Vassilis Evangelidis, *The Archaeology of Roman Macedonia. Urban and Rural Environments*. pp. 223, 40 b/w figures. Oxbow and Philadelphia: Oxbow books, 2022. ISBN 978-1-78925-801-1, paperback $51.91.

A new book on the archaeology of Roman Macedonia should not occasion too much apologetics. As pointed out by Grigoropoulos in the Introduction (p. xv), there still lacks an integrated study of the archaeology of Roman Macedonia, comparable to those of the neighbouring provinces. Because it rarely came into the focus of scholarly research, very little is known about the archaeological heritage of Roman Macedonia, and what is known so far, is not easily synthesized. Admittedly, in the Foreword, (p. xi-xii) the author hastens to explain that the scope of this book is limited to the built environment, both urban and rural, and does not aspire to provide an overarching synthesis of economic life and society in Roman Macedonia. This is also implied in the book's subtitle. In other words, this book is concerned primarily with the built heritage of Roman Macedonia, created in the period between the Roman conquest and the early 4th century AD. But even if it falls short of fulfilling Grigoropoulos' vision of an integrated study of the history and archaeology of Roman Macedonia, the study by Evangelidis is a most-welcome addition to the existing corpus of studies on Roman Macedonia.

This book is organized into three uneven parts. Part I, Roman Macedonia: history, people, cities and resources, (Pp. 3-37) consists of the first four chapters and aims to set the wider background for the survey of the architectural monuments. Chapter 1 (pp. 3-12) is a very condensed account of the history of Roman Macedonia, from the time of the conquest to the beginning of Late Antiquity and it mainly serves to provide a broad chronological framework for the rest of the study. The definition of the two main phases in the history of this province, the Late Hellenistic to Early Imperial and Middle to Late Imperial echoes the chronological divisions for Roman Greece and is entirely justified, although the line that separates the Early from the Middle Imperial period is only loosely defined. Chapter 1 also includes a brief account of the various ethnic groups that populated the Roman province of Macedonia, presumably with the aim of illustrating its diverse ethnic and cultural substrate.

Chapter 2 (pp. 13-24) is an introduction to the physical geography of Roman Macedonia and the distribution of its prime natural resources: land, pasture, forests and minerals. Somewhat surprisingly, much attention is devoted to the possible modes of exploitation of these natural riches, both in the periods prior to and after the conquest, even if the evidence at disposal is far from satisfactory. The author rightly points out that many of the widely-adopted ideas about the agrarian relations in Roman Macedonia – for example, the growth of the large estates at the expense of the small- and medium-sized farms – are pure speculations, but does not have much to offer in response. It is fully conceivable that the small family-farms continued to flourish throughout the Roman period, but this is still a long way from being proven.

The general developments in the urban geography of Roman Macedonia are the topic of Chapter 3. (pp. 25-32) The trajectory of urban development is charted more or less precisely. After a sudden slump in urban construction and abandonment of some of the old centres during the Late Hellenistic to Early Imperial period, a new phase of urban expansion begun under the Antonine emperors and it continued into the early part of Late Antiquity. However, the claim that the urban system became more hierarchical and centralized in the Middle to Late Imperial period is poorly substantiated. It is surprising to see how little reference is made to the recent study of the urban geography of Roman Macedonia by Michalis Karambinis [2020, 440-481]. The urban growth that marked the period between the 2nd and the 4th centuries AD is logically matched by an increase in the number of different categories of rural sites, but the author fails to demonstrate this with the help of maps or tables.

Chapter 4 (pp. 33-37) seeks to insert Macedonia into the empire-wide traffic network and underlines the geostrategic role and importance of this land for Rome. The author is right to point out that, far from being an isolated and nondescript corner of the Roman Empire, Macedonia was a key link in the land traffic between Italy and the East, and its importance was further accentuated during the frequent campaigns against Persia and the establishment of the new capital of Constantinople at the beginning of Late Antiquity.

Part II, built environment: the archaeological evidence, (41-170) is the main part of this book. It is divided into 12 chapters, Chapters 5 to 16, that present the subject matter by general functional categories. Chapter 5 (41-43) is a very brief introduction to the history of archaeological research in Roman Macedonia. Its brevity bluntly illustrates the relatively small volume of work carried out in the past. This chapter would have greatly benefited from a map showing the distribution of recent archaeological research.

Chapter 6 (pp. 44-54) is an overview of the known agoras and foras in the towns of Roman Macedonia. More precisely, it offers a brief description of the public squares of four Macedonian towns: Thessaloniki, Philippoi, Dion and Thasos. These are among the best researched urban centres in Roman Macedonia and they will figure prominently in virtually all chapters in Part II. This is obviously dictated by the state of research, but it leaves the impression of a highly skewed and unrepresentative coverage of the integral province. Moreover, there are some notable omissions, like the well-researched towns in south Albania or Heraclea Sintica, the forum or agora of which has been recently revealed by Bulgarian archaeologists. The author makes a valuable observation on the differences in the urban fabric between the old, pre-Roman and the newly founded, Roman towns. The telegrammic descriptions of the architectural remains are poorly illustrated, if at all, and they are difficult to follow.

Chapter 7, public and administrative buildings, (pp. 55-68) is one of the least coherent chapters in this part. It lumps together basilicas, buildings with unknown functions and large mansions, without a clear purpose in sight. All this is topped by a description of the palace of Galerius in Thessaloniki, a monument that surely deserves more scholarly and public attention, but at this point, it looks totally out of place. This chapter also exposes the problems inherent in all categorizations, in this case caused by the multifunctionality of buildings. The readers would really like to hear more about small centres like Nea Terpni or Paravela.

Chapter 8, titled buildings for commerce and industry, (pp. 69-74) is in fact a brief survey of stoas, macella and shops. Until Late Antiquity, manufacture and crafts were by and large banished from urban space. As in other provinces, most of the evidence of these activities comes from the countryside or the urban periphery. Surprisingly, sanctuaries are not mentioned among the centres of production.

The cultural and ethnic diversity of Roman Macedonia, and the mixing of local, eastern and western traditions, really comes to the fore in the sphere of religion. Chapter 9, (pp. 75-92) surveys the remains of temples and sanctuaries, both urban and rural. This overview is far from exhaustive, but it does cover a wide range of cults and traditions, highlighting the bewildering diversity of religions in Roman Macedonia, from classical Graeco-Roman temples to autochthonous, open-air sanctuaries.

One of the underlying themes of this book is the interplay between Hellenistic and Roman traditions in architecture, and this is most clearly observed in the example of spectacle buildings. The bulk of chapter 10, (pp. 93-103) is devoted to the most wide-spread type of spectacle building in Roman Macedonia, the theatre. With local traditions reaching back to the Hellenistic period, the theatres in the Macedonian towns nicely display the gradual blending of Hellenistic and Roman traditions. By the 3rd century AD, most theatres had been adapted to stage gladiatorial combats. The divide between old and new towns is also reflected in the plan and construction of theatres, although the Roman period saw the construction of new theatres in old towns, like Dion.

In contrast to spectacle buildings, water-management systems, baths and fountains are an entirely Roman invention, although the author hints at possible Hellenistic baths in Thessaloniki and Pella (p. 109). Despite its title, an architecture of water, chapter 11 (pp. 104-119) is essentially a survey of public and private baths, both in urban context and in the countryside. Only a passing mention is made of other types of water-management buildings. Like for the other building types, the author struggles to point out examples from the Early Imperial period. Most baths are dated to the 2nd or the 3rd century AD and they continue well into Late Antiquity.

Chapter 12, (pp. 120-128) gathers the evidence for colonnaded streets and gates. The discussion is limited to small segments of streets, from a few towns, including the Philippoi, Thasos, Thessaloniki and Dion quartet. The few examples of stand-alone arches and tetrapylons are a reminder of the pervasiveness of Roman architectural language even in areas in which Hellenistic traditions were prevalent.

Chapter 13, (pp. 129-141) looks at the evidence of vernacular architecture, mostly in an urban context. The starting premise is that prior to the Roman conquest, the Macedonian elite had been no stranger to large mansions and palaces. From an architectural point of view, the urban villas in Roman Macedonia mostly followed the Hellenistic tradition of houses with inner courtyards. Although there are some hybrid types, which combine Hellenistic and Roman traditions, western influences are more apparent in decoration and furniture than in planning. Most of the extant buildings are dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries or later. Till now, no evidence of humble dwellings in the towns of Roman Macedonia has been presented.

The surprisingly brief chapter 14, (pp. 142-148) dealing with the topic of city walls, is actually a stark reminder that prior to Late Antiquity, most of the towns in Roman Macedonia lay unprotected.

The only exception, Stobi, is located close to the troubled northern frontier of the province. Only after the Gothic invasions in the mid-3rd century did the towns in Roman Macedonia feel the necessity to invest in their defenses. Although excessive use of spolia has been found even in the earliest city-walls, construction was carefully executed.

The theme of Interplay between Roman and Hellenistic is taken up again in chapter 15, (149-159) which considers the evidence of not only funerary architecture, but also funerary rites and customs. The great number of burials excavated at urban and rural necropoleis shows that the study of funerary rites is in a much more advanced stage than the study of settlements. Particularly valuable in this respect is the bibliography on page 150. Discussing funerary rites together with funerary architecture has led, perhaps inadvertently, to an apparent contradiction. Whereas in the beginning of the chapter, the author states that "...funerary traditions and monuments remained basically the same (as in Hellenistic time) during the imperial period." (p. 149), in the end, he is compelled to conclude that the most popular types of funerary monuments, "...the vaulted tombs, the funerary altars and to a certain degree the sarcophagi had no real predecessors before the Roman period." (p. 159)! In the section on rural necropoleis, an intriguing suggestion is made about the possible use of single necropoleis by multiple settlements. The poor are as invisible among the burials as among the urban houses.

The final category of buildings covered in part II are villas and countryside houses. (Chapter 16, pp. 160-170). Studies in the countryside are arguably the least advertised segment of Macedonian archaeology and the inclusion of the recent findings in this field are most appreciated. Unfortunately, only a few sentences are devoted to the areas in which the new research has taken place, with very little qualification of the field methods used, except that they were part of rescue work. As in the majority of the chapters, the author is content to conclude that the data show too much individual variation and that no single model of exploitation of the countryside can account for this variation. However, having rejected all attempts at analysis, there is very little that can be done with this corpus of material, apart from making short, laconic descriptions of a chosen number of individual sites. Nonetheless, a few interesting remarks are made on the way, and in particular, the suggestion that the succession villa – Early Christian basilica, confirmed in a number of neighbouring provinces, could hint at the possible role of villas as centres of individual rural districts. (p. 164) The important issues of the continuity between pre-Roman and Roman rural sites and the scarcity of Early Imperial villas are given due attention, although nothing is said about the reliability of the chronology of these sites.

Part III unites the last four chapters of this book, Chapters 17-20. This part is assigned the difficult goal of summarizing the incoherent mass of material presented in the preceding chapters and streamlining the main points of the study. It is all the more surprising then, to discover that Chapter 17, (pp. 173-175) is in fact, a short survey of the building techniques and materials used in the towns of Roman Macedonia! This chapter calls attention to the fact that typical Roman construction techniques were not introduced prior to the 2nd century AD, which could in part explain the invisibility of the Early Imperial phase in the architectural history of individual towns, but it definitely does not belong to the concluding section of the book.

Chapter 18, (pp. 176-186) gives a succinct summary of the developments in urban architecture in Roman Macedonia. The author contrasts the two main phases in the history of Roman Macedonia, the Late Hellenistic to Early Imperial and the Middle to Late Imperial. The sparse evidence of urban construction in the former period, even in the Roman colonies, is explained by the continued use and maintenance of existing buildings and infrastructure. This seems like a reasonable explanation, but it fails to address the rareness of this phase in the newly-founded towns or the sudden rebuilding campaigns in Philippoi and Dion in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, which presumably would have also resulted in the destruction of the buildings from the preceding phase. Most of the buildings discussed in this book are dated to the second phase in the history of Roman Macedonia, between the 2nd and the early 4th century AD. This was a typical Roman architecture created with Roman building techniques, which finally brought the Macedonian towns closer to the empire-wide standards of urban planning and architecture. This wave of urban construction is rightly seen as a reflection of the increased wealth and living standards during this period, though the reader is left wondering if the Early Roman towns were really that different or were simply overwhelmed by the urban expansion of the succeeding period. The preference for the construction of baths, temples and spectacle buildings over administrative and commercial buildings is seen as a sign of the growing importance of towns as providers of special services.

Chapter 19, (pp. 187-192) revisits some of the topics pertinent to the rural sector. The main thrust of the argument is directed against the classical villa model of the Roman countryside and the presumed centralization of the farming estates and their usurpation by a narrow landowning elite. However, the nature of the evidence, and especially the way it is used, work against the formulation of well-founded counterarguments. For example, the idea that the large landed-estates were nothing new for Macedonia is solely based on the literary evidence and on our reconstructions of ancient Macedonian society. We do not know to what extent did the large estates dominate the pre-Roman countryside and, more to the point, we can only guess what happened to these estates after the Roman conquest. The other strand of the argument is that the sites in the countryside are too diverse to be subsumed under a single villa-type. But again, this does little to offset the classical villa model, especially because the author struggles to find even a handful of examples of small peasant holdings. The case for continuity in rural settlement is equally unconvincing because of the uncertain chronology of most rural sites. On the surface at least, it seems that it mirrors the developments in the urban sector.

The last chapter (Chapter 20, pp. 193-195) is a curious appendage to this study. It is a brief comparison of the trajectories of urban development in Roman Macedonia and Achaea. The conclusion is that, if towns could be ranked on a scale of Romanization, the towns of Macedonia would have ranked higher than the towns of Achaea. Because of their different backgrounds, Macedonia was much less urbanized than Greece in the pre-Roman period, and the urban fabric of Roman Macedonia is much closer to the empire-wide standards of urbanization than that of Achaea. Most of the urban tissue of Macedonia was created after the Roman conquest, and consequently the towns of Roman Macedonia were more open to foreign influences, both western and eastern, than the old towns of Achaea.

As it transpires from this detailed review, the study by Evangelidis has a number of weak points. These mostly pertain to the discussion of individual topics, but the most disconcerting are the ways in which the text is organized and the evidence presented. In principle, there are two ways to synthesize the source material for this study. One possibility is to write a purely architectural survey, providing thick descriptions of monuments and high-quality drawings and photographs. The other option is to relate the patterns observed in the relevant data to known or unknown trends in the economic, demographic and cultural developments in Roman Macedonia. This study falls somewhere in-between. Consequently, it neither offers a clear and well-illustrated overview of the architectural heritage of the province, nor does it bother to look for patterns in the distribution and date of construction activities that can be related to concrete historical developments.

Still, from a brighter perspective, this study does offer a theoretically informed introduction to the topic of architecture in Roman Macedonia and a useful guide to the archaeological research carried out in Greek Macedonia over the past few decades. It is an appropriate starting point for all those interested in the study of the building traditions and the urban fabric of the towns in the core area of Roman Macedonia.

DAMJAN DONEV
INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL HISTORY, SKOPJE
damjaned@gmail.com

Karambinis, M. 2020. Urban Networks in Early Roman Macedonia and Aegean Thrace, in De Ligt, L. and Bintliff, J. (eds) *Regional Urban Systems in the Roman World*, 150 BCE - 250 CE: 440-481. Leiden: Brill.

Dimitri Van Limbergen, Sadi Maréchal and Wim De Clercq (eds) with contributions by Pierre Ouzoulias, Maaike Groot, Antoni Martin i Oliveras, Victor Revilla Calvo, César Carreras Monfort, José Remesal Rodriguez, Emlyn K. Dodd and Rinse Willet, *The Resilience of the Roman Empire: Regional case studies on the relationship between population and food resources* (BAR International Series 3000). pp. 152; 38 B/W and colour figures, 26 tables. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2020. ISBN 978-1407356945, paperback $86.

Studies attempting to better understand the ancient economy have become increasingly popular amongst archaeological researchers in recent years. It is a broad, complex and often daunting topic to engage with, but one which can produce extremely insightful results with wide reaching implications