



SPEAKING OF EUGENE BORZA

by Josif Grezlovski

The American Philological Association refers to E. Borza as the "Macedonian specialist". In the introductory chapter of "[Makedonika](#)" by Carol G. Thomas, Eugene Borza is also called "the Macedonian specialist", and his colleague Peter Green describes Eugene's work on Macedonia as "seminal" and says: "Never was a man less given to the kind of mean-spirited odium philologicum that so often marks classical debate. Gene could slice an argument to pieces while still charming its exponents out of the trees."

Ernst Badian from Harvard University writes: "It is chiefly Gene's merit that recognizably historical interpretation of the history of classical Macedonia has not only become possible, but it is now accepted by all ancient historians who have no vested interest in the mythology superseded by Gene's work. Needless to say, I welcome and agree with that approach and have never disagreed with him except on relatively trivial details of interpretation." Here are some excerpts from Borza's writings regarding the Ancient Macedonians and the Ancient Greeks. I will offer no interpretations, for none is needed, indeed.

On the matter of distinction between Greeks and Macedonians: 1) "Neither Greeks nor Macedonians considered the Macedonians to be Greeks." On the composition of Alexander's army:

2) "Thus we look in vain for the evidence that Alexander was heavily dependent upon Greeks either in quantity or quality."

3) "The pattern is clear: the trend toward the end of the king's life was to install Macedonians in key positions at the expense of Asians, and to retain very few Greeks."

4) "The conclusion is inescapable: there was a largely ethnic Macedonian imperial administration from beginning to end. Alexander used Greeks in court for cultural reasons, Greek troops (often under Macedonian commanders) for limited tasks and with some discomfort, and Greek commanders and officials for limited duties. Typically, a Greek will enter Alexander's service from an Aegean or Asian city through the practice of some special activity: he could read and write, keep figures or sail, all of which skills the Macedonians required. Some Greeks may have moved on to military service as well. In other words, the role of Greeks in Alexander's service was not much different from what their role had been in the services of Xerxes and the third Darius."

On the policy of hellenization with Alexander conquest of Asia and the Greek assertion that he spread Hellenism: 5) "If one wishes to believe that Alexander had a policy of hellenization - as opposed to the incidental and informal spread of Greek culture - the evidence must come from sources other than those presented here. One wonders - archeology aside - where this evidence would be."

On the issue of whether Alexander and Philip "united" the Greek city-states or conquered them: 6) "In European Greece Alexander continued and reinforced Philip II's policy of rule over the city-states, a rule resulting from conquest."

On the ethnic tension between Macedonians and Greeks:

Referring to the episode of Eumenes of Cardia and his bid to reach the throne:

"And if there were any doubt about the status of Greeks among the Macedonians the tragic career of Eumenes in the immediate Wars of succession should put it to rest. The ancient sources are replete with information about the ethnic prejudice Eumenes suffered from Macedonians."

7) "The tension at court between Greeks and Macedonians, tension that the ancient authors clearly recognized as ethnic division."

On Alexander's dismissal of his Greek allies:

8) "A few days later at Ecbatana, Alexander dismissed his Greek allies, and charade with Greece was over." On the so called Dorian invasion: 9) The theory of the Dorian invasion (based on Hdt. 9.26, followed by Thuc. I.12) is largely an invention of nineteenth-century historiography, and is otherwise unsupported by either archeological or linguistic evidence." 10) "The Dorians are invisible archeologically."

11) "There is no archeological record of the Dorian movements, and the mythic arguments are largely conjectural, based on folk traditions about the Dorian home originally having been in northwest Greece.

12) "The explanation for the connection between the Dorians and the Macedonians may be more ingenious than convincing, resting uncomfortably on myth and conjecture."

On the Macedonian own tradition and origin:

13) "As the Macedonians settled the region following the expulsion of existing peoples, they probably introduced their own customs and language(s); there is no evidence that they adopted any existing language, even though they were now in contact with neighboring populations who spoke a variety of Greek and non-Greek tongues." On the Macedonian language:

14) "The main evidence for Macedonian existing as separate language comes from a handful of late sources describing events in the train of Alexander the Great, where the Macedonian tongue is mentioned specifically."

15) "The evidence suggests that Macedonian was distinct from ordinary Attic Greek used as a language of the court and of diplomacy."

16) "The handful of surviving genuine Macedonian words - not loan words from Greek - do not show the changes expected from Greek dialect."

On the Macedonian material culture being different from the Greek:

17) "The most visible expression of material culture thus far recovered are the fourth - and third-century tombs. The architectural form, decoration, and burial goods of these tombs, which now number between sixty and seventy, are unlike what is found in the Greek south, or even in the neighboring independent Greek cities of the north Aegean littoral (exception Amphipolis). Macedonian burial habits suggest different view of the afterlife from the Greeks', even while many of the same gods were worshipped."

18) "Many of the public expressions of worship may have been different."

19) "There is an absence of major public religious monuments from Macedonian sites before the end of the fourth century (another difference from the Greeks)."

20) "Must be cautious both in attributing Greek forms of worship to the Macedonians and in using these forms of worship as a means of confirming Hellenic identity."

21) "In brief, one must conclude that the similarities between some Macedonian and Greek customs and objects are not of themselves proof that Macedonians were a Greek tribe, even though it is undeniable that on certain levels Greek cultural influences eventually became pervasive."

22) "Greeks and Macedonians remained steadfastly antipathetic toward one another (with dislike of a different quality than the mutual long-term hostility shared by some Greek city-states) until well into the Hellenic period, when both the culmination of hellenic acculturation in the north and the rise of Rome made it clear that what these peoples shared took precedence over their historical enmities." 23) "They made their mark not as a tribe of Greek or other Balkan peoples, but as 'Macedonians'. This was understood by foreign protagonists from the time of Darius and Xerxes to the age of Roman generals."

24) "It is time to put the matter of the Macedonians' ethnic identity to rest."

More on Borza: <http://weber.u.washington.edu/~clio/aah/aah.publications.makedonika.html>