

## THE SUN OF VERGINA

### Prologue.

The young Macedonian prince is walking, as a stranger in a foreign land, *in domo Epaminondae*, in the streets of Thebes. Some tangled events and a very simple reason have brought him there: between Thebes and the king of Macedonia, Alexander II, a truce is in force. And the Thebans have asked assurances in the form of hostages. He is one of them.

Thebes is not an ordinary city. At that time, Thebes, after the victory over the Spartans at Leuctra(371 B.C.), is Greece. Thebes commands, whether one likes it or not. And a lot of things can be learned in Thebes. From the philosophers, of course (and from the Pythagoreans, in particular), but especially from the army commanders. Why is the Theban phalanx deployed, in battle, on an oblique line? Why is the strongest sector of its deployment the left wing and not the right wing, as practiced for centuries? The young hostage observes and thinks about. He observes the coordinated movements of the Theban infantry and he imagines it deployed on a larger number of rows; he notes the Theban hoplite's weapons and he imagines him with a small shield and a long spear, a spear much longer than usual; his thought goes to the elusive horsemen of his country and, on the battlefield, he sees them acting in combination with the infantry. That young prince, hostage in a foreign land, observes and learns, observes and elaborates: a new army becomes taking shape in his mind.

His name is Philip.

### Far from Hellas.

Land of mountains, of horses and horsemen, but also land of plains, of wide rivers and cultivated fields, surrounded by warlike peoples, subjected to raids and incursions of bunches of cutthroats, Macedonia lives for a long time isolated from the rest of Greece. In the southern Greeks' opinion, the Macedonians are semi-barbarian, despite their Kings claim to boast about Greek ancestry (Argive to be precise) and include Hercules among their progenitors.

Then, little by little, from the Persian Wars on, Macedonia, "the country whence it was never yet possible to buy a decent slave" according to the famous assertion of Demosthenes, approaches the Greek world. In its own way, of course, and bringing with itself its contradictions, its difficulties, its customs, its traditions, its contrasts, its harshness, its precariousness, its desire for independence.

Alexander I, King from 498 to 450 BC, has much to be forgiven. During the Persian Wars(499-479 BC), he has chosen - or he has been forced to choose - the wrong side and this stain has remained. Herodotus tries to erase it by inventing or by exaggerating the King's pro-Greek behaviours. After all, who communicates to Pausanias, on the eve of the battle of Plataea, Mardonius' intentions? Alexander. And who, for example, advises the Greeks not to side at Tempe pass? Alexander, again. Finally, is Alexander or not a Heraclides, a descendant of Hercules? It is more than enough to make him a worthy of the Greek cause.

However the pro-Greek (or pro-Persian?) Alexander has got clear ideas: he wants to take advantage of the political instability that has followed the Persian Wars in order to strengthen his kingdom, to expand it, to keep under control Illyrians and Paionians, to keep out the Thessalyans, to rely on his own strengths, to keep Macedonia uncommitted both from Athens and from Sparta, the hegemonic powers of that time. In short: He becomes pro-Hellenic, yes, but in small doses: He calls to his court some intellectuals; he

tries to reorganize the finances in accordance with the Greek model; he emphasizes the value and importance of the armed men's Assembly.

"Democratic" turning point, then? A window-dressing, to be honest, because the Assembly, in contrast to what happens almost elsewhere in Greece, does not deliberate, but only ratifies the decisions of the king, after his appointment. It behaves the same way the smaller council of the Crown formed by loyalists of the sovereign behaves. On the institutional and social policy Alexander- in whose hands are concentrated many political, military, religious powers – does not go beyond.

He goes beyond with regards to the military policy. To carry out his plans, the Macedonian king needs an army, not a new system of government, he needs discipline, not democracy, he needs hoplites, not philosophers. He has seen how the Spartans and the Athenians fight, he has understood the importance of the infantry. And, so, Alexander devotes himself to reorganize his army. Even at the risk of provoking a kind of social revolution. Since time immemorial, in fact, the horsemen, the *hetairoi*, all noble, constitute the backbone of his army. Will they accept an equal role or even a lower role than that one of *pezhetairoi*, the dismounted infantry? Will they agree to share privileges and loot with them?

But the thing seems to be working. The bond between the aristocracy and the king is too strong for being questioned and Alexander's expansionist policy is, for the aristocrats, a guarantee of earnings and profits. For their part, the "people" called to serve in the army warn new responsibilities, feel as integral part of the monarchy. So, *pezhetairoi* and *hetairoi* together will arrive, weapons in hand, until the mines of Mount Pangeus, will arrive to the course of the Strymon, to the city of Pydna, to the Thermaikos Gulf. But alarming Athens.

And the manoeuvres of an alarmed Athens lead to a division of the kingdom. The years following Alexander's death are, in fact, confused years, sometimes wrapped in the deepest darkness. That the kingdom is divided it is a fact: was Alexander to want it, or was the interference of Athens to determine it? Within twenty years (about from 450 to 430 BC), three of the five sons of the king (Alcetas, Perdiccas, and Philip) contend the power, among open wars, short-lived truces, compromises, definition of zones of influence, changes of alliances, political gyrations, some losses of territory, always under the interested gaze of Athens, whose goal is to maintain the kingdom of Macedonia in a condition of weakness in order to control it better. The foundation, in 437 BC, of the city of Amphipolis (in Greek Ἀμφίπολις) at the mouth of the Strymon river is another clear indication of this attitude.

Eventually, around the year 440, Perdiccas overcomes, even if the fight with his brother Philip, supported by Athens, is not completely over. The new king, the second in the name, takes advantage of the situation of conflict between Sparta and Athens to line up now with the first, now with the latter, keeping his hands free and taking only care of the interests of Macedonia. He loses and regains the town of Thermes; he supports the Spartan general Brasidas, thanks whose help he reduces to obedience -for the moment, at least- the rebellious princes of Upper Macedonia; he drives to rebellion Potidaea and the cities of Chalkidiki; he reaches an agreement with the Thracians; he goes with ease-and again from Sparta to Athens and vice versa.

When Perdiccas II passes away, Macedonia is stronger and it is more aware of itself and of its strength, even if territorially almost unchanged, compared to that one of Alexander. After Perdiccas' reign, the "barbarian" Macedonia cannot be ignored by the rest of the Greek world. Perdiccas also leaves a policy legacy to his heirs: we must strengthen ourselves, consolidate our independence, expand our territory, use the others, not be used by them. This attitude -the same of the pro-Greek Alexander, anyway- will contribute to keep alive in the Macedonian sovereigns some feeling of distrust toward the southern Greeks, a feeling of distrust mixed, however, with admiration; it will increase the

nationalism and, at the same time, it will enliven the need for cultural change. In short, it is as if Macedonia wanted to remain immutable and, at the same time, it wanted to renew itself, as if it wished to close itself at every change and, at the same time, it were attracted by the change itself.

Archelaus, ascended on a throne of blood in 413 BC, warns all the spell of the Greek world, tries to bring together nationalism and *Koinè*, tradition and innovation. He is the author, according to Thucydides and to the most part of modern historians, of modernization in the Hellenistic way of Macedonia; he is the generous sovereign ready to deliver to Athens the timber it needs to rebuild its fleet; he is the protector of artists such as Euripides and Zeuxis the painter; he is the builder of roads and fortresses, temples and shrines; he is the reformer of the army; he is the founder of a new capital city, Pella.

But all these honours, all these awards conceal wide shade. The Macedonian army had already been reformed by Alexander I; Archelaus' army, glorified by Thucydides, is not able to defeat a band of cutthroats, a sign that perhaps it is neither so strong, or so reformed; the administrative reform attributed to Archelaus is not a real reform, but rather an attempt, sometimes impromptu, to distribute better the tax burden among the various areas of the kingdom in order to avoid discontent and rebellion (for some scholars, that reform has not even existed), the political cost of the cultural adjustment to Greece is high.

Archelaus does not seem to realize it, but who glorifies his policy, who calls him "friend" acts in this way at his own interests and pursues a second purpose: to prevent any independent initiative. By celebrating Archelaus, an Athens in distress and prostrated by the prolongation of the Peloponnesian War, implicitly recognizes Macedonia as a state, but only to prevent it from expanding or to harm it. Thus depriving Archelaus of the only element capable of holding his own domain together: the policy of expansion. Result: under the reign of Archelaus, Macedonia does not grow territorially, does not expand itself, it becomes restless and potentially weak again.

Around 400 BC, at the end of his reign, the king seems to wake from his lethargy and tries to resume the policy of expansion. But when he draws his sword against the Thessalyans, he immediately gets the nickname of "barbarian" by the Athenians and undergoes the occupation of a border fortress by the Spartans. Definitely, the king will have noted bitterly: Macedonia with a high rate of Hellenization is tolerated only when it remains calm and when it does not tread on somebody's toes.

But it's too late to try to fix it. Archelaus is assassinated at the end of the 400 or in the following year and the situation comes to a head. Macedonia is restless and fragmented, the discontent is widespread; the aristocrats hold their head up again, the princedoms of the Highlands are in turmoil, the army is weak, the succession to the throne is a succession of murders, the neighbours become aggressive again, and the kings must make territorial concessions to keep them calm. As if it were not enough, under the reign of Amyntas III, the Chalcidians, increasingly arrogant and shameless, come to threaten the very capital city of the Macedonian kingdom, Pella. Among a lot of difficulties and some wars with an uncertain outcome (against the Thessalyans, for example), the policy of "the two ovens" comes back: today with Athens, tomorrow with Sparta or Thebes and vice versa. Who puts this policy into practice - Perdiccas III (king from 365 to 359 BC) - conquers at a certain point Amphipolis, and creates new enthusiasm among his people.

But however, his policy is, in hindsight, a shortness breath policy, a return to the past without the conditions of the past, a tactical limited vision, not a wide strategy. And so, when Perdiccas III dies, the situation is back to square one. Macedonia needs to restructure itself, it needs to switch gears. The "two ovens policy" cannot last indefinitely, you can not live perpetually on the defensive, you cannot give up the policy of expansion, without paying political duty inside and outside, new ideas and reforms are needed to get moving. But in order to achieve what? To create a pure and simple domain policy or,

instead, to create an expansion policy based , albeit from a position of strength, on the reconciliation of different interests? The former is a loser policy, the latter is the way to go. But to go along, a man able to drive other men is needed.

Philip, son of Amyntas, is needed: Philip II.

## **Towards Hellas.**

After having left Thebes and having come back to homeland in order to serve as tutor to the child-king Amyntas IV, Philip finds himself grappling with a lot of problems. The Paionians and Illyrians have resumed their raids; the princes of the Highlands, subjugated by Perdiccas III, have held their heads up again; the Calcidians are restless and now they are a serious threat; in the race to the throne, the Thracians support their candidate, Pausanias, while the Athenians sponsor Pausania's brother , Argeus. The whole of Macedonia seems on the verge of collapse.

Philip acts quickly and skilfully. He bribes the Paionians; he suggests to the Thracians that a weak Macedonia means a strong Athens and that a strong Athens means a weak Thrace; he withdraws the Macedonian garrison from Amphipolis, returning the city to the Athenians, and concluding a treaty with them. He covers himself, in other words. And, once covered, he reduces at first to obedience the princes of Upper Macedonia, making lose to them the will to rebel, then sweeps away the Illyrians , repelling them forever far from Macedonian borders.

In this first stage , Philip's successes are due mostly to his army. The Macedonian soldiers are professional soldiers; the Macedonian phalanx is a giant porcupine from which sprout the deadly *sarissas* pikes, spears long almost six meters ; a wing - the left- attacks, while the centre and the right wing block the enemy's deployment; the heavy cavalry operates as a hammer, taking behind the enemy and forcing him to run himself on the anvil formed by the *pezethairoi's sarissas* . It 's a revolution for those times, made possible by the lesson learnt in Thebes.

And with that army organized by him, thanks to the siege machines designed by his engineers, Philip , at first , conquers Amphipolis in defiance of the agreements or secret clauses - real or presumed- with Athens, then conquers Pydna.

After these victories, many Greek cities in the neighbouring regions ask for his intervention to resolve their long-standing or more recent controversies: Philip moves his army, he fixes those issues, and then he returns whence he has come.

Why this *free of charge* intervention ? Why does not he subjugate the cities that he has helped? And why, after having defeated them in battle, does not he get rid of the rebellious nobles of the Lincestis and of the Orestis, but he calls some of them to Pella? Philip has understood -or at least he has guessed- this: the domain without the consent has got feet of clay and, in the long run, it does not pay. In other words: *annexing* is not synonymous of *subduing*. Will this be one of the most significant features of his policy?

After the conquer of Amphipolis, Philip is not heavy-handed towards the Greeks. It is not yet time to leave the Macedonian borders in order to try to impose himself on Greece, even though Athens and Sparta- and the Macedonian king is aware of it- have lost both prestige and importance. The imperialism of the former, expressed by the Delian League, has produced discontent, rebellions and a long and devastating war ( the Peloponnesian war, 431-404 BC); the absolutism of the latter- the winner of the conflict- was poorly accepted by many Greek *poleis*; during those dark years, the Persians have become aggressive, fishing in troubled waters and trying to keep the Greeks divided to control them better.

The failure of Sparta and Athens, their chronic inability to renew themselves, have brought to the fore new realities and new ideas. Boeotia, for instance, dominated by Thebes; Phocis, guardian of sacred places; Thessaly, controlled by the tyrants of Pherae , Macedonia itself. All of them are actually able to go beyond the classical ideal of democracy

and of freedom guaranteed by democracy, without falling into the aristocratic absolutism of Spartan kind. The inhabitants of these regions, the citizens of these *poleis* feel themselves as subjects involved in the creation of a common project, not as slaves dependent on the whim of their owners. And for this project they are willing to sacrifice part of their individual freedoms. Philip seems to be aware of it, but, for the time, he prefers to wait and remain cautious.

Also because the capture of Amphipolis has opened another problem: that one of the settlers of Crenidis. They come from the island of Thasos and they are trying to replace the Athenians in the exploitation of the gold mines of Pangeus. Threatened by the Thracians, they ask Philip for help. And helping Crenidis means to fight against the Thracians. But this is precisely Philip's goal: he is decided to consolidate the boundaries of his kingdom in the eastern side and, above all, he is determined to seize the gold of Pangeus. The anti-Macedonian coalition set up in a hurry does not hold. The Illyrians and Paionians are beaten even before they can join with Thracians; Athens, which also participates in the coalition, is currently busy in the social war and cannot provide any effective help. So the Macedonian boundaries are moved to the River Nestus, and Crenidis, of course, changes hands. And its name: from now on, it will be called Philippi.

The gold of Pangeus enriches the kingdom of Macedonia, while the rest of Greece has its state coffers desolately empty; the Macedonian army is a perfect war machine; the national unification is completed; the borders are largely safe; the soldiers see Philip fighting in the forefront, giving and receiving wounds and they dote on him. Philip is proclaimed king by the assembly of armed men: the whole of Macedonia has found a leader and it rallies around him, sharing his project. Philip is aware of that, and when (336 BC) his daughter Cleopatra will get married to Alexander the First, king of Epirus, he will arise in public without an armed guard. Only the tyrants need an armed guard, he will say. He knows that nobody, in Macedonia, considers him a tyrant.

In 354, shortly after his proclamation as king in place of Amyntas, Philip conquers the last Athenian city in Macedonian territory - Meton - and, from 354 to 352, much of northern Thessaly. The time to look southwards is finally arrived.

## **Cheronea.**

The third Sacred War (356-346 BC) gives him the pretext for intervention [1]. Philip takes arms against the "sacrilegious" Phocians and their allies; he finds more troubles than he had planned, he suffers two serious military defeats, he must return to his homeland to quell the rebellion of Chalcis and to give the coup de grace to the Thracians, but ultimately he succeeds.

In the Anfizionia of Delphi (in Greek *Ἀμφικτυονία*) -i.e the Sacred League of Delphi- where he is admitted after the victory over the Phocians, now he counts more. How will he use his new power or his political weight? In Demosthenes' opinion there is no doubt: to satisfy his ambition, to subjugate the whole of Greece. Isocrates' hope, after the end of the Sacred War and the signing of an important peace agreement with Athens (the so-called "Peace of Philocrates", 346), is different: may Philip guide the Greeks against the Persians and, above all, may he bring peace and prosperity to Greece. According to the former, the Macedonian king is a liberticidal tyrant; according to the latter - even if later he will change his mind- a gift of the gods. Who is right? Demosthenes or Isocrates?

The most part of the ancient and modern historians insists on this particular: Philip was always concerned to justify his own actions to the Greeks, now posing himself as "avenger of the sanctuary of Apollo" (Sacred War), now posing himself as the guarantor of justice (destruction of Olynthus and the other rebel cities of Halkidiki peninsula.)

Why do the historians write so? Most of them do it to emphasize the political cunning of the king, highlighting his ability to convince by telling fibs; in the opinion of other

scholars, his is purely tactics: he wants to placate the Greeks to quit the game still in progress with the Phocians, and then to attack the Thracians.

It will also be so. But who comes for conquering and subjugating, cares perhaps to justify his actions with anyone? Philippe, however, does it. Double -dealing? Tactics? Guilty conscience? Or, by explaining his own actions, does Philip want to make implicitly understand that he does not want to be the *owner* of Greece, but that he wants to be the *leader* of it? That leader whose now the need was felt, either whether one wanted to attack Persia, or whether one wanted to build a common peace. For someone, now as in the Antiquity, this is a plausible hypothesis.

Not according to Demosthenes. But why does Demosthenes attack Philip almost every day? Does he find in the peace of Philocrates a favour done by Greeks to Philip? Does he ignore the change which is taking place in Greece? Does not he feel as an anachronism the idea of a return to Pericles' times?

Demosthenes does not ignore anything: simply he does not understand other guide for Greece with the exception of Athens, the greater expression of the ideals of freedom and democracy. Only Athens, then, in Demosthenes' opinion, is worthy of leading the Greeks, not a "barbarian" as the Macedonian king. And, so, to get more convincing, he shakes in front of his fellow citizens and of the whole of Greece the spectre of perpetual tyranny.

But which is Philip's opinion about Demosthenes? In other words, which is his attitude towards the Greek civilization? The impression is that the king is not indifferent to it and that he wants to understand it. Why, for example, does he call Aristotle at Pella as tutor of the young prince Alexander( the future Alexander III, the Great)? In order to make propaganda to himself? Or because does he imagine a different future for himself and for Greece ? The Greek civilization cannot, must not die in the embrace of Macedonia: its principles must rather give substance and meaning to a new political phase characterized by stability.

Perhaps Philip sees the whole issue in this way, perhaps he really tries to reach an agreement with Athens. Is this the reason why he organizes Greek troops in his own army or he tries to make understand to the Greeks that the true interlocutor is he, as king and not Macedonia as nation? Is this the reason why he uses some Greek administrators or, beyond temporary and "tactical" arrangements, he indicates the Persians as enemy to be fought?

But according to the contemporaries, Philip looks like the Philip of Demosthenes, not like that one of Isocrates; he looks like a tyrant, not like a bearer of new social and political instances.

Inflamed by the Athenian orator, the most part of Greece joins in an anti-Macedonian coalition. On the battlefield of Chaeronea (338), once again, Philip has the better. And, once again, he goes easy with Athens( not with Thebes). He returns Athenian prisoners without demanding any ransom, he returns the bodies of the fallen, he recognizes the bravery of his opponents, allowing them to maintain their fleet. And, above all, he enshrines his new role, founding, the following year, the League of Corinth, and gaining acceptance of his personal hegemony over Greece, by presenting himself as the "commander of the Greeks" and the guarantor of the common peace. That common peace that to Greece of the time, divided, fragmented, weak, could only be imposed from outside. Meanwhile, ordered by Philip, ten thousand Greek and Macedonian soldiers under the command of Generals Attalus and Parmenion, set foot on Persian territory waiting for him. But Philip won't guide them. The day after Cleopatra's wedding, while the king, as we have seen, goes out without an armed guard to inaugurate the games and participate in the festivities organized in Aigai (today Vergina ) the ancient Macedonian capital and sacred city, an officer of his bodyguard , Pausanias, stabs him to death.

Aristotle gives credit to the act of a humiliated lover; others write of a conspiracy of Olympia, king's wife and Alexander's mother; others blame the Persians and the princes of

Lincestis; still others see it as a reaction to the idea that Philip could be deified. A full-blown crime story, in short. With a guilty (immediately executed), but centuries later, still without a precise motive. It will fall to Philip's son, Alexander, third in the name and "The Great" for posterity, to suppress the Greek reaction and to face the Persian lion.

## **Epilogue.**

The discovery of so-called Macedonian royal tombs of Vergina, dated between 340 and 300 BC, has added mystery to mystery. The Tomb II is undoubtedly a king's tomb. But whose? According to Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos - the discoverer - it is Philip II's tomb; according to other scholars, it is the tomb of a half brother of Alexander the Great, Philip III Arrhidaeus, who died in 317 BC.

Andronikos writes, among a lot of other very scientific arguments: the remains that has been recovered indicate a bad wound in the right orbital arch and Philip had lost an eye in combat or while he was checking the working of a catapult during the siege of Meton; in the grave have been found two bronze greaves, one shorter than the other and Philip, according to ancient sources, was limping; on the frieze above the entrance is painted a hunting scene in which appear either Philip in the act of killing a lion, and Alexander the Great, on the sidelines among the trees and crowned with laurel; the objects found into the tomb are very rich and they unmistakably belong to a warrior king, and Philip was a warrior king, while Arrhidaeus - king in name only - was ill and mentally unstable and therefore unworthy of a tomb like Vergina's tomb II.

But there is another side of the coin, there are some counter-deductions. The wound in the orbital arch shows no signs of evident calcification. And could a wound received from Philip during the siege of Meton eighteen years before his death not calcify? Impossible. It would be, therefore, a lesion caused by an approximate cremation.

The asymmetric greaves? The shorter is the left one and Philip, according to the ancient historical sources, was limping from the right leg. And what about the other greaves found inside the tomb? All they are the same size. The hunting scene? It makes think more to an event according to the Persian use - and then introduced in Greece after Alexander the Great's conquests - than to a genuinely indigenous scene. It looks more like a hunting scene within an enclosed space specially designed for the purpose (as was the custom among the Persians), than like a scene in an open space. And then, were there lions in Macedonia? Was the King Philip III Arrhidaeus a wimp and incapable king and could he not be buried with a set of weapons and armours? Who says this, forget the accounts of ancient historians (and Diodorus' account, in particular), according to which the usurper Cassandrus wanted to dedicate a funeral with full honours to Arrhidaeus. And what about the barrel vault of the tomb? It reminds the Persian constructions and it appears in the Greek architecture after the conquests of Alexander.

There were lions in Macedonia? Sure, is the answer. What do Herodotus and Xenophon write about? They write that when the Greeks wanted to hunt lions, they went to Macedonia. The barrel vault? Do you forget - is the reply - that was found an almost identical barrel vault in a tomb of the period preceding that one of Philip II? And one could go on for quite a while. Until to identify those remains, how someone did, with those of Alexander the Great.

But if in that grave is buried Philip II, king with many faces and many wives (seven, not counting the lovers), brave soldier and shrewd diplomat, innovator and political conservative sovereign, man with impossible dreams and great ideas, then in the darkness of that tomb, really the sun of Vergina shines.

## **Philip conquers Greece: the events at a glance.**

359 BC. Philip is appointed regent of Macedonia in the name of the rightful king, Amyntas IV. He is twenty-one years old.

358. Philip faces the Illyrians (the place where he faces them is unknown, probably it is in the vicinity of the today Monastir) and defeats them. The Illyrians leave on the battlefield more than 7,000 men. The western borders are secure and the restless princedoms of Upper Macedonia, including the Lincestis, the homeland of Philip's mother, are reduced to obedience.

357. Philip marries Olympias, princess of Epirus. It is his third marriage (Philip II was polygamous). Previously he had married, for "political" reasons, the Illyrian princess Audata and after her, the Macedonian Phila, princess of the Helimeia region. Even that one with the Olympias is a "political" marriage: after the wedding, Epirus becomes a region gravitating in Macedonia's political orbit.

357. Philip breaks the treaty with Athens, and attacks the city of Amphipolis. On the one hand, he wants to access the sea to give breath to the commerce and, on the other hand, he wants to access to gold mines in Pangeus.

356. Philip conquers the city of Crenidis, Pangeus' door, close to today town of Drama. The city assumes the new name of Philippi. The borders with Thrace are moved to the River Nestos (today Mesta).

356. Alexander, the future Alexander the Great, is born. Philip is proclaimed king by the assembly of armed men.

356. In the Halkidiki peninsula, the Macedonians conquer the city of Potidaea, linked to Athens. While the Athenians are preparing to counterattack, Philip conquers Pydna, for a long time an Athenian naval base. All non-Macedonian citizens are expelled, the city is razed to the ground and re-founded as a Macedonian city. Taking advantage of the outbreak of the Third Sacred War, Philip enters in arms in Thessaly.

354. It is conquered by Macedonians the Greek city of Meton.

352. Philip firmly controls the entire northern part of Thessaly. After having defeated the Phocians at the Crocus Fields, the Macedonian army heads southward, but, come to the Pass of Thermopylae, it finds a strong Greek contingent of Athenians, Spartans, and inhabitants of Achaia. The Macedonian army withdraws.

351. The Greek orator Demosthenes, fiery opponent of Philip in whom he sees a threat to the freedom of Greece, composes his first speech - the first of the so-called "Philippics" - against the Macedonian king.

348. Philip returned to Macedonia, turns his attention to the cities of Halkidiki Peninsula. He conquers Olynthus and other 31 cities. Both Olynthus, and other cities are razed and the inhabitants enslaved. The entire Halkidiki is annexed to Macedonia.

346. A peace treaty between Philip and Athens is concluded (peace of Philocrates).

345. Philip's expeditions against the Illyrians and Thracians, who have rebelled against the Macedonian rule.

344. The second Demosthenes' "Philippic".

344. Expedition against the Thessalians, rebelled against Philip.

341. The third Philippic.

339. Decisive campaign against the Thracians. The region is almost entirely conquered. Only the Greek city of Byzantium and Perintus resist. the Greeks, in order to stop Philip, although it may seem paradoxical, ask for help their traditional enemies, the Persians.

339. Battle with the Scythians near Danube river. Philip defeats them, but while he is coming back to Macedonia, he is attacked by the Thracians Triballians and seriously wounded in a leg. Much of the booty taken to the Scythians fell into the hands of Triballians.



338, August 2. At Chaeronea in central Greece, the outnumbered Macedonian army defeats the army of the Greek coalition. During the battle, the young king's son, the eighteen-year old Alexander, stands out.

337. Under the auspices of Macedonia, the League of Corinth takes life. Philip says he will be "The commander of the Greeks." Is he sincere? Meanwhile, he prepares plans to attack the Persian Empire.

337. Philip marries Cleopatra, a young Macedonian princess. This is the seventh King's wedding.

336. Philip II is assassinated in the theatre of Aigai ( today Vergina) by Pausanias, an officer of his bodyguard.

## **How to get Vergina by bus from Thessaloniki .**

Reaching Vergina (in Greek Βεργίνα) from the centre of Thessaloniki is not complicated. If you rent a car, though, remember that traffic in the city is at times unbearable. It 's better, in my opinion, reaching Vergina by bus: no traffic problem, no risk of a wrong turn, no chance of causing an accident. We climb aboard, we sit and go. Greek buses are always on time.

### **1. From the centre of Thessaloniki to KTEL station.**

The starting point is the KTEL station (i.e. the suburban bus station) in Giannitzòn Odòs ( Jannitzon Street), located about four kilometres from the city centre. To get there, first of all reach the main street of Thessaloniki, Egnatia Odòs (the ancient Roman *Via Egnatia* that led from Brindisi, in Italy, to Byzantium), then take the urban bus number 8, direction KTEL (the "L" in Greek is represented graphically by an inverted "V", ΚΤΕΛ) and get off at the terminus, located in front of the suburban bus station (the journey takes about twenty minutes and costs 0.80 euro cents).

### **2. From KTEL station to Vergina.**

Go in the bus station and go to the ticket office of Imathia (Ημαθία in Greek). Buy a return ticket to Veria (Βέροια in Greek). Buses to Veria leave about every half hour from 6 o'clock in the morning. My advice is to take the express bus (i.e. direct, marked by a "T" on Greek timetables) at 10.15. The trip takes about an hour and once in Veria, at 11.15, take the connecting bus to Vergina. Tickets for Vergina may be procured at the station in Veria, or onboard the bus. The round-trip ticket to Veria costs about 13 euros and that one to go to Vergina, costs 1.70 euros. The journey from Veria to Vergina takes about twenty minutes and the bus stop is located in the immediate vicinity of the museum.

The visit of the archaeological site takes about an hour and a half. The palace and the theatre are closed and under renovation, so you can visit only the Macedonian tombs - including that of King Philip II-around which has been built the museum. Inside, your movements are in a very suggestive atmosphere, where darkness dominates the light , almost to represent the Afterlife.

### **3. The return: from Vergina to Veria.**

After the visit, if you want, you can take the return bus at 14:00( 2 p.m) which leads from Vergina to Veria (tickets can be purchased on board) or eat something and go to Veria taking the bus at 14.52 (2:52 p.m) (Pay attention, because the next bus after that one that

leaves at 14:52 , goes to 18:00 – 6 p.m). The bus stop is located right across the street where you have arrived in the morning. The bus stop is not indicated by tables or otherwise. It is easily recognized, however, not only because, as I said, it is just across the street where you have been left in the morning, but also for the presence of metal scaffolding of amaranth colour .

#### **4. The Return: from Veria to Thessaloniki.**

From Veria to Thessaloniki the express bus runs every hour: 14.45, 15.45, 16.45 and so on. If you already have a return ticket, go to the station located opposite the station where you came from. Here present the ticket to return to Thessaloniki: the clerk will mark the hour on the ticket and he will assign your seats. Once arrived in Thessaloniki, you can return to the centre, in about twenty minutes, either by bus. number 8 ( direction IKEA) or by bus n. 31 (stop Colombou).

On this website you can consult the KTEL suburban bus schedule:

<http://www.ktelmacedonia.gr/en/content/show/tid=124>

and here those from Veria to Vergina:

[http://www.veriorama.com/kTEL\\_route.php?id=343&category=category](http://www.veriorama.com/kTEL_route.php?id=343&category=category)

#### **To read:**

Pierre Briant, *Alexander the Great: from Greece to the East*, 1992

Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great*, 2004

Valerio Massimo Manfredi, *Alexandros, il figlio del sogno*(, Alexandros, the son of the dream) 2002

Arnaldo Momigliano, *Filippo il Macedone*, Guerini e Associati, 1987

Giuseppe Squillace, *Filippo il Macedone*, 2009

In the antiquity, Herodotus, Thucydides, Justinus, Arrianus, Diodorus wrote about Macedonia or about Philip of Macedonia.

[1] In 356 BC, the members of the Sacred League- or Anfizionia- of Delphi, instigated by the Thebans, accused the Phocians of having illegally grown the plain of Cirra, placed under the sanctuary of Apollo, and therefore inviolable. In response, the Phocians, punished with a hefty fine, occupied the shrine of Delphi and took possession of the riches contained therein. The Thebans seized the opportunity: in alliance with the Thessalians, the Boeotians and the inhabitants of Lokris, they declared war on the Phocians, accusing them of sacrilege. For their part, Sparta and Athens, eager to limit the interference of Thebes, sided with the rebels. Macedonia was not part of Holy League and, therefore, was out of the game. But when the Thessalians, threatened by the tyrant of Pherae, Lycophron, asked Philip for help (354 BC), Macedonia entered the game, giving the Macedonian sovereign - winner after ups and downs made of defeats and victories, interruptions and renewal of hostilities - the opportunity to present himself to the Greeks as the avenger of the sanctuary of Apollo. The war, long and difficult, ended in 346.

