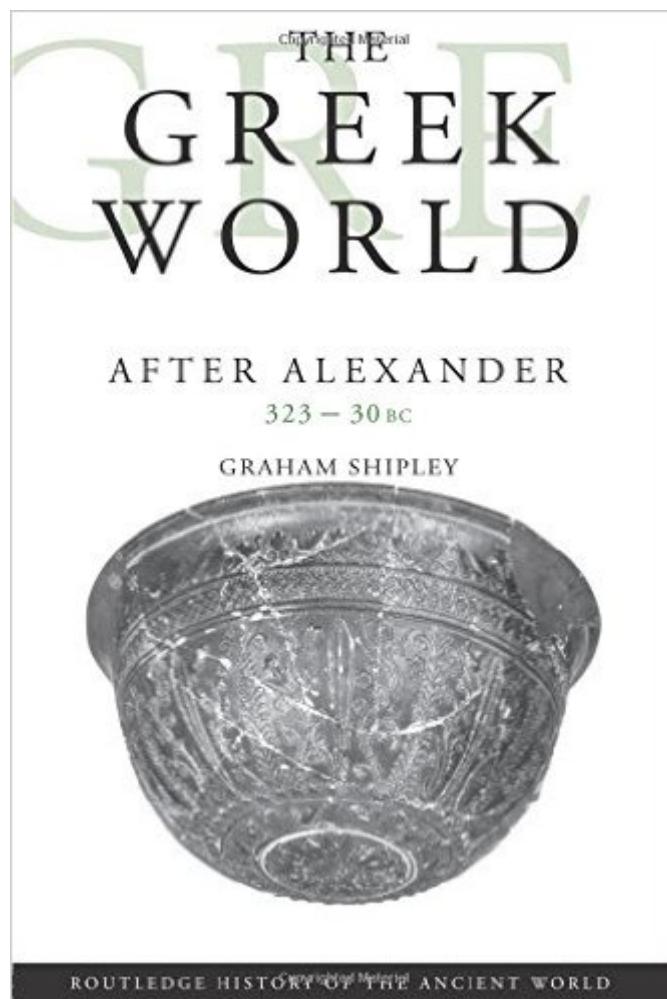


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The Greek World After Alexander 323-30 BC (The Routledge History Of The Ancient World)



Synopsis

The Greek World After Alexander 323â ¯30 BC examines social changes in the old and new cities of the Greek world and in the new post-Alexandrian kingdoms. An appraisal of the momentous military and political changes after the era of Alexander, this book considers developments in literature, religion, philosophy, and science, and establishes how far they are presented as radical departures from the culture of Classical Greece or were continuous developments from it. Graham Shipley explores the culture of the Hellenistic world in the context of the social divisions between an educated elite and a general population at once more mobile and less involved in the political life of the Greek city.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Graham Shipley has written an excellent book for students and others encountering the Hellenistic age (the three tumultuous centuries between Alexander's death and Octavian's victory at Actium) for the first time. Broadly there are two ways of looking at the history of Eastern Mediterranean in this period. One is the 'degeneration' framework which sees this period in general terms as a sad falling-off from the classical apogee of Greek achievement. The other is that which sees this as a period of rapid change when the civilizations of Near East and Western Mediterranean were drawn together through the rubric provided by the Hellenistic culture. This book falls firmly in the second group. An important aspect is that this book eschews the functionalist approach. Indeed the author warns throughout against anachronisms and retrojecting analysis derived from the experience of

modern capitalism, Imperialism or Christian discourse to understand the period. The book opens with a chapter reviewing the approaches and sources and next traces Alexander and his successors to 276 BCE. The next chapter is an important one on kings and cities and examines the consequences of the political changes of the period 338 - 276 for the old city states and details the ways in which Cities and Kings found of coexisting. It questions the received wisdom that the polis met its end at Chaironeia in 338 and shows how the Ptolemaic and Antigonid power relied on keeping cities contented. There are chapters on Macedonia and Greece, the Seleukid Kingdom and Pergamon and Ptolemaic Egypt.

The Hellenistic Age is neglected if not forgotten these days, but it still runs through our cultural heritage. The Library of Alexandria; Euclid, Archimedes, and Zeno (of Achilles-and-the-tortoise fame); the Seven Wonders of the World (the list, that is, as well as a couple of the Wonders themselves); the philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism, and the origin of the word "parchment," all come from the lands around the Eastern Mediterranean in the three centuries after the death of Alexander the Great. Shipley's book is one of the best I've found on the history of the age, although it doesn't quite rise to being a great book. It's certainly a big book: 400 pages of text, and another nearly 170 pages of appendices, notes, bibliography, and indices--hooray scholarly apparatus. It feels even heavier than that sounds, because it's printed on heavy, glossy art-book paper. Chapters alternate between the history of particular geographical areas (Macedonia, Greece, Egypt, the Asian kingdoms) and of cultural areas (literature, religion, science, philosophy). The final chapter, on the Roman acquisition of these geographical and cultural landscapes hints at, but doesn't quite state outright, interesting parallels with US foreign policies and practices. While the book is much better written than some on the subject I could name, it's still not easy reading: took me almost three months to finish. I bought my copy used; some student was highlighting passages through the first three chapters and then stopped completely. It's full of valuable and interesting information but still falls short of being a gripping and compelling read, is what I'm saying.

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