

Each of the maps in the two first categories is accompanied by a short summary of events, a list of sources attesting activities in different locations, and a bibliography.

The references to sources mentioning places depicted in the maps are very useful, and solves the problem acknowledged by the author: that many of the sources contain dubious information, which is nevertheless of interest to the scholarly reader. The bibliography for each conflict contains references to relevant specialized studies as well as passages in general surveys of the history of the region. The bibliographies are up to date and include references to works in Russian and Polish, rarely cited by scholars from Western Europe and North America. This will no doubt be a valuable point of departure for students and scholars interested in particular periods and event.

Readers with interest in particular conflicts or topics are likely to take issue with some of the explanations provided for imperial policies and military campaigns in the historical sketch. This reader is, for instance, doubtful whether control of trade routes was ever a main motivation for wars between the empires, as the author suggests in a number of cases. A historical summary such as this, however, must necessarily simplify. Full references are given to the literature consulted, and the sketch fulfills its role as a narrative framework for the ensuing atlas.

While the historical part of the work is in most ways impressive, more effort and resources could have been invested in the maps. These are low-resolution and very basic, in grey, white and black, with sparse legends, thin lines, and arrows so small that directions are hard to discern. With the ready availability of sophisticated, but easy-to-use cartographic software this important work had deserved the use of colours, patterns and high-resolution basemaps which would have made it easier to read and use. It would also have been good with a map showing isohyets in this region spanning both deserts and rich agricultural land, and perhaps some depicting polities and population centres at different times.

That said and more importantly, this is a highly welcome publication that will fill functions both as a point of departure for research and studies and as a companion volume to the many scholarly studies and sourcebooks which exist within the field, but lack detailed maps.

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▷ SCHNEIDER, PIERRE: *Les éléphants de guerre dans l'Antiquité: IVe-Ier siècles avant J.-C.* Paris: Lemme edit, 2015. (Illustoria) 100 p., plates. ISBN 9782917575567.

This slim book of about 100 small pages – including a ‘lexicon’, a list of ancient authors, a brief bibliography and 16 pages of illustrations – published in the series *Illustoria* is an easily read presentation of a ‘new’ military weapon introduced

to the Greek and later Roman world after Alexander the Great's campaign against the Persian king. Alexander's army first encountered war elephants in the battle at Gaugamela in 331 BC. However, it was not until the battle against the Indian king Poros in 326 BC that the Macedonian army tasted the frightening experience of being attacked by a corps of elephants.

Schneider opens his book with a very useful and updated chapter on the different species of elephants, the main groups being the Indian and the African. The Indian elephant seems to have been already domesticated during the third millennium BC and is today known in at least three subspecies: the Indian, the Sri Lankan and the elephant of Sumatra. The African elephant may be divided into the large elephant of the savanna and the smaller forest elephant. Now extinct is a subspecies related to the forest elephant which lived in North Africa and which was to become the war elephant of the Carthaginians.

Chapters 3–5 follow the entry of the elephant into the armies of Alexander's successors and to the Romans and Carthaginians. Alexander brought back from India 200 elephants, which after his death were part of the armies of his successors. Later, Seleukos I, whom one of his rivals nicknamed *elephantarchos* (master of the elephants) during his campaign in northern India was given no less than 500 elephants.¹ Some of Alexander's elephants were brought back to Macedonia where not least king Pyrrhus of Epirus made use of them. But Europe was not their natural habitat and the elephants only remained in use for a fairly short span of time in Europe, their most lasting impression being left by Hannibal's elephants and their disastrous crossing of the Alps during the second Punic war (218–201 BC). The elephants of the Carthaginians were not of the Indian type but from Mauretania and Numidia.

Schneider makes very good use of quotations from ancient authors in these chapters, bringing both the shock that war elephants created in the first western armies to fight against them and the eagerness of the Hellenistic kings to obtain this new and very costly weapon for their armies alive to the reader. A number of descriptions of battles are included, among them the battle at Raphia (close to Gaza) between king Antiochos III with his Indian elephants and king Ptolemy IV with his Ethiopian elephants 22 June 217 BC. In chapter VI a more detailed presentation is given on how the elephants were trained and equipped, and how they fought in battle.

That the elephants made a deep impact on Hellenistic society is attested by the many coins depicting elephants, some of the most famous mentioned and depicted in Schneider's book. The earliest was the unusual decadrachm depicting a war elephant and a horse-rider, who is often identified as Alexander. The coin, known only in a few copies, is fairly primitive and was undoubtedly struck in the east, probably during the lifetime of Alexander. Schneider follows Frank Holt in that

1 Strab. 15.2.9.

the coins were struck in Bactria. At the time when Alexander's funeral procession reached Egypt, to where it had been driven from Babylon, his satrap Ptolemy struck a coin with a portrait of Alexander wearing an elephant scalp as headgear (Schneider fig. 10). A quite common type of coin of Seleucus I, who frequently used the elephant on his coins, shows Athena driving an elephant quadriga. A small terracotta figurine from Asia Minor depicts a war elephant in battle. Apart from the elephant driver a kind of tower on the back of the elephant protects two or three warriors with spears or bows and arrows. In this case the enemy already trampled underfoot by the elephant is a Gallic warrior recognizable by the oblong shield (fig. 15; see also fig. 20). Gallic tribes had entered Greece and plundered sanctuaries and spread terror everywhere. In Asia Minor a famous battle by a Hellenistic king against invading Gauls in 275 BC may be reflected in the small statuette.

From the end of the third century, war elephants were used only to a limited extent, eventually to disappear entirely by the late first century BC. They had proven very costly and not always very efficient. Actually, already in 312 BC (in a battle also fought at Gaza) two of Alexander's successors and most experienced generals had used a tactic where they had placed men to handle the spiked devices made of iron and connected by chains that they had prepared against the onslaught of the enemy's elephants, and ordered their light infantry of javelin throwers and slingers to shoot without stopping against the elephants and those seated on them.²

Though disappearing from the military sphere, the elephant never lost its fascination for the Roman world. It became a popular element in the amphitheatre, either fighting against other animals or against gladiators.

Schneider's small book provides both the professional historian and the amateur with an excellent presentation of a subject that still holds great fascination for the modern reader. One could wish it to be translated into other languages.

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2 Diod. 19.81.3.