Introduction

Against the backdrop of Archaic and Classical Greece (ninth to fourth centuries BCE) and the era of the Eastern Zhou (eighth to third centuries BCE), the cultural places and historical trajectories of Argead Macedon in northern Greece and Qin 秦, a far western state of the fragmented Zhou realm in what is now China, appear uniquely parallel. Both were culturally semi-outsiders, with no constant contemporary consensuses in transmitted sources on their belonging among the greater Greek/Zhou cultural worlds; changes in larger Greek and Zhou political constellations as well as Macedonian/Qin societal developments shifted perspectives on them and their identities. Both existed at the geographic periphery of their larger cultural worlds, before their military and political power exploded in the fourth century. Both would then forcibly unify their cultural spheres, dominating them for a few decades and then collapsing as quickly as they had arisen. The unifications brought about by these states cast them as culture brokers, if not culture unifiers, permanently changing the trajectory of Greek and Chinese histories. Their greatest leaders, Alexander III (the so-called Great) and Ying Zheng 嬴政, the First Emperor of Qin (also called the First Emperor of China itself), cast their own long shadows forward into history. However, the time in the limelight of the grand historical narrative was fleeting for Argead Macedon and Qin; despite their towering achievements and enduring legacies, many aspects of their histories and cultures remain unclear.

This book attempts to trace the interplay of politics and culture in the rises of Macedon and Qin. My efforts to this end take the form of a comparative analysis of historical developments of both societies. The diversity of the societies examined lends itself to a variety of questions. An analysis of such varied political entities as we will encounter in this book asks and answers a diverse set of questions: First, given their shared experience of political fragmentation, how structurally similar or different were ancient Greek and Zhou identities? Second, what are the major

concerns and dynamics of political society in Macedon and Qin? Despite experiencing remarkably parallel developments, what dynamics marked their similarity and what marked their differences, and what were the consequences of these differences? Third, how were these societies informed by the cultural realms that they inhabited, and how was this culturally informed influence impactful on real behaviors and activities? Fourth, at the individual level, what activities were undertaken by the Macedonians and Qin rulership in their brief periods of dominance? While all empires face similar operational challenges, what were the methods used to surmount these obstacles, and how were these methods culturally informed and path-dependent?

Exactly what Macedon and Qin were, where they came from, what made them distinct from their cultural cores, and what evidence attests to their activities will all be addressed. In the first chapter, I lay out the summary histories and cultural backgrounds of Macedon and Qin, highlighting their comparability. I analyze the central figure in Macedonian and Qin state structure in the second chapter: the sole ruler. In comparing the two modes of rulership, distinct ideologies of rule and their cultural origins are highlighted. The dynamics of society beyond the ruler is the topic of the third chapter, wherein I compare the social structuring of elites and masses as culturally informed itself and how cultural practices feed into political behaviors with lethal and trajectory-altering consequences. In the fourth chapter, I bring these varied analyses together into a larger comparison of several key aspects of the reigns of Philip II, Alexander III, and Ying Zheng. The motivations of these figures, their population resettlement policies, their attempts at self-divinization, and the assassination attempts against them are drawn together to illustrate how Greek and Zhou cultural patterns undergirded evolutionary trajectories that were often strategically or politically parallel but institutionally and culturally distinct. Before any of that, however, it is worth briefly examining the methodological approach I have taken in this book.

This book is a work of comparative history. Though often considered "modern" or "novel," comparative history is, paradoxically, a historiographical tradition stretching back into the 1800s, while also being a historiographical approach that has seen no formal attempt to describe its methods and approaches until very recently.[1] This is likely a result of two inescapable realities of historical comparisons observed by heads of contemporary comparative ancient history projects. The

[1] Lange 2013, 1–2, and especially 15–23. cf. Scheidel 2018, 40.

first of these is that, as Walter Scheidel put it, "comparison is best understood as a highly flexible approach or perspective rather than a formal method."[2] Accordingly, as Hans Beck and Griet Vankeerberghen observed, a comparative study must cast a wide net, for if "it gravitates too much toward the specifics of cultures, the comparison becomes treacherous. If there is too much generalization, the comparative approach is in danger of being meaningless," with no single approach being a definitively correct choice to resolve this tension.[3] Accordingly, the simplest way to describe the methodology of this approach is that it seeks to "compare cases to explore similarities and differences in an effort to highlight causal determinants."[4]

In the sciences, comparative studies are reliant on statistics and quantifiable datasets inapplicable to the evidence available for the study of the ancient world. Some recent comparative studies of ancient history have attempted to sidestep antiquity's restrictively poor datasets to engage in statistical analyses regardless, often by supplementing them with narrative analysis. Scheidel's comparison of the financial developments of early Rome and China and Nathan Rosenstein's comparative analysis of the Roman Republic and the American Confederacy mixed statistical and narrative analysis to reveal historical causation.[5] Nathan Rosenstein's *Rome at War* takes a different approach to statistical comparative analysis aimed at ancient history. Both cases nevertheless highlight the limitations of poor quantitative data for the study of antiquity. Such limitations can only ever be partially overcome by the adoption of other approaches to compensate for this weakness. This book engages in the method of narrative analysis (also known as "causal narrative").[6] In practice, this involves comparing two cases to better highlight multivariate differences between them, before then attempting to explain these differences through causal sequential analysis in a narrative form. One of the key advantages of this approach is that it allows for holistic comparisons, unrestricted by an overly specific focus on one aspect or variable. For example, one comparison highlights a difference. This highlighted difference is then explored by recourse to explaining what features are present or absent in the comparanda that explain the difference. The identified features and differences then become a factor by which to explain further differences noted.

The advantages of a comparative approach, and thus, why I have chosen to adopt this method, are clear: Comparative approaches highlight by contrasting. Obviously, this approach has its limitations, especially when

[2] Scheidel 2015, 4. [3] Beck and Vankeerberghen 2021, 1. [4] Lange 2013, 4.
[5] Scheidel 2009b; Rosenstein 2004, 98–101. [6] Lange 2013, 43–48 and 96.

applied improperly: a definition is not a list of what something is *not*. One cannot write a history by writing what did not occur. That said, when there are uncertain aspects or factors in a case, finding similarities and differences with other cases aids one in understanding its particularities. When two terms are similar, one finds the semantic nuance of each by differentiating them against each other. This study, though beginning in similarities and parallels between Macedon and Qin, functions by highlighting distinctions of Macedon and Qin, both blatant and veiled. By examination of one case and its source evidence, one learns to ask new questions of another case and its own body of evidence. By this method, bodies of historical evidence as thoroughly mined by centuries of academics as the historiographies of ancient Greece and early China can be made to yield new and fresh insights into such matters as the nature of Hellenic and early Chinese cultural identity, early Greek and Chinese warfare, the relation between political structures and attitudes to women, and the reigns of Philip II, Alexander III, and the First Emperor of Qin.[7] In sum, in the asking of such questions as comparison inspires, what is old is made new.

My approach has also taken some inspiration from the modeling framework of Historical Institutionalism, in employing comparative history to illustrate path-dependence. Simply put, this holds that timing, sequence, and path dependence (explained in the next paragraph) affect institutions which in turn shape sociopolitical and cultural changes and activities.[8] In any given development, multiple results and endpoints are possible but small events and institutional frameworks exert a strong impact on which endpoint is reached. Because scholarship employing this approach focuses on developments and events with high causal complexities, such scholarship increasingly relies on comparison to highlight the extremely interconnected and contextual nature of causation for any given historical outcome.[9]

"Path dependency" is a description for the tendency of events to depend on results, outcomes, or decisions made previously.[10] Douglas Puffert provided a particularly apt case study demonstrating the concept, noting that 58 percent of global rail tracks in 2000 CE had a gauge of 4 feet and 8.5 inches (4′8.5″; 1.435 m) despite its suboptimal functionality.[11] The use of

[7] And indeed, they have been thoroughly mined: Goldin 2023 has listed around 15,500 published works of Sinology in western languages as of October 2024; Scheidel 2009a, 5 n. 5 notes that in the modern era, 600 monographs and 13,000 articles have been produced just about Qin and Han, mostly in Chinese and Japanese. Scheidel, in the same note, points out that published works on Greco-Roman civilization passed 1,000,000 already in the 1990s.
[8] Hall and Taylor 1996, 937–938. [9] Pierson 1993.
[10] Liebowitz and Margolis 1999, 981–982 and 985. [11] Puffert 2002.

4′8.5″ in modern rails is, he argued, a path-dependent outcome of conditions within Britain and the rise of the British Empire, and explicable only through an understanding of the historical dynamics leading from one historical engineer's familiarity with mining carts, and not through claims of optimal outcomes. Often, however, there are more than a single major factor impacting an ultimate outcome. As a result of such complexity, it can be helpful to resort to comparative analyses to better understand complex interactions within cases by gaining an insight into how such interactions worked in other cases.

This book compares cultural-institutional dynamics to better understand both Macedon and Qin on their own terms by thorough examination of apparent historical similarities. By so doing, this work will illustrate the truth of G. E. R. Lloyd and Nathan Sivin's remark that the "chief prize" of comparative history is "a way out of parochialism,"[12] as by taking both of the cases together, one gains contextual insight into what is unique and what is common for both cases. In particular, I will outline and analyze political institutions by focusing on the interplay between the development of political institutions and cultural practices.

The difference between the two is not always clear: Among the Greeks, νόμος (nomos), had a semantic meaning of *both* "law" and "custom."[13] The weight of nomos was such that it was declared "lord of all" by Pindar.[14] No political institution operates in a cultural vacuum, and attempts to separate and define these institutions without reference to cultural context is misguided.[15] Therefore, this work conceives of the methodological term of "institution" as a unit of comparison as broadly possible. While I handle such matters as bureaucracy and kingship as institutions with their own dynamics and traditions, so too do I treat "institutions" such as attitudes towards cultural notions of divinity. "Culture" itself is no less slippery a concept. In this book, it refers in the widest possible frame, encompassing the agglomerated intersections of abstract belief, customary habit, and ideology that underlie human activity.[16]

The many aspects in which Macedon and Qin are similar are outlined in detail throughout this work, but it is worth summarizing here. The general

[12] Lloyd and Sivin 2002, 8. [13] Liddell and Scott 1940, "νόμος."
[14] Hdt. 3.38.4: "καὶ ὀρθῶς μοι δοκέει Πίνδαρος ποιῆσαι νόμον πάντων βασιλέα φήσας εἶναι (and it seems to me that Pindar said it right that custom is king of all)." cf. Pl. *Grg.* 484b.
[15] Not dissimilar to the failed efforts of the United States to transplant its own political institutions onto an alien culture in Afghanistan. Thankfully, academic misadventures, at least, rarely end in equivalent disaster but are no less damaged by shared misconceptions.
[16] Gusfield 2006.

comparability of Archaic and Classical Greece and Eastern Zhou has been defended already by Alexander Beecroft, pointing out the fundamental similarities of these two regions where emergent senses of cultural unity coexisted with intense political fragmentation.[17] This assessment correctly lays out the basic foundation of any historical comparison of Greece and China. From the collapse of the Western Zhou in 771 to the unification under Qin in 221, and from at least the Greek Archaic period of the seventh century through to the establishment of Macedonian hegemony under Philip II in 338, both worlds saw centuries of this fragmentary dynamic defining their political and cultural perspectives. Sino-Hellenic comparison more broadly is nothing new and has already been undertaken along a wide array of axes, emerging with philosophical comparisons in the last century, and now broadening to include cultural/historical comparisons in the last couple decades.[18]

Only one work precedes this book in addressing Macedon and Qin through a comparative lens. Barend Noordam has previously noted some fundamental similarities in the political activities of Macedon and Qin and defended their comparability along the following axes:[19] both polities emerged as small states in a cultural zone of larger states, arising after the breakdown of prior orders, and were treated as culturally peripheral by their in-group. They both were drawn into intensifying patterns of warfare starting in the fifth century, reforming themselves in the fourth century, and ultimately coming to dominate their cultural realms. To his list, I add that both polities (at least initially) arose with aristocratic clans prominent in power relations. Both entities saw sudden explosive territorial growth under singularly famous rulers, Alexander III and Ying Zheng, whose influence on not just Greek and early Chinese civilizations, but on Western and Eastern civilizational discourses has been lastingly profound.[20] These figures undertook a number of particular political actions which are themselves further comparable, such as attempts at self-divinization and mass population transfers. Both Macedon and Qin saw dramatic declines following the deaths of these figures: Macedon would endure another century and a half in a vastly diminished state (relative to Alexander III's realm); Qin collapsed and would never rise again. If two

[17] Beecroft 2010, 13–15; cf. Beecroft 2016.
[18] Tanner 2009; cf. Beecroft 2016. The dissertation this book emerged from includes a full survey of the development of Sino-Mediterranean comparison for those interested.
[19] Noordam 2010; cf. Kiser and Cai 2003, 513 n. 8; Grainger 2007, 102.
[20] Reception history is beyond the scope of this book; those interested should see Moore 2018 and Barbieri-Low 2022.

historical entities were ever commensurate enough for comparison, then most assuredly the state rises of Macedon and Qin are comparable, and along a large number of axes as well. This work assumes that this is a sufficient similarity to justify comparison, chiefly in order to find the unique cultural path-dependencies of these state rises, and therefore to highlight key aspects of Greek, Zhou, Macedonian, and Qin identities out of how they approached comparable circumstances.

Noordam concluded that "a more elaborate comparison [between Macedon and Qin]" than his would be "impossible."[21] This is true only if one does not engage in social and cultural analysis – limiting a study of Macedon and Qin only to frameworks recognized in the discourse of Political Science, depriving a scholar of both approaches and evidence which contextualize understanding. It was only over the decade following the publication of his paper that the cultural turn really arrived in the space of comparative antiquity, making the "impossible" possible. What follows demonstrates that there is a significant amount yet to be gained by a deeper comparison of Macedon and Qin.

[21] Noordam 2010, 28.

CHAPTER 1

Pioneer Kingdoms: The Histories of Macedon and Qin

In this chapter, Macedon and Qin are introduced, providing separate summary histories of these two polities, examining the differing types and quality of evidence for the study of each, the geographic and cultural location of these polities relative to their cores of their cultural networks, and arguing for the usefulness of the center–periphery axiom in the study of these entities. Lastly, the nature of the Macedonian and Qin identity is explored, suggesting that prior attempts to define them as Greek/Zhou or not Greek/Zhou miss the clearer dynamic that they are frontier cultures. Their significant divergences from Greek and Zhou norms are explained by the same factors that cause colonial and frontier societies throughout human history to "deviate" from norms of a core culture. I also point out the significant ways in which their identities seek to preserve earlier cultural modes.

Keywords: comparative history, Argead Macedon, Qin, mimicry, diaspora studies, identity, ethnicity

In order to compare the developments of complex historical entities such as Argead Macedon and Qin, one must first lay out their histories, side by side. A comparative study is not the place for an exhaustive history of Macedon or Qin; here it is chiefly important to present their histories in a manner that renders them approachable and meaningfully comparable. To do this, one requires a certain set of information; I lay out their geographies, the source evidence that underpins their study, their histories, and lastly, their parallel cultural contexts – before conceptualizing them in a comparative category I have labelled as "Pioneer Kingdoms."

Introducing Macedon and Qin

The territorial core of Macedon is located at the northeastern edge of the Greek peninsula.[1] The majority of what constituted ancient Macedon is today within the borders of the modern state of Greece. It is divided geographically into Upper and Lower Macedon. The hilly and mountainous region of Upper Macedon is located in Macedon's west, sited among the Pindus mountains, and was the homeland of the "Makedones."[2] Lower Macedon, the historical heartland of the Argead domain, is hemmed in on most sides by mountains: to the north are the Barnous and Babuna massifs, which stretch westwards into Thrace. The land route south was partially blocked by the Cambounian and Pierian mountains which stretch north to south and provided a kind of rugged route along the coast, across the Peneus river into the plains of Thessaly, and to the west was Upper Macedon. Nestled amidst these mountains were the alluvial plains of Pieria and Bottiaea, the fertile territorial core of Argead Macedon. With mixed flood-plains and marshes, it may well have been conducive to outbreaks of malaria.[3] Only the eastern borders of the area were not cut across by imposing mountain ranges, as a smaller range separates the plains of Macedon from the plains of Strymon, inhabited by Thracians, and Eugene Borza has argued for considering this area as "Eastern Macedonia."[4]

Lower Macedon would be the core of Argead power until the time of Alexander III. This plain was itself bordered by the Haliacmon and Axios rivers (see Map 2). The Ludias river flowed between the two, and the Peneus river separated Argead Macedon from Thessaly. The area borders the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea to its south, which in antiquity stretched 80 km further north than was the case now.[5] This meant that the capitals of Aegae and especially Pella were far closer to the sea in antiquity than their ruins are today (see Map 3). As a plain on the edge of the Greek world, it played the role of a node connecting north and south, east and west, bordering the Greek world to its south, and Illyrians, Thracians, and other non-Hellenic groups in other directions. In sum: it was geographically and culturally a frontier between Greece and the Balkans.[6] Carol Thomas has aptly described the area as functioning for much of its history as "a highway without any tolls."[7] Its physical environment and climate

[1] On whether "Macedon" primarily denotes political or territorial meaning, see Zahrnt 2002, 48–50, suggesting it as a territorially applied ethnonym like "Turkey" or "England."
[2] The term "Makedones," referring to Macedonians, itself is usually taken to mean something analogous to "Highlanders." On this see, Engels 2010, 89; Anson 1984; Edson 1970.
[3] On malaria in Classical Greece, see Borza 1995, 57–83. [4] Thomas 2010, 68–71; Borza 1990, 30.
[5] Eumorphopulos 1963, 269–271; Borza 1990, 43. [6] Borza 1990, 27. [7] Thomas 2010, 66.

differ dramatically from areas in Greece further south that gave rise to the polis as the basic sovereign political unit.

In terms of material resources, the region was heavily forested throughout the period covered in this book. While Greece had lost much of its forest cover around 2,000 BCE due to the need for timber and climatic obstacles to reforesting, this was not the case in Macedonia.[8] The lumber of Macedon was famous in antiquity as being particularly useful for warships, and it was a critical export for the Argead realm.[9] Beyond this, forests also were a habitat for larger animals, allowing an emphatic focus on hunting in Macedonian elite culture through to the time of Alexander III.[10] Its plains were better suited for cereal grains and horse rearing than in most regions of the Greek world but worse for growing olives.[11] The hills and mountains of Upper Macedon were particularly well suited for transhuman pastoralism, which persisted in that region until the twentieth century.[12] Lastly, the area was blessed with mineral deposits: copper, gold, and silver were plentiful, as was stone from the mountains, and there were small but important iron deposits as well.[13] Notably, however, many of the prime mining sites, and indeed much of Upper Macedon itself, was traditionally outside the stable control of the Argead clan ruling the plains of Lower Macedon; despite Macedonia's resource wealth, Macedon was unable to fully leverage its own resource advantages until late in its history.[14] Consequently, Macedon was for much of its history a poor and vulnerable polity merely occupying valuable real estate.

Borza rightly declared the Macedonians to be "among the silent people of the ancient Mediterranean basin."[15] Macedon did not produce historians until the late Classical period, all whose works are lost.[16] For accounts of most of Argead Macedonian history, we are entirely reliant on the views of Greek historians. Setting aside the reign of Alexander III (and to a lesser

[8] Hughes and Thirgood 1982, 66–67; McNeill 1992, 71; Thomas 2010, 71.
[9] Borza 1987, 32; Borza 1995, 37–40; Karathanasis 2019; Errington 1990, 7, notes that one Macedonian town was even called Xylopolis Ξυλόπολις (lit. "Timber-town").
[10] Thomas 2010, 71; Hammond 1972, 14–15.
[11] Errington 1990, 7; Borza 1990, 52–53 and n. 61, suggests that the Macedonians imported oil either from the Chalcidice or poleis further south, and/or relied on linseed oil as "a tolerable alternative to the olive," and even suggest that environmental conditions may have allowed the regular use of animal fat as a replacement for oil.
[12] Hammond 1983b, 36 and 44; Thomas 2010, 71; Borza 1990, 51.
[13] Thomas 2010, 72; Hammond 1972, 14; Errington 1990, 8; Borza 1990, 40–43.
[14] Hammond 1972, 16. [15] Borza 1999, 5.
[16] Rhodes 2010, 23. Indicative of this situation, Philip II's general Antipater wrote a history of Perdiccas III, titled τὰς Περδίκκου Πράξεις Ἰλλυρικάς (The Illyrian Deeds of Perdiccas), entirely lost. On this, see Engels and Buckler 2011's discussion of *BNJ* 114 T1.