



## The Hellenistic Age

By Peter Thonemann

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### The Hellenistic Age By Peter Thonemann

The three centuries which followed the conquests of Alexander are perhaps the most thrilling of all periods of ancient history. This was an age of cultural globalization: in the third century BC, a single language carried you from the Rhone to the Indus. A Celt from the lower Danube could serve in the mercenary army of a Macedonian king ruling in Egypt, and a Greek philosopher from Cyprus could compare the religions of the Brahmins and the Jews on the basis of first-hand knowledge of both. Kings from Sicily to Tajikistan struggled to meet the challenges of ruling multi-ethnic states, and Greek city-states came together under the earliest federal governments known to history. The scientists of Ptolemaic Alexandria measured the circumference of the earth, while pioneering Greek argonauts explored the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic coast of Africa.

Drawing on inscriptions, papyri, coinage, poetry, art, and archaeology Peter Thonemann opens up the history and culture of the vast Hellenistic world, from the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC) to the Roman conquest of the Ptolemaic kingdom (30 BC).

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## The Hellenistic Age By Peter Thonemann Bibliography

- Rank: #339072 in Books
- Brand: Peter Thonemann
- Published on: 2016-07-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.00" h x .70" w x 6.80" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 144 pages

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#### Review

"A fine entry-level study of the Hellenistic Age...Highly recommended."--*CHOICE*

"Its place is the eastern Mediterranean world, stretching from Greece to India, with a satellite civilization in Sicily and south Italy. A historian can deal with it as a study of multicultural social and religious structures,...as Thonemann (Wadham College, Oxford) has done in this excellent brief book, as a historical sketch followed by glimpses of various aspects of the period. Next comes Hellenistic science, with the polymath Eratosthenes as illustration. The book moves on to encounters on the boundaries with India, the Russian steppe, and Italy, where Herculaneum has yielded a Hellenistic-type grand house: the Villa of the Papyri. Finally, Thonemann picks Priene in Asia Minor as an example of the type of city that served as the instrument of assimilation, spreading Greek civilization across the Hellenistic world. A fine entry-level study of the Hellenistic Age." --J. A. S. Evans, *CHOICE*

"A concise and engaging introduction to the personalities, politics, and society of the Greek world after the death of Alexander."--Tor.com

"[THE HELLENISTIC AGE] weighs in at a slender 152 pages but nonetheless captures beautifully the landscape of the brave new world that followed Alexander... Mr. Thonemann's excitement over the ingenuity, broad reach and rapid evolution of Greek culture in this era is palpable, and infectious. 'The three centuries which followed the Macedonian conquest of Asia . . . are perhaps the most thrilling of all periods of ancient history,' he writes. One feels, after completing the whirlwind tour that this short book provides, that he might have left the word 'ancient' out of that assertion."--*The Wall Street Journal*

"[Peter Thonemann] takes an expansive view in his small but informative new book, *The Hellenistic Age*... He extends his reach far beyond ordinary histories to claim the essential Greekness, the fundamental Hellenisticity, of everything that happened in the Mediterranean-influenced world after Alexander."--*Washington Free Beacon*

"What Thonemann has managed to pack into this small book is impressive... [He] takes an effective approach by writing like a tour guide who is passionate about his subject, bringing meaningful highlights of the Hellenistic age into view and infecting the reader with greater enthusiasm to study this rich period of classical multiculturalism and innovation."--*Classical Journal*

## About the Author

**Peter Thonemann** teaches Greek and Roman history at Wadham College, Oxford. He is the author of *The Maeander Valley: A Historical Geography from Antiquity to Byzantium* (2011), the winner of the Anglo-Hellenic League's prestigious Runciman Prize 2012, and co-author (with Simon Price) of *The Birth of Classical Europe: A History from Troy to Augustine* (2010). His most recent book is an introduction to Hellenistic coinage, *The Hellenistic World: Using Coins as Sources* (2015). He writes regularly on all aspects of Greek and Roman history and culture for the *Times Literary Supplement*.

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