

Hunters, Heroes, Kings: The Frieze of Tomb II at Vergina, by Hallie M. Franks. Pp. x + 158, figs. 70, 1 col. fold-out. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton 2012. \$75.00. ISBN 978-0-87661-966-7.

With its stunning panoply of undisturbed grave goods and one of the most well preserved examples of Greek wall painting, Tomb II at Vergina easily ranks among the most sensational archaeological finds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet since its discovery in 1977, there has been little consensus regarding the identity of its occupants. Chronological refinement of the tomb's contents has fueled scholarship for over 30 years, in an attempt to settle the question of identity. During this time, interpretations of the frieze have figured prominently within the conversation, often becoming part of the debate over the identification of the deceased. Rather than entering this foray, which has become somewhat solidified into camps claiming Philip II or Philip III Arrhidaïos as the identity of the deceased male, Franks pursues a different goal in *Hunters, Heroes, Kings*, instead focusing on how the frieze helps us understand Macedonian society in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

This shifting of focus away from questions of historicity provides a refreshingly new perspective on what can be gained from the frieze. Franks contends that the hunting scene on the frieze is designed to define and perpetuate Macedonian royal self-image, while simultaneously negotiating heroic and local dynastic pasts and regional ideals of kingship. Although many have sought to draw connections between Near Eastern lion hunt iconography and the Vergina frieze, Franks argues that the iconographic content of Tomb II frieze has been part of the Macedonian visual tradition since the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. The Tomb II frieze thus maintains and

exemplifies a tradition connecting the tomb's occupants to the local dynastic past, while simultaneously looking back to the heroic world to establish links between Macedonian royalty and the world of Greek epic heroes.

In the first chapter, Franks begins by discussing Neo-Assyrian lion hunt reliefs and their potential connection to Hellenistic sarcophagi and mosaics with hunting themes, such as the so-called Alexander Sarcophagus from Sidon. After discussing the temporal connection between Alexander's conquest of Persia and the increase of lion hunt iconography that follows in Hellenistic art, Franks looks for earlier evidence for these subjects in the Macedonian world. She finds this connection in numismatic evidence showing both lion hunts and mounted horsemen on Macedonian and Thracian coinage from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E., indicating that the iconographic themes on the Tomb II frieze were already present in classical Macedonian and Northern Aegean contexts well before the creation of the frieze.

After arguing that lion hunt and mounted horseman iconography had been part of the royal Macedonian visual tradition for the better part of two centuries prior to the creation of the Tomb II frieze, Franks next turns to the role of the hunt in Greek literature, and particularly in the epic past. She explores group hunting episodes, such as those of Odysseus and Meleager, that illustrate the convention of heroes being accepted into adulthood through participation in group hunts. Franks draws interesting parallels between the Tomb II frieze and mythological group hunting scenes, where the emphasis lies on cohesion of the group and on the social world to which success in the hunt ultimately allows access. Given the substantial evidence linking Macedonian royalty and Hellenic heroes, such as Alexander the Great's

unsubtle aspirations to become another Achilles, and early claims that the Argead royal lineage descended from Herakles, Franks' contention that the frieze alludes to mythological hunting scenes is compelling and well argued.

The third topic of Franks' interpretation of the frieze is the landscape in which the hunt takes place. She pays particularly close attention to the sacral elements in the scene, such as the votive sash and tablet hanging on a tree, and a pillar topped with statues. She presents these sacral elements as evidence arguing against the possibility that the landscape represents a Persian *paradeisos* (big game park), because there is no precedent for their existence in literature or iconography concerned with *paradeisoi*. On the contrary, Franks argues that the sacral elements are specifically designed to situate the scene in the mythic past, again strengthening the case for association with the heroic world of Greece. She admits that the relationship between hunts and sacred land is ambiguous, but chooses to let cases such as Herakles' hunt for the Nemean Lion in Zeus' sacred grove stand as precedent for the Tomb II frieze.

Franks concludes with a chapter on Macedonian royal self-image, and how the Tomb II frieze functions as a paradigm for the perpetuation of this image. An appendix to the book provides an account of recent scholarship on various aspects of the debate regarding the date of Tomb II and the identification of its occupants, with up-to-date bibliography. One of the most striking features of the book is a beautiful fold-out artist's rendering of the painted frieze, juxtaposed below an image of the frieze as it appears today. The artist's rendering is an invaluable resource for readers as they work through Franks' analysis and interpretation of many details of the frieze. Attractive color photographs, frequently interspersed throughout the text, further enrich the work and enhance

Franks' interpretations and arguments. The quality and size of the photographs will also help the book appeal to non-specialist audiences.

Although the work is generally clear and well written, the layout of the first two chapters is somewhat difficult to follow. The chapter titles, "The Hunters" and "The Hunt", seem to indicate a dichotomy between agent and act, but the chapter subtitles do not follow this dichotomy. Instead, agents and acts commingle throughout the chapter subtitles, rather than falling into the categories suggested by the titles. The content covered in each chapter is nevertheless well organized, but the chapter subtitles could provide a better indication of the chapter's content. Franks' discussion of the role of nudity within the frieze is also somewhat unclear. She does not propose a convincing explanation of why the two main characters in the frieze are clothed, while many, but not all, of the supporting characters are nude.

*Hunters, Heroes, Kings* is the third monograph in the ASCSA's Ancient Art and Architecture in Context series. The goal of the series is to combine archaeological and art historical approaches within a contextual framework, in order to realize a richer understanding of antiquity. Franks' work accomplishes this goal admirably. She presents a thoughtful interpretation of the Tomb II frieze, and demonstrates that there is more to be gained from the frieze than another contribution to the quest for identification of the tomb's occupants.

James Artz

Department of Classics  
SUNY at Buffalo