

## Foreword and Introduction

The eastern Mediterranean regions of the Levant, Cilicia, and Cyprus, which during the entire Iron Age were culturally closely connected, were all part of the Achaemenid Empire and subsequently conquered by Alexander the Great between 333 and 332 BC. With the dissolution of the Makedonian Empire after Alexander's death, this area was divided between the succeeding empires of the Seleukids and the Ptolemies, who continued to fight for supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean in the following two centuries.

The transition from the Achaemenid to the Hellenistic period brought many innovations. The Makedonian rulers founded new cities, brought Greek and Makedonian settlers, and introduced Greek as official language, thus making these regions part of the Hellenistic cultural *koiné*. Taking this as historical starting point, a clearly visible cultural break has to be expected. Yet in the context of material culture, this seems not always to be visible with the presumed clarity.

For our understanding of this transition, it is crucial to find out what exactly happened with the Makedonian conquest and the transition of power, and how it affected the population in the cities and the rural areas, their culture and their daily life. Therefore, archaeological sources give us the most reliable evidence. Ancient findings, objects, and images are the primary sources for the cultural, social, and economic history, and only through their analysis it is possible to find out, to what extent this transition in the ancient reality was the break that it is in our modern historical perception.

The symposium in Marburg, which the editor organised together with Zoi Kotitsa, therefore had the aim to discuss the problem of cultural continuity and discontinuity at the transition between these periods.

The contributions and discussions at the symposium were devoted to the questions,

- if and how this transition is visible in the archaeological documentation,
- if settlement patterns and archaeological finds testify to changes or continuity,
- which categories of artefacts reflect phenomena of continuity or change,
- if and how the transition between the periods influenced the relations between the three regions,
- which impact the transition had on production, consumption, and trade,
- if the transition changed cultural and social behaviour in these regions.

Apart from that the symposium aimed at bringing together scholars of different disciplines that usually tend to work separately. While the Achaemenid period, in the Levant equal to Iron Age III, is the object of Prehistoric, Near Eastern, or Biblical Archaeology, the Hellenistic period is studied by Classical Archaeology. Their view on the transition between these two periods thus is influenced by the epoch which is the focus of their respective archaeological disciplines, and therefore often incomplete or biased. The symposium was designed to create a forum for scholarly exchange between archaeologists from all of these disciplines in order to enable a comprehensive view of our chosen theme.

The call for papers received a broad response, so that in October 2017 we were able to unite in Marburg the 26 papers of scholars from nine countries, which also represented the variety of archaeological disciplines and the questions of the symposium. We were especially happy about the participation of many junior researchers. Our university provided us the senate's hall for the symposium.