

A PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS E-BOOK

# Wandering Greeks

The Ancient Greek Diaspora from the Age  
of Homer to the Death of Alexander the

Great

ROBERT GARLAND



PRINCETON

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to the Death of Alexander the Great*

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Summary: "Most classical authors and modern historians depict the ancient Greek world as essentially stable and even static, once the so-called colonization movement came to an end. But Robert Garland argues that the Greeks were highly mobile, that their movement was essential to the survival, success, and sheer sustainability of their society, and that this wandering became a defining characteristic of their culture. Addressing a neglected but essential subject, *Wandering Greeks* focuses on the diaspora of tens of thousands of people between about 700 and 325 BCE, demonstrating the degree to which Greeks were liable to be forced to leave their homes due to political upheaval, oppression, poverty, warfare, or simply a desire to better themselves. Attempting to enter into the mind-set of these wanderers, the book provides an insightful and sympathetic account of what it meant for ancient Greeks to part from everyone and everything they held dear, to start a new life elsewhere—or even to become homeless, living on the open road or on the high seas with no end to their journey in sight. Each chapter identifies a specific kind of "wanderer," including the overseas settler, the deportee, the evacuee, the asylum-seeker, the fugitive, the economic migrant, and the itinerant, and the book also addresses repatriation and the idea of the "portable polis." The result is a vivid and unique portrait of ancient Greece as a culture of displaced persons"—Provided by publisher.

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*for Paul with lasting affection*



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γαῖα δ' ἔτι ξυνή πάντων—  
Earth is common to all—

—HOM. *IL.* 15.193





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## PREFACE

To put things in a modern perspective: there are 42.5 million displaced persons in the world today. More people were displaced in 2012 than at any other time during the past decade. There are 12 million refugees, 3.2 million of whom are living in Africa. According to the United Nations' estimate, "Every year, more than 5 million people cross international borders to go and live in a developed country," while "the number of people who move to a developing nation or within their country is much greater" (*Human Development Report 2009*, 9). Some 2.5 million people are being trafficked around the world. There are a million asylum-seekers, 80 percent of them housed in developing states. They comprise the tortured, political dissidents, the starving poor, and oppressed religious and ethnic minorities. It has only been over the past century that the international community has attempted to regulate migration and to define those who should be accorded the special title of "refugees." An important step was the establishment in 1951 of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, initially intended to address the refugee problems consequent upon World War II.

In the ancient world, by contrast, displaced persons weren't even a statistic. Though a few migrant groups caught the headlines, often due to the Odyssean circuitousness of their wanderings, the majority disappeared without trace once they had severed ties with their homeland. Citing the numerous accounts of Greek heroes being driven into exile as the result of murder, jealousy, and other exigencies, Gilbert Murray (1934, 207) perceptively observed, "All Hellas was *anastatos*, driven by [*sic*] its home [by the] constant war paths and uprootings of peoples." This, as I shall seek to demonstrate, was no less true of Greece in



historical times.\* It is also the case that scholars have largely overlooked the scale of the humanitarian crises that regularly occurred consequent upon war, famine, and political upheaval—not that humanitarian crises that occurred thousands of years ago could be expected to stir much passion today. Many Greeks found themselves displaced and on the move, condemned to live out the rest of their lives in moldy shacks and frosty tents. This said, our sources tell us very little about refugees in particular and not much about migrants in general. Their existence, though widespread at all periods of history, receives but cursory mention and then only when it happens to alter the political landscape.

It has only been relatively recently that scholars have become interested in migrants, refugees, *Gastarbeiter*, asylum-seekers, and the urban homeless. Over the past twenty-five years, however, migration studies has become a burgeoning field of inquiry that incorporates a wide range of disciplines including demography, economics, geography, history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies. Those who work in migration studies are concerned not only with process but also with the personal experiences of migrants and refugees. Much of its focus, as well as its theoretical underpinning, however, lies outside the scope of the present investigation. Questions such as, “What is the desired relationship between refugees and asylum-seekers on the one hand, and human rights and domestic law on the other? How should one weigh the right of the state unilaterally to prevent potential immigrants from crossing its borders against the right of individuals to freedom of international movement? Should the economic and cultural gains of migration to society be prioritized before the strains that migration imposes on its social fabric?” have little or no relevance to the ancient world. Likewise concepts such as multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, globalism, and so on, which feature so prominently in discussions of contem-

\* For the meaning of *anastatos* in a migratory context, see Hansen and Nielsen (2004, 123). The instability of medieval, as well as ancient, communities has been emphasized by Osborne (1991, 139–67), here in the context of village life. Walzer (1981, 1–35), though dated, provides an excellent introduction to many issues relating to migration, particularly the human toll on both migrants and receiving community.

porary diasporas, cannot usefully be applied to the ancient world. Even the notion of a border as a (semi-)permanent marker of territory has to be revised when we think of the ancient world. Arguably a more appropriate concept is that of a frontier consisting of neutral territory, which was available for livestock grazing but not for settlement or agriculture (Diener and Hagen 2012, 29–30).

Interest in exilic literature in classical antiquity has been growing over the past half-century, concentrating primarily on the three most famous exiled Roman authors, Cicero, Ovid, and Seneca the Younger. More recently it has expanded to include Greek literature, a notable example being Jan Felix Gaertner's edited volume *Writing Exile: The Discourse of Displacement in Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond* (2007b). By contrast the investigation of diaspora as a historical phenomenon in the Greek (and Roman for that matter) world continues to be sparse, other than in the case of overseas settlements, where the emphasis is primarily on this phenomenon as a galvanizing force in Greek history. One of the first works to spotlight the refugee was Elemer Balogh's *Political Refugees in Ancient Greece: From the Period of the Tyrants to Alexander the Great* (1943). Balogh was motivated to undertake his study by the refugee crisis occasioned by World War I. Paul McKechnie's *Outsiders in the Greek Cities in the Fourth Century BC* (1989) first alerted scholars to the fact that "the description and analysis of Greek life as the life of an aggregation of city-states is in essence and origin the Greeks' own"—and he went on to examine the many groupings to whom that narrow self-definition did not apply. His primary focus was on large-scale population movement, but he also examined the condition of mercenaries, brigands, pirates, itinerant workers, and traders. Other scholars have illuminated individual topics covered in the present survey. Silvia Montiglio's *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture* (2005) demonstrates how wandering was conceptualized in literary and philosophical texts. "Colonization" in particular has generated intense interest. Recent pioneering work includes Robin Osborne's *Greece in the Making 1200–479 BC* (2nd ed., 2009) and Irad Malkin's *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (2011). Nancy Demand's *Urban Relocation in*

*Archaic and Classical Greece: Flight and Consolidation* (1990) emphasized the degree to which the Greeks envisioned the city-state as a transportable entity. Hans-Joachim Gehrke's *Stasis: Untersuchungen zu den inneren Kriegen in den griechischen Staaten des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (1985) pioneered the investigation of the political squabbles that frequently led to mass expulsion. The asylum-seeker has generated considerable interest particularly among German scholars, including Lienhard Delekat (*Katoche, Hierodulie und Adoptionsfreilassung*, 1964); Martin Dreher (*Das Antike Asyl. Kultische Grundlagen, rechtliche Ausgestaltung und politische Funktion*, 2003); and Ulrich Sinn (1990, 1993, and *ThesCRA III*, pp. 217–32). The importance of the economic migrant in Athenian society, first highlighted by Michel Clerc in *Les mèteques athéniens* (1893), was brought into sharper relief by David Whitehead's *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic* (1977) and Edward Cohen's *Athenian Nation* (2000). Sara Forsdyke's *Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy* (2005), though chiefly focused on Athenian democracy, demonstrates how political power in the Greek world was intimately connected with the power to drive one's opponents into exile. Finally, Mogens Hansen's and Thomas Nielsen's edited volume *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (2004) has been invaluable, both for its comprehensiveness and for its discussions of cities that experienced civil war, underwent wholesale enslavement, formed a synoecism, and so on.

The principal questions that have fueled my inquiry are “What did it mean in the Greek world to be a migrant, a refugee, a settler, an evacuee, a deportee, an asylum-seeker, and so on? What physical and psychological challenges did such people face? What was the human cost of unsettlement? What kind of interactions did migrants have with those whom they encountered abroad? What were the consequences of dislocation for their sense of belonging and identity?”—even though, given the nature of the sources, I have rarely been able to answer them adequately (see later, “Envoi”). That is in part because there was no particular interest in what we would call the “human interest story.”

I have subtitled this book “The Ancient Greek Diaspora from the Age of Homer to the Death of Alexander the Great” because “diaspora,” an ancient Greek word, best describes the multifarious types of movement

that I seek to investigate.\* The term is not, however, unproblematic, and its meaning has generated much debate among anthropologists, sociologists, cultural critics, geographers, environmental psychologists, political scientists, and literary theorists, to name but a few, all of whom are engaged in the relatively new field of diaspora studies. Primarily “diaspora” has been used to describe the mass movements that took place in the second half of the twentieth century, “particularly in reference to independence movements in formerly colonized areas, waves of refugees fleeing war-torn states, and fluxes of economic migration in the post–World War II era” (Brazier and Mannur 2003, 4). More recently, however, its usage has been widened to include “any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space” (Brubaker 2005, 3). It is thus “a universal nomenclature applicable to displaced peoples” (Barkan and Shelton 1998, 5). Another burgeoning field of multidisciplinary inquiry that has bearing on this investigation is border studies, which focuses on the importance of borders for social interaction, local identity, state sovereignty, and the exercise of power.

When I initially began my research, I intended to confine it to those who had been forcibly deprived of their homelands, their belongings, and their communities. It quickly became apparent, however, that the Greek refugee is not an isolatable category, since our sources often fail to give a precise explanation for population displacement. In addition, many of the individuals and groups who were exiled or who went into voluntary exile disappear from the record without trace, once mention has been made of their departure. There are other difficulties. We do not know what percentage of Athens’s large metic—that is, long-term resident—population comprised economic migrants who were seeking

\* The verb *diaspeirō* is first used in Pl. *Laws* 3.699d. The earliest occurrence of the noun *diaspora*, “that which is sown or scattered across,” occurs in the Book of Deuteronomy (Septuagint, third century BCE), where the Lord warns the Hebrews that if they do not hearken to him, they “will be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth” (28.25). “Diaspora” later came to refer specifically to the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem after the destruction of the Second Temple in 586 BCE. It first entered the English language in 1876. For a condensed history of human migration, see Goldin, Cameron, and Balarajan (2011, 11–38).

a better life, and what percentage was driven abroad by compulsion, though their circumstances and motivation would have been very different from one another. Last but by no means least, Greek uses the same word to describe both an exile and a refugee (see appendix A).

It follows that the subject of this inquiry, *tout court*, may be defined as the dispersal, removal, and relocation of the Greeks, whether in groups or singly, either by choice or by compulsion, in the period from ca. 800 to the death of Alexander the Great in 323. Because of the difficulty in drawing hard and fast distinctions within the Greek diaspora, my chapters cannot be self-contained. I have simply done the best I can to organize the testimonia comprehensibly. The fact is that it is often impossible to distinguish the asylum-seeker from the fugitive, the evacuee from the deportee, or the economic migrant from the itinerant. One might justifiably claim from this that it is impossible to have an encounter with the Greek migrant. While respecting that opinion, I have done my level best to force one.

This investigation has been a long time in the conception and gestation. About a decade ago Paul Cartledge suggested that I might write a book on refugees, and although the finished product is less circumscribed than I had originally intended, I owe the initial inspiration to him. Paul had traveled back and knew what I had overlooked. He also painstakingly read the manuscript and corrected countless inaccuracies and infelicities, though the book has gone some distance since then and all the remaining errors and imprecisions are mine. So I would like to take this opportunity yet again to express my deep and abiding gratitude for his unfailing encouragement and incomparable friendship.

I owe an equal debt of inspiration to Vergil. The *Aeneid*, through its empathetic depiction of a man who is *profugus fato* (a refugee by fate), has provided us with an unparalleled resource for exploring the mental world of those who experienced deracination and did their best to live out its consequences. No Greek text comes close in explicating and laying bare the barrage of fears and false hopes that a person seeking a new homeland experienced day after endless day. In short, the *Aeneid* helped

me to appreciate the predicament of those who lived in a world that was, almost by definition, perpetually *anastatos*.\*

I am most grateful to Rob Tempio and to all the editorial staff at Princeton University Press, and to the anonymous Press readers for their invaluable suggestions. My research was greatly facilitated by a stipend attached to the Roy D. and Margaret B. Wooster chair of the Classics. David Whitehead expertly read at short notice chapters 9 and 10. I should like to express my appreciation to the Research Council at Colgate University for covering the cost of the maps and illustrations. My thanks go to Michael Holobowsky for drawing the maps, and to Andy Daddio for photographing the coins. Mick Jagger and my son, Richard Garland, have been an invaluable strengthening presence throughout the long journey of this book. My friends Peter Balakian and John Naughton and my daughter, Ling Ling, have been constantly at my side.

\* Livy, too, in his early books consistently emphasizes the fact that Rome's growth owed everything to transfers of peoples. The abduction of the Sabine women is merely the most celebrated instance of this phenomenon (1.9).



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## WANDERING GREEKS



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