

Francesca Fariello, Luigi Gallo, *Alessandro Magno eroe dei due mondi. La storia, le fonti, l'archeologia e il mito*, Le Monnier Università, Milano 2023, 225 pp., 38 figs., 4 maps; ISBN 978-88-00-75199-5

Every year, at least several books and dozens of articles are published on Alexander the Great, the history of his conquests and their civilizational consequences, as well as the presence of his figure in the scholarly and popular traditions of various cultural spheres. Among these publications, alongside strictly academic works, there are also those addressed to a wider readership, who, through them, may gain knowledge about Alexander the Great, his era, and his achievements. The work by F. Fariello and L. Gallo—scholars affiliated with the Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”—belongs to this latter category. As the authors note in their preface (pp. vii–viii), the book is intended for students and all readers interested in the Macedonian ruler.

The book consists of six chapters, the first three written by L. Gallo and the remaining ones by F. Fariello. In the first chapter, *La vicenda storica* (pp. 1–58), L. Gallo provides a concise biography of Alexander the Great, with the main part devoted to the king’s campaign against the Achaemenid Empire. The second chapter, *La tradizione letteraria* (pp. 59–73), characterizes the historical works of ancient authors who described Alexander’s deeds. The author discusses both those that have been lost and those that survive. He also devotes special attention to literary works portraying Alexander from antiquity through the Middle Ages. The next chapter, *La documentazione epigrafica* (pp. 74–88), is dedicated to Greek and Oriental epigraphic sources. For the former, in addition to a brief characterization, L. Gallo presents about a dozen of the most interesting epigraphic documents from the period, translated into Italian (pp. 78–86). This allows students and general readers alike to familiarize themselves with their content and to sense the atmosphere of the times and circumstances in which they were produced. The discussion of Oriental sources is brief, limited to several types of Babylonian cuneiform documents and a collection of Persian Aramaic texts from Bactria.

An important testimony to the life and activity of Alexander the Great is provided by his numerous representations in works of art and on coins minted during his reign and after his death (*L’immagine di Alessandro nelle evidenze archeologiche e numismatiche*, pp. 89–148). F. Fariello traces the development of portrait art in the Greek world prior to Alexander, emphasizing how the court art of Macedonian rulers in the fourth century BCE contributed to the emergence of a more naturalistic style of royal representation. She notes that the political function of the royal portrait significantly influenced both style and iconography. Depicting Alexander with attributes of certain deities served to emphasize his superhuman character, while the dissemination of his idealized image in art—particularly on coinage—helped spread his likeness among his subjects. The

author underscores that Alexander's portrait style had a profound impact on the subsequent representation of Hellenistic rulers.

The chapter *Fonti orientali* (pp. 149–180) examines the presence of Alexander the Great in the literature and traditions of Asian and African peoples. His figure appears not only in regions he conquered, but also in places he never reached, such as Mongolia and China. The following chapter, *Il mito di Alessandro fra passato, presente e futuro* (pp. 181–211), continues this theme, presenting the forms in which Alexander's figure has appeared in Western culture—from antiquity to the present day—in literature, art, film, and contemporary popular culture.

The joint work of F. Fariello and L. Gallo deserves recommendation to readers interested in the age of Alexander the Great. Despite its concise format and popular character, it presents not only the political and military dimensions of the era, but also the relevant sources and selected aspects of its cultural legacy. What distinguishes this book from many similar publications are the chapters devoted to the presence and reception of Alexander's figure across different cultural spheres and historical periods. Their content may serve as an inspiration for further, more in-depth research in this field.

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