

FREEMAN, PHILIP.

ALEXANDRE, O GRANDE. TRADUÇÃO DE MARÍLIA

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By the end of 2014, the Brazilian layman that entered a bookstore looking for works about Alexander would find many options: the classical *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* (1833), by Johann Gustav Droysen, translated to Portuguese in 2010, the short and useful *Alexandre le Grand* (1974) by the French Pierre Briant, first seen here in 2010, and *Alexander, the Great and the Hellenistic Age* (2007), proficient study by Peter Green, that arrived in Brazil in 2014, are some examples. Beyond these, it was also possible to find *Alexander, the Great*, by Phillip Freeman, published in 2011 and brought to Brazil in 2014 by Amarilys publishing house and translated by Marília Chaves and Marcia Men.

Freeman maintains a website that offers information about his works and academic trajectory. He graduated in the University of Texas and obtained his PhD in Harvard. He taught at the Universities of Boston, Washington and nowadays teaches at Luther College. Another works by Freeman are *St. Patrick of Ireland* (2004), *Julius Caesar* (2008) and others. The website also informs that the author got interested in the Classical Studies randomly, since his parents did not have any relation with the theme. Curious to note how historians like Paul Veyne also used this prerogative.

Dedicated to his students, the book begins with a time line that goes from the coronation of Cyrus (559 B.C.) to the death of Alexander (323 B.C.). It also has a chronology of the Persian and Macedonian kings. The reader will also find two fine, and very useful, maps: one of the Aegean World and the other of Alexander's Empire. Evoking the famous aphorism by Arrian – that claimed for readers to have his Alexander narrative in high regard even among others – Freeman highlights the

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motives that led him to write about Alexander, stating that he grew up fascinated by the life of this historical figure, and that he would like to write a historical biography accessible to all those who love History, but that might have never read a single book about the life of Alexander, neither have had much familiarity with the Ancient World. Although stating that he used “ancient and modern” sources, if you take a look at the bibliography, you will find that Freeman structured his work, almost entirely in texts from whom we call “Alexander Historians”: authors of Antiquity whose texts about the Macedonian survived until our days – Diodorus Siculus, Quintus Curtius, Pompeius Trogus/Justin, Plutarch and Arrian.

It is possible to state that Freeman’s goal in writing an enjoyable book is, indeed, fulfilled since the quality of the author’s narrative. The book has many excerpts of unquestionable aesthetics and can capture the attention of any reader - even the more demanding. The description of the Siege of Tyre e the travel to Siwa oasis are two profitable examples of Freeman’s writing skills. The desire of a *latu sensu* history desired by the author can possibly explain his choice to construct a linear narrative: from birth to death of Alexander; this path is broken only in some digressions and in the final chapter, that is dedicated to a concise appreciation of the forms that the figure of the conqueror were appraised in different contexts.

Titled “Macedonia”, the first chapter covers the period between the birth of Alexander and death of Philip II to the arising of the Macedonian realm and its complex relations with Greece. Well written and attractive, there is only one passage that brings some discomfort: when the author states that Lysimachus, one of Alexander’s preceptors, is not well known for caring about his personal hygiene. This assertive might have been made to create a modern garb to the work. In other moments, this will happen again and can cause some negative reactions in some readers.

“Greece” is the second chapter and it is focused in the murder of Philip, Alexander’s campaigns in Hellas after his father’s death, and the destruction of Thebes. “Asia” covers the rise of the Persian Empire, the battle of the Granicus and Alexander’s arrive to Gordium. This passage narrates the famous strife between the Persian and Macedonian troops, the Siege of Tyrus and Alexander’s arrival in Egypt, title of the following chapter. Gathering anecdotes from Herodotus and passages about the Macedonian expedition with dexterity and intelligence, Freeman’s work is praiseworthy.

The sixth chapter, “Mesopotamia”, processes the arriving of Alexander to Babylon until de Battle of Gaugamela. Freeman cites an ancient Babylon Chronicles that describes the upshot of the last faceoff between Alexander and Darius. “Persepolis” weaves the infamous burning of the Persian capitol that was ordered by the Macedonian conqueror, the betrayal and the death of Darius. While “Bactria” verses

about the rise of Bessus, the execution of Philotas, Parmenion and Clitus and the marriage of Alexander to Roxana, "India" is focused in narrating the disputes between the Macedonian military forces and the elephant troops commanded by Porus, the arguing that involved Alexander and Callisthenes and the refusal of the army to follow marching by the Ganges valley. The last but one chapter, "Babylon" narrates the painful return from the desert of Gedrosia, the riot of Opis and the death of Hephaestion and Alexander.

The final pages discourse synthetically about the succession of Empire after Alexander's bereavement. Freeman also discusses some of the forms of appropriation of the Macedonian figure in Persian poetry, Jewish tradition or in the medieval period. It is a chapter of great value for studies and, in possible further new editions; it should be more explored and expanded.

The book is finished with a useful glossary since the frequent repetition of names between Persians and Greeks, making it easy for the reader to identify the characters along the narrative. Freeman also makes a bibliographic comment that discusses the complexion relation between Alexander's historians and their sources. But the author carries clichés that have been questioned by other for a while. Stating in the 21st century that Arrian is a "equalized" author (2014: 368) in contrast of a "highly rhetorical" Quintus Curtius Rufus (2014: 341) can bother the connoisseurs of the historiography about Alexander produced in the last 30 years. Regarding modern sources, it causes great surprise that there are no references to the renowned work by Johann Gustav Droysen dated 1833.

In the middle of the book, Freeman included a section of pictures: Mount Olympus, the graves of Phillip II and Cirus, the palace of Persepolis, the mosaic of Alexander and some coins. Although the illustrations are not credited, it is possible to infer that they were taken by Freeman's wife, Alison, who he calls "my favorite photographer" (2014: 20).

In a nutshell, *Alexander, the Great*, pleases by its careful narrative and the author's ability in describing with extraordinary beauty even the most known episodes of Alexander's career. Reading should be done with some caution especially in the points stressed in this review, but it is certainly a profitable and enjoyable book for who is interested in an introduction work about Alexander wrote with great and admirable passion.

