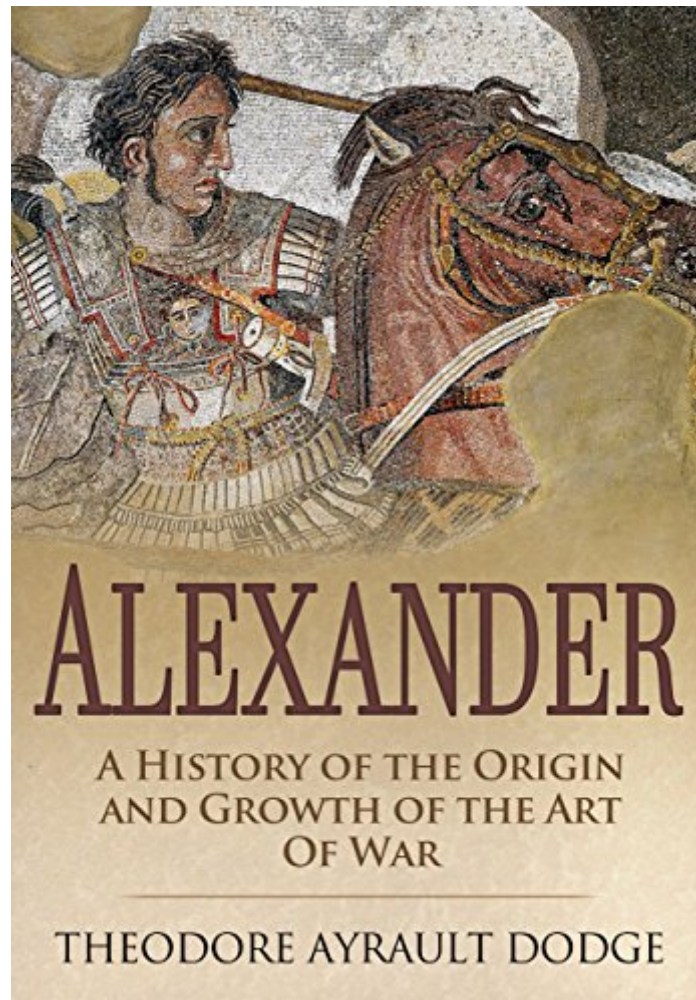


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Alexander: A History Of The Origin And Growth Of The Art Of War



Synopsis

Alexander is a classic and timeless account of the life and battles of one of the greatest military commanders the world has ever seen. Inheriting the kingdom of Macedonia when he was just 20, Alexander the Great went on to command his country's most successful army conquering most of the known world: Greece, Asia Minor, the Near East, Egypt, the lands of the Fertile Crescent, and on into what we now know as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. His small but revolutionary army was characterized by an unbreakable infantry phalanx and a shock cavalry force. Dodge, an experienced military historian, examines Alexander's expertise as a military strategist and an army commander, encapsulating all of the battles of his career. He also explores the effects of Alexander's military campaign upon the course of world history: his legacy spans thousands of years. Theodore Ayrault Dodge (May 28, 1842 – October 26, 1909) was an American officer and military historian. He fought as a Union officer in the American Civil War; as a writer, he was devoted to both the Civil War and the great generals of ancient and European history.

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Customer Reviews

This book is not a biography -- it is a military history of the art of war during ancient times, with Alexander the Great prominently featured. This volume is the first of five (the next three also published by Da Capo Press) that the author uses to describe and prescribe the art of war. In this inaugural book, Dodge effectively defines his terms, principally the term strategy. This is important because this theme is progressed through the times and actions of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, and Napoleon. Dodge's unique contribution to the subject comes from a few perspectives: first, Dodge was a soldier in the Union Army. His books were all published before the turn of the 20th century. He has often physically walked the terrain, studied the topography, and diligently compares the ancient accounts with common sense observation, with some surprising conclusions. Second, Dodge concentrates on what he is qualified to judge, military operations, tactics, leadership, and morale. He is not interested in court politics, who loved whom, or how much it cost to outfit an elephant for battle. Many times these aspects are presented, but the author makes pains to state his inability to interpret such events. What he does do is to bring to life the man, his armies, battles, and campaigns. Most of all, the reader gets the sense of the Great Captain's position in the military story of man. There are some weaknesses. There is a sense of "post holing" as Dodge attempts to cover 3000 years of military history and innovation. At times, the military aspects receives more attention than it should, and the books ends rather abruptly instead of leading into the next volume: Hannibal. With these weaknesses in mind the reader will have an enjoyable experience. Dodge's style is crisp, entertaining, humorous at times, and always provocative as he inevitably compares ancient military practices with those that he was familiar with, 19th century America. The whole series is worth its weight.

Its good to see the works of Dodge in print again. His six volumes chronicling the history and development of warfare were classics of their kind. Written in the 1880s, these books still have a lot to say about this subject. Granted some of the information on the organization and tactics of ancient armies may be somewhat dated. Also Dodge's somewhat jaundiced view toward Asian non-western armies may seem a bit out of date in these hyper-politically correct times, but his opinions are always insightful and interesting. What makes this history of Alexander different is the background development of ancient warfare leading up to his time, as well as the purely military analysis. The reader gets a first-rate discussion of military development and innovation before his time which places the Macedonian army and Alexander in greater perspective. You won't find this kind of depth in many other histories on Alexander. Other than JFC Fuller's analysis on Alexander's generalship, there are precious few works that devote much time to this most important aspect of his life.

Whatever else Alexander was, and he was, and remains many different things to different people, he was, first and foremost, a great military genius. This is what we should remember him most for. Many more recent works often forget this important aspect, and place too much emphasis on his character. Many biographers try to read too much into his actions, and have their own agendas to pursue in discussing Alexander's actions. This must have been so in Dodge's day as well as he often comments on this tendency. One of the great things about Dodge is his often candid and frank observations. His writing style is also smooth and elegant. Too bad more historians today don't have this style of elegance anymore. Dodge avoids most of the controversial aspects surrounding Alexander's life, although he will often mention them in passing and offer a brief opinion. The reader is constantly reminded that this is a military analysis of the great Macedonian, not a biographical one. While Dodge's view is decidedly pro-Alexander, he does acknowledge some of the darker aspects of his character. The reader is left to make his own judgement about these matters. Like Arrian, Dodge tries to stick to the matter at hand, and throughout maintains a solid and consistent narrative. The maps and diagrams provided may seem inadequate by today's standards, but they are numerous and very helpful in trying to understand Alexander's battles and campaigns. More works on Alexander should have maps like this. Dodge provides a fine military narrative of Alexander. You won't find any mention of the deviant sides of his character, which is so popular today. For those aspects the reader should turn to the fanciful works of Mary Renault who freely discusses such things. Dodge's work is an excellent companion to any modern day biography of Alexander. You won't find any better discussion of the military aspects of his life than in these pages. Highly recommended for all interested in ancient warfare and the development of military conflict in general.

Theodore Dodge's publication *Alexander* chronicles the military history of the world from the early history of war. Dodge stresses the importance and value of military history and how it has been the base for strategy on the battlefield ever since military conflict has been recorded. Although the writing may be a little straight forward and boring at times, it is full of useful and interesting information.

Very entertaining, presents good level of detail while keeping the narrative moving along. Good insights into the character of Alexander.

Good but you have to get past the flowery praises to Alexander that are too frequent and serve only

as a distraction.

A great book about a really exceptional person. Dodge is a great military writer, and Alexander the Great is a suitable subject for his talents.

Incredible research and detail. Although written many years ago, the author is meticulous in his descriptions of all the major campaigns

the builder of a new society and world

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