

With Alexander in India and Central Asia: Moving East and Back to West. Claudia Antonetti and Paolo Biagi, eds. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017. 304 pp. (ISBN-13: 9781785705847)

The book is one of the most important recent works about Alexander's visit to the east, specifically on his visit to Central Asia and India (and back to the West). In fact, this edited volume by Claudia Antonetti and Paolo Biagi is a compilation of papers from the International Conference *Anabasi: Sulle orme di Alessandro dalla morte di Dario*, which was organized by Foscari University and held in Venice from October 16-17 and November 17-18, 2014. Moreover, the attendance at this particular conference of many distinguished scholars such as Prof. Marek J. Olbrycht from the University of Rzeszów in Poland is a firm manifestation of the quality of the compiled articles of this edited book.

Maybe on a humble note, the central message of this edited volume would be enhanced further by small modifications on the cover page design such as the inclusion of the image of Seleucus I as a rising ruler in the new Mesopotamian geopolitical arena.

The articles of the compendium have been arranged mostly chronically and geographically. The book moves from Mesopotamia to Iran, Central Asia and India. The papers start with Hellenism in Babylonia and the role of the Seleucids in promoting Hellenic culture. In that particular chapter, the author refers to Babylonian tablets and some Iranian inscriptions. Following this, the papers cover Pazyryk art and parts of Eurasia as well as the administrative, economic and political situation of the large area under Alexander and his expeditions.

Chapter two by V. Messina is not only a wonderful paper but also his methodology about the data can be a model for upcoming works. "Alexander le Grand and Les Russes" (in French, chapter five) is one of the interesting articles of the compendium, which is different from all the others. On Iran and Hellenism, Prof. Olbrycht shows new aspects of the Iranized policies of Alexander. In the case of India, the compendium is not rich (chapters 10-11), but the article "Uneasy Riders: With Alexander and Nearchus from Pattala to Rhambakia" focuses on it effectively.

However, there are some issues with the book. All the papers focus on Hellenic sources, i.e. coins and written and oral sources. This is a similar factor among all the authors. However, East and Central Asia and India were the main topics of the conference. There are no Eastern sources in the papers, e.g. Persian texts. Obviously, Persian and Arabo-Persian classical sources are later, but they have preserved important information about Alexander's emergence in the East, e.g. his visit to India and Central Asia (cf. Gardizi 2005; Ibn Nadim 2003; Maghdasi 2007; Shah-nama 2003; *Tarikh-e Tbarai* 1996). However, the authors do not appear to have trusted these sources, while some of them have referred to Achaemenid sources. Also, it is unclear what is meant by "Arab literature" (9). Most probably it means the correct terms "Persian and Arabo-Persian texts." In addition, in chapter one, the author refers to W.K. Loftus for Babylonian tablets (5) as well as generally mentioned Achaemenid sources (6). In fact, the author does not refer to the content of those sources to support his claim or suggest a new analysis. Despite archaeological evidence or texts (Hellenic), the authors refer to other sources very generally in the entire compendium.

Despite some flaws regarding the diversification of resources, this edited volume is a valuable addition regarding Alexander's Indian campaign and sheds further light on one of the least known aspects of this campaign. Most certainly, the twelve chapters of this edited volume would benefit academics as well as graduate students focusing on Alexander's Central Eurasian expedition.

References

- Al-Tabari, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr. 1996. *Tarikh-e Tabari (Tarikh-al-Rosol va-al-Moluk)* 5th Edition, i-xvi. Translated by A. Payandeh. Tehran.
- Firdowsi. 2003. *Shah-nama* Vol. i-ii. Tehran.
- Gardizi, Abd al-Hayy ibn Zakkak. 2006. *Zayn-al-Akbar*, edited by Rahimi Zadeh-Malek, Tehran.
- Ibn al-Nadim, Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Ishāq. 2003. *Al-Fihrist*. Translated by M.R. Tajadod. Tehran.
- Maghdasi, M. T. 2007. *Afarinesh va Tarikh (Creation and History)*, 2nd Edition, Vol. I-II., edited by M. R. Shafie Kadkani. Tehran.

Daryoosh Akbarzadeh
Research Institute of ICHTO, Iran