

The Legendary Alexander: Behind All the Success

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ABSTRACT

one of the legendary figures in ancient Greek and Roman history is Alexander. In this paper, the researcher analyzes his life, myths, define the factors of his success.

Keywords: *The Alexander, the Legendary, success*

1. INTRODUCTION

David Rockefeller once said, "I was born into wealth and there was nothing I can do about it. It was there like food and air" [1]. A person with the last name Rockefeller certainly could not have done too bad in life, just like the son of Philip the II - Alexander the Great – could not have been lame. Indeed, throughout his unprecedented military campaigns in Asia, he has suffered no losses and defeats while he has been entitled to a liberator, a Pharaoh, and even the King of Gods (Son of Amun). Alexander has one of the grandest ambitions ever, and just like his father once said: Macedonia is too small for him. Thus, he would later claim the vast lands from Egypt all the way to India, embarking on one of the most ambitious and successful military campaigns in history. In fact, he would not stop even after he reached the edge of the known world and would have gotten into Arabia and beyond if it was not for his untimely death at thirty-two years of age.

2. THE EARLY PERIOD OF ALEXANDER

Even though very few men in the course of history have ever reached the height of his achievements, it does not indicate that the credit was all his to take. To be fair, Alexander had unprecedented resources and opportunities to support him. Even though Alexander embraced a challenging journey and amounted to a level of success much more impressive than where he started, it must not be overlooked that just simply his royal pedigree and his noble birth already guarantees a status more supreme than most of the world. He had more access to resources and had conditions better than anyone else by taking advantage of his father's prowess. This is

the Alexander that we know – a king, a conqueror, a military prodigy, and the son of Philip II [2].

Alexander's success could not have been easily achieved without his father, since he has provided Alexander with the best resources and conditions possible, both direct and indirect. The help from his father ranged from mental to physical, from theoretical to material, and they would keep assisting him even after Philip is long gone. Specifically, it is reflected from his exclusive and prestigious education, the vast royal power of the throne, and the enormous success in military innovation.

To begin with, Alexander demonstrated outstanding qualities since he was a mere teenager, and this would be dramatically strengthened after Aristotle was assigned to personally tutor Alexander. He would become the stupor mundi of his time because his brilliance is deeply affected by Aristotle – an opportunity made possible by his father. Aristotle became his personal tutor when Alexander was fourteen, and Alexander learned as much as he could from this renowned polymath (along with teachers beforehand like Leonidas). Even though Aristotle may still have caused Alexander's death (rumored), he still benefited substantially from him. Aristotle imparted philosophy, medicine, politics, disputation and art for Alexander. Although Alexander discarded some of the philosophies of Aristotle, such as treating the conquered enemies as if they were plants or animals, the rest of the skills still remain incredibly valuable and practical. Furthermore, Aristotle would also annotate a copy of Homer's Iliad for Alexander, and he has been significantly affected by this book. This is one of the very few material items that he ever held dear, and he cherished it so much that he would even sleep with the book under his pillow (Rogers, 7) [3].



Figure 1 Alexander

3.THE INFLUENCE FACTORS

3.1.THE ILIAD

Alexander's influence by the Iliad (introduced by Aristotle) is one of great significance as well. The Iliad is a 24-book epic poem about the Trojan war that follows the Greek hero Achilles. "It not only provided a model of war and revenge against Asia; Alexander was deeply moved by the heroic example of his kinsman Achilles in the epic, as we can infer from Alexander's actions when he visited the site of Troy in the spring of 334" (Rogers, 7). This is reflected when Alexander reached Troy and poured libations for Athena and Zeus, raced naked with his fellow men and gifted his armor... While Homer's epic Iliad heavily affected how Alexander saw himself and the world, it also played a crucial role in how he ruled the largest empire known to man. For instance, the king

himself never allowed himself to watch his men fight, so he charged in the front line and fought ferociously instead. This corresponds to how Achilles always fought in battles for honor and pride; Achilles is also a formidable warrior, which Alexander sincerely respects and hence paralleled. However, it is indeed his father who have provided him with ample education, since most of the people back in ancient Macedonia are illiterate – tallying to the fact that the Greek city states considered them barbarians and thugs for a reason. Moreover, the Iliad is written in ancient Greek, so that there would be no way for any other person without access to high-quality education to read and understand this epic. Not only did he had such an exclusive access to these marvel resources, but he was also assisted by the great Aristotle while growing up. They served crucial roles for Alexander's education. The tutor Aristotle, the Iliad, as well as many other assets offered by Philip II made Alexander the "Great".

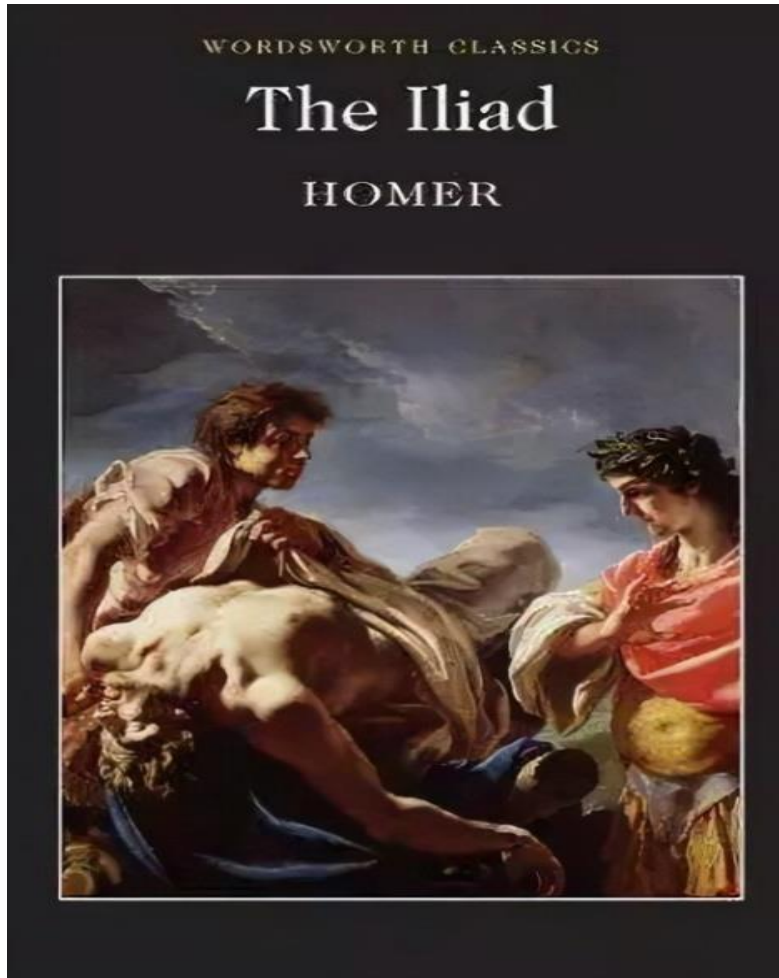


Figure 2 the Iliad

3.2. THE LOYAL SOLDIERS

Returning to Alexander, though, his journey is one of the most successful because he had loyal soldiers and professionals at his service, and he always successfully rallied support. Before Alexander had taken the torch of invading Asia from his father, Philip the II consolidated the groundwork for his son and would unite all the kingdoms together into one. In 338 BC at the battle of Chaeronea, Philip would eliminate the joint forces of Thebes and Athens, and as the supreme commander, he would form the Hellenic league a year later. Alexander would then take over the control for the league, gaining the support from all Greek nations neighboring Macedonia. This act unified all the troops and soldiers from the massive land of Greece (except for only Sparta) and enlisted them under the Macedonian rule for their military conquest against Persia. Alexander had a massive amount of support in terms of both diplomacy and military resources. Crushing rebellions and executing rivals seems was made relatively easy for Alexander, especially when he had all the support he could get. The league rallied thousands and thousands of soldiers under Macedonia rule, an event most key to his campaign [4].

The power of the throne is also illustrated from just the sheer amounts of wealth and power for Alexander. From a young age, Alexander would be exposed to military and combat, modelling after his father while learning aggressively. He had the chances to rule an entire kingdom after his father left for sieging the Byzantine empire when he was just a teenager. He had just about everything he needed, and there was rarely an instance when he lacked a condition needed to be king. Alexander was raised like a noble prince, and he learnt to fight, read and hunt.

On the other hand, many generals who served Alexander were the ones that served Philip, and their brilliance along with their contributions are especially important. Some of the generals include Parmenion, Antigenes and Eumenes etc. They range from generals to secretaries, and from commanders to archivists. They commanded huge armies, advised Alexander, and they would march with him side by side over the decade-long journey. Parmenion would command the left wing himself while Alexander did the right, reflecting the utter loyalty and trust with each other. In fact, Parmenion was so loyal to him that he would even execute his own son-in-law Attalus for being insubordinate to Alexander's succession. Even though Parmenion would eventually be

killed by the order of Alexander, he and many other generals had played crucial parts in all of Alexander's glorifying victories. Without their input, Alexander's glory would not have been possible. The troops that the generals so skillfully commanded also reflects other aspects in Alexander's advantages.

After Philip the II turned the entire Macedonian kingdom from the outcasts of Greece into a military paradise, Alexander had every opportunity to conquer and siege what was his to take. After the states Thebes and Sparta are fighting for the dominance of Greece due to the fall of Athens, Philip the II would become king, and he made Macedonia into the Greek powerhouse that Alexander lived in. As the historian Barry Strauss put it, "Macedon was a funny Greek state. It was always a bridesmaid and never a bride. It had lots of potential, both in manpower and natural resources, but it had never managed to get its acts together". Philip changed his kingdom into one of the most powerful ones the Greek world has ever seen by reinventing his army and advancing in technology and engineering, an asset utterly valuable to Alexander. Philip first made military and training into a full-time occupation, and then he developed new technologies of war with effective engineering. These new advancements in combat would affect how the battles are fought in the future, especially when commanded by Alexander. For instance, Philip's military and engineering prowess is accurately represented by the Phalanx, a rectangle formation of foot soldiers which was highly efficient, both in agility and aggression. The men were equipped with sarissas, 18-foot-long spikes that was incredibly heavy to maneuver, but very destructive when used right. The infantry also had hypapists (shield holders), hoplites, Agrianes, and archers etc. There were varieties of soldiers responsible on different departments. Philip also developed cavalries and other skirmishers, training their men rigorously. Even though Alexander was a brilliant commander and soldier, he benefited substantially from these armies because of how amazingly effective and diverse it is. While the phalanx is vulnerable in its flanks and rear, the army had hypapists and hoplites to guard them; Some of the infantries are not as well-equipped, so the phalanx would charge at the front to compensate for the loss of aggression. There are skirmishers, cavalries and many other soldiers who are highly mobile and can converge and disperse quickly, just like how he led the cavalries and some light infantry to charge across the river Granicus first so that he can buy time for the rest of the army like the phalanx to march. Furthermore, when he was outnumbered almost two to one at the battle of Issus, he could assist the phalanx with other soldiers when it was disordered, and he can also assist his generals by moving quadrants of soldiers around the battlefield like he did Parmenion. The military marvels achieved by his father was incredibly helpful, and they were the reasons were Alexander never lost a battle during his campaign.

Had his father not developed and achieved such military success, it will be very troublesome for Alexander to win the battles he had won, so Darius might have made the Macedonian army retreat in chariots [5].

4.CONCLUSION

The journey to his success is certainly not an easy one, but certainly made easy by his father. During the decade-long campaign he faced incredibly outnumbered battles, the betrayal of his own soldiers, unexpected revolts from neighboring kingdoms of Macedonia, as well as numerous deaths of his loved ones (assassinations, diseases...). However, the resources that he had access to is certainly not a mundane bunch: He had one of the smartest people – Aristotle – to tutor him personally. He learnt to read one of the most influential books, the Iliad, and modeled his entire moral values around it, all the while living in a royal family with a King as a father and a princess for a mother. From the earliest of ages, he would be exposed to his father's successful ruling strategies, whether if it is uniting the Greek empire into league Corinth or achieving a massive amount of success through engineering innovations of his troops. The troops would be passed down to Alexander, and he took the advantage of the unity of the soldiers with league Corinth, and the soldiers were equipped with cutting-edge technologies, being the most destructive war instruments. He marched down with them, being in the thick of the fighting, to exceed his father's most ambitious dreams.

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