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Philip II Of Macedonia: Greater Than Alexander

PHILIP II of MACEDONIA

Greater than Alexander

RICHARD A. GABRIEL



Synopsis

Philip II of Macedonia (382–336 BCE), unifier of Greece, author of Greece's first federal constitution, founder of the first territorial state with a centralized administrative structure in Europe, forger of the first Western national army, first great general of the Greek imperial age, strategic and tactical genius, and military reformer who revolutionized warfare in Greece and the West, was one of the greatest captains in the military history of the West. Philip prepared the ground, assembled the resources, conceived the strategic vision, and launched the first modern, tactically sophisticated and strategically capable army in Western military history, making the later victories of his son Alexander possible. Philip's death marked the passing of the classical age of Greek history and warfare and the beginning of its imperial age. To Philip belongs the title of the first great general of a new age of warfare in the West, an age that he initiated with his introduction of a new instrument of war, the Macedonian phalanx, and the tactical doctrines to ensure its success. As a practitioner of the political art, Philip also had no equal. In all these things, Philip exceeded Alexander's triumphs. This book establishes Philip's legitimate and deserved place in military history, which, until now, has been largely minimized in favor of his son by the classicist writers who have dominated the field of ancient biography. Richard Gabriel, renowned military historian, has given us the first military biography of Philip II of Macedonia.

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Customer Reviews

Gabriel has produced an excellent popular history of a subject that I think is all too often ignored in ancient history: the career of Philip II of Macedonia. Even since the time of his contemporaries, Philip's thunder had been stolen to a large extent by the vainglorious exploits of his son, Alexander. Yet in doing so, what gets ignored is the gross contrast between father and son. Philip created the Macedonian kingdom out of next to nothing; established and perfected the best army the ancient world had yet seen; and used that kingdom and its army to effectively unify the Greek world. Without those accomplishments, literally everything Alexander did would have been impossible. Furthermore, as Alexander's own career shows, he lacked the talents necessary to build states or innovate solutions to anything but battlefield problems. Alexander was probably a somewhat better general than his father, but Philip was in all other respects a vastly superior monarch. If Philip hadn't done the hard work, Alexander would have amounted to nothing. That is Gabriel's argument. He makes it persuasively and proves it in a well-written popular history. If you like swords and sandals non-fiction, buy this book. You'll love it.

The author has written a detailed book on the generalship of Phillip II of Macedonia whose genius is forgotten because of the accomplishments of his son Alexander. Phillip inherited a kingdom that although had a lot of potential was surrounded by dangerous neighbours and was on the verge of collapse. Using his diplomatic skills he managed to buy time to rebuild his army and in the process revolutionize warfare by creating the legendary combined arms force known as the Macedonian Phalanx. Using this army, his diplomatic skills, his intelligence services and soft power, Phillip was able to first consolidate Macedonia, expand a security buffer around his kingdom and then expand his control over the greek city states. In doing so he successfully united the warring city states for the first time in their history. What is incredible about Phillip's feats is that he never annihilated his enemies like some other generals but rather used his army to disarm them. He was also responsible for the plan to invade the persian empire and as the author convincingly demonstrates many of the strategies, means and tactics that Alexander used would not have been possible without Phillip. However, I disagree with the author that Phillip was the better of the two. Alexander was surely a great innovator as demonstrated by the siege of tyre, the mountain warfare campaigns he fought

in India, the fact that he was able to improvise against an army of elephants in India and the political strategy that he used to bring about the subjugation of the vast Persian Empire. It would be more accurate to say that Phillip was the equal of Alexander and that Alexander just picked up where his father left off.

I found this book to be both entertaining and informative. As the subtitle states "Greater Than Alexander" the book has a definite point of view, namely that Philip was greater than Alexander in that Alexander could never have done what he did without the army the Philip created. Not only did Philip create a new type of infantry unit, the Macedonian Phalanx, he also created a new type of cavalry and devised the tactics by which the two worked in harmony, creating a winning battle force. Philip is also credited with engineering innovations that allowed him to destroy city walls instead of having to engage in very long lasting sieges. He altered the supply system and the way in which his army operated in the field. I found the book well written and engaging, with an emphasis on military history and battle history. I recommend it to anyone interested in history, military history and the history of ancient Greece.

To know the son one should read about the father. This is a bio. that gives the reader insight into a man that devoted his life to his ambition to unite all Greek city states into one power to challenge the power of Persia. Mr. Gabriel reveals a man that was intelligent, tactical, and opportunistic in his philosophy in achieving his goal. He was a man who did not allow failure in one to affect the overall success in all. Alexander saw himself as a god, Phillip was a man who achieved more in his time, if one reads and sees that here was a person that overcame more than god. One can but reason that had Phillip had not been removed, perhaps history would refer to Phillip as the GREAT and Alexander would be a god.

I like this period in history and the author is detailed. Sometimes he seems to drone on and lose me a little by getting repetitive but it's definitely worth the read, esp if you like the subject matter.

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