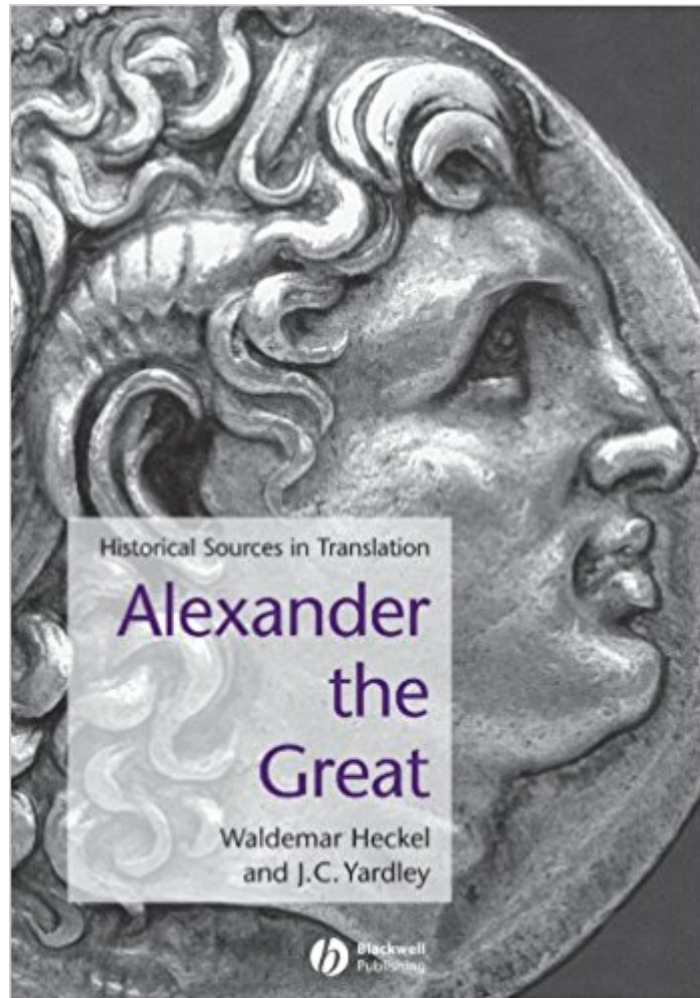




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# **Alexander The Great: Historical Sources In Translation**



## Synopsis

This source book presents new translations of the most important ancient writings on the life and legacy of Alexander the Great. Provides comprehensive coverage of Alexander, from his family background to his military conquests, death and legacy. Includes substantial extracts of texts written by historians, geographers, biographers and military writers. A general introduction and introductions to each chapter set the sources in context. Also includes a bibliography of modern works, visual sources and a map of Alexander's expedition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This volume provides an excellent selection of source materials with judicious commentary and up-to-date references. The elusive Alexander has never been so accessible to undergraduates. This volume seems destined to become a standard in our classrooms." Professor Frank Holt, University of Houston "This well-conceived and brilliantly executed book will be a boon to lecturers, teachers, and students of Alexander alike." Dr Pat Wheatley, University of Queensland "A review has to answer one simple question: is it advisable to buy this book? This time, the answer is an unqualified yes. Heckel and Yardley have collected many sources on the reign of Alexander and offer admirable translations and fine explanations...their book is to be recommended to anyone studying the reign of Alexander." Jona Lendering, Bryn Mawr Classical Review

At his death in 323 BC, Alexander the Great ruled an empire stretching from the Balkans to India, yet the best accounts we have of his life were written hundreds of years after his death. This book

presents new translations of the most important ancient writings on Alexander's life and legacy. Substantial extracts from Greek and Latin authors are arranged thematically and presented in such a way that the reader can compare different reports of the same events. They provide comprehensive coverage of Alexander, from his family background to his military conquests, death, and legacy. Accounts by historians are complemented by passages from geographers, biographers, and military writers. Waldemar Heckel, one of the foremost Alexander scholars in the world, provides an introduction and commentary outlining Alexander's career, and discussing the sources, both extant and lost. He also supplies a bibliography of the most significant modern works on Alexander. Visual evidence is included, and a map of Alexander's expedition guides readers through the military campaigns.

I have read extensively on Alexander the Great, as I lived 25 years of my life in the City that he created Alexandria Egypt. This book is a collection of ,Arrian, Justin, Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Aelian, Metz Epitome, Strabo the great Geographer. and many more. What makes this book different is how different writers have written about the same subjects about Alexander's life. They differ in many ways, and interpreted in many ways his life. The book also has excerpts of Alexander's original speeches to his Macedonian and Persian army. In this book there are names of the cities that Alexander founded, excerpts of his will, his final days, his final plans, and what was done about his final decisions. Although the book is intense it is very readable. If you really read this book you will see that Alexander indeed wanted to globalize the world. In doing so he had to conquer to be able to do it. Although I think that he was too anxious in doing it, he did bring many races together. Had he lived longer who knows whether he would have been able to conquer the Romans. Many Roman Emperors tried to copy him, from his hairstyle to his military genius. However we shall never know. Being an Italian and having read extensively and studied Roman History I am sure it would have been something to try and conquer Alexander, or he conquering the Romans. I enjoyed the book because it made me think more into depth in his strategies of war, and he as a person.

Historical overview would have been helpful.

Great source for studying Alexander the great!

This book is a true gem, not for those who are looking for a historical account of Alexander's life but for whoever just wants to grasp a moment in time. Heckel and Yardley have researched the many

sources from antiquity in order to present them to us in a handy succession of excerpts. What a job! Yet this is so terribly appealing if you are looking for that one date or that one event in Alexander's thrilling life. We know that official records were kept by his secretary, Eumenes of Cardia, while Alexander was still alive but only fragments of those records have survived and they seem to present a rather boring account of daily business with little military or political information. For that part we have to refer to Callisthenes of Olynthus, but one may wonder how much truth there is the propaganda he wrote to plead the Hellenistic cause and to please the Greeks at home. More realistic are probably the accounts of Nearchus, Alexander's general who commanded his fleet sailing from the Indus to Babylon, and those of Ptolemy, another of his generals who ruled over Egypt and lived to a blessed old age. But then there is Onesicritus of Astypalaea who made the voyage with Nearchus and had his own version of this experience. These men all wrote while Alexander was still alive or shortly thereafter. Better known is Cleitarchus, who made use of texts from both Onesicritus and Nearchus, but in the end it seems that most of the workable elements come from two men, Ptolemy and Aristobolus who told their version late in life - which makes us wonder how much they truly remember or believe to remember. In any case, we are left with five extant historians of Alexander which Heckel and Yardley use in their book. They are Diodorus Siculus, Curtius Rufus, Plutarch (later Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus), Arrian of Nicomedia and Justin (Marcus Junianus Justinus) who kind of summarized the work of Pompeius Trogus that is mostly lost. In addition, they also have searched for pertaining information among other authors. This list is a long one and I won't go into details but just name the sources: Aelian, Aristotle, Athenaeus of Naucratis, Cassius Clio, Cicero, Frontinus, Livy, Lucian, Pausanias, Pliny the Elder, Polyaeus, Polybius of Megalopolis, Stephanus of Byzantium, Strabo, Suetonius, and Valerius Maximus - i.e. geographers, tacticians, orators and rhetoricians. Additionally Heckel and Yardley consulted the Alexander Romance, The Metz and Heidelberg Epitomes, and the Itinerarium Alexandri (Itinerary of Alexander) of an unknown writer from about 340 AD. It is evident that both Professors did their homework! I can highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to investigate Alexander's character and exploits more in depth. It is such a handy and pleasant tool to work with!

I was very much looking forward to this Heckel/Yardley effort, but the actual book turned out to be something other than I was expecting. Unfortunately, although I suspect it will be extremely popular with undergraduates eager to find a source of citations for their term papers (and too lazy to do their own research), I'd have to say that it fell considerably short of my expectations. The good news is that the Heckel/Yardley team includes quite a number of passages from hitherto difficult-to-find

English versions of the Metz Epitome, the Itinerary of Alexander, the Heidelberg Epitome, and the Book of the Death of Alexander, all in new translations by the redoubtable Yardley. In addition they provide quotes from other sources, as well as from the five classic biographies, including those from Athanaeus, Cicero and so on. The bad news, from my perspective, begins with the fact that Heckel has chosen to include only representative quotes on each of his chosen topics and has omitted to add a list of the other source citations on those topics, which I think would have considerably increased the value of this book to scholars. Instead, he has clearly aimed this work at students. It is difficult to blame Heckel and Yardley for this decision, in view of the incredible amount of work they put into their 1997 Clarendon collaboration *Justin: Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, Vol. I, Books 11-12: Alexander the Great, only to find that it sold very few copies other than to libraries, in large part because the first printing was priced beyond the reach of any but dedicated scholars. With *Sources in Translation's* attractive price and broader appeal, they should finally see some decent income from their efforts - and that's a good thing, because, as a team, they have made some major contributions to modern Alexander scholarship and can be expected to make more in the near future. But, for serious students of Alexander, part of the problem with this book is exactly that it is aimed at those who are less so. Heckel's explanatory snippets are brief, and thus highly-compressed, and therefore necessarily something short of comprehensive. His footnotes are sparing and early on I found a cross-reference in the introduction that pointed to a passage from the Metz that does not actually appear to have made it into the published book - which I take as evidence of poor proofreading on the part of Heckel's editors. In sum, this is not the book I wish Heckel and Yardley had produced - one which would have collected only passages from sources other than the five mainstay biographies - and I don't think the book they did do is as useful to serious students of Alexander as that one would have been. At the same time, I think this book will be warmly welcomed by the undergraduate community - and I would be surprised if university-level classical history instructors are not inundated by term papers about Alexander (all of which will both be based on this book and parrot Heckel's explanations), from now until the end of time.

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