



Into the Land of Bones: Alexander the Great in Afghanistan

By Frank L. Holt

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The so-called first war of the twenty-first century actually began more than 2,300 years ago when Alexander the Great led his army into what is now a sprawling ruin in northern Afghanistan. Frank L. Holt vividly recounts Alexander's invasion of ancient Bactria, situating in a broader historical perspective America's war in Afghanistan.

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Editorial Review

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Explicitly echoing Afghanistan's tragic recent history, Holt explores the difficulties Alexander the Great encountered when he marched into the country, whose ancient name was Bactria. Like subsequent British, Russian, and, now, American and allied armies, the Macedonian wunderking discovered in 329 B.C.E. that invading was easier than conquering. Not persuaded by Alexander's apologists both ancient and modern, Holt narrates the campaign as an unredeeming exercise in pillage and massacre, with the twist that the Bactrians gave as good as they got: Alexander's armies received more damage invading Bactria than in overthrowing the Persian Empire. Alexander attempted to gain the upper hand through policies alternating scorched-earth campaigns with diplomacy, but the Bactrians would renege, revolt, or retreat to the mountains with frustrating regularity. Sound uncannily familiar? Holt's striking parallels between the warlords Alexander pursued and their modern Afghan avatars result in that rarity of history books: one immediately practical to current-day events. Surely, the journalists, humanitarian workers, and officials rotating into Afghanistan today would profit from Holt's insights. *Gilbert Taylor*

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Review

"Frank Holt...narrates [Alexander's] struggle in clear prose that makes this ancient campaign come alive and gives greater appreciation for the challenges that confront all counterinsurgents in Afghanistan—including the U.S. troops still fighting there more than a decade after 9/11."

(*Wall Street Journal* 2013-01-25)

From the Inside Flap

"*Into the Land of Bones* is the fullest narrative of Alexander's campaigns in Afghanistan available in English. It is informed by a comprehensive knowledge of the ancient sources, geography, and archaeology of Afghanistan. The work uses the history of Alexander to raise provocative questions about current affairs. Its long-term value, however, lies in its detailed and masterly account of Alexander's Bactrian campaigns in light of the history and geography of Afghanistan. This is one of the most important works on Alexander to appear in the last ten years."—Stanley Burstein, author of *Outpost of Hellenism: The Emergence of Heraclea on the Black Sea*

"The terrain, climate, and volatile socio-political milieu of Afghanistan have always been a logistical nightmare for invaders. Holt's vivid evocation of Alexander the Great's grueling, brutal, inconclusive war, and the telling parallels he draws with British, Soviet, and U.S. attempts to bludgeon the region into submission, make for grim reading."—Amelie Kuhrt, author of *The Ancient Near East, c.3000-330 BC*

Users Review

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Randy North:

As people who live in the modest era should be change about what going on or details even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era which can be always change and advance. Some of you maybe can

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