

Title: Myths as Facts: The Library of Alexandria and the Mirage of History
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This research intends to examine the impacts of the myths surrounding the Library of Alexandria by studying the credulity of primary sources, discussing the reasons behind the thriving of its myths, and the use of the library as a symbol. My main methodology is to analyze primary sources and case studies. The library is often portrayed as an important knowledge center of the West, and that its destruction lead to the inevitability of the Middle Ages. Yet detail studies disclose plenty of dubious aspects, such as the numerous suspects accused of its destruction, and the exaggerated number of books held in the library - the pseudonymous Aristeas reported 200,000 scrolls. Written records of the library, especially those regarding its destruction, are more similar to myths than historical facts. Myth and history both seek to explain the past, but in contrast to history, myth does not aiming for a truthful account. Current narratives of the library, such as Carl Sagan's Cosmos, do not reflect this reality, and the reasons for this continuous recounting of myth are inspected. What is common in all these myths is that the library became a symbol of Western intellectualism. This paper examines how this symbol was viewed differently in several arguments, and for which purpose it was used. The myths regarding the library strive to provide a narrative of a continued legacy of Western knowledge, yet to recognize the fallacy of the story allows historians to take a further step in aiming for truth and objectivity.

Works Cited

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