

Macedonians Impact on Eurasia

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Philip II developed the Macedonian art of war after he came to power in 359 B.C. This art of war allowed him to conquer the Greek city-states. His force was based on a combination of the phalanx with cavalry and light troops, which protected it from the flank attack and which could themselves easily develop an outflanking movement against the enemy. His son, Alexander, perfected this art of war and, in the course of his conquests, had a significant impact on Eurasia, not only through conquest but subsequently by trade and cultural interaction.

In 335 B.C., Alexander's army crossed the Hellespont with about 42,000 soldiers. After an initial victory against Persian forces at the Battle of Granicus, Alexander accepted the surrender of the Persian provincial capital and treasury of Sardis and proceeded down the Ionian coast. At Halicarnassus, Alexander successfully waged the first of many sieges, eventually forcing his opponents, the mercenary captain Memnon of Rhodes and the Persian satrap of Caria, Orontobates, to withdraw by sea. Alexander left Caria in the hands of Ada, who was ruler of Caria before being deposed by her brother Pixodarus. From Halicarnassus, Alexander proceeded into mountainous Lycia and the Pamphylian plain, asserting control over all coastal cities and denying them to his enemy. From Pamphylia onward, the coast held no major ports and so Alexander moved inland. At Termessus, Alexander humbled but did not storm the Pisidian city. Alexander's army crossed the Cilician Gates, met and defeated the main Persian army under the command of Darius III at the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C. As he proceeded down the Mediterranean coast; he took Tyre and Gaza after famous sieges.

In 332 B.C. - 331 B.C., Alexander was welcomed as a liberator in Egypt and was pronounced the son of Zeus by Egyptian priests of the god Ammon at the Oracle of the god at the Siwa Oasis in the Libyan Desert. He founded Alexandria in Egypt, which would become the prosperous capital of the Ptolemaic dynasty after his death. After the Macedonian conquest, the center of learning shifted from Greece to Alexandria. There, where Middle Eastern and Greek culture overlapped, Babylonian astronomy and Greek philosophy interacted to produce the sophisticated science of the Hellenistic Age.

Leaving Egypt, Alexander marched eastward into Assyria (now northern Iraq) and defeated Darius and a third Persian army at the Battle of Gaugamela. Darius was forced to flee the field after his charioteer was killed, and Alexander chased him as far as Arbela. While Darius fled over the mountains to Ecbatana (modern Hamadan), Alexander marched to Babylon. From Babylon, Alexander went to Susa, one of the Achaemenid capitals, and captured its treasury. Sending the bulk of his army to Persepolis, the Persian capital, by the Royal Road, Alexander stormed and captured the Persian Gates (in the modern Zagros Mountains), then sprinted for Persepolis before its treasury could be looted. Alexander allowed his forces to loot Persepolis.

He then set off in pursuit of Darius, who was kidnapped, and then murdered by followers of Bessus, his Bactrian satrap and kinsman. Bessus then declared himself Darius' successor as Artaxerxes V and retreated into Central Asia to launch a guerrilla campaign against Alexander. With the death of Darius, Alexander declared the war of vengeance over, and released his Greek and other allies from service in the League campaign (although he allowed those that wished to re-enlist as mercenaries in his imperial army). In 326 B.C. Alexander turned his attention to India. King Ambhi, ruler of Taxila, surrendered the city to Alexander. Many people had fled to a high fortress called Aornos. Alexander took Aornos by storm. Alexander fought an epic battle against Porus, a ruler of a region in the Punjab in the

Battle of Hydaspes in (326 B.C.). After attaining victory, Alexander made an alliance with Porus and appointed him as satrap of his own kingdom. Alexander continued on to conquer all the headwaters of the Indus River. Merged into the wider Hellenistic world, even though the territory conquered by Alexander lost their independence, they continued to be trading centers and became influenced by each other.

With Alexander's conquests, the problems of political jurisdiction weakened, and trade became still more open in the Mediterranean world. Alexander's empire did not hold together, but Greek civilization, after having penetrated the world of the western Mediterranean, now began to influence the ancient peoples of Egypt and the Middle East. Macedonian art and the Greek language spread far and wide by trade and interaction had a lasting impact on Eurasia.

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