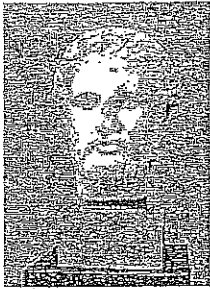


Alexander's Empire



(this bust of Alexander can be found at the Louvre in Paris)

Philip was succeeded in 336 B.C. by his 20-year-old son, Alexander. History knows him as Alexander the Great. The period from the beginning of his reign until the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 B.C. is called the Age of Alexander, or the Hellenistic Age. As you will see, the civilization of this period is different from that of early Greece. The Macedonians conquered far-off lands in Asia and the Middle East and brought Greek culture to these areas.

Alexander the Great

Alexander proved to be even more remarkable than his father. Although they were very much alike, the two could never agree and often quarreled bitterly. However, Philip did everything to give his son the best training and education possible. Alexander received his military training in the

Macedonian army. To train Alexander's mind, Philip sent for Aristotle, the greatest living Greek philosopher, to be his tutor. The fine education Alexander received made him a lifelong admirer of Greek culture.

When the time came for Alexander to command the army, he proved to be an even better general than his father. His campaigns are considered among the greatest in history. He was strong and brave to the point of rashness. His dramatic arts in battle so captured the imagination of his troops that they were willing to follow him anywhere.

Alexander began his military career by crushing rebellions in the Greek city-states and making himself master of Greece. Then he marched into Asia Minor and defeated the Persians, first at the battle of Granicus and a year later at Issus. Having conquered all of Asia Minor, Alexander then took Syria. Next he invaded Egypt, meeting almost no resistance. From Egypt he moved into Mesopotamia, defeating another Persian army at Gaugamela, and in 331 B.C. captured Babylon. Farther east he took control of the entire Persian Empire.

Alexander now ruled a huge territory, but he was still not satisfied. Beyond Persia lay India, the end of the world as it was then known to the people around the Mediterranean Sea. For four years he led his army eastward. He met little resistance in going as far as the Indus River. From there he wanted to march on to the Ganges River and so control the whole of the vast plain of northern India. But his long-suffering army had finally had enough fighting and forced him to turn around and go back.

At Babylon, in 323 B.C., Alexander became ill. In a few days he was dead of a fever at the age of 33. In 13 years he had conquered almost all of the world known to him.

Alexander's plan. Alexander the Great wanted to create a world empire with himself at the head. Even in his short lifetime he was able to change the world. It is difficult to imagine what he might have done had he lived to old age.

Alexander planned to create his united world empire in three ways. First, he wanted to found new cities and rebuild old ones as cultural centers of his empire. He actually established more than 70 such cities, many of them named Alexandria in

his honor. Groups of Greeks and Macedonians settled in each one. Alexandria, in Egypt, was founded by Alexander 2,300 years ago.

Alexander's second aim was to merge the Macedonians and the Persians into one ruling group to run his empire more efficiently. He married a Persian princess and made his generals do the same. But the Macedonians saw themselves as superior to all other Asians, and this aim of Alexander was frustrated.

Alexander's third goal was to be considered by his subjects a divine monarch—a god-king. By the end of his life, he was convinced that his real father was not Philip but the god Zeus-Ammon. He insisted that all of his subjects honor him as being part human and part divine. The Persians did not believe in god-kings, but the Egyptians did; and the Greeks thought that some heroes became gods.

Alexander's death in 323 B.C., however, brought his ambitious plans to an end. His mighty empire soon broke apart.

