

Greatest Soldier of All Time: A Look into the Life of Alexander the Great

Ancient Greece is considered to be the seat of Western civilization. It served as the breeding ground for the development of ideas of political liberty and democratic government. Appreciation and observation of certain standards for art, science, literature, and philosophy were actually rooted in ancient Greece (Cawthorne 23).

The very influential Greek civilization was not always a colourful one. It was also beset by conflicts between Greek city-states, causing them to be at war against each another. How these Greek city-states evolved into an empire is attributable to a person possessing nearly deity qualities—Alexander the Great (Alexander of Macedon) (Gergel 40).

The Makings of a Great Warrior

Indeed, the result of Alexander's conquests was no small feat. It is one of history's most treasured accounts of a military leader with unrivalled in military skills and brilliance. However, Alexander's seemingly innate qualities were not developed overnight. He laboured hard to become who he was in history (Roisman 45).

Alexander the Great honed his skills and enriched his intellect through the guidance of a respected great thinker in the person of Aristotle. He taught Alexander to develop a scientific curiosity for things. He moulded him to better understand and appreciate the Greek culture, which is evident in Alexander's love for the arts (Roisman 45).

Through Aristotle's influence, Alexander devoted a part of his life to acquiring knowledge and skills. He nourished his mind and spirit by viewing various works of art and by reading Greek classics. He absorbed philosophical ideas derived from written classics, and he dreamed of one day matching the skills of the heroes depicted in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Establishment of a Great Empire

Alexander of Macedon was born in 356 BC. Following the assassination of his father Philip in 336 BC, he became the ruler. This, undoubtedly, was the start of the regime of one of the greatest leaders in history (Howe and Harrer 79).

Alexander of Macedon was only 20 years old when he inherited the responsibility of governing his father's land and army. Unbeknownst to many, Alexander was set to accomplish things beyond the wildest imagination of many. Ancient Greece was destined to become recognised worldwide through the efforts of their ruler Alexander of Macedon (Lonsdale 52).

Like a true heir to his father's throne, Alexander shared the same vision for Greece. He acquired exceptional military skills, leadership ability, and an unparalleled desire to conquer the Persian Empire.

Alexander the Great made his mark in history as the greatest military leader ever to live. His unrivalled popularity was always the source of controversy at times and inspiration more often. He possessed unparalleled brilliance, which earned him the reputation of being a daring and intelligent ruler.

These, however, did not stop him from doing more. In 334 BC, he braved crossing Hellespont and freed the Greek colonies in Asia Minor. This resulted to one empire falling after the other. He eyed conquering Phoenicia and then Egypt, where he founded Alexandria. In 331 BC, he was successful in conquering Mesopotamia, which surrendered and submitted under his rule (Baldry 83).

Alexander's military prowess was remarkable. After defeating the King of Persia in battle, he pushed on to north-western India. He continued his invasion of empires, and evidently, he achieved his desired results. Between 334BC and 326 BC, Alexander, together with his army,

conquered the lands from Egypt to India without ever losing a single battle (De Santis 61; Lonsdale 54).

Death of Alexander the Great: An Empire Falls Apart

Alexander the Great's death in 323 BC was shrouded in mystery. He was almost 33 years of age when he passed away. His death had a tremendous impact on his empire because the brief period of unity that brought Greece and the Near East together had ended abruptly. As a result, his generals were unable to control the vast empire that Alexander built. This resulted to the separation of Alexander's empire into three kingdoms. It is interesting to note that one of his generals, Ptolemy, ruled Egypt while others settled in Asia and Macedonia.

Alexander's Life and Contributions: An Analysis

Alexander the Great lived a life destined for greatness. His brilliance involved more than his extraordinary military skill. However, despite all these, his life was not always smooth sailing. At one point, his right to inherit the throne of King Philip was questioned following King Philip's marriage to Cleopatra of Macedonia. This, however, did not deter him from fulfilling his destiny. As soon as he reconciled with his father, he assumed the role of the rightful heir to the throne. It was proven when King Philip died, and Alexander managed to rule over his father's loyal subjects and lead them to conquests that later on brought them glory and honour.

Alexander earned for the Greeks a reputation that is worth emulating. Gaining recognition as a superior army backed by a ruler whose brilliance is well-known, the Greeks conquered lands and empires to expand their influence. Alexander also built his empire and showed his power and influence throughout history. His desire to conquer Persia was no small feat. It enabled him to make his mark as a magnificent military leader and a brave one at that, too (Baldry 76).

As a ruler, Alexander the Great made various decisions and policies that merited recognition while some were controversial. An example would be the cultural influence of proskynesis. This is a Persian culture in which people are strongly encouraged to kiss the hands of others regarded as social superiors. The Greeks abhorred this practice, thinking that it is only meant for gods and goddesses, and by implementing it, Alexander was regarded as one with the gods (Renault 34).

Indeed, Alexander the Great raised his status as a ruler. By attaining what his father Philip failed to achieve, he created an image of himself that is nothing short of spectacular. By strategically conquering one empire after another, he has made both enemies and allies acknowledge the fact that he is an excellent military leader who bows down to no one.

The importance of Alexander the Great can be deeply felt long after he has gone. Although his empire has disintegrated, putting his efforts of unification to waste, his conquests had a lasting effect. This is because Alexander the Great was an agent of change. He has espoused ideals and beliefs that influenced the Greek's culture whether or not it was to their liking (Renault 34).

Regarded as a magnificent military leader, Alexander the Great was always one step ahead in many respects. He encouraged the Greek soldiers, merchants, and even government officials to settle in the conquered lands. This became the reason for the proliferation of the Greek culture long after his death. Through settling in the conquered lands, the Greeks, by having contacts between the peoples of the Near East, became agents of spreading the Greek culture. Ultimately, Greek culture influenced the conquered lands' inhabitants, and soon, the transfer and absorption of the Greek culture followed. The Greek language became widely used

in the Mediterranean. People belonging to the upper class stratum of society learned and appreciated the Greek literature, arts, ideas, and customs.

This can be considered as one of Alexander's most significant contributions—to be able to spread the Greek culture and assimilate it into the daily lives of the people living in the conquered lands. This symbolises the unending tale of his heroic acts and the legacy he so desired to leave.

During his conquests, Alexander the Great acquired a great deal of knowledge. His travels gave him an opportunity to learn about plants, animals, geography, astronomy, and philosophy. Many of the philosophers and scientists that accompanied him saw opportunities for a learning experience.

Alexander advocated educating one's self through discovery of principles and gathering knowledge (Green 27). It became more evident when he founded Alexandria. He invited outstanding scientists and scholars to work at the library of Alexandria. Many of the discoveries made still influence modern science.

Alexander the Great looked into the future and linked it to the past. This is exactly what he did when he encouraged the spread of the Greek culture. It marked the opening of a new stage of civilization more prominently termed as the Hellenistic Age.

The Hellenistic age saw the lessening of the discrimination between Greeks and Non-Greeks, which was also evident in the Hellenic age. This is where the recognition of Greek culture in the Mediterranean world started (Mercer 60).

The conquests of Alexander the Great were fruitful and introduced a lot of changes in the Greek civilization. The widespread acceptance of the Greek culture by conquered lands elevated Alexander the Great as a ruler, a military leader, and a brilliant king (Mercer 60).

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