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Research and Writing 5: What if?

If Alexander the Great had died in his first battle, the world would have been very different. The Age of Empires would have been impacted in many different ways, from the spread of Greek culture, to the balance of power between eastern and western empires, to even the development of western civilization. In this assignment, I will be exploring the potential implications of Alexander the Great's death on these three areas in particular.

When Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE, J.B. Bury noted that his death had a “profound influence” on the spread of Greek culture (Bury, 1900). Alexander had spent his life leading military campaigns that unified regions and allowed for the exchange of goods and ideas to occur. His death brought an big end to his conquests and left the lands that he had conquered without a single ruler or government to keep the peace. As a result, there was an increased risk of civil unrest and war, which slowerd the spread of Greek culture. Additionally, the lack of a single ruler mean that there was no single individual to promote the adoption of Greek culture and language. Consequently, the influence of Greek culture in the Middle East, India, and other

regions that had been conquered by Alexander was limited. While some parts of the world still adopted aspects of Greek culture, the process of cultural exchange was slowed considerably by the death of Alexander the Great.

The balance of power between the Eastern and Western Empires has changed significantly over the past few centuries. According to NJ Spykman (2017), the Eastern Empire was much stronger during the Middle Ages, with significantly more resources and a superior military. However, during the 16th and 17th centuries, the balance of power began to spread more. The Western Empire started to gain more power, due to its better and good political structures, economic development, and military technology. This shift of power was accelerated during the Industrial Revolution, as the West developed more advanced weapons and machines, which allowed them to overpower the Eastern Empire. In modern times, the balance of power has shifted even more, with the West having a much larger influence over the East, due to its superior military, economic, and technological capabilities.

The Hellenistic world had an immense impact on the development of Western civilization. According to I Malkin in his book, “the Hellenistic period was a critical juncture in the history of the Mediterranean world, where the influence of different cultures and religions intersected and clashed” (2011). This period saw the rise of a number of influential philosophical, religious, and cultural movements, creating a melting pot of ideas that would eventually shape the cultural and intellectual landscape of the West. Without the Hellenistic world, the West would not have been exposed to the ideas of Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, Platonism, and various forms of

religious syncretism. These ideas spread throughout the region, allowing them to become entrenched in the social and political structures of the West. Furthermore, the Hellenistic period was an important predecessor to the development of modern science, as it saw the emergence of the scientific method and the development of advanced mathematics. Without the Hellenistic world, these developments may never have taken place, leading to a much slower progress in the sciences in the West. In conclusion, the Hellenistic world had a profound impact on the development of Western civilization, and without it, the West would have been much poorer for it.

If Alexander the Great had died in his first battle, the Age of Empires would have undoubtedly been vastly different. Instability would have been more rampant, since without Alexander's rule, Persia and its surrounding territories would not have been unified and powerful, thus encumbering the region for years to come. Additionally, the cultural exchanges and advancements brought about by the formation of the Hellenistic World - such as advances in mathematics, philosophy and art - would not have occurred without Alexander, drastically weakening the development of the region. It is therefore evident that without the legacy of Alexander the Great, the Age of Empires would be a very different story.

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