

Zachary Wong

Dr. Lyndell O'Hara

HHS113

11 February 2023

### What if there was no Alexander?

Young Alexander surrounded by spartan forces was overwhelmed and slain in the battle, unable to complete his goal of uniting Greece. What would have happened if this was the case? How would the world during the Age of Empires look like? Or would there even be an "Age of Empires" at all? In this short essay, we shall explore three main ways the world in this period would have changed if not for the appearance of Alexander the Great. How or how not empires would form, how cultural influences would differ and how networks would or would not be created.

Empire creation through military conquest was not an invention of Alexander, the Assyrians, predecessors of the Persians, actually had this art figured out around 300 years prior. Hence, regional empires like Persian, Egyptian and Roman would still be established even without Alexander. Greece with her fragmented city-states would probably fail to hold back the Persian advance. Given its weak status during this period, Egypt would definitely fall to the Persians, hence making the Persian Empire the largest power in the stretching from Iran to modern-day Greece in the north and the Nile river in the south. The Roman Republic with its new philosophy in governing would eventually meet their Persian adversaries nearer to home soil than they would like, possibly in northern Thrace or even Dalmatia. In the eastern end of the Persian empire, the Maurya Empire would face different challenges during its establishment

without the opportunity to exploit the voids left behind by Alexander's conquests. Subsequently, Asoka's conversion would have a far lesser impact on the spread of Buddhism in the regions beyond.

Culturally, Hellenistic movements would not have taken place in the eastern Mediterranean region. Greek customs, values and language would not be spread throughout, rather Farsi, the Persian language, would be dominantly spoken in the middle east. This would have a significant impact on Biblical history and time periods leading up to the New Testament period and the spread of Christianity in subsequent centuries. The Maccabean revolts probably won't have taken place since Jews enjoyed some autonomy under the Persians. Without widespread usage of the Greek Language, the Gospels would probably be recorded in Persian, Aramic or Syraic languages, thus rendering Christianity an eastern religion. This religion would have a far lesser impact on the Roman empire but might spread eastward towards the fringes of the Persian empire, possibly infiltrating into the Indian subcontinent, since it lacked a strong Buddhist influence.

Finally, Trade networks on the other hand would remain more or less the same with or without Alexander. Although Alexander's conquests have expedited the creation of networks connecting the east to the west, the growth of these networks is more or less "organic", governed by geography other than the political situation, yet their importance might not be as significant as we see them today.

All in all, without Alexander the world as we know it would be very different. The Roman empire would not dominate, the Greek language would not be widely spoken and the Trade networks would not be as effective. A schism between East and West would be much more

prominent than that of the Greek East and Latin West gorge we witnessed within the Roman Empire. Finally, Christianity as we know it would probably not become a “Western” religion.

#### Sources

Morillo, Stephen. *Frameworks of World History*. New York City, Oxford UP, 2014.