

Invasion of Alexander the Great and the emergence of hybrid cultures in the east

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Alexander the Great became the master of the Achaemenid Empire after defeating Darius III in 331 BC. Then he secured the Achaemenid satrapies of Baktria and Sogdiana in Central Asia. In 327 BC Swat and Punjab were annexed to his empire. He had to abandon the expedition to further east and had to turn homewards when his army refused to proceed. While some of the soldiers remained and settled in India and in the other eastern territories having intermarried with the locals, some joined Alexander in his homeward journey. The Greeks who remained and settled along with the people in the newly founded cities, colonies and provinces led to stimulate the spread of Hellenism in the eastern territories. When Alexander died in 323 BC his empire was divided among his generals. When these generals began to consolidate their territories it further led to create new hybrid cultures (mixing Hellenic culture with the local cultures) and/or to consolidate the existing ones.

This study intends to critically examine the impact of the conquests of Alexander the Great in spreading Hellenism in the East, and how it led to the establishment of hybrid cultures that later swelled into separate political centers. In this process, first the conquests of Alexander, with reference to the establishment of settlements and provinces, and setting up of garrisons will be examined along with Alexander's setting up of new cities. Then, the focus will be shifted to examine the impact of Alexander's conquests on the East with attention to the setting up of hybrid cultures.

It can be concluded that the scant Hellenism in Asia gained a revival with a great dynamism due to the invasion of Alexander. Gandhara and Matura art and architecture are clear manifestations of hybrid cultures that emerged from the fine amalgamation of East and West.