

Examrace

Competitive Exams: The Conquest of Alexander

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In 331 BC, Alexander the Great of Macedon began one of the greatest conquests in human history. After conquering Egypt and defeating the Persian Empire Alexander had pushed his army to the very limits of the world as the Greeks knew it. But he wanted more; he saw that the world extended further. By conquering the ancient lands of the Mesopotamians, he came into contact with cultures to the east, such as Pakistan and India. After almost a millenium and a half, from the period of Harappa (2500 – 1750 BC) , to the end of the Brahmanic period, the peoples of India entered into no commerce or trade with the Mesopotamians. But starting around 700 BC, the Indians began to trade again with the Mesopotamian cities, and by the time of Alexander, that trade was dyanmic. Partly out of curiosity, and partly out of a desire to conquer the enitre world within the boundaries of the river Ocean (the Greeks believed that a great river, called Ocean, encircled all the land of the world) , Alexander and his army pushed east, through northern Iran and all the way to Pakistan and India. He had conquered Bactria at the foot of the western Himalayas, gained a huge Bactrian army, and married a Bactrian princess, Roxane. But when he tried to push on past Pakistan, his army grew tired, and he abandoned the eastward conquest in 327 BC.

Alexander only made it as far as the region of Gandhara, the plain which lies directly west of the Indus River. Alexander himself seems to have had literally no effect on Indian history, for he left as soon as he reached the Indus. Two important results, however, arose because of Alexander's conquests: First, from this point onwards Greek and Indian culture would intermix. But most importantly, the conquest of Alexander may have set the stage for the first great conqueror of Indian history, Chandragupta Maurya (reigned 321 – 297 BC) , who, shortly after Alexander left, united all the kingdoms of northern India into a single empire.

practices of the Harappans, so it is not possible to reconstruct Harappan religion through the religion of the Vedic peoples, that is, the Indo-Europeans who constructed the rudimentary Indian religion represented by the Vedas.

Right at the heart of the mystery, like a person speaking behind sound-proof glass, are the numerous writings on the artifacts that have been unearthed. Harappan writing was a pictographic script, or at least seems to be; as of yet, however, no one has figured out how to decipher it or even what language it might be rendering. The logical candidate is that the Harappans spoke a Dravidian language, but that conclusion, which may not be true, has not helped anybody decipher the script. Like the rest of Harappan civilization, the writing was lost to human memory after the disappearance of the Harappans.

And finally they disappeared. And they disappeared without a trace. Some believe that they were overrun by the war-like Aryans, the Indo-Europeans who, like a storm, rushed in from Euro-Asia and overran Persia and northern India. Some believe that the periodic and frequently destructive flooding of the Indus finally took its toll on the economic health of the civilization. It is possible that the periodic changes of course that the Indus undergoes also contributed to its decline. All we know is that somewhere between 1800 and 1700 BC, the Harappan cities and towns were abandoned and finally reclaimed by the rich soil they had sprung from:

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