

THE POLICY OF FUSION

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Next, Alexander's policy of the fusion of races. It was a great and courageous idea, which, as he planned it, failed. He might indeed fairly have supposed that his experiment in mixed marriages would be successful, for he only applied it to Asia and it only meant marriage between different branches of the white race. Greek blood had once been mixed with Anatolian with good results in Miletus and many other cities, as with Libyan (Berber) blood in Cyrene; Herodotus and Themistocles were half-breeds, while the intermarriage of Macedonian and Iranian was to produce that great organiser Antiochus I; but speaking broadly, the better-class Greeks and Macedonians now refused to cooperate.¹ And it is doubtful whether, even had he lived, he could have carried out his idea of a joint commonwealth; for his system of Iranian satraps had broken down before he died. Of eighteen appointed, two soon died, one retired, and two are not again heard of; but ten were either removed for incompetence or executed for murder of subjects or treason, and were replaced by Macedonians. The three who alone held office when Alexander died were doubtless good men; nevertheless Atropates certainly, and Oxyartes possibly,² ended by founding independent Iranian kingdoms, while from Phrataphernes' satrapy of Parthia-Hyrcania came later the main Iranian reaction. In fact, Alexander had come into conflict with the idea of nationality, which was exhibited, not merely in the national war fought by Sogdiana, but in the way in which, even during his lifetime, independent states like Cappadocia and Armenia under Iranian rulers arose along the undefined northern limits of his empire. But of course, owing to his death, his policy never had a fair trial. The Seleucid kings indeed, half Sogdian in blood, were a direct outcome of that policy, and they did carry out parts of it; they transferred Europeans to Asia, employed, though sparingly, Asiatics in high position, and produced a marvellous mixture of east and west. But it was not done on Alexander's lines or in his spirit; the Macedonian meant to be, and was, the dominant race. What Alexander did achieve was again done through the cities, both his own and those which he inspired Seleucus to found, and it was a great enough achievement; the cities radiated Greek culture throughout Asia till ultimately the bulk of the upper classes over considerable districts became partially hellenised, and Demetrius of Bactria led Greeks for a second time beyond the Hindu Kush, to succeed for a moment where Alexander had failed and rule northern India for a few years from Pataliputra to Kathiawar. What Alexander did succeed in ultimately giving to parts of western Asia was not political equality with Greece, but community of culture.

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The real impress that he left on the world was far different; for, whatever else he was, he was one of the supreme fertilising forces of history. He lifted the civilised world out of one groove and set it in another; he started a new epoch; nothing could again be as it had been. He greatly enlarged the bounds of knowledge and of human endeavour, and gave to Greek science and Greek civilisation a scope and an opportunity such as they had never yet possessed. Particularism was replaced by the idea of the 'inhabited world', the common possession of civilised men; trade and commerce were internationalised, and the 'inhabited world' bound together by a network both of new routes and cities, and of common interests. Greek culture, heretofore practically confined to Greeks, spread throughout that world; and for the use of its inhabitants, in place of the many dialects of Greece, there grew up the form of Greek known as the *koinē*, 'common speech'. The Greece that taught Rome was the Hellenistic world which Alexander made; the old Greece counted for little till modern scholars re-created Periclean Athens. So far as the modern world derives its civilisation from Greece, it largely owes it to Alexander that it had the opportunity. If he

could not fuse races, he transcended the national State; and to transcend national States meant to transcend national cults; men came to feel after the unity which must lie beneath the various religions. Outwardly, this unity was ultimately satisfied in the official worship of the Roman Emperor, which derived from the worship of Alexander after his death; but beside this external form there grew up in men's hearts the longing for a true spiritual unity. And it was Alexander who created the medium in which the idea, when it came, was to spread. For it was due to him that Greek civilisation penetrated western Asia; and even if much of the actual work was done by his successors, he broke the path; without him they would not have been. Consequently, when at last Christianity showed the way to that spiritual unity after which men were feeling, there was ready to hand a medium for the new religion to spread in, the common Hellenistic civilisation of the 'inhabited world'; without that, the conquests made by Christianity might have been as slow and difficult as they became when the bounds of that common civilisation were overpassed.

But if the things he did were great, one thing he dreamt was greater. We may put it that he found the ideal State of Aristotle, and substituted the ideal State of Zeno. It was not merely that he overthrew the narrow restraints of the former, and, in place of limiting men by their opportunity, created opportunities adequate for men in a world where none need be a pauper and restrictions on population were meaningless. Aristotle's State had still cared nothing for humanity outside its own borders; the stranger must still be a serf or an enemy. Alexander changed all that. When he declared that all men were alike sons of one Father, and when at Opis he prayed that Macedonians and Persians might be partners in the commonwealth and that the peoples of his world might live in harmony and in unity of heart and mind,³ he proclaimed for the first time the unity and brotherhood of mankind. Perhaps he gave no thought to the slave world – we do not know; but he, first of all men, was ready to transcend national differences, and to declare, as St Paul was to declare, that there was neither Greek nor barbarian. And the impulse of this mighty revelation was continued by men who did give some thought to the slave world; for Zeno, who treated his slave as himself, and Seneca, who called himself the fellow-slave of his slaves, would (though Alexander might not) have understood St Paul when he added 'there is neither bond nor free'. Before Alexander, men's dreams of the ideal state had still been based on class-rule and slavery; but after him comes Iambulus' great Sun-State, founded on brotherhood and the dignity of free labour. Above all, Alexander inspired Zeno's vision of a world in which all men should be members one of another, citizens of one State without distinction of race or institutions, subject only to and in harmony with the Common Law immanent in the Universe, and united in one social life not by compulsion but only by their own willing consent, or (as he put it) by Love. The splendour of this hopeless dream may remind us that not one but two of the great lines of social-political thought which until recently divided the world go back to Alexander of Macedon. For if, as many believe, there was a line of descent from his claim to divinity, through Roman Emperor and medieval Pope, to the great despotisms of yesterday, despotisms 'by the grace of God', there is certainly a line of descent from his prayer at Opis, through the Stoics and one portion of the Christian ideal, to that brotherhood of all men which was proclaimed, though only proclaimed, in the French Revolution. The torch Alexander lit for long only smouldered; perhaps it still only smoulders to-day; but it never has been, and never can be, quite put out.⁴

Notes

- 1 The attitude of the Greeks in Asia to mixed marriages is discussed, Tarn, *Bactria and India*, pp. 34–8.
- 2 A. de la Fuye, *Revue Numismatique*, 1910, pp. 281 sqq. (Now very doubtful; for a more probable suggestion of what happened to the Paropamisadae, see Tarn, *J.H.S.* LIX, 1939, p. 322, reviewing E. T. Newell, *The coinage of the Eastern Seleucid mints*.)
- 3 See App. 25, VI, [in Tarn] and pp. 116–17 ante.
- 4 I have left the latter part of this paragraph substantially as written in 1926. Since then we have seen new and monstrous births, and are still moving in a world not realised; and I do not know how to rewrite it.