

The Personality and Characteristics Conversion of Alexander the Great

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ABSTRACT

Alexander the Great, the legendary military leader, who has sophisticated blood lineage and belief, experienced a conversion in his personality during the expedition. This has resulted from different factors including family of origin and education environment. This time it mainly focuses on Alexander's visit to Siwah where he wondered to get the oracles and the motivation, which contributes to confirming how his worship towards the gods influenced his characteristics.

Keywords: *Alexander the Great, Personality, Ancient Greek history*

1. INTRODUCTION

Alexander the great is a very complicated character, which relates to his family background and legendary personal experiences. In his adolescence, he was the prince of Macedonia, whose parents, Philip and Olympias, are almost the most outstanding and effective leader in Greece history and the most formidable woman in the ancient world, who provide the distinctive blood lineage for him. Had been received instruction from Aristotle, the celebrated philosopher, Alexander became a well-educated young man. It seems that he behaved somewhat differently from other ordinary emperors, in which case, he was decisive, calm, wise, and brave in front of the dilemmas. At the same time, he respected the women, admired those who are faithful and courageous, and had the keen insight, which are the peculiarities of the achievers as well. Nevertheless, there was something

that happened in his later life. He had become arrogant, reckless, impulsive, and selfish. It appeared in the accuse complaint from Cleitus, "Yes, it was my cowardice that saved your life, you who call yourself the son of the gods, when you were turning your back to Spithridates' sword. And it is the blood of these Macedonians and their wounds which have made you so great that you disown your father Philip and claim to be the son of Ammon." [2] The young page, Curtius, also accused the guilt of Alexander which is the lawless killing of Philotas; the arbitrary execution of Parmenio and the other officers put to death at the time; the murder of Cleitus; the assumption of Persian dress; prostration; the heavy drinking; the drunken sleeps. [3, 4] When Alexander heard of the dissatisfaction from his citizens, he just killed them to vent his spleen instead of reflecting. It looks that he stuck the old path of most sovereigns. The turning point of all those changes is intrigued.



Figure 1.the photo of the Temple of the Oracle (Temple of Amun) at the Siwah Oasis in Egypt [1]

2.THE VISIT TO SIWAL AND THE REASONS

The starting point could be Alexander’s visit to Siwah. The location of this shrine is so remote, which is the westernmost oasis in Egypt and situated deep in the Libyan Desert [5], that Alexander needed to march westward 290 kilometers first, then turned southward 260 kilometers in that case[6]. It is extremely tricky for them to march in a nefud especially when the water had been run out. The account shows that the whole process took about 8 days during which the troop even had gotten lost for times. Therefore, the motivation for such an arduous journey seems thought-provoking. Firstly, it is proved that the Greeks-of course-including Alexander regarded Ammon as their Zeus, who is the god of the oracular shrine in Siwah. It is found that in a Greek city,

Cyrene, the coins were curved with Ammon’s head. The god also seems to have had a temple in Athens before 332 B.C., where a sacrifice was made to Ammon by the Athenian generals in 333 B.C..[7] Secondly, the intention to have this visit could be contributed to Alexander’s worship towards the ancient heroes. He thought he is the descendant of Perseus and Heracles, in this way, he would like to trace his birth back to Ammon as they did. [8] Furthermore, he wondered to question the oracle about his birth, [9] since Olympias had told him that she dreamt a thunderbolt struck her womb and Philip once had seen a serpent near his wife at night, which could be the embodiment of gods. Therefore, it is vital for him to get confirmation from oracles. These possibilities implied that he somehow believed that he had distinctive bloodlines from others since he suspected that he is the son of the god.



Figure 2. the photo of the Temple of the Oracle (Temple of Amun) at the Siwah Oasis in Egypt [10]

2.1. KEY POINTS DURING THE VISIT

There is also something miraculous that happened during this trip, which significantly contributed to the conversion of Alexander's personality. To begin with, it is the help from the gods. When the party used out of the water in hot and dry conditions, a storm happened out of a sudden. In other words, this heavy rain saved them from thirst. According to Arrian, Alexander attributed it to the God, Ammon. [11] It seemed that the god helped them more than once. When a south wind blows the sand, the roads, vegetation, and anything other could be the signs are covered by them, so that it would be easy for the party to lose their directions. One saying of this from Ptolemy is that two cobras showed up and led the way. The leak of this is that the story is not reliable which relates to Ptolemy's personal benefits, in which case, it helps him, a foreigner, to rationalize the Enthronization in Egypt many years later. Another saying is that the divine instructors are two crows from Aristobulus and Callisthene. [12,13] Nonetheless, it is still probably that it is Alexander's willingness to let his official historians agree with his divinity. No matter which thought is right, it proves that Alexander had begun to be a little arrogant since he just thought he is the descendant of gods.

Alexander seemed to get the implication from the gods again in the temple. Justin states that "when Alexander was entering the temple the priests immediately hailed him as the son of Ammon." [14] However, the greeting not happened immediately after entering the temple or in public which can be easily heard by others because the interview occurred in a private room [15]. In that case, we must be skeptical of the view that the appellation confirms Alexander's divine identity, which might be invented by writers, historians, like Cleitarchus or Alexander himself to a large extent. Another perspective is that the priest who received Alexander made a mistake in his greeting sentence due to his poor Greek, in which case, he was supposed to call Alexander "O my son" in Greek. [16] Generally speaking, Alexander was pleased with that appellation, so the story that he is called the son of Zeus had been spread, which reinforced his divinity both for himself and for the citizens.

The other renowned thing that happened during this visit is the problems that Alexander asked the prophet even if no one truly heard the questions according to Arrian. Some popular statements are that Alexander asked about his blood lineage (about Philip) and his future. He wondered the identity of his father directly and the answer seemed to satisfy him. The god implied that he is the son of Zeus, which means Philip is not his father theoretically speaking, in accordance with the words from Olympias. Another perspective is that, according to Plutarch, Alexander asked whether the murderer of Philip had been punished, and the answer is in the

affirmative. However, it is potential that these all are just speculations and fabricate information from others for different aims. Some of them may just be invented by Callisthenes. Trying to ingratiate Alexander, Callisthenes wrote down this answer so that the divinity of Alexander is confirmed, [17] which also reinforced his regime both in Egypt and Greek as Siwah had a great reputation in the world and made excuses for Alexander and Olympias at the same time. To intensify the effect that he pursued, it is suspected that the story of the divine appellation is formulated by him as well. Certain later writers and historians also played a role in that to explain the rapid development in the next few years reasonably. With respect of the questions about Alexander his own future, the explanation might be that Alexander would like to know whether he would be able to reach the end of the world, or in other words, whether he would rule all the human beings undefeated. Due to the privacy of this interview process, we can hardly know the answer precisely. We could presume that Alexander had gotten the answer that satisfied him due to the fact that he sacrificed the gods generously before leaving Egypt. We have known that by the time Alexander had been undefeated, and he would compete head-to-head with one of his most powerful enemies, Darius, very soon. As a result, the oracle ensured his victory to an extent that was also a strong implication for the rest of his life.

3. CONCLUSION

It is vital to analyze how the visit to Siwah attributed to the personality conversion of Alexander. We can never say Alexander was a humble person during his adolescence since he was willing and ready to show himself at every moment like the story of Bucephalus, but at least there was no relationship between him and the word "arrogance", which described his later life. The key is, during this visit, Alexander realized and confirm his divinity and uniqueness compare with others. No matter whether these miraculous incidents were real or just made up by himself or those who want to flatter him, Alexander would become dizzy with success and greediness. As it is widely spread, Alexander had deeply adored those ancient Greek heroes from childhood, which leads to his imitation of them. He was thirsty to be a person like them. Although at that time, he had not become the king of Asia yet, he started to firmly believe that he would be able to make that one day according to the oracles.

The visit to Siwah was just a turning point, which means the change of Alexander's personality is not so obvious until he had exactly become the king of Asia. He would find that the oracle about his future military exploits is totally true so he might also deeply trust another one about his birth. Objectively speaking, he was legendary in the history of warfare. There was never a person who had been able to conquer such a huge

territory in a comparatively short time with a complete victory, which was realized by Alexander as well. He clearly knew that the people around him can never match with himself. Namely, he was an unprecedented genius who was somehow even more outstanding and eminent than those ancient heroes or say, Alexander's brothers. At the same time, having the sovereign authority, Alexander could easily control Greek, Persian, and India. In that world, he was a god and had the power as gods. Hence, he just overlooked the human beings since he was their father like Zeus. He requires his sons to show their worship towards him. When they had done something salutary, he rewarded them with alacrity, but if they offended him, he would easily inflict harsh punishment.

This explained some of his later behaviors. He attempted to introduce the Persian custom, proskynesis to the Greeks and Macedonian which is a sacred act towards the gods according to their conventions. Alexander is Macedonian, who knew clearly that there would be a strong imperative among the Greeks a Macedonian since they didn't regard him as the god. As a military genius, it is natty of him to comprehend the disagreement in his subordinates exerted a negative effect on his dominion. The reason why he insisted on this revolution is that he wanted the Greeks and Macedonians to think of him somehow as a real son of Zeus, just as he had been claiming since his visit to Siwah. [18] Additionally, in the battle against the Mallians, Alexander chose to leap down within the wall directly on his own at stake where there were thousands of enemies below him. The crazy behavior almost devitalized his life. Why did Alexander decided to take such a great risk in seconds? He thought it was his fate which is dying fighting on the battlefield, like other brave gods. Had fought battles for more than eight years, it is hard for him to imagine the peaceful and pleasure-seeking life in the palace since he had conquered the whole known world, which is not his temperament. He requested himself to behave like a god.

Alexander was a brilliant human being in the first half of his life. The personality and characteristics happened when his wild ambition pushed him to be a presumptuous god.

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