

“Just Rage”: Causes of the Rise in Violence

In the Eastern Campaigns of Alexander the Great

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the sharp increase in violence in Alexander the Great’s campaigns in Bactria, Sogdiana, and India in the third century B.C.E. The author argues that a combination of obstacles provides a more exact explanation for the augmented carnage of the Macedonian army’s campaigns than does singling out a particular catalyst, as has been done in the past. Using the methodologies of scholars like John Keegan and Victor Hanson, whose studies reconstruct the perspectives of common soldiers, the author highlights how the relationship between the actions and experiences of the soldiers and the reactions of native peoples greatly contributed to intensified aggression. By comparing the West and East Asian operations of the Macedonians, the thesis emphasizes how the gradual disintegration of the constraints of traditional Greek warfare contributed greatly to the escalation of brutality as the campaign progressed. Other factors which led to an increased incidence of massacre are discussed, including local resistance, enforced settlements of populations, Alexander’s policies of conquest and surrender, war-weariness among the troops, as well as a foreign landscape and climate.