



ALEXANDER THE GREAT

BY: JOHN J. POPOVIC

CATEGORY: HISTORY – GREEK HISTORY

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Alexandros Philipπου Makedonon,
Αλεξανδρος Πηλιππου Μακεδονον,
Alexander the Invincible,

later renamed by the Romans,
Alexander III the Great of Macedon (356-323 B.C.)

PROJECT by [John J. Popovic](#)

Alexander accomplished greater deeds than any other ruler before or after him.



This project is dedicated to the most charismatic and heroic king of all times.

Edition 9.2



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✦ **Introduction.**



Alexandros III Philippou Makedonon (Alexander the Great, Alexander III of Macedon) (356-323 B.C.), King of [Macedonia](#), was born in late July 356 BC in Pella, Macedonia, he was one of the greatest military genius in history. He conquered much of what was then the civilized world, driven by his divine ambition of the world conquest and the creation of a universal world monarchy.



Arrian describes Alexander: the strong, handsome commander with one eye dark as the night and one blue as the sky, always leading his army on his faithful Bucephalus. Alexander inherited from his father King Philip the



Alexander, comiola engraving, 1st. century AD, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples

best military formation of the time, the Macedonian Phalanx, armed with sarisses - the fearful five and half meter long lances. He was the first great conqueror who reached Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Asia up to western India. He is famous for having created the ethnic fusion of the Macedonians and the Persians. From victory to victory, from triumph to triumph, Alexander created an empire which brought him eternal glory. He brought Greek ideas, culture and life style to the countries which he conquered, and assured expansion and domination of Hellenistic Culture which, together with Roman Civilization and Christianity, constitutes the foundation of what is now called Western Civilization.



Kingdom of Macedon (SE)

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 **Alexander's Origins**

☀ July 357

His parents were Olympias and Philip II and according to some legends and oracles Alexander has divine origins: Zeus and Olympias.



Olympia, golden medal, Abukir treasure, 3rd century BC, Archeologic Museum, Thessaloniki



Alexander was born at Pella in [Macedonia](#) in late July of 356 BC, on the same day on which the famous Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was destroyed by fire. His father, Philip II of Macedon, was a brilliant ruler and strategist. His mother was Olympias, princess of Epirus, daughter of King Neoptolemus. Olympias was initiated into the cults of [Dionysus](#) and Orpheus. She was often jealous, vindictive and very protective of Alexander.



The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, one of the largest temples ever built by the Greeks, circa 550 B.C.

According to tradition, Olympias' ancestor was the mythical hero of the Iliad - Achilles, while his father, Philip II of Macedon, was said to descend from the Zeus' son - Hercules.

The legend of Alexander of Macedon begins even before his birth. Alexander's parents, King Philip II of Macedon and Myrtali - the Princess of Epirus, later known as Olympias - were in their dreams warned about his birth. Philip and Olympias were initiated in the mysterious cults of Kabira of Samothrace, and they had believed in the messages in dreams, so that they have invited the most renowned prophet of that time Arixstandros Telmisy, to interpret their dreams. Olympias had dreamt of a loud burst of thunder and lightning that had hit her womb, while in Philip's dream, he was sealing her womb with the seal of the lion. Arixstandros determined that Olympias was pregnant, and that the child would have the character of lion. The oracle of Delphi advised Philip to worship Zeus-Ammon, more than any other god. That brought the advent of Alexander's birth. Ammon (also Amon, Hammon, Zeus, Jupiter) represents the principle of invincibility, and ancient Egyptians had called Ammon "The Invisible", so any other attribution is superfluous. The animal dedicated to the cult of Ammon was ram-aries, one of the "astral fire signs", with the active male principle and the symbol of Pure Will strength, that stands behind everything, which initiates each significant event and crushes all obstacles (like aries or thunder). The thought and vision, now become action. Only through action does it take form, power and is transformed into reality. The purely spiritual can not be

stopped and is invincible. Alexander's historical mission was to prepare the impulse of a new astrologic era, to terminate the old one and to transform ancient-obsolete forms of culture and world dominion. (This transition period from Aries to Pisces astrologic era in history is known as the Hellenistic period, and it has lasted for more than two centuries. One astrologic era has a duration of 2000 years.)

Related articles on the net:



[Alexander's Origins , Plutarch](#)



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[Alexander's Birth, Plutarch](#)



[Alexander's origin and controversies according various traditions](#)



[The Temple of Artemis](#)



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Alexander, Prince of Macedon

 344

Even as a young boy Alexander was fearless and strong. At the age of twelve, he tamed the beautiful and spirited [Bucephalus](#) ("ox-head" in Greek), a horse that no one else could ride. Philip was so proud of Alexander's horsemanship that he said:



O my son, seek out a kingdom worthy of thyself, for Macedonia is too little for thee.

Later, this famous stallion carried him as far as India up to the Hydaspes River, where he died. There Alexander built the city of Bucephala, in memory of his beloved horse.

The court at which he grew up was the centre of great deeds, and Philip, by war and thorough diplomacy, was raising Macedon to the guidance of the Greek states, and the atmosphere was charged with grand ideas. To unite the Greek race in a war against the Persian Empire (Isocrat's political project) was set up as the ultimate mark for his ambition,

Prince Alexander was even more ambitious than his father; he was even desperate when he heard of Philip's conquests:

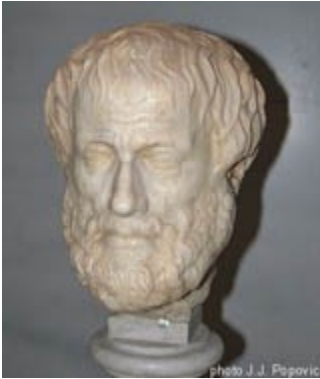
My father will get ahead of me in everything, and will leave nothing great for me to do.



Alexander knew the [Iliad](#) by heart. He loved [Homer](#), and always slept with a copy of the Iliad under his pillow.

His first teacher was Leonidas, a relative of Olympias. Leonidas instilled in Alexander his ascetic nature for which he became famous during his future campaigns; he lived simply, in a Spartan way, eating and sleeping together with his troops. Leonidas was replaced with Lysimachus, who taught Prince Alexander to play the lyre, and to appreciate the arts.





✧ Plutarch writes: *The care of his education, as it might be presumed, was committed to a great many attendants, preceptors, and teachers, over the whole of whom Leonidas, a near kinsman of Olympias, a man of an austere temper, presided, who did not indeed himself decline the name of what in reality is a noble and honorable office, but in general his dignity, and his near relationship, obtained him from other people the title of Alexander's foster father and governor. But he who took upon him the actual place and style of his pedagogue was Lysimachus the Acarnanian, who, though he had nothing to recommend him, but his lucky fancy of calling himself Phoenix, Alexander Achilles and Philip Peleus, was therefore well enough esteemed, and ranked in the next degree after Leonidas.*

343-342

✧ By the 5th century BC. the Hellenes have achieved the cultural stability necessary to develop a common tradition of religion, literature, Olympic sport, art, craft, philosophy, folklore and mythic history. That great cultural achievements lay already far enough behind to have become invested with a classical splendour and the importance of Hellenic culture had been made solid in a way which might maintain respect and passion for ideal values, deep-rooted by tradition, present and appreciated even in the modern Western world. And this sum of tradition was brought upon Alexander in his thirteenth year through the person of the man who beyond all others had gathered it up into an organic system of knowledge. In 343 [Aristotle](#) came to [Pella](#) at Philip's bidding to direct the education of his son. Alexander from age 13 to 16, together with the other boys belonging to the Macedonian aristocracy, was taught by Aristotle at the Mieza temple-about 30 kilometers from the royal palace at Pella; it was the great Greek philosopher himself who introduced them to the world of arts and sciences. He was also early schooled in war. Aristoteles who conquered the world with thought, was the teacher of Alexander who conquered the world with the sword.

Related articles on the net:



[Iliad](#) - the war manual



[Homer](#) - the poet



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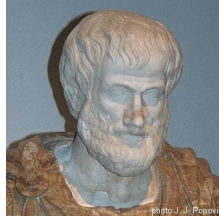


Character of Alexander

Alexander's actions were inspired: by one god, one demigod, one hero and one sovereign. Dionysios - a divinity. Hercules - a demigod. Achilles - a hero. Cyrus the Great - The Persian emperor. His actions were guided by the spirit of Homer, who appeared in Alexander's dreams, while the Illiad was his manual of war. Like Achilles he was a superhuman hero and warrior, he exposed himself often to the extreme danger during battle. Alexander could support pain, hunger, thirst, heat, desperation and great suffering with immense patience, like Hercules. As a boy, his mother introduced him to the cult mysteries of the Dionysios. Through Dionysios, Alexander took extreme mobility and love for adventure. During the course of his conquest, Alexander repeated the same journey as Dionysios, only in reverse. Alexander admired the personality of the Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire, whose example and politics he imitated during the creation of his universal empire. Like Cyrus, Alexander respected the tradition and religion of dominated peoples. The Illiad taught him that he could have only two epic and noble passions: furious anger and disinterested generous friendship. To live with such a multitude of images and multiplicity of souls inside one personality was difficult and dangerous, as such a coexistence was not often harmonious and pacific. Alexander's epic actions were often guided by the ghost of Homer, like Hamlet's were by the ghost of his dead father.

Some notion of the personal appearance of Alexander may be got from the literature and the surviving monuments.

He is described as of an athletic frame, though not taller than the common, and a white and ruddy complexion. The expression of his eyes had something *liquid and melting* and the hair which stood up over his forehead gave the suggestion of a lion. He had a way of carrying his head somewhat aslant. (See especially Plut. Alex. 4; de Alex. fort.ii. 2.) The greatest masters of the time executed portraits of him, Lysippus in sculpture, Apelles in painting and Pyrgoteles in graven gems. Among surviving monuments, we have no completely certified portraits except the Tivoli herm (now in the Louvre) and the coins struck by his successors. The herm is a dry work and the head upon the coins shows various degrees of idealization. There are, however, a considerable number of works which can make out a better or worse claim either to be portraits of Alexander or to reproduce his type, and a large field of discussion is therefore open as to their values and classification



✧ Alexander, Prince Regent

✧ 340



During Philip's expedition against Byzantium in 340, Alexander, then sixteen years old was left in [Macedonia](#) in the charge of the royal seal; at that time, he was anything but idle: he managed to subjugate the rebellious Maedi, a Thracian tribe. He took their capital town by storm, drove out the barbarous inhabitants, and created a colony of several nations in their region, calling the new town Alexandropolis.

Philip's autocracy was not appreciated by the Athenians, and Demosthenes considered him semi-barbarian. Obviously the hegemony of Macedonia presented a threat for the autonomous politics of Athens.

Related articles on the net:



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[PERSEUSPROJECT, wives and sons: Paus. 9.7.2](#)



[PERSEUSPROJECT, passionate nature: Paus. 6.18.2](#)



[PERSEUSPROJECT, good fortune: Paus.4.35.4,Paus.7.10.3](#)



[PERSEUSPROJECT, Aristotle's influence with him: Paus. 6.4.8](#)



[PERSEUSPROJECT, house at Megalopolis: Paus. 8.32.1](#)



[PERSEUSPROJECT, makes Chaeron tyrant of Pellene: Paus. 7.27.7](#)

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Philip's Kingdom



September 338

At the battle of Chaeronea Philip defeated the allied Greek states of the Sacred Band of Thebes in September 338 BC. At that time Alexander was only 18, and, having been placed in command of the left wing of Philip's cavalry, he demonstrated personal courage



in breaking the Band. It is said he was the first man to dare to charge against the Thebans. Although Philip's army was greatly outnumbered by the Athenian and Theban troops, the Macedonian phalanxes triumphed over them. Athens and Thebes now also came under Philip's rule. Sparta remained the only Greek state not under Macedonian control. This early demonstration of courage made Philip so proud of Alexander that he was even pleased to hear his subjects call him their general and Alexander their king!



The prospect of conquering the Persian empire had become more realistic than in 346: Artaxerxes III had died in 338, and the new king was the much weaker Darius II (*he succeeded to*

the Persian throne in 336, after the brief reign of Arses, who, as the trilingual inscription found at Xanthus in 1973 shows, was given the name Artaxerxes IV at birth).

★ 337BC.



At the Council of Corinth, Philip imposed his political system on the Greek states (with exception of Sparta); Philip gave freedom and autonomy to all the political parties in each polis, establishing an administrative system that would be stable and loyal to him.



Then came family dissension, such as frequently displeased the polygamous courts of the East. Philip repudiated Olympias for another wife, Cleopatra, and after a [quarrel at a wedding feast](#), Alexander went with his mother to her home in Epirus. Few months afterward, [father and son were reconciled](#) and Alexander returned; but their hearts were estranged. The Philip's new wife was with child; her kinsmen were in the ascendant; the succession of Alexander was imperilled. Some negotiations which Pixodarus, the satrap of Caria, opened with the court of Macedon with a view to effecting a marriage alliance between his house and Philip's, brought Alexander into fresh broils.

★ 337BC.



With the support of almost all Greece, Philip declared war on Persia. In the spring of 336 BC, Philip sent Attalus and Parmenion with the army of 10,000 men into Asia Minor to begin with the liberation of Greek coastal cities. In 336 Philip was suddenly assassinated, before he was able to depart, during the marriage celebration at Aegae of his daughter to Alexander I of Epirus in the presence of a great concourse from all the Greek world.

But Philip himself was assassinated.

Related articles:



[Geopolitic map of Macedonia during Philip II](#)



PERSEUS PROJECT, Congress at Corinth, [Diodorus, Historical Library 16.89.1](#)



PERSEUS PROJECT, War with Persia, [Diodorus, Historical Library 16.91.1](#)



PERSEUS PROJECT, Philip's last days, [Diodorus, Historical Library 16.93.1](#)



PERSEUS PROJECT, Assassination of Philip, [Diodorus, Historical Library 16.94.1, 16.95.1](#)



[The Murder of Philip II](#)

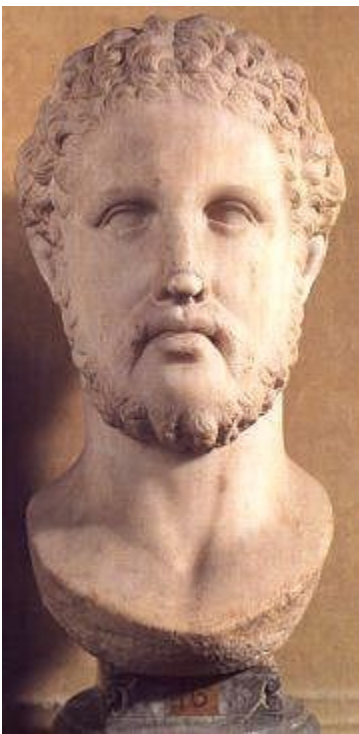
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 **The King is dead, Long live the King.**



Spring-Autumn 336 BC



On his way to the theater at Ege, the ancient capital of Macedonia, Philip was assassinated by his officer Pausanias during the celebration of his daughter's wedding to Olympias' brother, Alexander of Epirus, in July 336. Alexander was immediately presented to the army as the new king of Macedon. Alexander was not the only pretender to the vacant throne: but, recognized by the army, he soon swept all rivals from his path. He established his authority far more firmly than anyone thought possible; he was only 20 and for this reason not universally respected. Since Alexander himself was the main beneficiary of his father's

murder, he was suspected of complicity, especially as he was only half Macedonian. He addressed himself to the embassies which were present and in affable fashion bade the Greek polises to maintain towards him the same loyalty which they had accorded to his father. Philip's last wife, Cleopatra, had borne a daughter a few days before his assassination, while Attalus, her uncle and guardian, had been sent on ahead to Asia to share the command of the forces with Parmenion. Attalus acquired great popularity in the army. Alexander at once executed all those who were alleged to be behind Philip's murder along with all possible rivals and the whole faction opposed to him. The known victims of this purge were Alexander's own rivals: his older cousin Philip's nephew Amyntas, son of King Perdiccas III; the principal family of Alexander of Lyncestis, although he himself was spared; and Philip's wife Cleopatra and her infant daughter, killed by Olympias. A possible rival for the throne remained Attalus himself; the uncle of Cleopatra (Philip's last wife) was disaffected because of her murder and that of her daughter, but he had no claim to the throne of Macedonia; indeed, he was loyal to Philip and hostile to his assassin. Alexander determined to eliminate Attalus discreetly. Alexander had good reason to fear that he might challenge his rule, making common cause with those of the Greeks who opposed him, and selected among his friends a certain Hecataeus from Cardia and sent him off to Asia with a number of soldiers, under orders to bring back Attalus- accused of high treason- alive if he could, but if not, to assassinate him.

Related articles on the net:



[Philip's Assassination, Plutarch](#)



PERSEUSPROJECT, Alexander establishes his authority, [Diodorus.HistoricalLibrary 17.2.1](#)

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Alexander - Strategos autocrator of all Hellenes

Alexander then marched south, pacified Thessaly, and at an assembly of the Greek League, at [Corinth](#) was confirmed as *strategos autocrator* (the supreme commander) of the Hellenes against the barbarians, in the place of his father Philip for the expected invasion of the Persian Empire, previously planned and initiated by Philip. On his return to Macedonia by way of Delphi, the Pythian priestess acclaimed him as [invincible](#).



335BC

Philip's elimination had made all the hill-peoples of the north and west raise their heads and set the Greek states free from the Macedon hegemony. He started with blitz campaigns against the Triballi and Ilyrians, which took him across the Danube. He marched into Thrace in Spring 335, struck across the Balkans, by the Shipka Pass and traversed the land of the Triballians (Rumelia), crossed the Danube to subjugate the Getae and Celtic tribes; turning west, he then shattered a coalition of Illyrians who had invaded Macedonia.. To strike the imagination of the world he took his army over the Danube and burnt a settlement of the Getae upon the other side.



[The Greek states had grown restless under Macedonian hegemony.](#) In the meantime a rumor of Alexander's death in Illyria had caused a revolt by the Thebans, favored partly by the Athenians and some other Greek states (Arcadia, Eolia, Etholia). He had hardly restored Macedonian prestige in this quarter when he heard that Greece was aflame. Thebes had taken up arms. By a forced march he took the Thebans completely by surprise, and in a few days the city, which a generation before had won the headship of Greece, was taken. Alexander reached Thessaly in seven days and Boeotia five days later. So in only 14 days Alexander marched 380 kilometers from Pelion in Illyria to Thebes. When the Thebans refused to surrender, there were to be no half-measures now; the city was wiped out of existence, he spared only the temples and the poet Pindar's house; 6,000 were killed and 30,000 survivors were sold into slavery for 440 Talents of silver. Greece might now be trusted to lie quiet for some time to come.



Related articles:



PERSEUSPROJECT, the danger over the Thebans, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.10.1](#)



PERSEUSPROJECT, destroys Thebes: [Paus. 4.27.10, 7.6.9, 7.17.2, 9.6.5., 9.7.1, 9.23.5, 9.25.10](#)



PERSEUSPROJECT, Greeks suffer at his hands: [Paus. 1.4.1](#)



[The destruction of Thebe](#)



[Timoclea -the brave lady of Thebe](#)



The other Greek states were frightened by this cruelty. While his garrisons were left in Corinth, Chalcis and Cadmea, Alexander could thus afford himself to treat Athens diplomatically with eager courtesy, although Athens was hostile at heart to the Macedonian hegemony, The Panhellenic alliance (from which Sparta still stood aloof) against the barbarians was renewed.

Related articles:



PERSEUS PROJECT, Greek states do recognise Alexander's leadership, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.04.1](#)



[Diogenes](#)



Beginnings of the Alexander invasion of Persia **334**



By an invasion of the Persian dominions, Alexander took up the interrupted campaign of his father. The army was concentrated and certain forces had already been sent on to occupy the opposite shore of the Hellespont. He also needed the Persian wealth to maintain the army built by his father and pay off the 500 talents he owed to the ten thousand Greek professional troops, and to Agesilaus of Sparta. Alexander's army in its successful campaign in Persian territory had demonstrated the weaknesses of the Persian Empire. With the Companion Cavalry he could expect to preside over any Persian army. The reason for the invasion of Asia was to liberate the Greek cities taken by the Persians some years before. In the spring of 334, Alexander crossed the Dardanelles, (i.e. Hellespont), with an army of 30,000 men, Macedonians, Illyrians, Thracians and the contingents of the Greek states, into Asia. The place of concentration was Arisbe on the Hellespont, leaving Antipater, the general and friend of his father as his deputy in Europe with over 13,000 troops. Alexander himself commanded about 30,000 foot soldiers and over 5,000 cavalry, of whom nearly 14,000 were Macedonians and about 7,000 allies of the Greek League. This army had an



*Alexander in the battle, detail from the monument.
Taranto, 3rd. century BC., Museo Archeologico Nazionale*

excellent mixture of arms- the lightly armed Cretan and Macedonian archers, the Thracians, and the Agrianian javelin men; the striking force was the cavalry, and the core of the army was the infantry phalanx, 9,000 strong, armed with shields and five -and-one-half meter long spears, the sarises, and the 3,000 men of the royal troops, the hypaspists. Alexander's second in command was Parmenio, who had secured a foothold in Asia Minor during Philip's lifetime; many of his family and supporters were entrenched in responsible positions. The army was accompanied by explorers, engineers, architects, scientists, court officials and historians.



[PERSEUSPROJECT, makes war on Darius: Paus. 6.17.5](#)





✦ Alexander's Magnanimity

Love
Triangle:



Alexander, Pancaspe and Apelles

✦ **Alexander** had such an admiration for the beauty of his favorite mistress, named **Pancaspe** (Campaspe), that he gave orders that she should be painted in the nude by **Apelles**, and then discovering that the artist while executing the commission had fallen in love with the beautiful lady. Generous, great minded as and self controlled as he was, he offered **Pancaspe** to his friend artist as gift; he was and still greater owing to his control of himself, and of a greatness proved by this action as much as by any other victory: because he conquered himself, and presented not only his bedmate but his affection also to the artist, and was not even influenced by regard for the feelings of his favorite in having been recently the mistress of a monarch and now belonged to a painter. According tradition, she was the model from which the **Aphrodite Anadyomene** was painted.

✦ Apelles - the painter and friend

✦ Giovanni Battista Tiepolo



[Angelika Kauffmann, Alexander überlässt Apelles seine Geliebte Kampaspe, 1783](#)



[Alexander Ceding Campaspe to Apelles, Jérôme-Martin Langlois, 1819](#)



✦ The Battle of Granicus



Spring 334



[On the way he stopped at Troy](#) and afterwards he visited Ilium, at the Granicus River, near the Sea of Marmara (May/June 334), where he confronted his first Persian army which was led by three satraps.

To meet the invader the Persians had in Asia Minor an army to some extent larger than Alexander's, which was gathered under the satraps of the western provinces at Zeleia. Beside that, what was more serious, Persians had control of the Aegean, so Alexander could communicate with his base only by the narrow line of the Hellespont, and ran the risk, if he went far from it. To draw Alexander after them, while avoiding a conflict, was sound strategy for the Persian generals, which was urged upon them by their war-colleague the Rhodian Memnon. But pragmatic and strategic considerations were cancelled by the Persian code of chivalry, and Alexander found them waiting for him on the banks of the river Granicus. [Memnon, the general of the Greek mercenaries in the Persian army, suggested that the Persians avoid facing Alexander in open fields and to move the combat to the Balkans. Nevertheless, his suggestion was denied by Persian satraps who felt their forces were superior to Alexander's. but was finally won by the Macedonians.](#)



**Granicus, May
334 BC**



Alexander's first battle, beside the river Granichus, was commenced with initial Persian optimism. The Persian plan to tempt Alexander across the river and kill him in the melee almost succeeded; but the Persian line broke, and Alexander's victory was complete. It was a cavalry



clash, in which the common code of honour caused Macedonian and Persian chieftains to engage hand to hand, and at the end of the day the remainder of the Persian army were in escape. This victory opened western Asia Minor to the Macedonians, and most cities opened their gates. The tyrants were expelled, and in contrast to Macedonian policy in Europe, in Asia were installed democracies. Alexander confirmed his Panhellenic policy, confirmed in the sending of 300 panoplies, i.e. sets of armor, taken at the Granicus as an offering dedicated to Athena at Athens by "***Alexander the son of Philip, and the Hellenes, except the Lacedaemonians (Spartans), won these from the barbarians who inhabit Asia.***"

Alexander could now accomplish the first part of the task belonging to him as supreme commander of the Hellenes, that liberation of the Greek cities of Asia Minor, for which Panhellenic enthusiasts had cried out so long. He first went to take possession of the old Lydian capital Sardis, the headquarters of the Persian government on this side of the Taurus, and the strong city surrendered without a blow. The cities remained *de facto* under Alexander, and his nomination Calasas satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia confirmed his intention to succeed the Great King of Persia.

Related articles:

[The Battle of Granicus](#)

[The Campaigns of Alexander](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, Granicus, the battle of, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.20.1](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, Granicus, the battle of, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.21.1](#)



When the city of Miletus refused to open its gates, encouraged by the proximity of the Persian fleet, Alexander took it by assault; without a maritime battle: he disbanded his expensive navy and decided to defeat the Persian fleet on land by occupying the coastal cities. In Caria, Halicarnassus resisted and was destroyed; but Ada, the widow and sister of the satrap Idrieus, adopted Alexander as her son and Alexander appointed her as a satrap of Caria. However, until 332 some parts of Caria held out.



Memnon and Persian satraps took refuge in different fortresses and cities. Consequently Memnon has abandoned Miletus for an attack on Lesbos and Chios, and he has unexpectedly died in unexplained conditions. Finally, Alexander captured Ionia and was welcomed in Sardis, and he has managed to conquer Cappadocia and Phrygia as well. The Persian navy curiously renounced from capturing mainland Greece and cutting Alexander's contact with home.



Related articles:



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AsiaMinor



333BC



Alexander conquered western part of Asia Minor in winter 334-333, subjugating the hill tribes of Lycia and Pisidia; and in spring 333 he advanced along the coastal road to Perga. At [Gordium in Phrygia, tradition records his cutting of the Gordian knot](#), which could only be loosed by the man who was to rule Asia. At this point Alexander benefited from the [sudden death of Memnon](#), the competent Greek commander of the Persian fleet. The Syrian coast was consequently his next urgent objective.

He passed the Cilician Gates before the Persian king, Darius III, had sent up a force sufficient to hold him. From Gordium he moved to Ancyra and then south through Cappadocia and the Cilician Gates. His passage through Cilicia was marked by a violent fever that arrested him for a while in Tarsus. In the meantime, [the Grand Army under the command of Darius himself had advanced northward](#) on the eastern side of Mt. Amanus in northern Syria. In the knot of mountains which close in about the head of the Gulf of Alexandretta, Alexander, following hard by the coast, marched past the Persian army encamped on the plains to the east. To cut Alexander's communications with the rear, Darius now committed the error of entangling his large force in the mountain defiles.



The Battle of Issus, Autumn 333

Intelligence on both sides was imprecise, and the two armies had in fact been advancing randomly. Alexander was already encamped by Myriandrus (nearmodern Iskenderun,

Turkey) when he find out that Darius was astride hisline of communications at Issus, north of Alexander's position (Autumn 333). Alexander came head to head with King Darius during the [Battle of Issus](#) on the north-east Mediterranean coast. Although Alexander was advancing south he was surprised to find Darius approaching from his north! Turning, Alexander found Darius drawn up along the Pinarus River, and near the town of Issus fought his second pitched battle, sending Darius and the relic of his army in feral flight back to the east. It was an incident which did not modify Alexander's plan. He did not press the pursuit far, although the great king's camp with his harem fell into his hands.



✦ Alexander was outnumbered many times (*perhaps even 10:1*). Even so, he held back a reserve force, for the first time in the military history.

✦ After the battle when he entered in the Darius's tent in all its luxury, golden bath, silk carpets, and so on (while Alexander was known for living in spartan conditions in comparison) he is reported to have

commented:

"So this is what it means to be a King."

✦ Another famous incident sheds light upon Alexander's and Hephaestion's friendship. Alexander had captured Darius's throne tent with treasure of 3000 talents of gold (US\$ 1.2 billion, 1 TALENT = 27 kg Au), with a complete imperial escort; including Darius's mother, Sisygambis; his wife, Stateira; his harem and other princesses.

✦ When Alexander and Hephaestion went to meet Sisygambis, she prostrated herself at the feet of the most imponent figure in the group. She chose by the mistake the taller Hephaestion! Alexander is said to have responded in a rather friendly fashion:



"Don't worry mother, he is Alexander too."



The chivalrous courtesy, which he showed to the captive princesses "*due to their station*", was a favourite theme for later rhetoricians. An interesting fact is that later when Sisygambis had an opportunity to return to Persians, she had refused.

Related articles and paintings on the net:



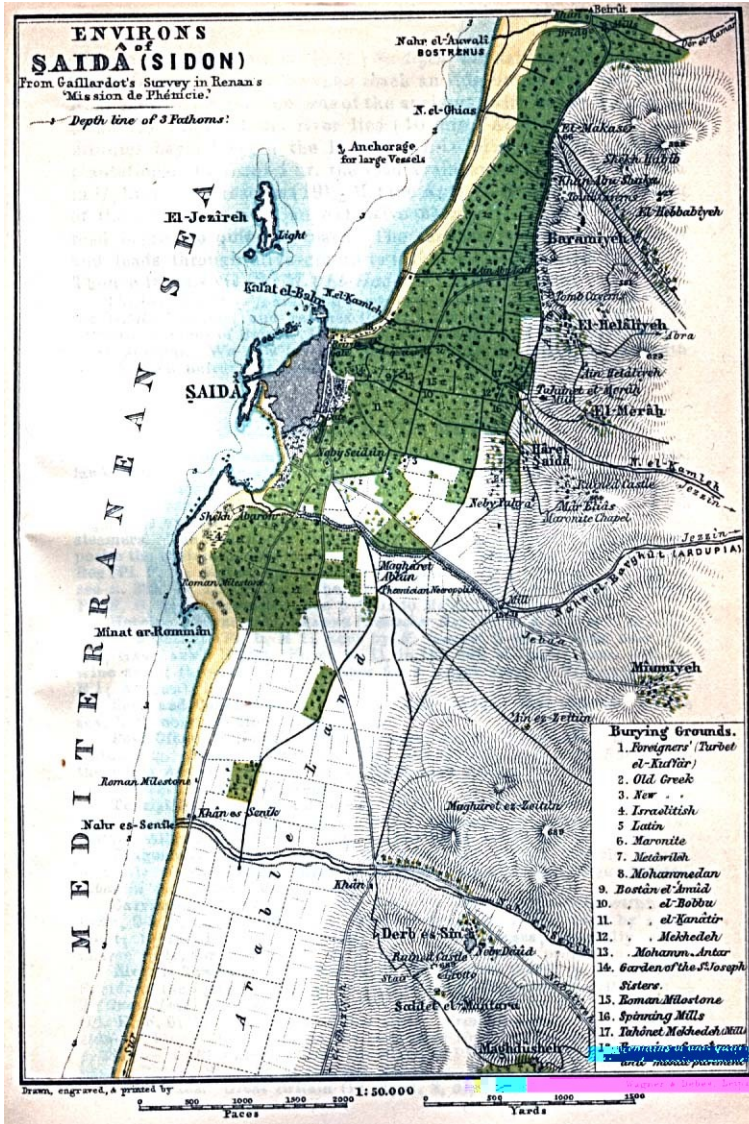
[Paolo Veronese: The Family of Darius before Alexander](#)



[Alexander's Generosity, Plutarch](#)

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✧ Conquest of Syria, Phoenicia and Egypt

✧ 332BC

✧ With the intention to isolate the Persian fleet from its maritime bases and so to destroy it as an effective fighting force, from Issus Alexander marched south into Syria and Phoenicia. The Phoenician cities Marathus and Aradus came over to Alexander with no resistance. In reply to a letter from Darius offering peace, Alexander replied with determination, demanding unconditional surrender to himself as lord of Asia.



The siege of Tyre

After taking Byblos and Sidon, he met serious resistance at [Tyre](#), where he was refused entry into the island city. It was one of those obstinate sieges which often mark the history of the Semitic races. The Tyrians walled them-selves inside their island fortress. Alexander could not leave them to attack his rear and he could not attack by sea so he decided to build a land bridge, which still exists. He succeeded finally only after seven months, not on land but in a very brutal naval battle; the Tyrians fired red hot sand at Alexander's fleet. The storming of Tyre in July 332. When it fell, Alexander had the old Tyrian people scattered to the winds, 30,000 sold as slaves.

In the meantime (winter 333-332) the Persians had counterattacked by land in Asia Minor, but they were defeated by Antigonus, the satrap of Greater Phrygia. In the meantime, at sea, the Persians succeeded in recapturing various Ionian cities and islands.

✳ During the [siege of Tyre](#), Darius opened negotiations in which he ultimately went so far as to offer a partition of the empire, sending a letter with his offer: he wanted to pay ransom of 10,000 talents for his family and cede all his lands west of the Euphrates. Darius Alexander refused the bargain and definitely claimed the whole. On that occasion Alexander's general Parmenio advised him to accept.

"I would accept, were I Alexander." Parmenio said ;
"I too, were I Parmenio!" was Alexander's famous retort;

✳ Leaving Parmenio in Syria, Alexander advanced south without opposition until he reached Gaza on its high mound; there bitter resistance halted him for two months, and he sustained a serious shoulder wound during a sortie. The occupation of the rest of Syria and Palestine proceeded smoothly, and after the fall of Gaza Alexander's way lay open into Egypt.





✧ Alexander in Egypt

✧ In November 332 he reached Egypt, and the Egyptians welcomed him as their liberator. The Persian satrap Mazaces surrendered with no resistance. At Memphis Alexander was sacrificed to Apis, (Hapi) , and was crowned with the traditional double crown of the pharaohs of Egypt; the Egyptian priests were placated and their religion encouraged.

The winter (332-331) which Alexander spent in Egypt saw two memorable actions on his part:

- *the problematic expedition to the oracle of Zeus Ammon (Oasis of Siwa)*
- *the foundation of Alexandria at the Canopic mouth of the Nile*

Alexander reorganized Egypt employing Egyptian governors, while keeping the army under a separate Macedonian command. He founded the city of Alexandria near the western arm of the Nile between the sea and Lake Mareotis, protected by the island of Pharos, having it planned by the famous Rhodian architect Deinocrates. From Alexandria he marched along the coast to Paraetonium and from there inland to visit the celebrated oracle of Ammon at Siwah. About 570 B.C., the Pharaoh Amasis rebuilt a temple in Siwa dedicated to the Ammon (*also Amun, Ammon, Hammon*).

Tradition claims that in Egypt Dionysus founded the oracle of Ammon. One day he was wandering in the waterless desert with his followers when they saw a solitary ram. As they followed the animal it disappeared, but a spring of water was found where it had been. There the god placed the oracle, and set the ram in heaven as the constellation of Aries. ...When the gods fled to Egypt from the monstrous Typhon, Dionysus changed himself into goat...

The temple oracle was one of the most famous in antiquity and was famed for being able to answer difficult questions. According to tradition he was descended from the heroes Heracles and Perseus. Both of these heroes had visited the oracle in their lifetime, and Alexander thought it appropriate that he should visit it as well. When he reached the oracle in its oasis, the priest gave him the traditional salutation of a pharaoh, as son of Ammon; Alexander consulted the oracle and: Oracle proclaimed Alexander the son of Deus - Ammon (Zeus). It changed his life for ever.

Related articles:

✧ [Siwa](#)

✧ [Ammon TEMPLE](#)

✧ [Alexander in Egypt](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, *founder* later city of Smyrna: [Paus.7.5.1ff.](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, founds Alexandria:[Paus.5.21.9](#),[Paus.8.33.3](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, in the Temple of Ammon-Zeus, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.51.1](#)

***Alexander the Great* Part Two**

Bibliography and on-line references

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✧ Alexander in Mesopotamia

✧ 331

✧ In the spring of 331 Alexander could at last leave the Mediterranean to strike into the heart of the [Persian empire](#), for by his occupation of all Mediterranean harbours the Persian command of the sea had inevitably collapsed, without having any significant maritime battle. He returned to Phoenicia, nominated a Macedonian satrap for Syria, and prepared to advance into Mesopotamia, toward Babylon. Early in July 331 Alexander was at Thapsacus on the river Euphrates, then he advanced across northern Mesopotamia toward the Tigris. Darius sent his general Mazaeus, who marched up the Tigris to oppose him.

The Battle of Gaugamela



The last army gathered by an Achaemenian king was shattered in the battle called popularly after the city of Arbela some 100 km distant, or more precisely after the village of Gaugamela hard by. The Battle of Gaugamela (or Arabela as it is also called in Assyria), was the last big battle of the war, which took the place on the plain of Gaugamela between Nineveh and Arbela on the 1st October 331 BC. The happy coincidence of a lunar eclipse gives us the 1st October 331 BC as the exact day upon which the Macedonian army crossed the Tigris. Darius III succeeded to escape with his Bactrian cavalry and Greek mercenaries into Media before the battle was over. Alexander remained till he had secured the provinces to the south. He followed the Tigris into Babalonia.

Related articles:

PERSEUS PROJECT, The battle of Arbela, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.60.1](#)



Babylon welcomes the King



Babylon welcomes Alexander as new "King of Asia"; Mazaeus, who wisely surrendered Babylon was confirmed by Alexander as satrap. Alexander with Mazaeus was so generous that he granted him the right to have his coin. The same as in Egypt, the local religion and priests was encouraged. From Babylon went on to seize the riches which the Persian kings had amassed in their spring residence, Susa. Susa, also surrendered, releasing fabulous amounts of

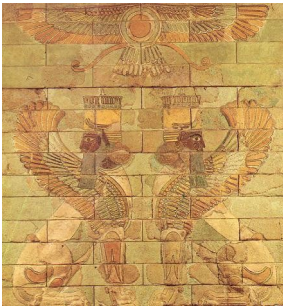
silver and gold which corresponds to 120.000 talents, when the gold was estimated in terms of silver.

Thence he at last ascended upon the Iranian plateau. The mountain tribes on the road (the Oxii, Pers, Huzha), accustomed to exact blackmail even from the king's train, learnt by a bitter lesson that a stronger hand had come to wield the empire. Reducing to obedience the mountain tribe of the Oxians, he now continued over the Zagros range into Persia, and successfully took the Pass the Persian Gates, held by the satrap Ariobarzanes.

Alexander had become **Lord of Asia**.



Alexander entered in the capital of Persia, [Persepolis](#) and [Pasargade](#), the cradle of the Achaemenian dynasty, and came upon new treasure in the [royal city, Persepolis \(3D Reconstructions & renderings\)](#) As a symbol that the Panhellenic war was terminated, Alexander ceremonially burned down the [palace of Xerxes](#); solemn revenge for the destruction of Greek temples by Xerxes generations ago, Dionysiastic act that was inspired by the Athenian courtesan Thaïs.



Persian divinities, Sussa



Ishtar Gate detail, Babylon

Related articles:

PERSEUS PROJECT, at Susa and Persepolis, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.71.1](#)



330

Later in spring 330 Alexander marched north into [Media](#) and occupied its capital [Ecbatana](#). Panhellenic war was over, the Thessalians and Greek allies were sent home. Since that moment, he was conducting a purely personal war. Since the Panhellenic war of revenge came to an end, Alexander's political and ideological views on the empire were changing: He had come to new political idea of two jointly ruling people: Macedonians and Persians. That new politics created the opposition and misunderstanding between Alexander and Macedonians.

Alexander was prepared for further pursuit. Darius fled northwards from [Ecbatana](#) upon his approach. At Ecbatana new masses of treasure were seized, but when once the necessary measures which its disposal and the occupation of the Median capital entailed were taken. Before continuing to pursuit Darius, who had escaped into [Bactria](#), he collected all the Persian treasure and entrusted it to Harpalus, who was to keep it at Ecbatana as chief treasurer. Parmenio was also left behind in Media to control communication lines.



Persepolis, 19th century drawing



Summer 330 Darius Death



Alexander with his fastest troops chased Darius for 12 days and nights and has passed over 800 km. Meanwhile Darius troop strength was reduced to 6000 foot and 3000 horse. Darius had moved to [Bactria](#), to Bessus - the satrap of Bactria. It was an thrilling chase of king by king, in which each covered the ground by barely credible exertions, past Rhagae (Rai) and the Caspian gates, till early one morning Alexander came in sight of the broken train which still clung to the fallen king.

His cousin Bessus and the Persian magnates staged a coup d'etat and had betrayed and imprisoned Darius, at Skirmish (near modern Shahrud, after a the Caspian Gates), the usurper Bessus finally had stabbed his king Darius III and left him to die in agony. [Bessus preferred Darius dead than imprisoned](#). If Darius had surrendered, Alexander would leave him alive. Alexander organized an imperial funeral with all honors for the last Persian emperor. Alexander, later, captured satarp Bessus, new

pretender to the Persian throne. Darius' murder was punished and Bessus was humiliated with a public flogging before execution.



[Images of Ancient Iran](#)



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Campaign eastward, to Central Asia



After the Darius' death there was no obstacle to Alexander's claim to be Great King, and a Rhodian inscription of the year 330 BC. calls him "*lord of Asia*", in sense of the [Persian Empire](#); soon afterward his Asian coins have the title of king. Crossing the Elburz Mountains to the south of the Caspian which connects western Iran with the provinces to the east of the great central desert, he seized Zadracarta in Hyrcania and received the submission of a group of satraps and Persian notables. To conquer this remaining portion of the empire, Alexander now went on through the mountain belt, teaching

the power of his arms to the mountain people who inhabited the Elburz Mountains, Tapyri and Mardi, till he came, passing through Zadracarta (Asterabad), to Parthia and thence to Aria. Darius' Greek mercenaries were surrenders as well. His advance eastward was fast. In Aria he reduced to obedience Satibarzanes. In these further provinces of Iran the Macedonian King had for the first time to encounter a serious local opposition, for in the west the Iranian rule had been merely the domination of an foreign power over native populations indifferent or hostile. [Here the ruling race was at home](#). He founded yet another [Alexandria](#) of the Aryans (modern Herat).

Related articles on the web:



[The Kalash: The Lost Tribe of Alexander the Great](#)



[The Kalash, the last descendants of Alexander the Great - photographs by Massimo Pizzocarò](#)



[Alexander in Arya \(modern Herat\)](#)



[The Kalash - infidels of Pakistan](#) - abc.net

 329



From Phrada during the winter of 330-329, Alexander moves to south through [Arachosia](#) toward valley of the Helmand River, and crossed the country of the Paropamisadae, where he founded another cities Alexandria in Aracosia and Alexandria by the Caucasus. The ordinarily chronology makes Alexander reach the Kabul valley in the winter of 330-329. That to fit the actions and distances covered by Alexander into such a scheme, assuming that he went by Seistan and Kandahar, would involve physical impossibilities. In the meantime Bessus in Bactria was organizing a revolt in the eastern satrapies with the usurped title of Great King. In Central Asia to Alexander has reached the information that Bessus had taken the diadem, as Darius' successor in Bactria, but so soon as he marched against him Aria rose in his rear, and Alexander had to return in all rush to bring the revolt under. Nor did he, when this was accomplished, again strike directly at Bactria, but made a large turning movement through Seistan over Kandahar into the Kabul valley. Crossing the mountains of Hindu Kush, Alexander marches northward over the Khawak Pass (over 3000m), Alexander brought his troops, despite food shortages, snow and very cold climate to Drapsaca (modern Banu).



It was on the way, in Seistan at Prophtasia (mod. Farrah), that the alienation between Alexander and his Macedonian followers, which becomes sensible in the latter part of his career, first showed itself in an ugly form. Alexander had come to merge the characters of Macedonian king and Hellenic captain-general, with which he had set out, in that of Oriental despot. He wore on occasions of state the Persian dress. A discontent began to work among the Macedonians, and at Prophtniasia the commander of the Macedonian cavalry the son of Parmenio, and certain others were arraigned before the army on the charge of conspiring against the king's life. They were condemned and put to death. Not satisfied with procuring this, Alexander had Parmenio himself, who had been left in command in Media, put to death by secret orders. Philotas, Parmenio's son, commander of the elite Companion cavalry, took a part in a plot against Alexander. He was condemned by the army, and executed; and a secret message was sent to Cleander, Parmenio's second in command, who obediently assassinated him. This brutal action diffused horror but strengthened Alexander's position. All Parmenio's men were eliminated and men close to Alexander promoted. The Companion cavalry was reorganized in two sections, each containing four squadrons (since then known as hipparchies); one group was commanded by Alexander's oldest friend, Hephaestion, the other by Cleitus, an older man.


Related articles:



PERSEUS PROJECT, among Arimaspians and Gedrosians, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.81.1](#)



[ARACHOSIA and the Origin of the name HRVAT](#)

 In the spring of 328 Alexander crossed westward the Hindu Kush into Bactria Bactra-Zariaspa (modern Balkh/Wazirabad in Afghanistan), appointed loyal satraps in Bactria and Aria, and followed the retreat of Bessus across the Oxus and into Sogdiana (Bokhara) Crossing the Oxus, he sent his general Ptolemy in pursuit of Bessus, who had meanwhile been overthrown by the Sogdian Spitamenes. In the July, Bessus was captured, flogged, and sent to Bactria, where he was later mutilated after the Persian manner (losing his nose and ears); several months later he was publicly executed at Ecbatana. They fastened him to a couple of trees which were bound down so as to meet, and then being let loose, with a great force returned to their places, each of them carrying that part of the body along with it that was tied to it. The Bessus was treated with the barbaric cruelty which the rule of the old Persian monarchy prescribed for rebels.

Alexander occupies Maracanda (modern Samarkand). From there Alexander marched to north by way of Cyropolis to the Jaxartes (modern Syrdarya), at the extreme limits of the Persian Empire. There he broke the rebellion of the Scythian nomads, who had massacred Macedonian soldiers. At the site of modern Khojent on the Jaxartes, he founded a city, Alexandria Eschate, "the last Alexandria" In the mean time Spitamenes, prince of Sogdiana had raised in revolt, who had escaped in the hart of Asiatic Russia raising the Massagetai against the Macedons. He now made one raid across the frontier river, the Jaxartes (Sir Dana), to teach the fear of his name to the outlying peoples of the steppe (summer 328). It took Alexander until the autumn of 328 to crush the most rigid opponent he encountered in his campaigns. In the autumn, Alexander's general Craterus triumphed over the Massagetai; who then have killed Spitamenes, offering his head to Alexander, asking for the peace. It is interesting fact that Spitamenes daughter, Apame had become the wife of Seleuco, who had later founded the Seleucid dynasty. At Maracanda in the autumn of 328 BC, during the dyonisiastic feasts, Alexander murdered Cleitus, one of his most trusted commanders. That event widened the detachment between Alexander and many Macedonians. Alexander occupies Maracanda (modern Samarkand). From there Alexander marched to north by way of Cyropolis to the Jaxartes (modern Syrdarya), at the extreme limits of the Persian Empire. There he broke the rebellion of the Scythian nomads, who had massacred Macedonian soldiers. At the site of modern Khojent on the Jaxartes, he founded a city, Alexandria Eschate, "the last Alexandria" In the mean time Spitamenes, prince of Sogdiana had raised in revolt, who had escaped in the hart of Asiatic Russia raising the Massagetai against the Macedons. It took Alexander until the autumn of 328 to crush the most rigid opponent he encountered in his campaigns. In the autumn, Alexander's general Craterus triumphed over the Massagetai; who then have killed Spitamenes, offering his head to Alexander, asking for the peace. It is interesting fact that Spitamenes daughter, Apame had become the wife of Seleuco, who had later founded the Seleucid dynasty.

Till the spring of 327 Alexander was moving to and from in Bactria and Sogdiana, beating down the recurrent rebellions and planting Greek cities. On his march towards India through Afghanistan, he attacked Oxyartes and the remaining three princes (Corienes, Catanes and Austanes) who controlled the hills of Paraetacene (modern Tadjikistan). One of his splendid moves was the capture of the Sogdian Rock. At the top of the rock was Oxyartes, who felt protected because of the vertical cliffs on each side. He provoked Alexander to send up men with wings to take the fortress. Alexander did exactly what Oxyartes ironically proposed. He sent up 300 experienced climbers during the night with the assurance of spectacular wealth if they succeed. The climb - a "very severe" in alpinistic manner of speech was concluded by the majority of the soldiers. Next morning Oxyartes was shocked to see these men "with wings" waving down at him. He surrendered with no resistance. Alexander and Oxyartes became good friends. Alexander married his sister (according some authors his daughter) Roxanne. In one of them he captured Roxana, the daughter of Oxyartes, whom he made his wife. Before the summer of 327 he had once more crossed the Hindu Kush on his way to India (see F. von Schwarz, *Alex. d. Grossen Feldzuge in Turkestan*, 1893, v.).



In the meantime the rift between Alexander and his European troops continued to show itself in dark incidents. Shortly afterward, at Bactra, he tried to impose the Persian court ceremonial, the prostration (proskynesis, genuflexion) on the Greeks and Macedonians too. This custom which was normal for Persians entering the king's presence, to them was intolerable and unacceptable. Even Callisthenes, historian and nephew of Aristotle and an old friend of Alexander, refused to abase himself. Several weeks later Callisthenes was held to be involved in conspiracy among the royal pages at Bactria and was arrested (he was executed or died in prison according some authors). It was now that Alexander completed the conquest of the provinces north of the Hindu Kush by the reduction of the last mountain strongholds of the native princes.

Related articles:

PERSEUS PROJECT, his danger among Oxydracians: [Paus. 1.6.2](#)

[Callisthenes](#)

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Invasion of India



Summer 327 - Winter 326

Before Alexander crossed into India in early summer 327 BC, he felt the necessity to reorganize the army that he had led through Persia and to adapt the different climate and terrain. He burned all of the baggage wagons of Persian booty that impeded his mobility, and he dismissed a large number of his soldiers, reshaping his army with several thousand east Iranian cavalymen. The fighting forces were about 40,000, while the troops with auxiliary services were 120,000 men. Crossing again the Hindu Kush mountain, this time without snow, by Bamian and the Ghorband Valley, Alexander split his forces. Whilst the heavier troops with the luggage moved down the Kabul valley to Pencelaotis (Charsadda) under Perdikkas and Hephaestion, both cavalry commanders, was sent through the Khyber Pass, Alexander led a body of lighter-armed troops and cavalry pushed up the valleys which join the Kabul from the north through the regions now known as Bajour, Swat and Buner, inhabited by Indian hill peoples. A number of their "cities" were reduced by Alexander. Ancient walled mountain villages can be in some cases identified with places where the clans are established today. The crowning exploit was the reduction of Aornus, a stronghold perched on a precipitous summit above the Indus, which it was said that Heracles had failed to take. We cannot say how much of the story of Alexander's discovery of the sacred mountain of the Nysa and the traces of Dionysus is due to the Aristobulus and Clitarchus invention.

Meantime Perdikkas and Hephaestion had built a bridge over the Indus, and by this in the spring of 326 Alexander passed into the Punjab (at Ohind, m. above Attock, according to Foucher, *Notes sur la geogr. ane. de Gandhara*, 1902). The country into which he came was dominated by three principalities, that of Ambhi between the Indus and the Hydaspes (Jhelum, Jehlam), centred in the great city of Takkasila (Gr. Taxila), that of the Paurara rajah (Gr. Porus) between the Hydaspes and Acesines (Chenab), and that of Abhisara (Gr. Alisares) between the same two rivers higher up, on the confines of Kashmir.



In spring 326, crossing the river Cofen, Alexander entered Taxila, and [King Taxiles](#) equipped Alexander with elephants and troops in return for aid against his rival Porus, who ruled the lands between the Hydaspes and the Acesines. The kings of Taxila and Porus were at enmity, and for this cause the invader could reckon upon Omphis as a firm ally. Porus was prepared to contest the passage of the Hydaspes with all his strength. Abisares preferred to play a double game and wait upon events. Alexander reached the Hydaspes just as the rains broke, when the river was already swollen.

In June 326 BC. on the left bank of the Hydaspes against **Porus**, one of the most powerful Indian kings, Alexander fought the fourth and last of his pitched battles in Asia, the one which put to proof more shrewdly than any of the others the quality of the Macedonian army as an instrument of war, and yet again emerged victorious. Porus held the opposite bank with a potent army, including 200 elephants. Alexander's army crossed the heavily defended river in dramatic manner during during a night of torrential rain. The Indians were defeated in a brutal battle, although they fought with elephants. Porus fell deeply wounded into his hands. Alexander captured Porus and, like the other kings he had defeated, allowed him to continue to reign his country. Alexander even

conquered an autonomous province and granted it to Porus as a gift. He founded two cities there, Alexandria Nicaea (to celebrate his victory) and Bucephala (named after his horse Bucephalus, who died there); and Porus became his friend and ally. When he continued his progress eastwards across the Acesines, Porus was an active ally. Alexander moved along close under the hills. After crossing the Hydraotes (Ritvi) he once more came into contact with hostile tribes, and the work of storming petty towns began again.

Related articles:

PERSEUS PROJECT, in India, Porus, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.89.1 SASIGUPTA AND THE POISONING OF ALEXANDER](#) by Ranajit Pal
[Remarks to western historiography of Alexander's invasion of India - by Zulfiqar](#)



November 326 - Spring 325

Alexander's next goal was to reach the Ganges River, which was actually 400 kilometers away. He was impatient to continue farther, but when the Hyphasis (Beas) was reached, his army exhausted in body and spirit denied to go farther in the tropical rain. Then the Hyphasis was reached, it was a bitter mortification to Alexander, before whose imagination new vistas had just opened out eastwards, where there beckoned the unknown world of the Ganges and its splendid kings. For three days the will of king and people were locked in antagonism; Coenus, one of Alexander's four chief commanders, acted as their speaker. His soldiers had heard stories of the powerful Indian tribes that lived on the Ganges and remembered the difficulty of the battle with Porus, they refused to proceed any farther. On finding the army insistent, although he was extremely disappointed, he accepted their decision, but persuaded them to travel south down the rivers Hydaspes and Indus so that they might reach the Ocean. On the Hyphasis he erected 12 altars to the 12 Olympian gods. On the Hydaspes Phoenician and Egyptian sailors built a fleet of 800 ships. He then proceeded down the river and into the Indus, with half his forces on shipboard and half marching in three columns down the two banks, led by Craterus, Hephesteion and him. The fleet was commanded by Nearchus, and Alexander's own captain was Onesicritus; both of them later wrote the memoirs of the campaign. The march was attended with much fighting and heavy, merciless massacre; at the invasion of one town of the Malli near the Hydraotes (Ravi) River, Alexander was heavily wounded. During this journey, Alexander sought out the Indian philosophers, the Brahmins, who were famous for their wisdom, and debated them on philosophical issues. He became legendary for centuries in India for being both a wise philosopher and a courageous conqueror.



Alexander and his army reached the mouth of the Indus in July 325 B.C. Alexander left the conquered portion of India east of the Indus to be governed under Porus, Omphis of Taxila, and Abisares; the country west of the Indus under Macedonian governors, and set out to explore the great river to its mouth (for the organization of the Indian

provinces, see especially Niese, vol. i. pp. 500 f.). The fleet prepared on the Hydaspes sailed in October, while a land army moved along the bank. The confluence of the Hydaspes and Acesines passed, the Macedonians were once more in a region of hostile tribes with towns to be stormed.



It was at one of these, a village of the Malli, that a memorable incident occurred, such as characterized the personality of Alexander for all succeeding time. One of the villages in which the army stopped belonged to the Malli, who were said to be one of the most warlike of the Indian tribes. Alexander was wounded several times in this attack, most seriously when an arrow pierced his breastplate and his ribcage. He leapt from the wall with only three companions into the hostile environment, and, before the army behind him could effect an entrance, lay wounded almost to death. The Macedonian officers rescued him in a narrow escape from the village.



He recovered and beat down the resistance of the tribes, leaving them annexed to the Macedonian satrapy west of the Indus. Below the confluence of the Punjab rivers into the single stream of the Indus the territory of loose tribes was succeeded by another group of regular principalities, under the rajahs called by the Greeks Musicanus, Oxycanus and Sambus. These opposed a national resistance to the Macedonians, the fires of which were fanned by the Brahmins, but still the strong arm of the western people prevailed.



Summer 325

The rajah of Patala abandoned his country and fled. It was the high summer of 325 when Alexander reached Patala, situated at the apex of the Indus delta, built a harbor and explored both arms of the Indus, which then ran into the Rann of Kutch. From here he explored both arms of the delta to the ocean, now seen by the Macedonians for the first time.

He had determined that the Indus fleet should be used to explore this new world and try to find a water way between the Indus and the Persian Gulf. A great part of the land-forces had been already sent off under Craterus in the earlier summer to return west by Kandahar and Seistan; the fleet was to sail under the Nearchus from the Indus mouth toward Persian Gulf; Nearchus, a Cretan with naval experience, who made a exploration voyage along the Persian Gulf. was put in command of a fleet of 150 ships that took the sea route. Nearchus sailed westwards with northeast monsoon in late October 325 BC. Alexander himself intended to lead land-forces, across the dangerous, coast of Baluchistan, through the terrible sand-wastes of the Gedrosian Desert (Mekran).



September - October 325

Alexander marched along the coast through Gedrosia (modern Baluchistan), but he was soon forced by mountainous country to turn inland. Craterus, a high ranking officer, already had been sent off with the baggage and siege train, the elephants, and the sick and wounded, together with three battalions of the phalanx, by way of the Mulla Pass, Quetta, and Kandahar into the Helmand Valley; from there he marched through Drangiana in order to rejoin the main army on the Amanis (modern Minab) River in Carmania. Alexander, on land, lost nearly three quarters of his army because of the severe conditions of the desert, and in a unexpected monsoon flood while they were encamped in a Wadi many of them died.



Autumn - Winter 325

When the survivors reached the region called Carmania, their fortune changed radically as they were welcomed into the prosperous country. Alexander and his men celebrated the end of their calamities in the desert and traveled in luxury to Harmezeia, where they rejoined to Nearchus' fleet, which also had suffered losses. Then the joined army marched to Persis to take rest.

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Consolidation of the empire



The empire was weakened by years of absence and rumors of his death, and it had not functioned altogether efficiently and on Alexander's reappearance many incompetent and scoundrel in high office had to be replaced by better men. In Carmania, in Persis, complaints from the provinces continued to reach him, as well as the news of disorders in Macedonia and Greece. Between 326 and 324 BC over a third of his governors (i.e. satraps) were replaced and six were executed, including the Persian satraps of Persis, Susiana, Carmania, and Paraetacene; three generals in Media, including Cleander, were accused of extortion and convoked to Carmania, where they were arrested, examined, and executed.



In spring 324 he was back in Susa, capital of Elam and administrative center of the Persian Empire; at Susa Alexander

held a banquet to celebrate the conquest of the Persian Empire. In promotion of his policy of fusing Macedonians and Persians into one master race, he and 80 of his officers took Persian wives; he married Darius' daughters Barsine (also called Stateira) and Hephæstion married her sister Drypetis, and 10,000 of Macedonian soldiers which married with native wives were given generous gifts. The filopersian policy brought increasing friction to Alexander's relations with the rest of Macedonians, who had no understanding for his new conception of the empire. His determination to incorporate Persians on equal terms in the army and the administration of the provinces was heavily criticized by Macedonians. This discontent was now disqualified by the arrival of 30,000 native youths who had received a Macedonian military training and by the introduction of Orientals from Bactria, Sogdiana, [Arachosia](#), and other parts of the empire into the Companion cavalry. Persian aristocracy had been accepted into the royal cavalry bodyguard. Peucestas, the new governor of Persis, gave this policy full support, but most Macedonians saw it as a danger to their own favored position. An actual mutiny of the Macedonians broke out at Opis (324 BC.) on the Tigris, when Alexander's decision to send home Macedonian veterans under Craterus was interpreted as a move toward transferring the seat of power to Asia. There was an open insurrection involving all but the royal bodyguard; but when Alexander discharged his whole army and enrolled Persians instead, the opposition ceased. An emotional scene of reconciliation was followed by a vast banquet with 9,000 guests to celebrate the ending of the misunderstanding and the partnership in government of Macedonians and Persians as partners in the empire. Ten thousand veterans were now sent back to Macedonia with gifts, and the crisis was eliminated.



In summer 324 Alexander attempted to solve another problem, that of the nomadic mercenaries, of whom there were thousands in Asia and Greece, many of them political exiles from their own cities. A decree brought by Nicanor to Europe and proclaimed at Olympia (September 324) required the Greek cities of the Greek League to receive back all exiles and their families (except the Thebans), a maneuver that indicated some modification of the oligarchic regimes maintained in the Greek cities by Alexander's governor Antipater. Alexander now planned to recall Antipater and replace him by Craterus; but he has died before this could be done. In autumn 324 Hephaestion died in Ecbatana, and Alexander indulged in extravagant mourning for his best friend; he was given a royal funeral in Babylon with a pyre costing 10,000 talents. His post of chiliarch (grand vizier) was left unfilled. It was probably in connection with a general order now sent out to the Greeks to honor Hephaestion as a hero that Alexander linked the demand that he himself should be accorded divine honors. For a long time his mind had dwelt on ideas of godhead. Alexander had on several occasions encouraged favorable comparison of his own accomplishments with those of Dionysus or Heracles.

PERSEUS PROJECT, against the Cossaeans, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.111.1](#)



In November of 324 Alexander carried out punitive expedition against the Cossaeans in the hills of Luristan. The following spring at Babylon he received complimentary embassies from the Libyans and from the Bruttians, Etruscans, and Lucanians of Italy; representatives of the cities of Greece who came to celebrate and confirm Alexander's divine status. Following up Nearchus' voyage, he had founded an Alexandria at the mouth of the Tigris and made plans to develop sea communications with India, for which an expedition along the Arabian coast was to be a preliminary one. He also appointed Heracleides to explore the Hyrcanian (Caspian) Sea.



The plans for the conquest of the western Mediterranean and the creation of a universal monarchy were mentioned by Diodorus. In his later years Alexander's aims have been directed toward exploration, in particular of Arabia and the Caspian. The exploration of the waterways round about the empire was Alexander's immediate concern, the discovery of the presumed connection of the Caspian with the Northern Ocean, the opening of a maritime route from Babylon to Egypt round Arabia. The latter enterprise Alexander designed to conduct in person; under his supervision was prepared in Babylon an immense fleet, a great basin dug out to contain 1000 ships, and the water-communications of Babylonia taken in hand. Innovations were carried out in the tactical system of the army which were to modify considerably the methods of future battle-fields.

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 **Mysterious Death and Apotheosis**

Suddenly, in Babylon, while busy with plans to improve the irrigation of the Euphrates and to settle the Arabic coast of the Persian Gulf, Alexander was taken sick after a splendid entertainment in honour of Nearchus departure for Arabia (it was also commemoration of the death of Heracles). There he drank much unmixed wine, and finally, filling a huge beaker, downed it at a gulp. The pain increased and no one was able to do anything helpful and Alexander continued in acute suffering. His Friends asked:

"To whom do you leave the kingdom?"

and he replied:

"To the best (the strongest)."

These were his last words. Predicca has received from the king before he died his ring, as the symbol of his regency.

On the sundown of 10th of June, after the ten day fever, in the Palace of Nabukodonossor, Alexander died. Historians disagree about the date of Alexander's death (*Aristobulus (30th or 29th) last day (triakàdi) of Daesius; Plutarch 28th of Daesius; Daesius was the eighth Macedonian month*). While 5th-century Armenian version of the *Historia Alexandri Magni, The Alexander Romances* reports 4 th of Pharmouthi as the day of the death, which corresponds to 13th of June; but according to contemporary **Babylonian Astronomic Diary**, which is most credible and accurate source, Alexander has died on 29th Aiaru (10th of June). Alexander III of Macedon died in his 33rd year; and had reigned for 12 years and eight months. (8 month -Arrian; 7 month Diodorus)

Some historians disagree about the death of Alexander, and state that this occurred in consequence of a draught of poison, it seems necessary for us to mention their account also.

His Friends staged a vast contest in honour of his funeral. Ptolemy, the later king of Egypt, transferred Alexander's body to Alexandria in Egypt. He received divine honors, both in Egypt and elsewhere in the Greek cities



Some centuries later, Alexander's golden sarcophagus was melted down for coinage by the Ptolomius XI (116-107, 87-81 B.C.) and replaced with one of alabaster. Strabo (17. C 794), who visited Alexander's tomb himself in the first century A.D. The subsequent mismanagement of Egyptian affairs by Ptolemy IX's successors, as well as the economic collapse of the kingdom, caused by an incompetent administration, made it impossible for the Ptolemies to restore Alexander's gold sarcophagus. Diodoros from Sicily visited Alexandria and Alexander in ca. 60 B.C. and has preserved an exciting description of the tomb for posterity (18.26.3; 28.2-4).

Alexander's prominent visitors included Caius Julius Caesar who visited Alexandria in 45 B.C. and went to pay his respects to his idol. -[Suetonius (Caesar, VII) and Lucian (X.19), second century A.D.] When Augustus defeated Marcus Anthonius and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 B.C. and then conquered Alexandria in 30 B.C., he visited Alexander's tomb. When Augustus's guides offered to take him next to the tombs of the Ptolemaic dynasty, Augustus answered that *he came to see a king and not dead people* (Dio Cassius, Roman History, 51; 2nd-3rd centuries A.D.). An anecdote in Dio's report of Augustus's visit to Alexander is interesting: *When Augustus inclined over to kiss the Alexander, he accidentally broke Alexander's nose.*

Some other Roman emperors visited the tomb of Alexander in Alexandria: Caligula, went to Alexandria, paid a visit to the Sema and left with Alexander's cuirass (Xiphilinus,

Epitome of Dio's Roman History). Septimus Severus (early third century A.D.) eventually closed the tomb to the public because he was nervous about its safety under the hoards of tourists who rushed to visit. The last reported imperial visit was made by Caracalla (3rd century A.D.), who believed that he was Alexander's reincarnation. [Herodian (Tes Meta Markou Basileias Historion Biblia 4, 8) and Ioannes Antiocheus (ca. 108-238 A.D.).]

The alabaster sarcophagus disappeared some time in the 4th century AD, and his alabaster tomb may be found at the cemetery near latin quarter of Alexandria.

✧ In 1995 his tomb was eventually? rediscovered in oasis of [Siwah](#) (although there are not certain archeological proofs). Quite apart from the fact it was in Siwah, Egypt and not Alexandria, where it was visited many times in antiquity, the tomb is dedicated to Alexander.

Related articles:

- ✧ [Burial in Egypt](#) , Harry E. Tzalas
- ✧ [Alexander's Tomb](#) ,
- ✧ [Alexander's death, Plutarch](#)
- ✧ [Alexander's Testament, Q.C. Ruffus](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, death, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.117.1](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, death: [Paus. 1.25.3](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, said to have been poisoned by water of Styx: [Paus. 8.18.6](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, buried at Memphis: [Paus. 1.6.3](#), [Paus. 1.7.1](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, ranked as general below Pyrrhus by Procles: [Paus. 4.35.4](#)

✧ Hellenistic Era

✧ No heir had been appointed to the throne, and his generals adopted Philip II's illegitimate son, Philip Arrhidaeus, and Alexander's posthumous son by Roxanne, Alexander IV, as kings, sharing out the satrapies among themselves, after much negotiation...He and his uncle Philip, as joint kings, were placed under the guardianship of Perdikkas, Peithon and Antipater in succession. After the death of Antipater (309) Roxana fled with his sun to Epirus, and was afterwards taken back to Macedonia, together with Olympias, by Polyperchon. Both kings were murdered, Arrhidaeus in 317 and Alexander IV in 309 with his mother Roxane were assassinated by Cassander who then usurped the throne of Macedonia and married Thessaloniki (Alexander the Great's sister) in order to legitimize his position (Justin xiv. 6, xv. 2). The parts of former Alexander's empire became independent monarchies, and the generals, following Antigonus' lead in 306, took the title of monarch. The turbulent years from 323 to 301 B.C. saw endless conflicts among Alexander the Great's generals which ended with the parceling out of the Alexander's empire and the creation of the first Hellenistic kingdoms. Alexander generals known as Diadochs had established their own kingdoms on the rests of the Alexander's empire:

- Ptolemy Lagus, Alexander's half brother (Egypt and Palestine);
- Seleucus Nicator (Mesopotamia and Syria);
- Cassander (Macedonia and Greece);
- Antigonus (Asia Minor)
- Lysimachus (Thrace).



Related articles:

- * PERSEUS PROJECT, his family extirpated by Cassander: [Paus. 9.7.2](#)
- PERSEUS PROJECT, post Alexander era, [Diodorus, Historical Library 17.118.1](#)

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* Epilogue

* Several different sources of the period have survived, especially Plutarch, Diodorus, Xenophon and Arrian. Classic authors have covered different issues, which are compared with the information obtained from other sources, such as inscriptions and political speeches from Athens (Demosthenes).

* Alexander had the iron will and capacity to lead his men; he knew when to withdraw and to modify and adapt his policy. Alexander had imaginative fantasy of genius which was driven with the strong romantic figures like Achilles, Heracles, and Dionysus. He was sometimes cruel and autocratic. The only clear characteristics that emerge are his outstanding military genius and his successful politics. The only psychologically clear

motive is the pursuit of glory: the urge to surpass the heroes of myth and to attain divinity. The success of his ambition, at immense cost in human terms, spread a veneer of Greek culture far into central Asia, which remained present during the Hellenistic era for a long time after his death.

✳️ His financial policy was centralized with collectors independent of the local governors, the establishment of a new coinage helped trade everywhere and vast amount of the Persian treasuries, have created desperately needed impact to the economy of the Mediterranean.

✳️ Alexander has founded over 70 new cities. The Greek influence remained strong and the colonization process was continued by Alexander's successors. The diffusion of Hellenic customs over Asia till India was one of the most dominant effects of Alexander's conquests, but his plans for ethnic fusion, did not have success. The Macedonians rejected the idea of ethnic fusion and in the later Seleucid Empire the Hellenistic element was dominant. After his death, nearly all the noble Susa marriages were dissolved.

✳️ As a conqueror Alexander is among the greatest the history has seen. He had adapted new tactics and created innovative forms of warfare (battles against the Shaka nomads, or against Porus with his elephants). His strategy was genial and imaginative and he knew how to use the opportunities that occurred in every battle that were decisive for the victory.

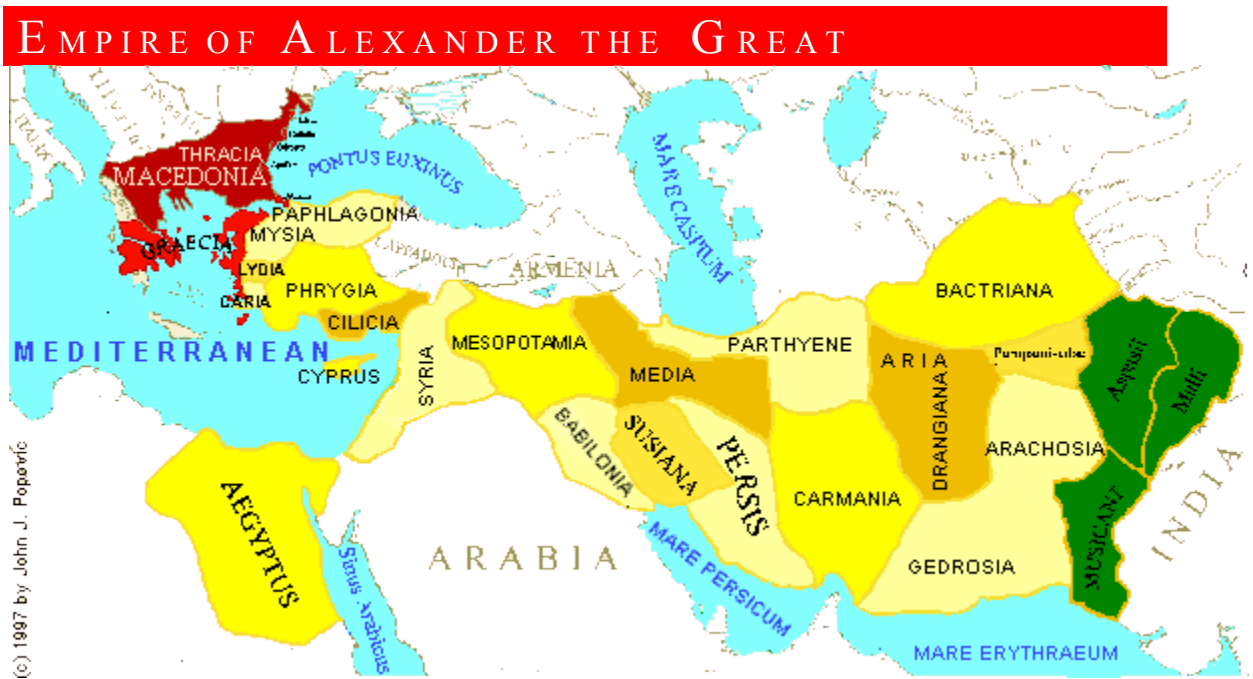
✳️ He initiated the era of the Hellenistic monarchies, and created, if not politically, at least economically and culturally, a single market extending from Gibraltar to the Punjab, open to trade, social and cultural exchange. This vast territory had common civilization, and the Greek was in fact was the *lingua franca* of the time.

✳️ Alexander's expedition brought significant improvements of geography and natural history. His achievements mark a decisive moment in the World history. The Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity as a world religion, and the thousand years of Byzantium were all in part the consequences of Alexander's conquests.

XIX Century historiography

Alexander the Great is one of the instances of the vanity of appealing from disputes to " the verdict of posterity "; his character and his policy are estimated today as variously as ever. Certain features-the high physical courage, the impulsive energy, the fervid imagination - stand out clear; beyond that disagreement begins. That he was a great master of war is admitted by most of those who judge his character unfavourably, but even this has been seriously questioned (e.g. by Beloch, Griech. Gesck. ill. (i.), p.66). There is a dispute as to his real designs. That he aimed at conquering the whole world and demanded to be worshipped as a god is the traditional view. Droysen denies the former, and Niese maintains that his ambition was limited by the bounds of the Persian empire and that the claim to divine honours is fabulous (Historische Zeitschr. lxxix., 1897, i f.).

It is true that our best authority, Arrian; fails to substantiate the traditional view satisfactorily; on the other hand those who maintain it urge that Arrian's interests were mainly military, and that the other authorities, if inferior in trustworthiness, are completer in range of vision. Of those, again, who maintain the traditional view, some, like Niebuhr and Grote, regard it as convicting Alexander of mad ambition and vainglory, whilst to Kaerst Alexander only incorporates ideas which were the timely fruit of a long historical development. The policy of fusing Greeks and Orientals again is diversely judged. To Droysen and Kaerst it accords with the historical conditions; to Grote and to Beloch it is a betrayal of the prerogative of Hellenism.



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Related articles:

- ✳ PERSEUS PROJECT, epic poem on him: [Paus. 6.18.6](#)
- ✳ PERSEUS PROJECT, statues: [Paus. 1.9.4](#), [Paus. 5.20.10](#), [Paus. 5.25.1](#), [Paus. 6.11.1](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, overreached by Anaximenes: [Paus. 6.18.2-4](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, joins Clazomenae to mainland: [Paus. 7.3.9](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, wishes to dig through promontory of Mimas: [Paus. 2.1.5](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, sets up no trophies: [Paus. 9.40.9](#)

PERSEUS PROJECT, dedicates cuirass and spear to Aesculapius: [Paus. 8.28.1](#)

