

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS

Students develop an understanding of Alexander the Great through a range of archaeological and written sources.

KEY ISSUES

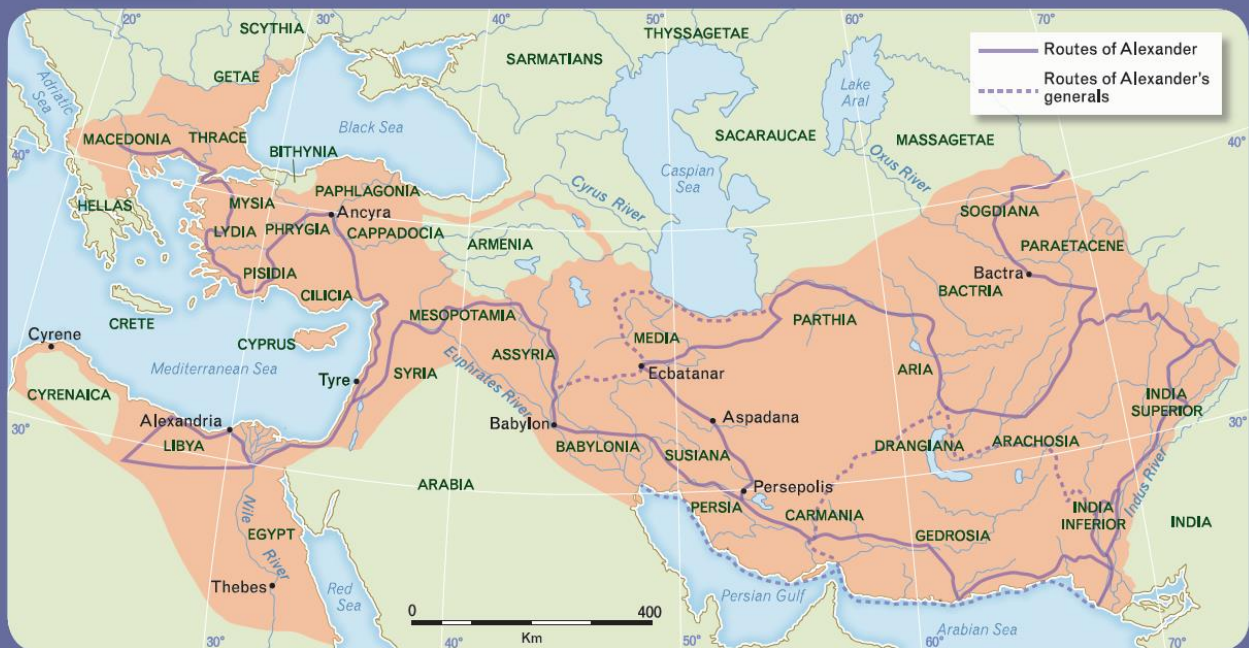
- historical context
- background and rise to prominence of Alexander
- key features and developments in the career of Alexander
- evaluation
- the value and limitations of Arrian's *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Book IV (please note, for ease sake, from here on we use simple numbers rather than roman numerals to refer to the different books and sections of Arrian's works).

Alexander may have been one of the greatest catalysts in history. Out of his conquests came the Hellenistic Age ... as a result of his conquests a whole new pattern of political, cultural, social and religious developments took place.

SOURCE 8.1 E. M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, p. 182



FIGURE 8.2 The routes and extent of Alexander's conquests



The birth of Alexander

Olympias fulfilled her duty to Philip by producing an heir. Alexander was born on 20 July 356 BC, but like everything about Alexander's future life, his birth was regarded as legendary.

A COMMENT ON...

Alexander's 'auspicious' birth

Ancient Greeks believed that the birth of a great man was accompanied by portents, and according to Plutarch, the following were some of those portents.

- 1 On the night before Philip and Olympias consummated their marriage, Olympias 'dreamed that there was a crash of thunder, that her womb was struck by a thunderbolt' followed by 'a blinding flash from which a great sheet of flame blazed up'.⁹ She believed that the thunderbolt was from Zeus and that the god had impregnated her.
- 2 Sometime after their marriage, Philip 'saw himself in a dream in the act of sealing up his wife's womb' and on the seal, he saw 'the figure of a lion',¹⁰ a sign that his son would have the nature of a lion.
- 3 On the day of Alexander's birth:
 - Philip won a victory over the city of Potidaea and his horses won a victory at the Olympic Games.
 - the *magi* (priests of Persia), visiting the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor, ran into the street when the Temple of Artemis burned down, shouting that the kingdoms of Asia were destined to fall.

Alexander's education, early career and ambitions

His education

In his early years, the most influential person in Alexander's life was his mother, from whom he inherited a vivid, romantic imagination, a passionate and fiery nature, a strong will for power and a belief that he was set apart from other men with a special relationship with the gods.

It was natural that a great number of nurses, pedagogues, and teachers were appointed to take part in his upbringing but the man who supervised them all was Leonidas, a severe disciplinarian who was also a relative of Olympias.

SOURCE 8.6 Plutarch, *Alexander*, 5

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- 1 Alexander was born into a court at Pella that featured great ethnic and linguistic diversity, and from a small child he came in contact with foreign diplomats, traders, soldiers, courtiers, exiles, Greek philosophers, artists and poets. He is supposed to have once impressed a group of visiting Persian ambassadors with his maturity and curiosity about their country and king.
- 2 From the age of seven or eight he entered a life of dangerous competition. As war was a normal part of life, Alexander's daily exercises as a boy were geared to train him as a superb warrior, particularly as a skilled horseman.
- 3 By the age of 12, Alexander had developed the skills of perception and deduction, and was full of unshakable confidence. This was borne out in the story of the black stallion, Bucephalus, which he later rode into the greatest battles of his career. The story goes that a horse trader brought a magnificent and extremely expensive horse to Philip for inspection, but it appeared to be completely wild and unable to be trained. When Philip prepared to send the horse away, Alexander remarked, 'What a horse they are losing, and all because they don't know how to handle him, or dare not to try!'¹¹

... Alexander went up to Bucephalus, took hold of his bridle, and turned him towards the sun, for he had noticed that the horse was shying at the sight of his own shadow, as it fell in front of him and constantly moved whenever he did. He ran alongside the animal for a little way, calming him down by stroking him, and then when he saw he was a light spring vaulted safely on to his back ... when Alexander dismounted he [Philip] kissed him and said, 'My boy, you must find a kingdom big enough for your ambitions. Macedonia is too small for you.'

SOURCE 8.7 Plutarch, *Alexander* 6

- 4 Early on, Alexander found inspiration in the feats of mythical heroes and gods. To the ancient Greeks – and to Alexander – the myths of the past were real stories of interactions between gods and humans that taught guiding principles of life, some harsh and violent, but always competitive. The most important story for Alexander was Homer's epic *The Iliad*, which focused on the exploits of Achilles, Alexander's supposed ancestor.
- 5 Philip decided that at 14 his strong-willed son needed guidance and control. He persuaded Aristotle, the great Athenian philosopher, scientist and political theorist, to come to Pella to instruct his son. Alexander, with a group of teenage 'companions', was sent to a secret location to be schooled by Aristotle. The great man taught a huge range of subjects including botany, zoology, geography, biology, mathematics, political history and rhetoric, as well as philosophy as a guide for living a life of excellence. However, his major focus was on the concept of the 'Man of Great Soul', a man who sought honour through competition throughout his life.

Under Aristotle's tutelage Alexander developed:

- an insatiable curiosity and a desire to explore the world
- a determination to go beyond everyone else in excellence
- a desire to become a 'Man of Great Soul'.

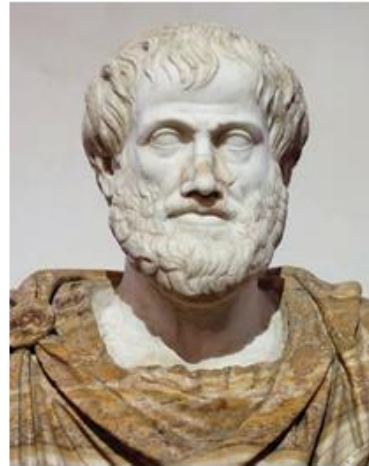


FIGURE 8.10 A bust of Aristotle

A COMMENT ON...

The features of a 'Man of Great Soul'

A 'Man of Great Soul':

- recognises his supreme standing among others
- has no tolerance for insults
- becomes angry at ungrateful and disloyal people
- craves knowledge
- employs practical thoughtfulness in everything he does
- endures misfortunes
- is a great benefactor
- deserves – and expects to receive – the greatest honour in return
- believes friendship is as important as honour
- hopes his accomplishments raise him to the level of the gods.¹²

In this society where the king of the Macedonians was required to prove his superiority at every moment, the son of a king was under unimaginable pressure to be the best at everything, every time ... The Macedonians did not shy away from putting their future leaders to the sternest tests over and over.

SOURCE 8.8 T. R. Martin and C. W. Blackwell, *Alexander the Great: The Story of An Ancient Life*, p. 16

Alexander's adolescent military successes

Alexander was addicted to winning renown and glory for himself, and when he heard that his father had captured a city or won a great victory, he would, according to Plutarch, complain to his friends 'my father will forestall me in everything. There will be nothing great or spectacular for you and me to show the world'.¹³

At the age of 16, he was left in charge of Macedonia while Philip was away fighting in Thrace and had been given the royal seal that empowered him to make political, economic and military decisions. When a tribe on the north-east of the country rebelled, Alexander seized his opportunity to act as a king. He marched into Maedi territory at the head of his troops, defeated the rebels and captured their main settlement. He re-founded it, named it Alexandropolis, the 'city of Alexander' and, like his father, populated it with new settlers: former soldiers and people from other nationalities.

By the time he was 18, Alexander had marched with his father into Greece to face an alliance of Greek states led by Thebes. At the Battle of Chaeronea, Philip placed his son and heir on the left wing opposite the famous and undefeated Theban force called the Sacred Band. Alexander charged at the elite Theban force and, according to the ancient sources, played a major role in the Macedonian victory.



FIGURE 8.11 A statue of a young Alexander taming Bucephalus

Problems with the succession

In the last years of Philip's reign, there was considerable strain in the relationship between father and son, and it appears that they saw each other as rivals. However, this strain turned into a complete upheaval in the royal family when the king decided to take a seventh wife, Cleopatra, the young niece of Attalus, a prominent Macedonian and one of Philip's leading generals. This would be the king's first true Macedonian wife.

It not only angered Olympias, Alexander's mother, but also caused a potentially dangerous rift between father and son. During the drunken celebrations of the marriage, Attalus toasted the couple with the wish that they produce a legitimate successor to the kingdom. Humiliated, Alexander threw a cup of wine at him and Philip, drunk and furious at his son's actions, drew his sword and approached Alexander.

When he tripped and fell to the floor, Alexander taunted him with: 'Here is the man who was making ready to cross from Europe to Asia and who cannot even cross from one table to another without losing his balance.'¹⁴

Alexander, his companions and his mother left the court. He took Olympias to Epirus and he went into voluntary exile in Illyria. This caused Philip a great deal of concern: his son had proved himself already a great commander and Illyria had always been his greatest threat. Would his son march on Macedonia, threaten all he had achieved and disrupt his plans to invade Asia?



FIGURE 8.12 A bust of young Alexander the Great

The young man had never remained idle and had been trained since childhood to act aggressively to shape his own world. The boy who would risk his life on a wager over an ill-tempered horse would hardly fail to seek revenge so horrible it drove him and his mother from their home. The insult denied Alexander's right to rule. ... The toxic combination of jealousy, ambition, anger and alcohol, stirred up in the superheated crucible of Macedonian royal politics, was on the verge of destroying everything Philip had worked for.

SOURCE 8.9 T. R. Martin & C. W. Blackwell, *Alexander the Great: The Story of an Ancient Life*, p. 33

Due to the intervention of Demaratus, a Corinthian Greek at the court of Pella, father and son were reconciled within months and the question of the succession did not become an issue as Philip's latest child by his new wife was a daughter.

ACTIVITY 8.2

- 1 How did the following influence Alexander's character and upbringing:
 - the lineage of his mother and father
 - his mother's character and religious beliefs
 - his contact with those who visited the court at Pella
 - the Greek heroic myths
 - Aristotle's teachings
 - his father's achievements?
- 2 What does Source 8.7 reveal about Alexander's character?
- 3 What military abilities did Alexander reveal while still a teenager?
- 4 Assess the impact on Alexander of Philip's marriage to his seventh wife.

8.3 Key features and developments in the career of Alexander

The impact of the assassination of Philip

Despite his many battle injuries, Philip died eventually at the hands of an assassin in 336, stabbed to death at his daughter's wedding. Pausanias, the assassin, is believed to have had a grievance against Attalus (a sexual assault) that Philip failed to address. Some claim it was a conspiracy that involved Olympias, but no ancient source ever accused Alexander of patricide, although he benefited from his father's death. As Philip's heir, he inherited:

- a strong and powerful state
- a trained and experienced professional army with excellent generals
- overlordship of the Greek states (members of the Corinthian League, a federation of Greek states created by Philip in 338–7)
- an expedition against the Persian Empire already set in motion.

Although the designated successor to Philip, 20-year-old Alexander knew his life was in danger; as Macedonian heirs had always done, he took decisive and violent action, eliminating possible threats to his life: 'Such precautionary ferocity became the hallmark of his reign.'¹⁵ The first to die was Attalus, Philip's general, already in Asia with Parmenion (another of Philip's old guard).

Although Attalus' earlier actions had led to the assassination of Philip by Pausanias, in Alexander's eyes his greater crime was impugning Alexander's legitimacy as Philip's heir at his father's wedding. Attalus could not be trusted. When Alexander's men killed him in Asia, those stationed with him did nothing; they knew the dangers of a royal succession.

- 1 Alexander's supporters then killed his cousin, Amyntas, the nephew Philip had protected for 20 years.
- 2 Olympias is believed to have murdered her deceased husband's latest child and caused his seventh wife, Cleopatra, the niece of Attalus, to take her own life.
- 3 Alexander then arranged for the deaths of all Cleopatra's male relatives.

No amount of killings, however, could ensure Alexander's succession without the total support of the army. The Macedonian soldiers knew of his formidable talents, and when he appeared before them promising to continue his father's policies and added that they no longer had to pay taxes to the king, they approved his succession.

Consolidation of Macedonian control of the Greek mainland

Philip's death led to ferment in the cities of Greece. Alexander, at only 20 years of age, was faced with 'external dangers on every side.'¹⁶

Alexander made a lightning march through central Greece, forcing them to:

- 1 acknowledge his succession to his father's position as supreme leader of Greece
- 2 agree to go ahead with the Macedonian/Greek invasion of Asia.

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Threats from the north

Feeling secure in the loyalty of the Greeks, Alexander returned north to deal with the Thracians and Illyrians, who saw the young king on the throne as an opportunity to cause trouble.

In 335, Alexander headed for the Danube River to deal with the Triballians of Thrace in a swift offensive war, since 'these people bordered upon Macedon and since his expedition [Persian] would take him so far from home he did not think it wise to leave them in his rear, unless they were thoroughly crushed.'¹⁷ In this march of 480 kilometres over mountains and among hostile tribes, the young king revealed his ability to command and motivate his men, deal with logistical challenges, and devise and implement innovative offensive tactics and flexible plans to outwit a cunning enemy.

Although he routed the Triballians and captured rich booty, Alexander was determined to cross the Danube – 'the greatest of rivers' – and face the tribes on its northern side. Arrian suggests that it was more than just a matter of defeating the tribes; he describes Alexander's motivation as one of *pothos*, which in Greek meant 'a longing or yearning for something you don't have', a need to 'go beyond'.

At great risk, he ferried 5000 of his men across the swiftly flowing river on a makeshift flotilla of local dugout canoes and inflatable pontoons made from his men's tents. At dawn his men were ready for combat. The tribesmen holding the north side fled in terror and the Thracian tribes sued for peace. 'Alexander's brilliance remained so vivid in the memory that for half a century no Thracian ever again attacked his homeland.'¹⁸

Alexander then turned his attention to a coalition of forces in Illyria. Although his men were caught in a narrow valley and appeared to have no hope of escape, Alexander once again proved victorious without the loss of life. He based his plan on his knowledge of the psychology of the Illyrians. By using his 120-deep phalanx in an aggressive way with massed and swishing sarissas and clashing shields, he routed the Illyrians by fear. He utilised his catapults as covering fire, and had his archers take up a position at his army's back.

His men escaped the valley and a few days later, when the Illyrians thought the Macedonians had run away, he led his army at night through the valley and destroyed them.

The destruction of Thebes – a significant point in Alexander's career

While in Illyria, Alexander received news that the Thebans had rebelled and declared their independence. According to Arrian, 'certain people with a view to overthrowing the government had invited a number of

Cadmeia the ancient Theban citadel, or fortified core of the city

political exiles to return.¹⁹ These people slipped into the city, killed those guarding the **Cadmeia** and seized control. They then appeared before the city's assembly and incited the Thebans to revolt by insisting that Alexander had been killed in Illyria.

Alexander, fearing that their disaffection might spread to the rest of Greece, marched south. In only two weeks, his army covered nearly 800 kilometres, marching over four mountain ranges and arriving unannounced before the walls of Thebes.

Arrian says – confirmed by Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus – that Alexander made no move against the city initially because he was hoping to remain on terms with the Thebans and avoid action against them.

Although some Thebans, who had their city's interest at heart, wanted to seek a pardon from Alexander, those who had instigated the revolt insisted on holding out. 'But still Alexander waited and did not attack.'²⁰ What happened next is where the accounts of Arrian and Plutarch differ.

TABLE 8.3 Two views of the destruction of Thebes

Plutarch (<i>The Life of Alexander</i>)	Arrian (<i>The Campaigns of Alexander</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plutarch also says that when Alexander reached Thebes he wanted to give the Thebans a chance to repent. He offered an amnesty (forgiveness without punishment) to all except the leaders, who were to be handed over. In response, the Thebans demanded that two of Alexander's chief officers be handed over, and at the same time, did something that was an unforgiveable insult to the Macedonian king: they called from the towers that all freedom-loving Greeks should join them in destroying 'the tyrant of Greece' (The Loeb version of Plutarch). 	<p>Arrian – quoting from one of Alexander's contemporaries, Ptolemy – records the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Macedonian officer, Perdiccus, on his own initiative and without any word from Alexander, began an assault. Alexander, seeing the likelihood of Perdiccus' men being cut off by Theban troops, 'ordered a general advance'²⁴ and eventually the Theban troops were surrounded on all sides. In what happened next, Arrian does not so much blame the Macedonians as the Phocians and Plataeans and men of other Boeotian towns who 'in the lust for battle indiscriminately slaughtered the Thebans'²⁵ in their houses and sheltering in temples. Alexander permitted the allied troops who took part in the fighting to decide the fate of the city and its inhabitants. They chose to garrison the citadel, but raze the city itself to the ground and to sell into slavery all the women, children and men who had survived. The exceptions were priests and priestesses, those who had any ties with Macedonia and the poet Pindar (a favourite of Alexander) and his family.
<p>Boeotia the state of which Thebes was the predominant city</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this Alexander ordered his troops to attack. The greater part of the army was slaughtered, 'and the city was stormed, plundered and razed to the ground.'²¹ Alexander's chief aim, says Plutarch, was 'to frighten the rest of Greece into submission by making a terrible example, and 'to redress the wrongs done to his allies.'²² He spared the priests, those who were friendly to Macedonia and the poet Pindar. 'All the rest were publically sold into slavery to the number of 20000'.²³ 	

The violence of the action, the size and importance of the fallen city, above all the unexpectedness of the event both to victors and vanquished, all made the horror of this disaster to men of Grecian blood hardly less shattering for the rest of Greece, than for those that were actually involved. ... the complete enslavement of a city pre-eminent in Greece for power and military prestige, were, not unnaturally, all put down to the wrath of God. People felt that Thebes, at last, had been punished for her treachery – she had paid the penalty for her betrayal of Greece in the Persian war ...

SOURCE 8.10 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, 8–9

Alexander oversaw the physical destruction and the enslavement of the population. Even though the destruction of the Hellenic city technically was ordered by his Greek allies, it is clear that Alexander could have prevented its destruction, if he had so wished

SOURCE 8.11 Edward M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, p. 910

The once-great city of Thebes no longer existed. Alexander showed that 'he would not shrink from direct, complete and savage retribution'.²⁶ Although modern historians have criticised his actions, 'slaughtering one's enemies, sacking cities and enslaving populations were viewed as standards at the time'.²⁷

Alexander was persuaded to be more lenient with Athens as the cultural capital of Greece, but took 20 of its triremes and the League of Corinth rubber-stamped his position as leader of the Greeks.

ACTIVITY 8.3

- 1 Describe what Alexander inherited from his father, apart from the throne.
- 2 What is meant by Alexander did what all heirs before him had done by utilising 'precautionary ferocity'?
- 3 Identify the one vital necessity for any Macedonian wanting to secure the throne.
- 4 Summarise Alexander's reactions to the external troubles that erupted after the death of his father.
- 5 Clarify Alexander's military abilities and attitudes to disloyalty that were evident before he had even crossed to Asia.
- 6 Discuss the opinions in Sources 8.10 and 8.11 (one an ancient source, the other a modern source) about the destruction of Thebes.

Into Asia

What was Alexander's goal when he launched his campaign against the Persian Empire two years after his father's death?

- 1 Was it revenge for past Persian interference in Greece, and the liberation of Greeks under Persian control?
- 2 Was it 'a piece of propaganda, borrowed from his father, destined to encourage the Greeks to support him'?²⁸
- 3 Was Alexander aiming for personal glory above all else by means of conquest for its own sake?
- 4 Did he, as a true pupil of Aristotle, envisage a campaign of conquest combined with an expedition for exploration, scientific research, expansion of Hellenic culture and the performance of noble deeds beyond mere military actions? Is there a clue in the personnel he took with him: poets, historians, scientists, philosophers, surveyors, mapmakers and geographers?

Alexander's forces, which were large by Greek standards, comprised approximately 40% Macedonians, 40% Greeks from the Corinthian League and 20% from other nations such as Thrace and Crete. Including the 10 000 troops already sent ahead, he crossed into Asia with about 33 000 heavily armed infantry and light skirmishers, as well as a cavalry force of 5000 to 6000. Pride of place in the cavalry were the approximately 1800 members of the 'Royal Companions' and of these, around 300 comprised Alexander's own bodyguard.

trireme Greek-style ships with three banks of oars

hubris excessive pride

Among his troops were the 1000 Agrianians (a tribe from the upper Strymon River who made up the elite light infantry). These troops were ferried across on a fleet of 160 **triremes**. However, the main weakness of the Macedonians was lack of provisions and funds.

Alexander had left Antipater in Macedonia with a force of 12 000 infantry and 1500 cavalry and garrison troops in various Greek cities as security.

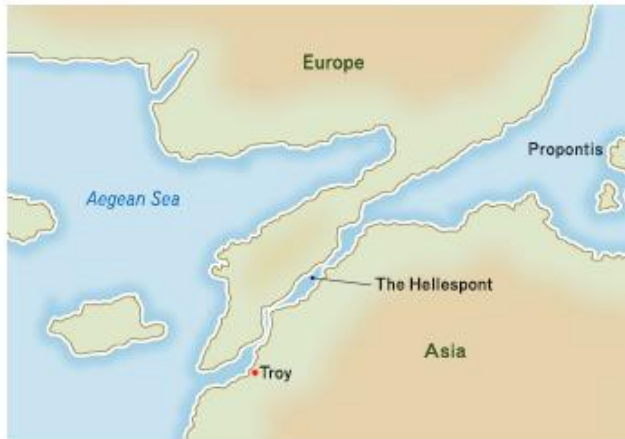


FIGURE 8.13 A sketch map of the Hellespont



FIGURE 8.14 An artistic depiction of Alexander landing in Asia

Crossing the Hellespont

Alexander knew from Herodotus that taking an army across the divide between Europe to Asia was – according to the gods – verging on **hubris** or 'excessive pride'. Ever mindful of the lessons from literature and the need to be respectful of the gods, Alexander made every effort to act properly. He:

- built a shrine to Zeus, Athena and Herakles on the European side
- crossed the Hellespont alone, ahead of his army
- sacrificed a bull and poured libations to Poseidon midway across
- cast a spear onto the shore as a symbol of claiming the empire by conquest before setting foot on Asia
- built another altar to the gods on the other side.

Philip had already sent an advance force to Asia to secure a beachhead and to act as security as the vulnerable army disembarked from the ships.

Alexander went immediately to Troy, where he sacrificed to Priam, its legendary king, and to his 'ancestor' Achilles.

It is likely that few in Alexander's army were aware of the vastness of the Persian Empire and its geographic challenges. The Great King, Darius III, ruled an empire from Egypt and the Mediterranean coast in the west, as far as Bactria (Afghanistan) and the Indus Valley of India in the east, and Sogdiana (Uzbekistan) in the north. The vast empire – its heartland in Persia and Media (modern Iran) – comprised 30 different nationalities and was divided into satrapies (large provinces) and ruled by satraps (provincial governors) who had considerable powers. The empire had a population estimated to have been 25 times that of Greece and Macedonia

combined, massive infantry and cavalry resources, including Greek mercenaries, and a treasury full of gold and silver.

This was the empire through which Alexander led his army for 12 arduous years.

ACTIVITY 8.4

- 1 Describe how Alexander's piety to the gods was expressed as he crossed into Asia.
- 2 Describe the challenges ahead for Alexander and his army.

Alexander's generalship and military campaigns

Arrian (Flavius Arrianus Xenophon), a Greek who became a Roman citizen at birth, is the most authoritative source on Alexander's military conquests in Asia. He wrote his *Campaigns of Alexander* (the *Anabasis* – 'The march up-country') in the 2nd century AD, approximately four centuries after Alexander's death. 'However, Arrian's experience as a military commander makes him the only surviving ancient source on Alexander with direct knowledge of how an army operated',²⁹ and his main source was the history of Ptolemy, a contemporary of Alexander who focused predominantly on military matters.



FIGURE 8.15 The route of Alexander's military conquests and location of major battles

ACTIVITY 8.5

As you follow Alexander's conquests, use the text, sources and figures to build up a dossier of examples of Alexander's generalship during his major battles in Asia, under the following headings:

- flexibility in response to changing physical conditions
- adaptation of tactics and disposition of troops to suit each opponent
- audacious cavalry tactics
- ingenuity in overcoming obstacles
- siegecraft
- leadership of his men.

The Battle of Granicus and the conquest of Asia Minor, 334 BC

Plutarch says that 'Alexander was obliged to fight at the very gates of Asia, if he was to enter and conquer it'.³⁰

The Persians, led by the Greek mercenary general Memnon, took up a defensive position on the eastern side of the Granicus River. Although the Persians held the high ground, Alexander gave orders to prepare to engage, but Parmenion was opposed to this and suggested that, for the moment, they should remain where they were.

'Yes, Parmenion,' he said, 'but I should be ashamed of myself if a little trickle of water like this ... were too much for us to cross without further preparation ... Such hesitancy would be unworthy of the fighting fame of our people and my own promptitude in the face of danger.'

SOURCE 8.12 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 1.13

Then Alexander, while the Persians still waited for the crossing to begin, that they might fall upon his men as they were struggling up the further bank, leapt upon his horse and called upon his bodyguard to follow and play the man. ... then he himself at the head of the right wing of the army, with trumpets blaring and the shout going up to the Gods of Battle, moved forward into the river. He kept his line oblique to the pull of the current as the troops went over, to prevent a flank attack as they emerged from the water ...

SOURCE 8.13 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 1.13

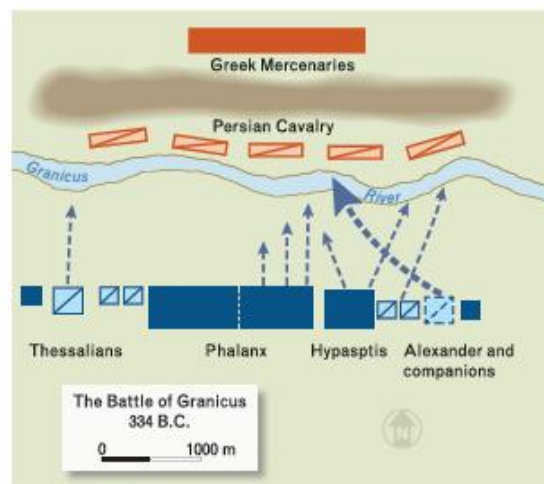


FIGURE 8.16 Diagram of the deployment of Persian and Macedonian forces and first action



FIGURE 8.17 A bronze plaque of Alexander leading the charge of his men across the Granicus River

Alexander's fearless action in crossing the deep and swiftly flowing river forced the Persians to make radical adjustments. Plutarch records how Alexander – his leadership appearing rash – advanced through a hail of spears, and climbed the steep, wet and treacherous slope on the other side. He was forced to fight 'horse upon horse, man against man, locked together ...³¹ before his supporting troops could get into position. He was an easy target and in the heat of battle came close to death when first his helmet was slashed in two and then, bare-headed, he was saved by Cleitus, one of his cavalry companions, from having his skull smashed.

It was predominantly 'a cavalry battle with, as it were, infantry tactics'.³² Once the Persian centre failed to hold, owing to the swift Macedonian cavalry attack, the Persian wings folded. The experience of the Macedonians, the weight of their attack and the superiority of their arms won the day.

Aftermath

- Most of the Greek cities along the coast went over to Alexander.
- The local provincial capital of Sardis surrendered.
- Miletus and Halicarnassus resisted, but were taken by siege.
- Alexander disbanded his fleet.

Alexander now decided to disband his fleet. He had not, at the moment, the money for maintaining it; he knew it was no match for the Persian navy, and he had no wish to subject any part of his strength, in ships or men, to the risk of disaster. ... he was well aware that a fleet was no longer of any use to him; by seizing the coastal towns he could reduce the Persian navy to impotence, for they would then have no port on the Asian coast.

SOURCE 8.14 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 1.20.

The Battle of Issus and the conquest of Syria, 333–332 BC

Darius III led the army himself in his next encounter with Alexander.

He had amassed a huge army of approximately 150 000, although most had little experience. Plutarch maintains that 'fortune certainly presented Alexander with the ideal terrain for the next battle'³³ because Darius, with his enormous army, had left his camp on the plain to seek out Alexander and was caught in a defile between the mountains and the sea, which favoured Alexander's smaller numbers. The armies faced each other across the swollen Pinarus stream that ran through the defile.

The Macedonian cavalry surged forward across the stream and broke through the Persian line. Then Alexander 'wheeled his horsemen obliquely in toward the centre rolling up the Persian riders on their flanks in a brilliant manoeuvre'.³⁴

The Macedonian centre was having trouble with the hard-fighting Greek mercenaries in the Persian centre, but Alexander outflanked the enemy and cut them to pieces. The other Macedonian wing fought desperately until Darius fled in his chariot. At Issus, tens of thousands of Persians died and the Greek mercenaries deserted, never to return to Persian service.



FIGURE 8.18 A diagram of the decisive moment in the Battle of Issus.



FIGURE 8.19 The Alexander Mosaic found at Pompeii depicting the battle of Issus

Keeping to his chariot as long as there was smooth ground to travel on, he was forced to abandon it when ravines and other obstructions barred his way; then dropping his shield and stripping off his mantle – and even leaving his bow in the war-chariot – he leapt on his horse and rode for his life.

SOURCE 8.15 The flight of Darius III, cited in Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 2.11

Aftermath

- After Darius' flight, Alexander captured the Persian camp with its treasure and abandoned royal women. He treated them with respect and promised to protect them. Darius' mother, Sisygambis, never forgave her son, disowned him and thereafter referred to Alexander as her son.
- Alexander founded a city on the site of the battle.
- He delayed pursuing Darius as he needed to secure the Syrian coast and Egypt before he moved inland. For this he has been criticised by some modern scholars.
- Byblos and Sidon yielded to him but the impregnable fortress city of Tyre held out.



FIGURE 8.20 *The Family of Darius in Front of Alexander*, by Charles Le Brun, 1661

The siege of Tyre, 332 BC

Arrian and Curtius maintain that the fortress city of Tyre originally submitted to Alexander, but when he asked to sacrifice in its main temple, they considered it sacrilegious and stood firm against him.

Was his subsequent siege of the city due to this affront to his ego, a strategic move, or both?

Tyre was one of the strongest fortresses in the ancient world, believed to be impregnable. It was a walled island, about 800 metres off the mainland, and its thick walls on the landward side were 45 metres high and 4.8 kilometres in diameter.

With Tyre's powerful navy, and Persia still in command of the sea, the fortress had to be captured before Alexander could move on. He besieged it by:

- 1 'constructing **moles**
- 2 using siege artillery on the landward side. Alexander's siege machines, the tallest yet seen (20 metres high), had battering rams and catapults on their upper decks.
- 3 blockading it with 200 triremes by sea'.³⁵ These triremes were supplied by the allied Phoenician states.



FIGURE 8.21 Tyre causeway today

moles massive structures, usually of stone, set up in the water to act as a causeway or breakwater

A COMMENT ON...

New light thrown on Alexander's construction of his causeway

- Archaeologists have often wondered how Alexander's engineers built a causeway capable of supporting an army and catapults across the water between the island bastion of Tyre and the mainland.
- Recent geological work – cores drilled into the modern isthmus – carried out by the French Geoscience Research Institute has revealed that there was in fact a natural sandspit joining the island and mainland that changed over time.
- It appears that in the centuries before Alexander's arrival at Tyre the spit of sand went through a substantial growth period which would 'have been the perfect platform for Alexander's engineers'.

Adapted from H. Whipps, 'Mystery Solved: How Alexander the Great Defeated Tyre', in *Live Science*, 2007

The siege lasted seven long and exhausting months. Read Arrian's detailed account in Bk 2, 18–24.

Finally, when the people of Tyre were starving and without allies, Alexander began an all-out attack by ships at sea, and siege towers on the mole. The city's defences collapsed and of the inhabitants of Tyre, 8000 people were killed and 30 000 sold into slavery.

While the siege was still underway, Alexander received envoys from Darius III offering him the following:

- 1 10 000 talents for the return of his mother, wife and children
- 2 all the territory between the Euphrates and the Aegean
- 3 his daughter in marriage to seal the bond of friendship.

Alexander's general, Parmenion, 'declared that if he were Alexander, he would be happy to end the war on such terms'.³⁶ Alexander agreed that he would do the same if he were Parmenion.

‘... but since I am Alexander, I shall send Darius a different answer’. ... He had no need he wrote, of Darius’ money, nor was there any call upon him to accept a part of the continent in place of the whole ... and if he wished to marry Darius’ daughter he would do so whether Darius liked it or not ... and if Darius wanted kindness and consideration at his hands, he must come to ask for it in person. Darius abandoned all thought of coming to terms and began once more to prepare for war.

SOURCE 8.16 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 2.26

Aftermath

- ‘After the victory, Alexander offered sacrifices to Herakles and held a ceremonial parade of his troops in full battle equipment’³⁷ as well as a parade of the fleet.
- Tyre was re-colonised.
- Gaza, further along the coast, also stood against Alexander and once again he was forced to carry out a siege.
- Alexander was welcomed into Egypt, and he:
 - made sacrifices to their gods
 - was crowned pharaoh
 - founded what was to become his most famous city, Alexandria on the coast (see p. 229)
 - organised the country’s administration
 - made a long and difficult journey across the desert to the oasis of Siwah to consult the oracle of Zeus-Ammon, as his heroic ancestor Herakles and Perseus had supposedly done. There were rumours that he received confirmation from the priests that he was the son of Zeus.
- He then returned to Syria to pursue Darius.

The Battle of Gaugamela and the conquest of Persia, 331 BC

By 331, Darius had gathered together a larger and better-organised army than at Issus, including 200 scythe-bearing chariots and 15 elephants. He chose the plain of Gaugamela on the left bank of the Tigris River for his next encounter against Alexander because it was level and open, and more suitable for his enormous numbers, chariots and elephants.

Arrian tells how ‘all places where a broken surface might obstruct the movement of cavalry having been worked on for some time previously by the Persian troops, so that all of it was now good going for both chariots and cavalry’.³⁸ Darius also ordered stakes to be placed in the ground to protect his flanks from attack.

Once he saw the placement of the enemy, Alexander prepared at leisure and kept the Persians waiting for two days. Because of his smaller numbers, he slanted his army and stationed his cavalry and lightly armed troops outside of both ends of his main line of battle to prevent flanking attacks by the Persians. To support these troops Alexander organised a reserve formation of infantry behind the main phalanx, with orders to face about in case of an encircling movement, a manoeuvre requiring perfect discipline.

As usual, Alexander began the battle by leading his wing to the right while holding back Parmenion’s troops. This drew the Persian left flank out, away from their elephants and defences.³⁹ The Persians attacked the centre of Alexander’s phalanx with a hundred scythed chariots, but the Macedonian heavy infantry were trained to part their ranks, creating lanes for the chariots to pass through to the rear where they were destroyed. Alexander, treating the battle like a game of chess, allowed the Persian left to outflank his right, creating a gap into which he sent his cavalry. His pre-positioned flank guard now came into action and those Persians who thought to take his army in the rear were caught in a trap.

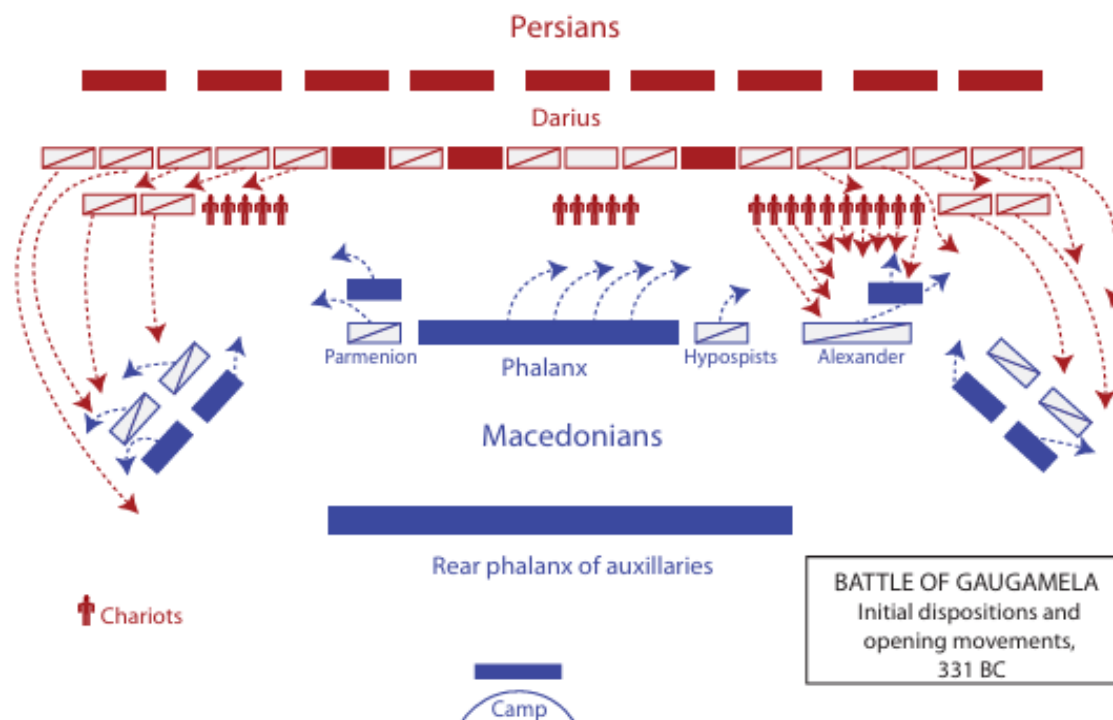


FIGURE 8.22 Initial deployment of troops and opening moves

Darius fled once again, the news demoralising his army. 'The battle had been won by just 3000 cavalry Companions supported by 8000 Shield Bearers under Alexander's visionary leadership.'⁴⁰

Aftermath

- Darius fled to Ecbatana in Media.
- The great cities of Babylon and Susa (the capital of the empire) welcomed Alexander.
- He then moved on to the ceremonial capital of Persepolis, sat on the throne as king and gained incalculable treasure. Unfortunately, in a night of drunken celebration, Alexander and his Macedonians set fire to the ceremonial complex. The destruction caused Alexander much shame.
- He went in search of Darius, who had been kidnapped and murdered by his relative, Bessus, the satrap of Bactria. Alexander buried Darius with all royal honours.
- Between 330 and 327, Alexander carried out protracted and tough guerrilla campaigns against local tribes and the rebellious satraps Bessus and Spitamenes. His years in central Asia – Parthia, Ara, Arachosia, Bactria and Sogdiana, and Scythia – tested Alexander's initiative. He crossed the mighty Hindu Kush in winter and the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers.
- He captured and executed Bessus, defeated the Scythians beyond the Jaxartes River and set the northernmost limit of his empire by establishing a city called Alexandria Eschate.
- He married Roxanne, the daughter of a local Sogdian noble, as part of an alliance.
- The prospect of conquering India was a challenge he could not ignore and so, with his army, half of which was now composed of Asian troops, he arrived at the Indus where his friend and commander, Hephaestion, had already bridged the river. Arrian admits he does not know how this was done, but suggests it was by a bridge of boats.



FIGURE 8.23 An artist's impression of the burning of Persepolis



FIGURE 8.24 The Hindu Kush

The Battle of the Hydaspes River and the invasion of India, 326 BC

When Alexander crossed the Indus, many of the princes, such as Taxiles, who lived between the Indus and Hydaspes rivers, welcomed him and became allies; but on the far bank of the Hydaspes, King Porus, at the head of a formidable army – including a large squadron of elephants – stood waiting to confront him.

Alexander knew that a direct assault across the river was out of the question as the elephants would have terrorised the horses, but Porus had sent troops to guard various points along the river where a crossing might have been possible.

Alexander had already sent for the boats that had been used at the crossing of the Indus to be brought in sections to the Hydaspes and then reassembled.

Arrian describes Alexander's brilliant plan to confront Porus in Source 8.17.

Alexander had noticed a projecting spit some 25 kilometres upstream from his base that he decided would make an ideal place from which to cross the river. Under cover of darkness, he led a select force on boats and hay-filled floats across the river in a surprise dawn landing. He had given orders to his commanders not to lead the main part of the army across the river until they saw Porus move from his position to attack Alexander.

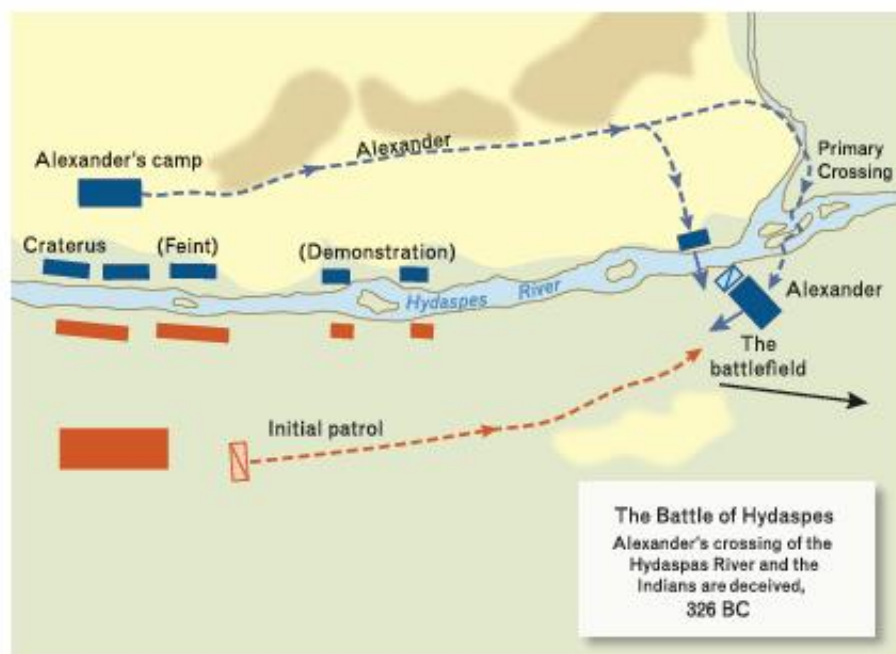


FIGURE 8.25 Diagram of Alexander's deceptive ploy

The river had to be crossed so, as it could not be done openly, Alexander determined to attain his object by cunning. Every night he kept moving the greater part of his mounted troops up and down the bank of the river, making as much noise as possible – shouts, war cries, and every sort of clatter and shindy which might be supposed to precede an attempted crossing. Porus, bringing up his elephants, followed these movements ... and Alexander gradually led him to make these marches parallel to his own, a regular thing. This went on for some time, until Porus gave up. Clearly it was a false alarm; so he ceased to follow the movement of the enemy cavalry and stayed where he was ... no longer expecting a sudden attempt under cover of darkness, was lulled into a sense of security – and this was Alexander's opportunity.

SOURCE 8.17 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 5.11

The Indian king, taken by surprise, made the decision to advance to meet Alexander rather than await the crossing of the rest of his army. In the ensuing battle, Alexander deployed his normal oblique attack to devastating effect and once again revealed his bold originality and brilliance.

His light infantry dispersed the elephants and the rest of Alexander's army attacked Porus from the rear. The Indian losses were enormous: according to Arrian, Porus lost two sons, 20 000 infantry, 3000 cavalry, all his war chariots and most of his commanders of high rank.

Aftermath

- Alexander treated the defeated Porus with respect, restored his sovereignty, increased his territory and accepted him as an ally.
- He established two cities on either side of the Hydaspes: Bucephala and Nicaea.
- He easily conquered the rest of the area, but when he wanted to go beyond the Hyphasis River, his men refused and he reluctantly capitulated (see p. 234).
- Marching and sailing with 800 vessels, the army moved down the Indus to its mouth where Alexander faced one last strenuous campaign against an Indian tribe known as the Malli, during which he was critically injured when a spear pierced his lung. He was not expected to live and the Malli were slaughtered, neither women nor children were spared. Read Arrian Bk 8, 9–11.
- He founded another 'Alexandria' at the mouth of the Indus as a port with an eye to India's potential for trade.
- He sent his elephant corps and 10 000 veterans the easy way back to the head of the Persian Gulf and directed his admiral, Nearchus, to sail with the fleet around the coast to the Euphrates.
- Alexander, at the head of 30 000 men, began a terrible 60-day march through the waterless Gedrosian Desert, an unprecedented venture. He and his men suffered overpowering heat, thirst and hunger, and were forced to slaughter their pack animals. Only a quarter of the men with him survived (perhaps an exaggeration). Read Arrian Bk 8, 24–26.
- He linked up with his navy and returned to Susa and then Babylon.



FIGURE 8.26 An engraving of King Porus' army



FIGURE 8.27 An aerial view of the Gedrosian Desert

ACTIVITY 8.6

- 1 Check that you have classified the information gathered on Alexander's generalship under the headings specified in Activity 8.5.
- 2 Describe how Alexander treated Darius III's abandoned wife and family when Darius fled the battle field after his defeat at Issus.
- 3 Assess the significance for Alexander, and for the future of the Mediterranean world, of his entry into Egypt.
- 4 Describe how the great cities of Babylon and Susa reacted to Alexander's victory at Gaugamela.
- 5 What disaster was Alexander responsible for in the heartland of Persia that caused him great shame?
- 6 Describe how Alexander treated the Indian king, Porus.
- 7 What effect did the refusal of his troops to go any further east after the battle of Hydaspes have on Alexander?
- 8 Describe Alexander's return to Babylon through the dreaded Gedrosian Desert.

Organisation and administration of the empire

Early in his campaign, Alexander learnt that he could not merely win battles to conquer the Persian Empire; he had to make an attempt to secure each area before he moved on. He realised he would have to:

- 1 avoid any rigid system of government that applied to the entire empire, but 'to find a localized solution to particular problems'⁴¹ and where possible use the already-established forms of administration.
- 2 win over the local people by showing religious tolerance and respect for local customs, and incorporate local elites in his administration and entourage.

A mixed form of administration

The evidence, sparse as it is, suggests that Alexander did not form one or even a couple of uniform patterns to deal with his conquests, but rather dealt with each new situation in whatever way appeared to him to be appropriate at the time and in the given situation. In most cases, he adhered fairly closely to Persian practice ...

SOURCE 8.18 E. M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, p. 141

- Alexander tended to follow the Persian administrative practices and continued to call the provinces 'satrapies' and the governors 'satraps'. In some cases, he even kept the original officials.
- There is a general belief that he separated civil, military and financial functions, but this did not apply everywhere. It seems that wherever he appointed a non-Macedonian as satrap, like the Persian Mazaeus in Babylon, military and financial duties were in the hands of Macedonians.
- However, in other satrapies, such as Phrygia, there was only one administrator.
- In some cases, a Macedonian was given financial authority over a number of provinces.
- In Egypt, Alexander created 'a very complicated and cumbersome power structure'⁴² due to its significant resources and revenues:
 - He retained the two native administrators (nomarchs) of Upper and Lower Egypt.
 - Finances were in the hands of Cleomenes whose duty it was to assess and collect taxes from the two Egyptian monarchs.
 - Two Macedonians shared military authority and another controlled the fleet, while various cities had their own garrison commanders and there was an official in charge of mercenaries.

- However, in some areas in the far east of the empire Alexander simply chose to make military demonstrations against tribal groups without subjecting them to his authority, and in India, Porus, the defeated monarch, was confirmed as king in his dominions without any Macedonian presence at all.

City building

Alexander followed the example of his father in creating cities. He is believed to have founded 20 cities, 17 of which were given the pre-name of 'Alexandria'. Most were east of the Tigris River in central Asia, and were:

- 'designed to hold captured territory against neighbouring tribal, nomadic peoples and to secure the regions from internal revolutions by the conquered'.⁴³
- strategically located near frontiers and at critical communication sites.
- expected also to become 'large and prosper' so they needed to be well placed for commercial activity.

These cities, generally populated with local inhabitants, retired Greek mercenaries and soldiers unfit for service, appear to have been Greek and Macedonian in form with markets and temples. It is possible that they had assemblies, local magistrates and laws based on the Greek model, and that these applied to Greek and non-Greek alike.

- 1 Alexandria in Areia (modern Herat) was on the ancient trade routes connecting the Middle East with central and southern Asia.
- 2 Alexandria in Arachosia (modern Kandahar) was on the trade routes of southern central and western Asia.
- 3 Alexandria at Caucasus (modern Charikar) controlled the road leading to India.
- 4 Alexandria Eschate (the 'furthest' or 'ultimate') on the Jaxartes River fixed the limit of the empire at the gate between China and southwest Asia at the Tian Shan Mountains, bordering today's Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang).

Alexander's greatest city, Alexandria Rhacotis, on the coast of Egypt

When he (Alexander) saw what wonderful natural advantages the place possessed – for it was a strip of land resembling a broad isthmus, which stretched between the sea and a great lagoon, with a spacious harbour at the end of it ... he ordered the plan of the city to be designed so that it would conform to this site.

SOURCE 8.19 Plutarch, *The Life of Alexander*, 26



FIGURE 8.28 Map of some of the 'Alexandrias' in the far east of Alexander's empire

Alexander intended his new city to:

- 1 include a mixed population of Macedonians and Greeks (veterans, captives, Greeks from different parts) as well as incorporating a mix of other ethnic groups and native Egyptians.
- 2 be easily defensible. Pharos Island would act as a screen, and situated as the city was between Lake Mareotis and the Mediterranean Sea, approached by only two narrow roads, it would be very difficult to attack. Also, it was protected from the east by the Nile delta and from the west by the vast Libyan desert.
- 3 be well placed for commercial activity. The site, removed from the silt thrown up from the westernmost mouth of the Nile, would be accessible to large ships, and to grain and other products transported down the Nile.

Needless to say, that the site looked outward towards Greece would have appealed to Alexander.



FIGURE 8.29 An artist's impression of Ptolemaic Alexandria in the 3rd century BC

Alexander was enthusiastic to begin the layout of the city himself and had input into its initial design and boundaries, and employed an architect and hydraulic engineer to carry out his plan. He remained in Egypt only a few months before heading east to confront Darius III, and unfortunately, he never lived to see his city.

Attempts to win over the local people

Throughout the empire, Alexander practised religious and cultural tolerance.

TABLE 8.4 Examples of Alexander's religious and cultural tolerance

Sardis	When the provincial capital of Sardis yielded to him, he permitted the people 'to observe the old customs of their country and gave them their freedom'. ⁴⁴
Egypt	On his entry into Egypt, he offered a special sacrifice to Apis at Memphis, promised to restore the Egyptian temples desecrated by the Persians and then accepted the position of pharaoh.
Babylon	In Babylon, he instructed that the temples destroyed by Xerxes be rebuilt, in particular the temple of Ba'al (Bel-Marduk), the patron god of Babylon. He received the standard titles of king and took advice from the priests of Marduk in the way to sacrifice to Bel.

TABLE 8.4 (continued)

In Persia and further east	<p>He:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established close bonds with local elites and included them in his entourage as advisers, courtiers and officials. adopted a form of Persian dress, perhaps, as Plutarch suggests, in the belief that if he shared the local habits and customs, it would be 'a great step towards softening men's hearts.'⁴⁵ incorporated oriental units into his ever-growing army in the belief that a policy of assimilation would contribute to the security of the empire while he was far away, because it would be based on goodwill rather than on force. encouraged the intermarriage of Persians and Macedonians to provide a dominant group to administer and safeguard his empire in the future. In 324 at Susa, he held a Persian-style wedding where he and 90 of his Macedonians took women from the noblest Persian families. He also registered and rewarded those 10 000 Macedonian soldiers who had previously taken Asiatic wives.
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ACTIVITY 8.7

- 1 Explain what Source 8.18 reveals about Alexander's various administrative arrangements.
- 2 Demonstrate five examples of Alexander's approach to the problem of administering his conquests.
- 3 Identify where most of Alexander's cities were located and outline their strategic advantages.
- 4 Discuss what Source 8.19 reveals about Alexander's choice for the site of his new city of Alexandria Rhacotis.
- 5 What was the demographic of most of his 'Alexandrias'?
- 6 Alexander, like his Persian predecessors, practised religious and cultural tolerance. List examples of this policy.

Alexander's relationship with his Macedonians

The relationship of the Macedonian commanders and soldiers with Alexander varied from total loyalty and devotion on the one hand, to resentment and open opposition on the other. When he crossed the Hellespont at the age of 22 he was supported by a group of powerful commanders whose loyalty he had no reason to doubt. They had already enthusiastically embraced the Persian campaign. However, towards the end of his career, he held a banquet at Opis in 324 as a reconciliation between himself and his Macedonians.

What had occurred in Asia to increase the tension between Alexander and his men?

ACTIVITY 8.8

- 1 Summarise what you have learnt so far about Alexander's personality.
- 2 Analyse the impact that this might have had on his relationships with the Macedonians.

Discontent with Alexander's Persian policy

Alexander knew that the best guarantees for the security and permanence of his Asiatic empire was to build a bridge between the Macedonians and the Persians, but many of his Macedonians reacted to his attempts with hostility. They saw themselves as the victors and looked with contempt on the defeated barbarians, although many of them had no objection to marrying Persian women.

- Alexander's adoption of Persian dress displeased many of his Macedonians, especially the family of the elderly general Parmenion, who believed Alexander had acquired a taste for oriental luxury.

Plutarch records that, despite the Macedonians' displeasure, 'they admired his other virtues so much that they considered they ought to make concessions to him in some matters which either gave him pleasure or increased his prestige'.⁴⁶

Arrian says it was regrettable that the descendent of Herakles assumed 'Median dress in place of what Macedonians have worn from time immemorial'.⁴⁷

- His policy of selecting 30 000 young Persians to learn Greek and train in Macedonian military tactics to supply him with adequate military leaders for the future upset many of his men. Although his best friend Hephaestion supported this policy, others, like Craterus, his ablest young officer, disapproved. So, Alexander used Hephaestion in his dealings with the Persians, while Craterus liaised with the Macedonian and Greek troops.
- His attempts to introduce prostration (**proskynesis**) at his court in Bactria in 327 caused great offense to his Macedonians. Alexander saw it as a political move to introduce a common court ceremonial practice

proskynesis a Greek term that refers to the traditional Persian act of kissing, bowing, kneeling or prostrating oneself before a person of higher social rank

to show the equal position of the Persians with the Macedonians, and to the Persians it was a mark of their deepest reverence for their king. However, for the Macedonians and Greeks, prostration was only performed before a god. Alexander tried it out with his close associates at a dinner, and while most offered no actual opposition, their displeasure and anger were obvious, especially among older officers who disliked all aspects of Alexander's oriental policy.

Callisthenes, the court historian, was 'the only man to express in public the resentment which all the oldest and best of the Macedonians felt in private'.⁴⁸ His speech against the practice angered Alexander, who told his Macedonians they would not be called upon to prostrate themselves in the future. However, this led to a break in the once close relationship between Alexander and Callisthenes, and the king now regarded him as the head of an opposition. See 249 on evaluation of Arrian's Bk 4.

The execution of Philotas and Parmenion

Plutarch says that Alexander became suspicious of Philotas – the commander of the famous Companion cavalry – when he heard that he had boasted while drunk that all the successes in the campaigns were due to his father, Parmenion, and himself, and that Alexander was a mere boy who owed his position to them.

Alexander said nothing about Philotas' drunken outbursts. However, when two men with knowledge of a conspiracy against Alexander approached Philotas and asked for an interview with the king, Philotas did nothing. When Alexander heard that Philotas had failed to warn him, despite visiting him in his tent every day, he had him arrested, tried and executed.

Parmenion, Philotas' father and Alexander's chief of staff, was also put to death, as well as a number of other relatives in high commands, including Alexander of Lyncestis who was of royal blood and a possible pretender to the throne. Although Parmenion had given long and loyal service to Alexander, Macedonian law dictated that the relatives of a man convicted of treason must also be put to death.

Alexander could have persuaded the army to take a different action, but it was too much of a risk to leave Parmenion alive. These events left a legacy of bitterness and fear among Alexander's friends.

ACTIVITY 8.9

- 1 Define *proskynesis*.
- 2 Explain how it resulted in Macedonian hostility towards Alexander.
- 3 Discuss whether or not Alexander was justified in executing Philotas and Parmenion.
- 4 Discuss whether Alexander was becoming paranoid.

The manslaughter of Cleitus

In 328, during a drunken brawl, Alexander killed Cleitus, the leader of one of the Companion divisions and the man who had saved his life at the Battle of Granicus. See p. 249 for evaluation of Arrian's Bk 4.

For some time, Cleitus had been resentful of Alexander's adoption of eastern manners and of the excessive flattery of his courtiers. The various accounts are contradictory but all agree that the whole company was drunk.

Whatever the cause, Cleitus, hot-tempered by nature and fired up with alcohol, began to insult Alexander, reminding him that he had saved his life and that Alexander alone did not achieve their successes against the Persians. It was Macedonian blood that had made Alexander so great.

When Alexander accused him of stirring up trouble with the Macedonians, Cleitus suggested that Alexander should spend all his time with the barbarians, who would prostrate themselves before his white Persian tunic, and not to bother with free men who spoke their minds.

Alexander, hurt, furious and drunk, ran him through with a spear, despite all attempts to stop the argument. According to Plutarch, the whole affair 'was a misfortune rather than a deliberate act',⁴⁹ but it did reveal the bitterness towards Alexander and the continuing tension felt by some of his closest associates. Horrified at what he had done, Alexander supposedly took to his bed for three days without food or drink, but he made no attempt to justify his crime.



FIGURE 8.30 A painting by André Castaigne (1898) of the killing of Cleitus

A COMMENT ON...

Alexander's drunkenness

There was no doubt that the Macedonian generals and Companions drank heavily at times and most of the sources relate instances of Alexander's inebriation.

Arrian says he felt pity for Alexander, for he allowed himself to become 'the slave of anger and drunkenness'.⁵⁰

Plutarch says that:

- Alexander was 'more moderate in his drinking than generally supposed'. In fact, he liked to 'linger over each cup' and was in fact 'talking rather than drinking' but only when he had 'plenty of leisure'.⁵¹
- It was never really Alexander's fault, that others 'used his intoxication and anger to destroy him'.⁵²

The Conspiracy of the Pages

This conspiracy is supposed to have originated during a hunting expedition, when one of Alexander's pages (personal attendants), Hermolaus, killed a boar before Alexander could strike it himself. The king whipped him in front of the others, and Hermolaus, with the help of five other pages, planned to exact revenge for this humiliation by murdering Alexander while he slept. It is possible that the conspiracy had something to do with Alexander's attempt to enforce prostration, as it occurred soon after.

The plot was foiled and Alexander informed. Even though the boys, under torture, confessed that the plot was entirely their own, Callisthenes was implicated due to his influence with the young men. The pages were stoned to death, but the fate of Callisthenes – imprisonment or death – is not really known.

ACTIVITY 8.10

- 1 Describe what caused the fatal argument between Cleitus and Alexander.
- 2 In your opinion, was Alexander's treatment of the pages justified?
- 3 Discuss the attitude of Arrian and Plutarch to Alexander's drunkenness.

The mutiny of the troops at the Hyphasis River

After weeks of innumerable hardships, monsoon rains and the most difficult battle they had yet fought (against King Porus), the Macedonians refused to follow Alexander beyond the Hyphasis River further into India. Arrian says that the sight of Alexander undertaking 'an endless succession of dangerous and exhausting enterprises was beginning to depress them'.⁵³ They had lost their enthusiasm and grumbled among themselves until Alexander addressed them and invited comment. Coenus spoke for them all, explaining how the men were yearning for home where they could live in peace and enjoy the treasures that Alexander had enabled them to win. He emphasised that a successful man should know when to stop.

Alexander reacted angrily, declaring that he would continue with or without them and then retired to his tent, hoping they would change their minds. His men resented his outburst and refused to be manipulated. When Alexander took the omens for crossing the river, they proved unfavourable and he decided to go no further east.

Purges of inefficient and corrupt officials

Prior to his march into India, Alexander had put to death several top officials, such as Menander (one of the Companions) because he had refused to stay at his garrison post. Plutarch says that by this time Alexander 'was already feared by his men for his relentless severity in punishing any dereliction of duty'.⁵⁴

When he returned to Susa, Alexander carried out a purge of top government officials and army officers guilty of maladministration, plunder of temples, acts of violence and incitement to revolt. He executed two of his Macedonian generals stationed in Media for crimes against the populace and 600 common soldiers for participating in these crimes.

Cleander was one of the first officers to be executed and the purge went on for months. During this time, Harpalus, the royal treasurer, fled to the west with embezzled funds from the treasury. See p. 235.

The parade of the 'Inheritors'

The 30 000 Persians who had been trained on Macedonian lines were paraded before Alexander when he returned to Susa and incorporated as a separate unit into the army. Arrian writes, 'It is said that their coming caused much bad feeling among the Macedonians who felt it was an indication of his many efforts to lessen his dependence for the future on his countrymen'.⁵⁵

They also resented foreigners being recruited into the regiments of the Companions. The belief that Alexander no longer cared for his own people gained strength. To placate them he offered to pay off all the debts they had incurred throughout their time in Asia.

The mutiny and reconciliation at Opus

In 324, at Opus on the Tigris River, Alexander, hoping to gratify his men, announced that all the sick and disabled and those unfit for military service because of age were to be discharged with very generous payments and sent home.

Despite having claimed their desire to return home during their mutiny at the Hyphasis River, the Macedonians felt Alexander was deliberately humiliating them, and in their resentment called on him to send all his Macedonians home as useless while he went on to conquer the world with 'his corps of young ballet soldiers'.⁵⁶ Hurt by their reaction, Alexander called their bluff and began recruiting Persians for a new royal squadron and appointing Persian officers to high commands.

The Macedonians eventually came to their senses and begged to be forgiven for their jealousy, anger and ingratitude. Alexander responded to their claims of repentance and pardoned them. In order to regain their loyalty for any future campaign, he called them all *syngensis* (kinsmen), making even the common soldier equal to the noblest Persian.

He held a great banquet of reconciliation at which 9000 were present. Alexander prayed for *homonoia* or concord between Macedonians, Greeks and Persians. Once he had courted the Macedonians, he did as he had always planned and dismissed those no longer fit to serve.

ACTIVITY 8.11

- 1 Explain why the Macedonians refused to go beyond the Hyphasis River.
- 2 Recount how Harpalus and Cleomenes betrayed Alexander.
- 3 Explain why it was necessary for Alexander to hold a banquet of reconciliation at Opis in 324.
- 4 Construct a detailed mind map to illustrate Alexander's changing relationship with his Macedonians.

Alexander's relationship with the Greeks

Alexander's relationship with the Greeks of the mainland was determined by his position as hegemon of the League of Corinth.

- Anxious to give the Greeks who remained at home a share in his victory at Granicus in 334, he sent spoils back to Greece engraved with the following inscription: 'Alexander, the son of Philip, and the Greeks (except the Lacedaemonians) dedicate these spoils taken from the Persians who dwell in Asia.'⁵⁷
- Although the Macedonian hegemony over Greece was not universally popular, and Alexander never discounted the possibility of a Persian-instigated Greek uprising, the Greeks avoided provocative actions while Alexander was alive and winning victories in Asia.
- The large number of exiles (and retired mercenaries) in Asia in the 4th century BC was symptomatic of the violent political strife in Greek states. Alexander issued a decree allowing them to return to their former cities.
- The Greek city-states of Asia Minor were brought over to the side of Alexander, either voluntarily or by force, and in most cases he overthrew the ruling cliques and established democracies. They were treated as Alexander's free allies.

The Spartan revolt

The Spartans had refused to join the League of Corinth and were therefore not bound by its resolutions. Prior to the Battle of Issus, the Spartan king Agis IV communicated with Persia to form an anti-Macedonian coalition and began raising money and ships in the Aegean to be sent to the Peloponnese. Although the defeat of the Persians at Issus was a setback for him, King Agis continued to build up a mercenary force. He had some initial success, defeating a Macedonian force in the Peloponnese, but Antipater, with Greek League forces to augment his own Macedonians, marched into the Peloponnese and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Spartan-led Greeks. With the death of Agis in battle, the opposition to Macedonia collapsed.

The Harpalus affair

Relations between Athens and Alexander were strained over Athens' failure to hand over his treasurer, Harpalus, who had embezzled 5000 talents from the royal treasury in Babylon and fled to Athens in 424 with 6000 mercenaries. Rather than hand him over, the Athenians put him in prison and deposited

