**The Assassination of Philip II** (336 BC) FQ: **Did Alexander have anything to do with it?**

The murder occurred during October 336 BC, at [Aegae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vergina), the ancient capital of the kingdom of Macedon. The court had gathered there for the celebration of the marriage between [Alexander I of Epirus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_I_of_Epirus) and Philip's daughter, by his fourth wife [Olympias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympias), [Cleopatra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleopatra_of_Macedon). While the king was entering unprotected into the town's theater (highlighting his approachability to the Greek diplomats present), he was killed by [Pausanias of Orestis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pausanias_of_Orestis), one of his seven bodyguards. The assassin immediately tried to escape and reach his associates who were waiting for him with horses at the entrance of Aegae. He was pursued by three of Philip's bodyguards; tripping on a vine, he died by their hands.

The reasons for Pausanias' assassination of Philip are difficult to expound fully, since there was already controversy among ancient historians. The only contemporary account in our possession is that of [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) who states rather tersely that Philip was killed because Pausanias had been offended by the followers of [Attalus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attalus_(general)), Philip's wife Cleopatra's uncle.

Fifty years later, the historian [Cleitarchus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleitarchus) expanded and embellished the story. Centuries later, this version was to be narrated by [Diodorus Siculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diodorus_Siculus) and all the historians who used Cleitarchus. According to the sixteenth book of Diodorus' history,[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_II_of_Macedon#cite_note-14) Pausanias (of Orestis) had been a lover of Philip, but became jealous when Philip turned his attention to a younger man, also called Pausanias. The elder Pausanias's taunting of the new lover caused the youth to throw away his life, which turned his friend Attalus against the elder Pausanias. Attalus took his revenge by inviting Pausanias to dinner, getting him drunk, then subjecting him to sexual assault.

When Pausanias complained to Philip, the king felt unable to chastise Attalus, as he was about to send him to Asia with [Parmenion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parmenion), to establish a bridgehead for his planned invasion. He also married Attalus's niece, or daughter, [Eurydice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleopatra_Eurydice_of_Macedon) (Our family tree shows Eurydice to be a niece). Rather than offend Attalus, Philip tried to mollify Pausanias by elevating him within the bodyguard. Pausanias' desire for revenge seems to have turned towards the man who had failed to avenge his damaged honour, so he planned to kill Philip. Some time after the alleged rape, while Attalus was already in Asia fighting the Persians, he put his plan in action.

Other historians (e.g., [Justin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justin_(historian)) 9.7) suggested that Alexander and/or his mother [Olympias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympias) were at least privy to the intrigue, if not themselves instigators. The latter seems to have been anything but discreet in manifesting her gratitude to Pausanias, according to Justin's report: he says that the same night of her return from exile she placed a crown on the assassin's corpse and erected a [tumulus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulus) to his memory, ordering annual sacrifices to the memory of Pausanias.

Many modern historians have observed that all the accounts are improbable. In the case of Pausanias, the stated motive of the crime hardly seems adequate. On the other hand, the implication of Alexander and Olympias seems specious (*hollow, false, erroneous*): to act as they did would have required brazen (*bold, audacious*) effrontery (*boldness, impudence, cheek*) in the face of a military personally loyal to Philip. What seems to be recorded in this are the natural suspicions that fell on the chief beneficiaries (*heirs, recipients)* of the murder; their actions after the murder, however sympathetic they might seem (if actual), cannot prove their guilt in the deed itself.

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| Reasons, according to **Aristotle**: (Consider, if he knew P and A, why was he so ‘terse’?)  Philip was killed because Pausanias had been offended by the followers of Attalus, Philip’s wife Cleopatra’s uncle. His ‘terse’ explanation (lacking certain detail, abrupt) is likely due to | **Cleitarchus**’s explanation as it appeared in **Diodorus Siculus**’ text:  Pausanias (of Orestis) had been a lover of Philip, but became jealous when Philip turned his attention to a younger man, also called Pausanias. The elder Pausanias's taunting of the new lover caused the youth to throw away his life, which turned his friend Attalus against the elder Pausanias. Attalus took his revenge by inviting Pausanias to dinner, getting him drunk, then subjecting him to sexual assault.    When Pausanias complained to Philip, the king felt unable to chastise Attalus, as he was about to send him to Asia with Parmenion, to establish a bridgehead for his planned invasion. He also married Attalus's niece, or daughter, Eurydice (Our family tree shows Eurydice to be a niece). Rather than offend Attalus, Philip tried to mollify Pausanias by elevating him within the bodyguard. Pausanias' desire for revenge seems to have turned towards the man who had failed to avenge his damaged honour, so he planned to kill Philip. Some time after the alleged rape, while Attalus was already in Asia fighting the Persians, he put his plan in action. |
| **Justin**’s version:  Alexander and/or his mother Olympias were at least privy to the intrigue, if not themselves instigators. The latter seems to have been anything but discreet in manifesting her gratitude to Pausanias, according to Justin's report: he says that the same night of her return from exile she placed a crown on the assassin's corpse and erected a tumulus to his memory, ordering annual sacrifices to the memory of Pausanias. |
| **Reasons for modern historians’ dubiousness** about all versions:  In the case of Pausanias, the stated motive of the crime hardly seems adequate. On the other hand, the implication of Alexander and Olympias seems specious (hollow, false, erroneous): to act as they did would have required brazen (bold, audacious) effrontery (boldness, impudence, cheek) in the face of a military personally loyal to Philip. What seems to be recorded in this are the natural suspicions that fell on the chief beneficiaries (heirs, recipients) of the murder; their actions after the murder, however sympathetic they might seem (if actual), cannot prove their guilt in the deed itself. |

Positive qualities inherent in Alexander and others that were part of the ‘Great Soul Man’ he sought to emulate:

* Insatiable curiosity about the world
* Desire to explore the unknown
* To ‘go beyond’ all others in excellence
* To aim for practical thoughtfulness in everything he did
* To respect loyalty
* To seek honour through competition
* To never be afraid to admit when he made mistakes