

= Battle of Chaeronea (338 BC) =

The Battle of Chaeronea was fought in 338 BC , near the city of Chaeronea in Boeotia , between the Macedonians led by Philip II of Macedon and an alliance of some of the Greek city @-@ states including Athens and Thebes . The battle was the culmination of Philip 's campaign in Greece (339 ? 338 BC) and resulted in a decisive victory for the Macedonians .

Philip had brought peace to a war @-@ torn Greece in 346 BC , by ending the Third Sacred War , and concluding his ten @-@ year conflict with Athens for supremacy in the north Aegean , by making a separate peace . Philip 's much expanded kingdom , powerful army and plentiful resources now made him the de facto leader of Greece . To many of the fiercely independent Greek city @-@ states , Philip 's power after 346 BC was perceived as a threat to their liberty , especially in Athens , where the politician Demosthenes led efforts to break away from Philip 's influence . In 340 BC Demosthenes convinced the Athenian assembly to sanction action against Philip 's territories and to ally with Byzantium , which Philip was besieging . These actions were against the terms of their treaty oaths and amounted to a declaration of war . In summer 339 BC , Philip therefore led his army into Greece , prompting the formation of an alliance of Greek states opposed to him , led by Athens and Thebes .

After several months of stalemate , Philip finally advanced into Boeotia in an attempt to march on Thebes and Athens . Opposing him , and blocking the road near Chaeronea , was the allied Greek army , similar in size and occupying a strong position . Details of the ensuing battle are scarce , but after a long fight the Macedonians crushed both flanks of the allied line , which then dissolved into a rout .

The battle has been described as one of the most decisive of the ancient world . The forces of Athens and Thebes were destroyed , and continued resistance was impossible ; the war therefore came to an abrupt end . Philip was able to impose a settlement upon Greece , which all states accepted , with the exception of Sparta . The League of Corinth , formed as a result , made all participants allies of Macedon and each other , with Philip as the guarantor of the peace . In turn , Philip was voted as strategos (general) for a pan @-@ Hellenic war against the Persian Empire , which he had long planned . However , before he was able to take charge of the campaign , Philip was assassinated , and the kingdom of Macedon and responsibility for the war with Persia passed instead to his son Alexander .

= = Background = =

In the decade following his accession in 359 BC , the Macedonian king , Philip II , had rapidly strengthened and expanded his kingdom into Thrace and Chalkidiki on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea . He was aided in this process by the distraction of Athens and Thebes , the two most powerful city @-@ states in Greece at that point , by events elsewhere . In particular , these events included the Social War between Athens and her erstwhile allies (357 ? 355 BC) , and the Third Sacred War which erupted in central Greece in 356 BC between the Phocians and the other members of the Delphic Amphictyonic League . Much of Philip 's expansion during this period was at the nominal expense of the Athenians , who considered the north Aegean coast as their sphere of influence , and Philip was at war with Athens from 356 ? 346 BC .

Philip was not originally a belligerent in the Sacred War , but became involved at the request of the Thessalians . Seeing an opportunity to expand his influence into Greece proper , Philip obliged , and in 353 or 352 BC won a decisive victory over the Phocians at the Battle of Crocus Field in Thessaly . In the aftermath , Philip was made archon of Thessaly , which gave him control of the levies and revenues of the Thessalian Confederation , thereby greatly increasing his power . However , Philip did not intervene further in the Sacred War until 346 BC . Early in that year , the Thebans , who had borne the brunt of the Sacred War , together with the Thessalians , asked Philip to assume the " leadership of Greece " and join them in fighting the Phocians . Philip 's power was by now so great that ultimately the Phocians did not even attempt to resist , and instead surrendered to him ; Philip was thus able to end a particularly bloody war without any further fighting . Philip allowed the

Amphictyonic council the formal responsibility of punishing the Phocians , but ensured that the terms were not overly harsh ; nevertheless , the Phocians were expelled from the Amphictyonic League , all their cities were destroyed , and they were resettled in villages of no more than fifty houses .

By 346 BC , the Athenians were war @-@ weary , unable to match Philip 's strength , and had begun to contemplate the necessity of making peace . Nevertheless , when it became apparent that Philip would march south that year , the Athenians originally planned to help the Phocians (whom they were allied to) keep Philip out of central Greece , by occupying the pass of Thermopylae , where Philip 's superior numbers would be of little benefit . The Athenians had successfully used this tactic to prevent Philip attacking Phocis itself after his victory at Crocus Field . The occupation of Thermopylae was not only for the benefit of Phocis ; excluding Philip from central Greece also prevented him from marching on Athens itself . However , by the end of February , the general Phalaikos was restored to power in Phocis , and he refused to allow the Athenians access to Thermopylae . Suddenly unable to guarantee their own security , the Athenians were forced instead into making peace with Philip ; the treaty that was agreed (the Peace of Philocrates) also made Athens reluctant allies of Macedon .

For the Athenians , the treaty had been expedient , but it was never popular . Philip 's actions in 346 BC had expanded his influence over all Greece , and although he had brought peace , he had come to be seen as the enemy of the traditional liberty of the city @-@ states . The orator and politician Demosthenes had been a principal architect of the Peace of Philocrates , but almost as soon as it was agreed , he wished to be rid of it . Over the next few years , Demosthenes became leader of the " war @-@ party " in Athens , and at every opportunity he sought to undermine the peace . From 343 BC onwards , in order to try to disrupt the peace , Demosthenes and his followers used every expedition and action of Philip to argue that he was breaking the peace . Conversely , there was at first a substantial body of feeling in Athens , led by Aeschines , that the peace , unpopular though it was , should be maintained and developed . Towards the end of the decade however , the " war party " gained the ascendancy , and began to openly goad Philip ; in 341 BC for instance , the Athenian general Diopithes ravaged the territory of Philip 's ally Cardia , even though Philip demanded that they desist . Philip 's patience finally ran out when the Athenians formed an alliance with Byzantium , which Philip was at that time besieging , and he wrote the Athenians declaring war . Shortly afterward Philip broke off the siege of Byzantium ; Cawkwell suggests that Philip had decided to deal with Athens once and for all . Philip went on campaign against the Scythians , and then began to prepare for war in Greece .

= = Prelude = =

Philip 's forthcoming campaign in Greece became linked with a new , fourth , Sacred War . The citizens of Amphissa in Ozolian Locris had begun cultivating land sacred to Apollo on the Crisaean Plain south of Delphi ; after some internal bickering the Amphictyonic council decided to declare a sacred war against Amphissa . A Thessalian delegate proposed that Philip should be made leader of the Amphictyonic effort , which therefore gave Philip a pretext to campaign in Greece ; it is , however , probable that Philip would have gone ahead with his campaign anyway .

At the start of 339 BC , the Thebans had seized the town of Nicaea near Thermopylae , which Philip had garrisoned in 346 BC . Philip does not appear to have treated this as a declaration of war , but it nevertheless presented him with a significant problem , blocking the main route into Greece . However , a second route into central Greece was available , leading over the shoulder of Mount Callidromos and descending into Phocis . However , the Athenians and Thebans had either forgotten the existence of this road , or believed that Philip would not use it ; the subsequent failure to guard this road allowed Philip to slip into central Greece unhindered . Philip 's relatively lenient treatment of the Phocians at the end of the Third Sacred War in 346 BC now bore fruit . Reaching Elatea , he ordered the city to be re @-@ populated , and during the next few months the whole Phocian Confederation was restored to its former state . This provided Philip with a base in Greece , and new , grateful allies in the Phocians . Philip probably arrived in Phocis in November 339 BC , but the Battle of Chaeronea did not occur until August 338 BC . During this period Philip discharged

his responsibility to the Amphicytonic council by settling the situation in Amphissa . He tricked a force of 10 @, @ 000 mercenaries who were guarding the road from Phocis to Amphissa into abandoning their posts , then took Amphissa and expelled its citizens , turning it over to Delphi . He probably also engaged in diplomatic attempts to avoid further conflict in Greece , although if so , he was unsuccessful .

When news first arrived that Philip was in Elatea , just three days march away , there was panic in Athens . In what Cawkwell describes as his proudest moment , Demosthenes alone counseled against despair , and proposed that the Athenians should seek an alliance with the Thebans ; his decree was passed , and he was sent as ambassador . Philip had also sent an embassy to Thebes , requesting that the Thebans join him , or at least allow him to pass through Boeotia unhindered . Since the Thebans were still not formally at war with Philip , they could have avoided the conflict altogether . However , in spite of Philip 's proximity , and their traditional enmity with Athens , they chose to ally with the Athenians , in the cause of liberty for Greece . The Athenian army had already pre @-@ emptively been sent in the direction of Boeotia , and was therefore able to join the Thebans within days of the alliance being agreed .

The details of the campaign leading up to Chaeronea are almost completely unknown . Philip was presumably prevented from entering Boeotia by way of Mount Helicon , as the Spartans had done in the run @-@ up to the Battle of Leuctra ; or by any of the other mountain passes that led into Boeotia from Phocis . There were certainly some preliminary skirmishes ; Demosthenes alludes to a " winter battle " and " battle on the river " in his speeches , but no other details are preserved . Finally , in August 338 BC , Philip 's army marched straight down the main road from Phocis to Boeotia , to assault the main allied army defending the road at Chaeronea .

= = Opposing forces = =

According to Diodorus , the Macedonian army numbered roughly 30 @, @ 000 infantry and 2 @, @ 000 cavalry , a figure generally accepted by modern historians . Philip took command of the right wing of the Macedonian army and placed his 18 @-@ year @-@ old son Alexander (the future conqueror of the Persian Empire) in command of the left wing , accompanied by a group of Philip 's experienced generals .

The allied Greek army included contingents from Achaea , Corinth , Chalcis , Epidaurus , Megara and Troezen , with the majority of troops being supplied by Athens and Thebes . The Athenian contingent was led by the generals Chares and Lysicles , and the Thebans by Theagenes . No source provides exact numbers for the Greek army , although Justin suggests that the Greeks were " far superior in number of soldiers " ; the modern view is that the numbers of the city states that fought were approximately equal to those of the Macedonians . The Athenians took up positions on the left wing , the Thebans on the right , and the other allies in the centre .

= = Strategic and tactical considerations = =

The Greek army had taken up a position near Chaeronea , astride the main road . On the left flank , the Greek line lay across the foothills of Mount Thurion , blocking the side @-@ road that led to Lebedea , while on the right , the line rested against the Kephisos River , near a projecting spur of Mount Aktion . The Greek line , which was about 2 @. @ 5 miles in length , was thus secure on both flanks . Moreover , the Greek line seems to have slanted north @-@ eastwards across the plain in between , so that it did not face the direction of Macedonian advance full @-@ square . This prevented Philip from attempting to concentrate his force on the Greek right wing , since the advanced position of the Greek left wing would then threaten Philip 's right . Although Philip could attempt to concentrate his force against the Greek left , the troops there occupied high ground , and any attack would be difficult . Since the Greeks could remain on the defensive , having only to prevent Philip 's advance , their position was therefore strategically and tactically very strong .

= = Battle = =

Details of the battle itself are scarce , with Diodorus providing the only formal account . He says that " once joined , the battle was hotly contested for a long time and many fell on both sides , so that for a while the struggle permitted hopes of victory to both . " He then recounts that the young Alexander , " his heart set on showing his father his prowess " succeeded in rupturing the Greek line aided by his companions , and eventually put the Greek right wing to flight ; meanwhile , Philip advanced in person against the Greek left and also put it to flight .

This brief account can be filled out , if Polyaeus 's account of the battle is to be believed . Polyaeus collected many snippets of information on warfare in his *Strategems* ; some are known from other sources to be reliable , while others are demonstrably false . In the absence of other evidence , it is unclear whether his passage regarding Chaeronea is to be accepted or rejected . Polyaeus suggests that Philip engaged the Greek left , but then withdrew his troops ; the Athenians on the Greek left followed and , when Philip held the high ground , he stopped retreating and attacked the Athenians , eventually routing them . In another ' stratagem ' , Polyaeus suggests that Philip deliberately prolonged the battle , to take advantage of the rawness of the Athenian troops (his own veterans being more used to fatigue) and delayed his main attack until the Athenians were exhausted . This latter anecdote also appears in the earlier *Stratagems* of Frontinus .

Polyaeus 's accounts have led some modern historians to tentatively propose the following synthesis of the battle . After the general engagement had been in progress for some time , Philip had his army perform a wheeling manoeuvre , with the right wing withdrawing , and the whole line pivoting around its centre . At the same time , wheeling forward , the Macedonian left wing attacked the Thebans on the Greek right and punched a hole in the Greek line . On the Greek left , the Athenians followed Philip , their line becoming stretched and disordered ; the Macedonians then turned , attacked and routed the tired and inexperienced Athenians . The Greek right wing , under the assault of the Macedonian troops under Alexander 's command , then also routed , ending the battle .

Many historians , including Hammond and Cawkwell , place Alexander in charge of the Companion Cavalry during the battle , perhaps because of Diodorus 's use of the word " companions " . However , there is no mention of cavalry in any ancient account of the battle , nor does there seem to have been space for it to operate against the flank of the Greek army . Plutarch says that Alexander was the " first to break the ranks of the Sacred Band of the Thebans " , the elite of the Theban infantry , who were stationed on the extreme right of the Greek battle line . However , he also says that the Sacred Band had " met the spears of [the Macedonian] phalanx face to face " . This , together with the improbability that a head @-@ on cavalry charge against the spear @-@ armed Thebans could have succeeded (because horses will generally shy from such a barrier) , has led Gaebel and others to suggest that Alexander must have been commanding a portion of the Macedonian phalanx at Chaeronea .

Diodorus says that more than 1 @,@ 000 Athenians died in the battle , with another 2 @,@ 000 taken prisoner , and that the Thebans fared similarly . Plutarch suggests that all 300 of the Sacred Band were killed at the battle , having previously been seen as invincible . In the Roman period , the ' Lion of Chaeronea ' , an enigmatic monument on the site of the battle , was believed to mark the resting place of the Sacred Band . Modern excavations found the remains of 254 soldiers underneath the monument ; it is therefore generally accepted that this was indeed the grave of the Sacred Band , since it is unlikely that every member was killed .

= = Aftermath = =

Cawkwell suggests that this was one of the most decisive battles in ancient history . Since there was now no army which could prevent Philip 's advance , the war effectively ended . In Athens and Corinth , records show desperate attempts to re @-@ build the city walls , as they prepared for siege . However , Philip had no intention of besieging any city , nor indeed of conquering Greece . He wanted the Greeks as his allies for his planned campaign against the Persians , and he wanted to leave a stable Greece in his rear when he went on campaign ; further fighting was therefore

contrary to his aims . Philip marched first to Thebes , which surrendered to him ; he expelled the Theban leaders who had opposed him , recalled those pro @-@ Macedonian Thebans who had previously been exiled , and installed a Macedonian garrison . He also ordered that the Boeotian cities of Plataea and Thespieae , which Thebes had destroyed in previous conflicts , be re @-@ founded . Generally , Philip treated the Thebans severely , making them pay for the return of their prisoners , and even to bury their dead ; he did not , however , dissolve the Boeotian Confederacy .

By contrast , Philip treated Athens very leniently ; although the Second Athenian Confederacy was dissolved , the Athenians were allowed to keep their colony on Samos , and their prisoners were freed without ransom . Philip 's motives are not entirely clear , but one likely explanation is that he hoped to use the Athenian navy in his campaign against Persia , since Macedon did not possess a substantial fleet ; he therefore needed to remain on good terms with the Athenians . Philip also made peace with the other combatants ; Corinth and Chalcis , which controlled important strategic locations both received Macedonian garrisons . He then turned to deal with Sparta , which had not taken part in the conflict , but was likely to take advantage of the weakened state of the other Greek cities to try to attack its neighbours in the Peloponnese . The Spartans refused Philip 's invitation to engage in discussions , so Philip ravaged Lacedaemonia , but did not attack Sparta itself .

Philip seems to have moved around Greece in the months after the battle , making peace with the states that opposed him , dealing with the Spartans , and installing garrisons ; his movements also probably served as a demonstration of force to the other cities , that they should not try to oppose him . In mid 337 BC , he seems to have camped near Corinth , and began the work to establish a league of the Greek city @-@ states , which would guarantee peace in Greece , and provide Philip with military assistance against Persia . The result , the League of Corinth , was formed in the latter half of 337 BC at a congress organised by Philip . All states signed up to the league , with the exception of Sparta . The principal terms of the concord were that all members became allied to each other , and to Macedon , and that all members were guaranteed freedom from attack , freedom of navigation , and freedom from interference in internal affairs . Philip , and the Macedonian garrisons installed in Greece , would act as the ' keepers of the peace ' . At Philip 's behest , the synod of the league then declared war on Persia , and voted Philip as Strategos for the forthcoming campaign .

An advance Macedonian force was sent to Persia in early 336 BC , with Philip due to follow later in the year . However , before he could depart , Philip was assassinated by one of his bodyguards . Alexander therefore became King of Macedon , and in a series of campaigns lasting from 334 to 323 BC , he conquered the whole Persian Empire .

= = Thematic appraisal = =

Philip 's feint withdrawal was the main tactic which stemmed all the subsequent planned manoeuvres .

It lured on the Athenian left wing to the front and left , which thereby extended and weakened the whole line .

This meant that a gap created somewhere along the line , probably between the center and the Theban Sacred Band on the right .

It was through this gap Alexander and the cavalry charged . He thus made the first break in the line .

Alexander had surrounded the Sacred Band , who refused to move and were thus annihilated .

Philip on the other hand counter @-@ attacked the Athenian left wing and routed it .

The rest of the Athenian line was next rolled up from both ends .