ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

Lecture 21: From Bactria to Babylon

Soghdian Rock

He had called on them to discuss terms, and offered to allow them to return unmolested to their homes on condition of surrendering the stronghold; but their answer to the offer was a shout of laughter. Then in their barbaric lingo they told Alexander to find soldiers with wings to capture the Rock for him, as no other sort of person could cause them the least anxiety. As a result of this Alexander proclaimed that he would give a price of twelve talents to the first man up, eleven to the second, and ten to the third, and so on to the twelfth, who would receive 300 gold darics.

Arrian *Anabasis* 4.19

Rhoxane

- Alexander marries the daughter of Oxyartes
- Move to consolidate the alliances of the Bactrian barons?
- Merger of East and West

Proskynesis

Chares of Mitylene says that on one occasion at a banquet Alexander, after he had drunk, passed the cup to one of is friends, who took it and rose so as to face the shrine of the household; next he drank in his turn, then performed proskynesis toward Alexander, kissed him and resumed his place on the couch. All the guests did the same in succession, until the cup came to Callisthenes. The king was talking to Hephaestion and paying no attention to Callisthenes, and the philosopher, after he had drunk, came forward to kiss him. At this Demetrius, whose surname was Pheido, called out, 'Sire do not kiss him; he is the only one who has not made obeisance to you.' Alexander therefore refused to kiss him, and Callisthenes exclaimed in a loud voice, 'Very well then, I shall go away the poorer by a kiss.'

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 54

Conspiracy of the Pages

However, in a letter which he write later to Antipater and in which he includes Callisthenes in the general accusation, he says; 'The youths were stoned to death by the Macedonians, but as for the sophist I shall punish him myself, and I shall not forget those who sent him to me, or the others who give shelter in their cities to those who plot against my life.' In these words, at least, he plainly reveals his hostility to Aristotle in whose house Callisthenes had been brought up, since he was a son of Hero, who was Aristotle's niece. As for Callisthenes' death, according to some accounts Alexander ordered him to be hanged, but others have it that he was thrown into chains and died of disease. Chares tells us that after his arrest he was kept in prison for seven months in order to be tried by the Council of the League of Corinth in the presence of Aristotle, but that about the time when Alexander was wounded in India he died of excessive corpulence and the disease of lice.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander 55*

Into India

- Very bad historical information available to Alexander
- Only Dionysus and Heracles had had some success in conquering India
- Alexander hopes to rival both

Ambhi and Porus

- Minor Indian prince Ambhi approaches Alexander with gifts (including 25 elephants)
- Alliance with Alexander
- Hopes to gain advantage against his rival Porus

Splitting the Army

- Hephaestion and Perdiccas take ½ the calvary, 3 phalanx battalions and the baggage train through the Kyber pass to the Indus
- Alexander and Craterus go up the Choaspes (Kunar) river and march through Bajaur and Swat
- Meet at the Indus
- Hephaestion's route is fairly easy, Alexander's difficult

Violent Resistance

- Most towns offer violent resistance rather than surrender:

  Now the best fighters among the Indians were mercenaries…So he concluded a truce with them when they were in one city, allowed them to leave, and then attacked them on the march and annihilated them. This action remains a blot on his career as a soldier: on all other occasions he observed the normal usages of war and behaved like a king.

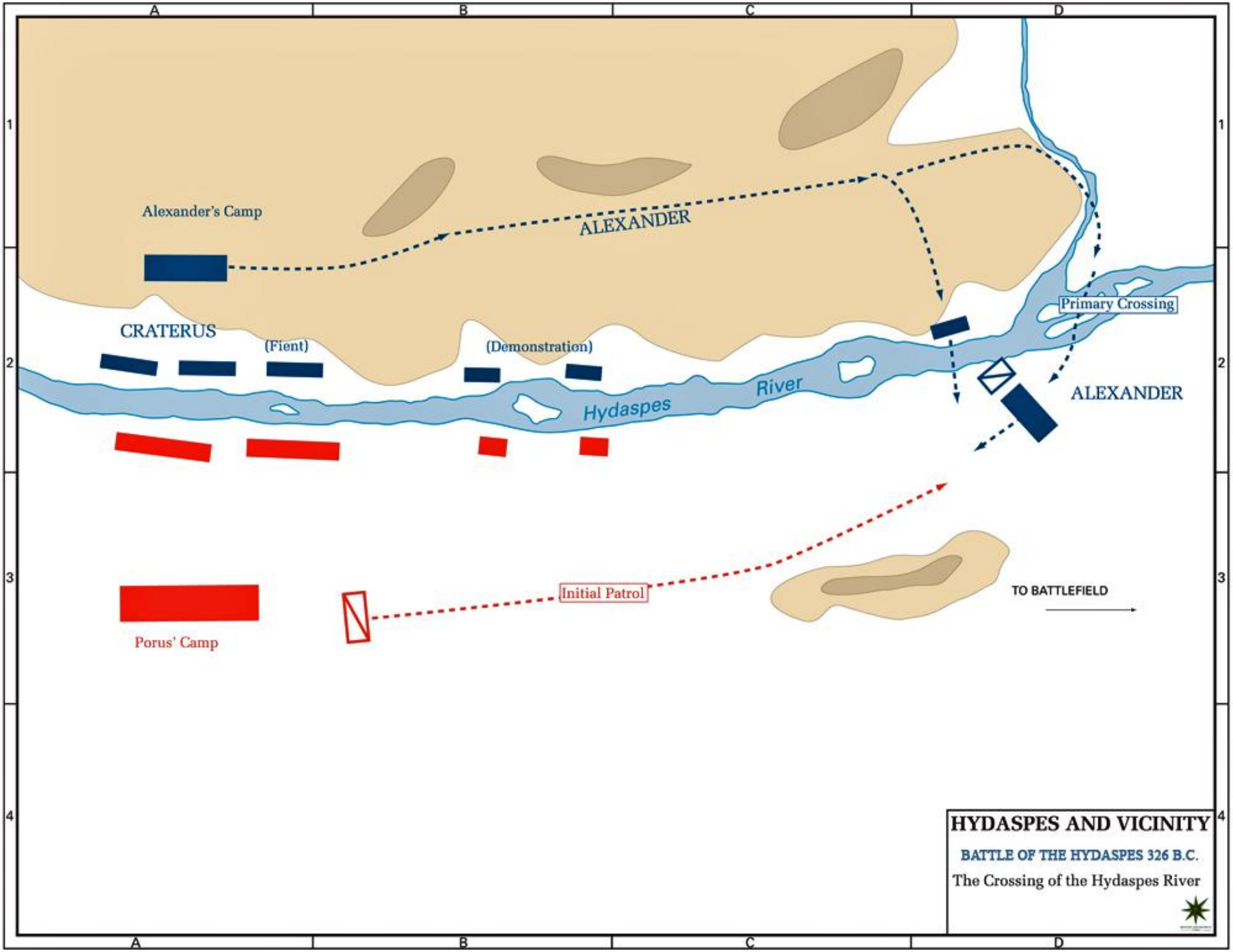
Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 59

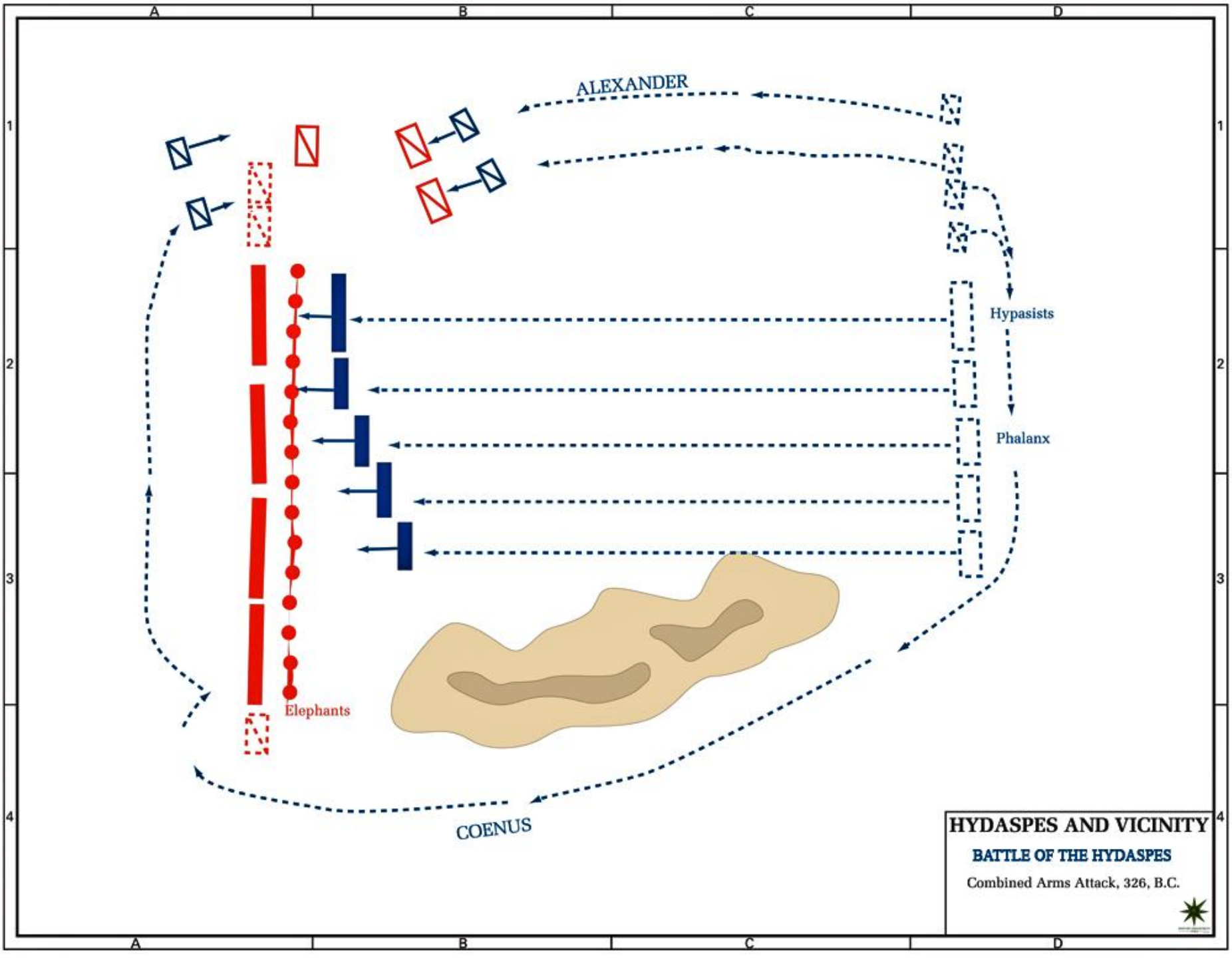
Equal to the gods?

- Surrender of Nysa
  - Association with Dionysus
  - People who make wine (rare in the region)
  - Sacrifice goats for religious purposes
- Rock of Aornus
  - “not captured” by Heracles
  - Alexander captures it

Battle with Porus

- Battle at the Hydaspes River
- Porus uses elephants to disrupt Alexander's lines
  - Elephants are extremely useful against horses
- Alexander hides his intentions on how to cross the river
- Alexander moves his troops constantly, particularly at night
- Porus stops following his every movement
- Attack must be a surprise
- Prepare a feint in the centre
- Main force goes upstream to a crossing
- Everything almost goes wrong as they disembark on a jetty not on the bank


Alexander's Camp
ALEXANDER
CRATERUS
(Fient)
(Demonstration)
Hydaspes
River
Primary Crossing
ALEXANDER
Initial Patrol
TO BATTLEFIELD
Porus' Camp
HYDASPES AND VICINITY
BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES 326 B.C.
The Crossing of the Hydaspes River


ALEXANDER
Hypasists
Phalanx
Elephants
COENUS
HYDASPES AND VICINITY
BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES
Combined Arms Attack, 326, B.C.

When two strong men stand face to face tho' they come from the ends of the earth

Alexander, informed of his approach, rode out to meet him, accompanied by a small party of his Companions. When they met, he reined in his horse, and looked at his adversary with admiration: he was a magnificent figure of a man, over seven feet high and of great personal beauty; his bearing had lost none of its pride; his air was one of a brave man meeting another, of a king in the presence of a king, with whom he had fought honourably for his kingdom.

Alexander was the first to speak, 'What,' he said, 'do you wish that I should do with you?'

'Treat me as a king ought,' Porus is said to have replied.

'For my part,' said Alexander, pleased by his answer, your request shall be granted. But is there not something you should wish for yourself? Ask it.'

'Everything,' said Porus, 'is contained in this one request.'

Arrian *Anabasis* 5.19

Porus' Reward

- Porus retained in his kingdom
- Territories Alexander conquers after his defeat are given to Porus

Further Conquests?

Alexander observed that his soldiers were exhausted with their constant campaigns. They had spent almost eight years among toils and dangers, and it was necessary to raise their spirits by an effective appeal if they were to undertake the expedition against the Gandaridae. There had been many losses among the soldiers, and no relief from fighting was in sight. The hooves of the horses had been worn thin by steady marching. The arms and armour were wearing out, and Greek clothing was quite gone. They had to clothe themselves in foreign materials, recutting the garments of the Indians. This was the season also, as luck would have it, of the heavy rains. These had been going on for seventy days, to the accompaniment of continuous thunder and lightning.

The end of the adventure

All this he accounted adverse to his project, and he saw only one hope of gaining his wish, if he might gain the soldiers' great goodwill through gratitude. Accordingly he allowed them to ravage the enemy's country, which was full of every good thing. During these days when the army was busy foraging, he called together the wives of the soldiers and their children; to the wives he undertook to give a monthly ration, to the children he distributed a service bonus in proportion to the military records of their fathers. When the soldiers returned laden with wealth from their expedition, he brought them together to a meeting. He delivered a carefully prepared speech about the expedition against the Gandaridae but the Macedonians did not accept it, and he gave up the undertaking.

Diodorus 17.94

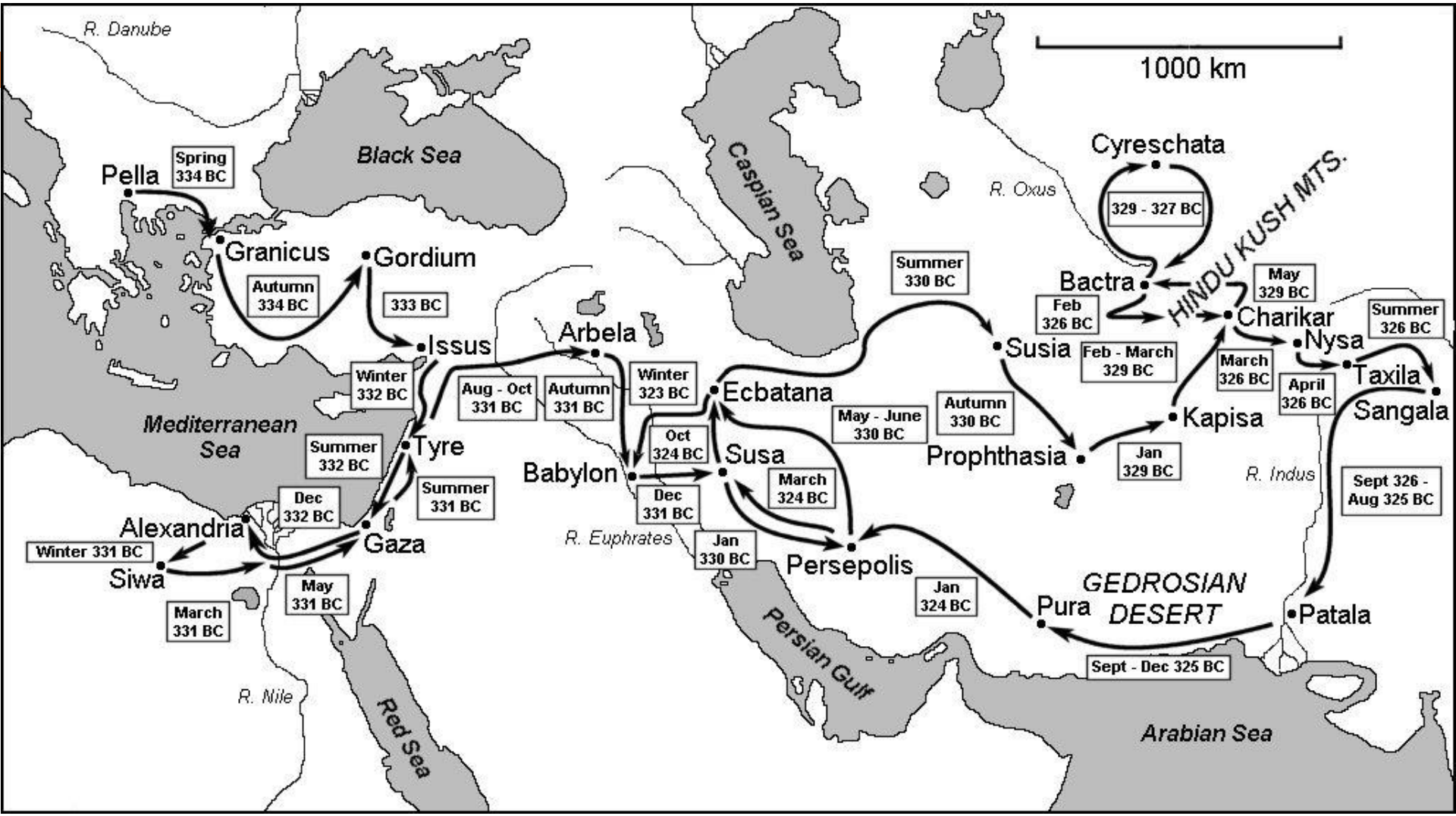
The long road home

- Craterus has been building a fleet, it is now ready, Nearchus commands the fleet
- Alexander starts to make his way to the Indian ocean
- 3 columns move south, under the commands of Craterus, Hephaestion and Philip

A tough campaign to the ocean

However, when he attacked the tribe known as the Malli, who are said to be the most warlike of all the indian peoples, he nearly lost his life. After the defenders had been driven from the walls by volleys of missiles, he was the first to scramble to the top of the wall by means of a scaling ladder. The ladder was smashed, so that no more Macedonians could join him, and the barbarians began to gather inside along the bottom of the all and to shoot at him from below. Finding himself almost alone and exposed to their missiles, Alexander crouched down, leaped into their midst, and by luck landed on his feet. Then, as he brandished his arms, it seemed to the barbarians as if a dazzling sheet of lame suddenly took shape in front of his body, and they scattered and fled….

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 63


R. Danube
Black Sea
Caspian Sea
1000 km
Pella
Spring 334 BC
Granicus
Autumn 334 BC
Gordium
333 BC
Issus
Winter 332 BC
Mediterranean Sea
Summer 332 BC
Tyre
Summer 331 BC
Dec 332 BC
Alexandria
Winter 331 BC
Siwa
March 331 BC
May 331 BC
Gaza
R. Nile
Red Sea
Arbela
Aug - Oct 331 BC
Autumn 331 BC
Winter 323 BC
Babylon
Oct 324 BC
Dec 331 BC
R. Euphrates
Jan 330 BC
Ecbatana
Susa
March 324 BC
Persepolis
Persian Gulf
Summer 330 BC
May - June 330 BC
Autumn 330 BC
Susia
Prophthasia
Jan 324 BC
Jan 329 BC
Cyreschata
329 - 327 BC
R. Oxus
Bactra
Feb 326 BC
HINDU KUSH MTS.
May 329 BC
Charikar
Feb - March 329 BC
Kapisa
March 326 BC
Nysa
Summer 326 BC
April 326 BC
Taxila
Sangala
R. Indus
Sept 326 - Aug 325 BC
Patala
GEDROSIAN DESERT
Pura
Sept - Dec 325 BC
Arabian Sea

March through the desert

Here he endured terrible privations and lost great numbers of men, with the result that he did not bring back from India so much as a quarter of his fighting force. And yet his strength had once amounted to a hundred and twenty thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry. Some of his men died from disease, some from the wretched food, some of the scorching heat, but most from sheer hunger, for they had to march through an uncultivated region whose inhabitants only eked out a wretched existence. They possessed few sheep and even these were of a stunted breed, and the sea fish on which they subsisted made the animals' flesh rank and unsavoury. It was only with great difficult that Alexander succeeded in crossing this region in sixty days, but once he reached Gedrosia, he was immediately in a land of plenty, and the satraps and local rulers provided him with all his needs.

Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 66

Leadership?

It was all he could do to keep going, but he did so, and the result (as always) was that he men were the better able to endure their misery when they saw that it was equally shared. As they toiled on, a party of light infantry which had gone off looking for water found some – just a wretched little trickle collected in a shallow gully. They scooped up with difficulty what they could and hurried back, with their priceless treasure, to Alexander; then, just before they reached him, they tipped the water into a helmet and gave it to him. Alexander, with a word of thanks for the gift, took the helmet and, in full view of his troops, poured the water on the ground. So extraordinary was the effect of this action that the water wasted by Alexander was as good as a drink for every man in the army. I cannot praise this act too highly; it was proof, if anything was, not only of his power of endurance, but also of his genius for leadership.

Arrian *Anabasis* 6.26

Dionysiac Procession?

- According to Plutarch, having made it out of the desert and receiving supplies he leads his men on a seven day Dionysiac procession.
- Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 67

Purges

- Cleander and Sitacles (the ones in charge of killing Parmenio)
- Harpalus (escapes)

After this celebration was over, Alexander learned that many of his officials who had used their powers arbitrarily and selfishly had committed serious offences, and he pursued a number of his satraps and generals. As the word spread of his righteous indignation against his offending subordinates, many of the generals recalled acts of insolence or illegality which they had performed and became alarmed. Some who had mercenary troops revolted against the king's authority, and others got together sums of money and fled. As news of this was brought to the king, he wrote to all his generals and satraps in Asia, ordering them, as soon as they had read his letter, to disband all their mercenaries instantly.

Diodorus 17.106

Unity of Mankind?

- Re-organisation of the army
  - Companion cavalry reduced from 8 to 4 (plus a new one)
  - Iranians fully integrated
  - 30,000 Persian youths who Alexander sent to receive Macedonian training now return

'All this was a cause of deep resentment to the Macedonians, who could not but feel that Alexander's whole outlook was becoming tainted with orientalism, and that he no longer cared for his own people or his native ways.'

Arrian 7.6.5

Greece as just another province

Even at home his mother Olympias and his sister Cleopatra had been intriguing against the regent, Antipater, and had divided the kingdom between them, Olympias taking Epirus and Cleopatra Macedonia. When Alexander heard of this, he remarked that his mother had made the wiser choice, since the Macedonians would never tolerate being governed by a woman.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 68

Mass Weddings at Susa

Here at Susa he held wedding ceremonies for his Companions; he also took a wife himself – Barsine (Stateira), Darius' eldest daughter, and according to Aristobulus, another as well, namely Parysatis, the youngest daughter of Ochus. He had already married Roxane, daughter of Oxyartes of Bactria. To Hephaestion he gave Drypetis, another of Darius' daughters and sister of his own wife Barsine, as he wanted to be uncle to Hephaestion's children; to Craterus he gave Amastrine, daughter of Darius' brother Oxyatres, and to Perdiccas a daughter of Atropates, governor of Media. The bride of Ptolemy (of the Guard) was Artacama, daughter of Artabazus, and Eumenes, the King's secretary, had her sister Artonis; Nearchus was given the daughter of Barsine and Mentor, Seleucus the daughter of Spitamenes of Bactria. Similarly, the other officers – to a number of eighty all told – were given as brides young women of the noblest Persian and Median blood. The marriage ceremonies were in Persian fashion… There proved to be over 10,00 other Macedonians who had married Asian women; Alexander had them all registered, and every man of them received a wedding gift.

Arrian Anabasis 7.5

Suspicion of Alexander

- Alexander offers to pay off all of his soldiers debts
- They must register their debts with him
- Very few register

Alexander was annoyed when he learned that most of the men were refusing to enter their names and concealing their possessions of covenants to pay, and told them in no uncertain terms what he thought of their suspicions; a King, he declared is duty bound to speak nothing but the truth to his subjects, who, in their turn, have no right to suppose that he ever does otherwise. He had tables set up in the army quarters, with money on them, and instructed the clerks in charge to pay off debts of every man who produced an I.O.U without even registering their names.

Arrian *Anabasis* 7.5

The Mercenary Problem

- All the mercenaries that were employed by Darius (and not by Alexander) cannot go home
- Alexander had forced all the satraps to disband their private armies
- The officials who escaped during the purge fled to southern Laconia
- Solution?

The Exile Decree

King Alexander to the exiles from the Greek cites. We have not been the cause of your exile, but, save for those of you who are under a curse, we shall be the cause of your return to your own native cities. We have written to Antipater about this to the end that if any cities are not willing to restore you, he may constrain them.

Diodorus 18.8.4

Alexander as a god?

- In addition to the Exile decree being read at the Olympic games, Alexander had a second decree which required that the Greek states recognise him as god.

Damis the Spartan: "Since Alexander desires to be a god, let him be a god."

Plutarch *Sayings of the Spartans* 25.1

Mutiny at Opis

- Alexander assembles his Macedonian troops and announced the imminent demobilization of:
- ‘all men unfit through age or disablement for further service.’

Arrian *Anabasis* 7.8.1

- Near riot
- Alexander recalls the work of his father and everything that they had done.

Alexander's response

'You all wish to leave me. Go then! And when you reach home, tell them that Alexander your king, who vanquished Persians and Medes… tell them, I say, that you deserted him and left him to the mercy of barbarian men, whom you yourselves had conquered. Such news will indeed assure you praise upon earth and reward in heaven. Out of my sight!'

Arrian *Anabasis* 7.11

A new army?

- Alexander hides in his tent for 2 days
- 3rd day, invites the Persians to him and divides the commands amongst them
- Soldiers see this and beg Alexander for forgiveness and to be taken back into service
- Alexander takes them back

Disbanding the army

- Alexander then demobilises those too old or disabled
- 11,000 veterans discharged
- Active pay until they get home
- 1 talent bonus
- All native wives and concubines and children to be left behind
- Alexander wants a new mixed race of children who will be trained as soldiers, loyal only to him
- Craterus is to lead this group back to Greece and:
- 'to assume control of Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly, and assure the freedom of Greece' - Arrian 7.12.4

Antipater's Response

- Sends Cassander to Alexander
- Does Cassander make a deal with Craterus?
- Remove Alexander?

Death of Hephaestion

- Alexander moves from Opis to Ecbatana
- Giant festival to Dionysus
- Hephaestion gets very drunk and falls ill
- Follows doctors advice of a strict plain diet and starts to get better
- Eats a whole chicken and a half gallon of wine
- He gets really sick and then dies

Alexander's Grief

- Then there is the story – to me quite incredible – that the personally drove for a short distance the funeral carriage with Hephaestion's body in it; and, again, that he ordered the shrine of Asclepius in Ecbatana to be razed to the ground…. Most authorities have said that he ordered sacrifice to be always offered to Hephaestion as a demi-god, and some declare that he sent to inquire of Ammon if he would permit sacrifice to be offered to him as a god; but Ammon refused.

Arrian *Anabasis* 7.14

Alexander's final campaign

- Brief campaign against the Coassaeans, a mountain tribe near Ecbatana.
- Persian kings had paid them tribute for safe passage
- Alexander eliminates them in 5 weeks
- Alexander marches to Babylon

Alexander in Babylon

- Alexander warned by the Chaldaean priests not to enter Babylon
- Alexander camps outside the city
- Alexander meets delegates from all over
- Plans campaign against Arabia
- Preparation for Hephaestion's funeral
- Brief entrance to Babylon, loses diadem either a sailor or Seleucus retrieves it and places it on his head

Final Banquet

- Banquet for Nearchus
- Alexander wishes to go home (unusual)
- Alexander goes to the party of Medius (a Thessalian)
- Alexander drinks more and gets carried home
- High-fever, next day goes drinking (May 31st)
- June 6th clearly ill

June 7th

- The Macedonians now believed that he was dead: they thronged the doors of the palace and began to shout and threaten the Companions, who were at last obliged to let them in. When the doors had been thrown open they all filed slowly past his bedside one by one, wearing neither cloak nor armour.
- In the course of this day too Python and Seleucus were sent to the temple of Serapis to ask whether Alexander should be moved there, and the god replied that they should leave him where he was.
- Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 76

Poison?

They say that Antipater, who had been left by Alexander as viceroy in Europe, was at variance with the king's mother Olympias. At first he did not take her seriously because Alexander did not heed her complaints against him, but later, as their enmity kept growing and the king showed an anxiety to gratify his mother in everything out of piety, Antipater gave many indications of his disaffection. This was bad enough, but the murder of Parmenion and Philotas struck terror into Antipater as into all of Alexander's Friends, so by the hand of his own son, who was the king's wine-pourer, he administered poison to the king.

Diodorus 17.118.1

June 10th 323 BC: To the strongest

When he, at length, despaired of life, he took off his ring and handed it to Perdiccas. His Friends asked: "To whom do you leave the kingdom?" and he replied: "To the strongest." He added, and these were his last words, that all of his leading Friends would stage a vast contest in honour of his funeral. This was how he died after a reign of twelve years and seven months.

Diodorus 17.117.3-5

Follow-up Reading

- Badian, E. "Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind" *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*. Vol. 7, No. 4, Oct., 1958. pp. 425-444
- Look up in the OCD or a good encyclopaedia or in *Marshalls of Alexander's Empire* (on library only loan)
  - Perdiccas
  - Antipater
  - Craterus
  - Eumenes
  - Ptolemy