



Alexander the Great

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

What are our sources?

- Diodorus
- Q. Curtius Rufus
- Plutarch
- Arrian
- Justin
- Inscriptions
- Alexander Romance?

Key Narrative Features of Alexander's Early Life

Relationship with Olympias

Nectanebo

Relationship with Aristotle

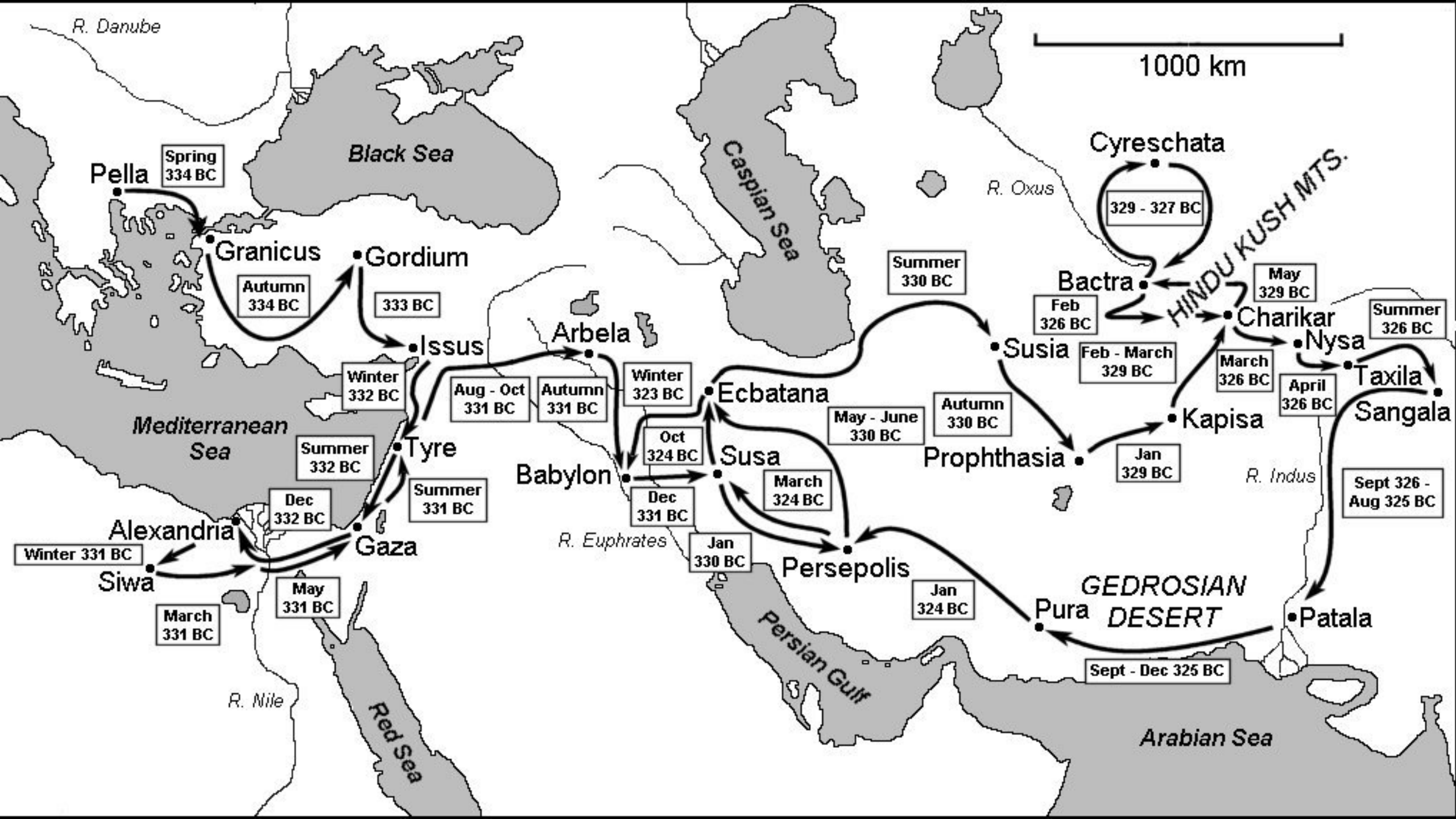


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Alexander Birth and Propaganda

Be that as it may, Alexander was born early in the month Hecatombaeon, the Macedonian name for which is Loüs, on the sixth day of the month, and on this day the temple of Ephesian Artemis was burnt. 6 It was apropos of this that Hegesias the Magnesian made an utterance frigid enough to have extinguished that great conflagration. He said, namely, it was no wonder that the temple of Artemis was burned down, since the goddess was busy bringing Alexander into the world. But all the Magi who were then at Ephesus, looking upon the temple's disaster as a sign of further disaster, ran about beating their faces and crying aloud that woe and great calamity for Asia had that day been born. To Philip, however, who had just taken Potidaea, there came three messages at the same time: the first that Parmenio had conquered the Illyrians in a great battle, the second that his race-horse had won a victory at the Olympic games, while a third announced the birth of Alexander. These things delighted him, of course, and the seers raised his hopes still higher by declaring that the son whose birth coincided with three victories would be always victorious.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 4



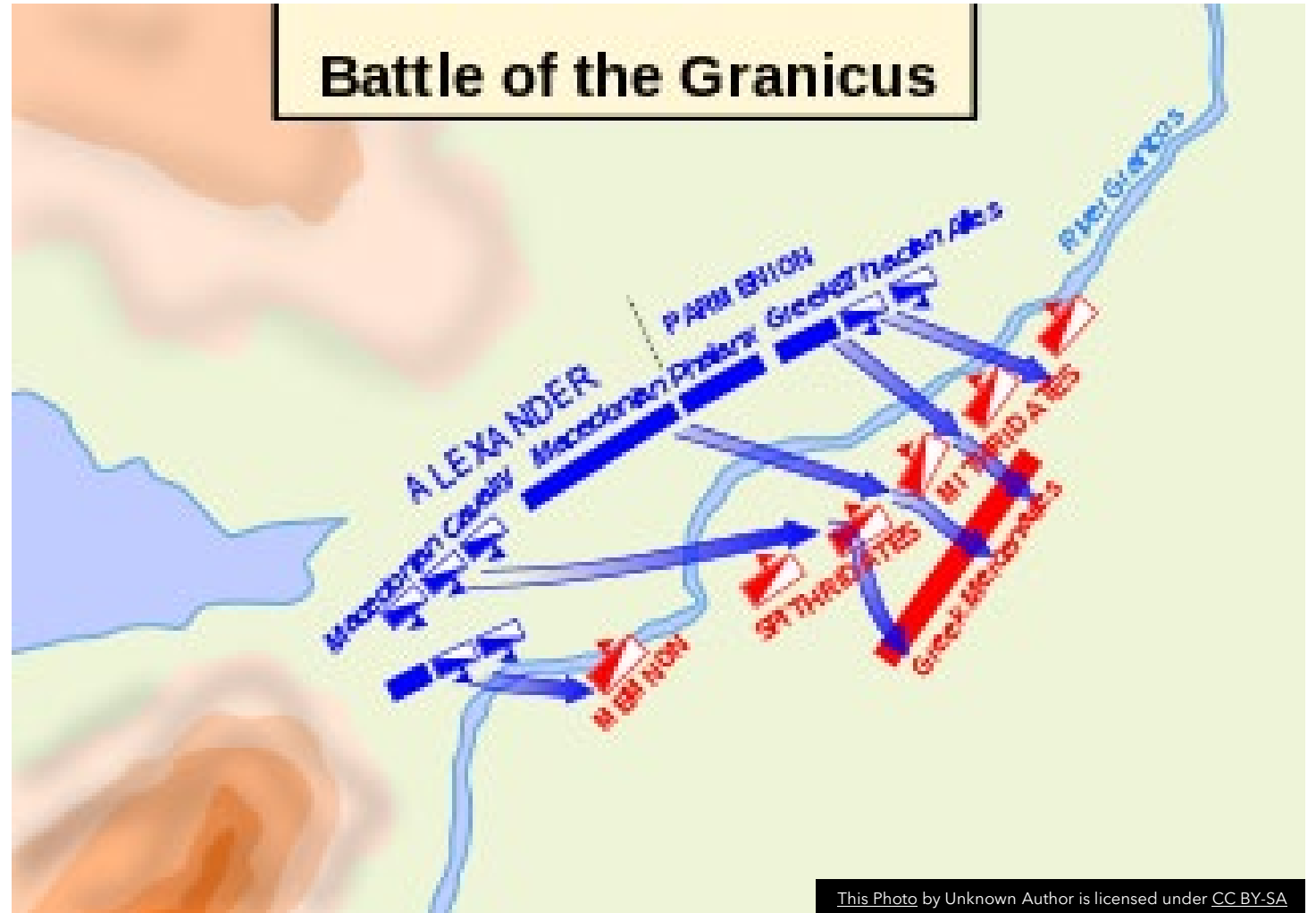
Up to Granicus

Alexander and the
Philosophers

Destruction of Thebes

Crossing the Hellespont

Battle of Granicus





a snug wooden barrel and Alexander a surprisingly gray beard for one so young (he was only twenty) in this version

Alexander went in person to see him and found him basking at full length in the sun. When he saw so many people approaching him, Diogenes raised himself a little on his elbow and fixed his gaze upon Alexander. The king greeted him and inquired whether he could do anything for him. 'Yes,' replied the philosopher, 'you can stand a little to one side out of my sun.' Alexander is said to have been greatly impressed by this answer and full of admiration for the hauteur and independence of mind of a man who could look down on him with such condescension. So much so that he remarked to his followers, who were laughing and mocking the philosopher as they went away, 'You may say what you like, but if I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes.'

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 14

Destruction of Thebes

Alexander's principal object in permitting the sack of Thebes was to frighten the rest of the Greeks into submission by making a terrible example. But he also put forward the excuse that he was redressing the wrongs done to his allies, for the Plataeans and Phocians had both complained of the actions of the Thebans against them. As for the population of Thebes, he singled out the priests, a few citizens who had friendly connections with Macedonia, the descendants of the poet Pindar, and those who had opposed the revolt to be spared: all the rest were publicly sold into slavery to the number of twenty thousand. Those who were killed in the battle numbered more than six thousand.

Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 11

Results?



'to raze the city, to sell the captives, to outlaw the Theban exiles from all Greece, and to allow no Greek to offer shelter to a Theban'

Diodorus 17.14.3

Alexander demands ten Athenian generals and politicians (including Demosthenes) to be handed over to him.

After a second Athenian embassy he lets most of them off. (Led by Demandes)

Macedonian Forces

Advance force (in Asia)

- 10,000 foot and c. 1,000 cavalry

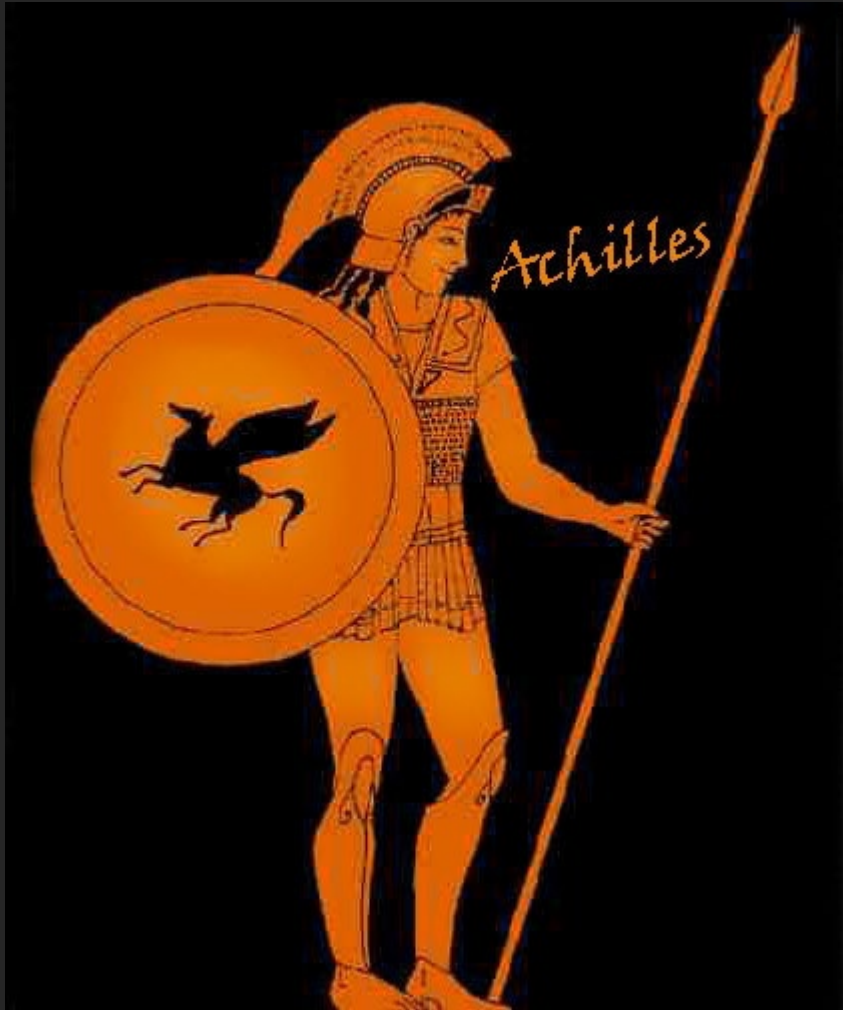
Total Army in Macedon

- 30,000 infantry
- 3,300 cavalry
- Home defence
 - No less than 12,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry
- Garrisons
 - 5-6,000



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Temporarily Like Achilles



Once arrived in Asia, he went up to Troy, sacrificed to Athena and poured libations to the heroes of the Greek army. He anointed with oil the column which marks the grave of Achilles, ran a race by it naked with his companions, as the custom is, and then crowned it with a wreath: he also remarked that Achilles was happy in having found a faithful friend while he lived and a great poet to sing of his deeds after his death.

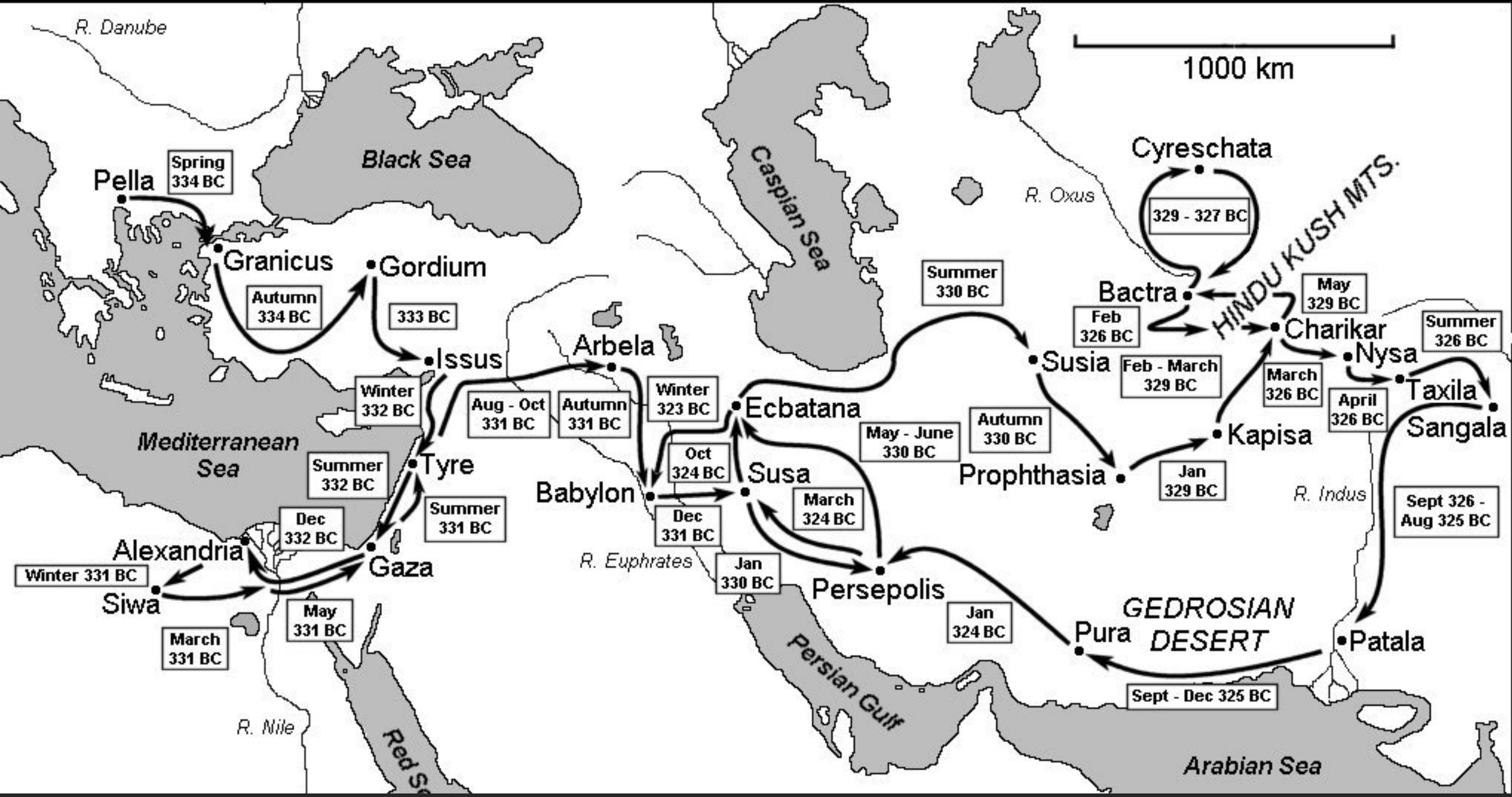
Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 15



Persian Response?

Meanwhile, the Persian satraps and generals had not acted in time to prevent the crossing of the Macedonians, but they mustered their forces and took counsel how to oppose Alexander. Memnon, the Rhodian, famed for his military competence, advocated a policy of not fighting a pitched battle, but of stripping the countryside and through the shortage of supplies preventing the Macedonians from advancing further, while at the same time they sent naval and land forces across to Macedonia and transferred the impact of war to Europe. This was the best counsel, as after-events made clear, but, for all that, Memnon failed to win over the other commanders, since his advice seemed beneath the dignity of the Persians. So they decided to fight it out, and summoning forces from every quarter and heavily outnumbering the Macedonians, they advanced in the direction of Hellespontine Phrygia. They pitched camp by the river Granicus, using the bed of the river as a line of defence.

Diodorus 17.18.2-4



Fate of Asia Minor

Parmenio is to go accept the surrender of the cities of Ionia, Lydia, and Aeolis.

Oligarchies/Tyrannies are to be replaced with "democracies"

Local laws and customs to remain the same

Tribute to Persians to be removed

Cities to join the league and pay contributions to the campaign

Sacks Miletos after a siege

Disbands the Fleet: Greek Allies, Expensive, No Retreat/No Surrender

Alexander is in Cappadocia in August

Before the highway, barely wide enough for 2 camels to pass each other

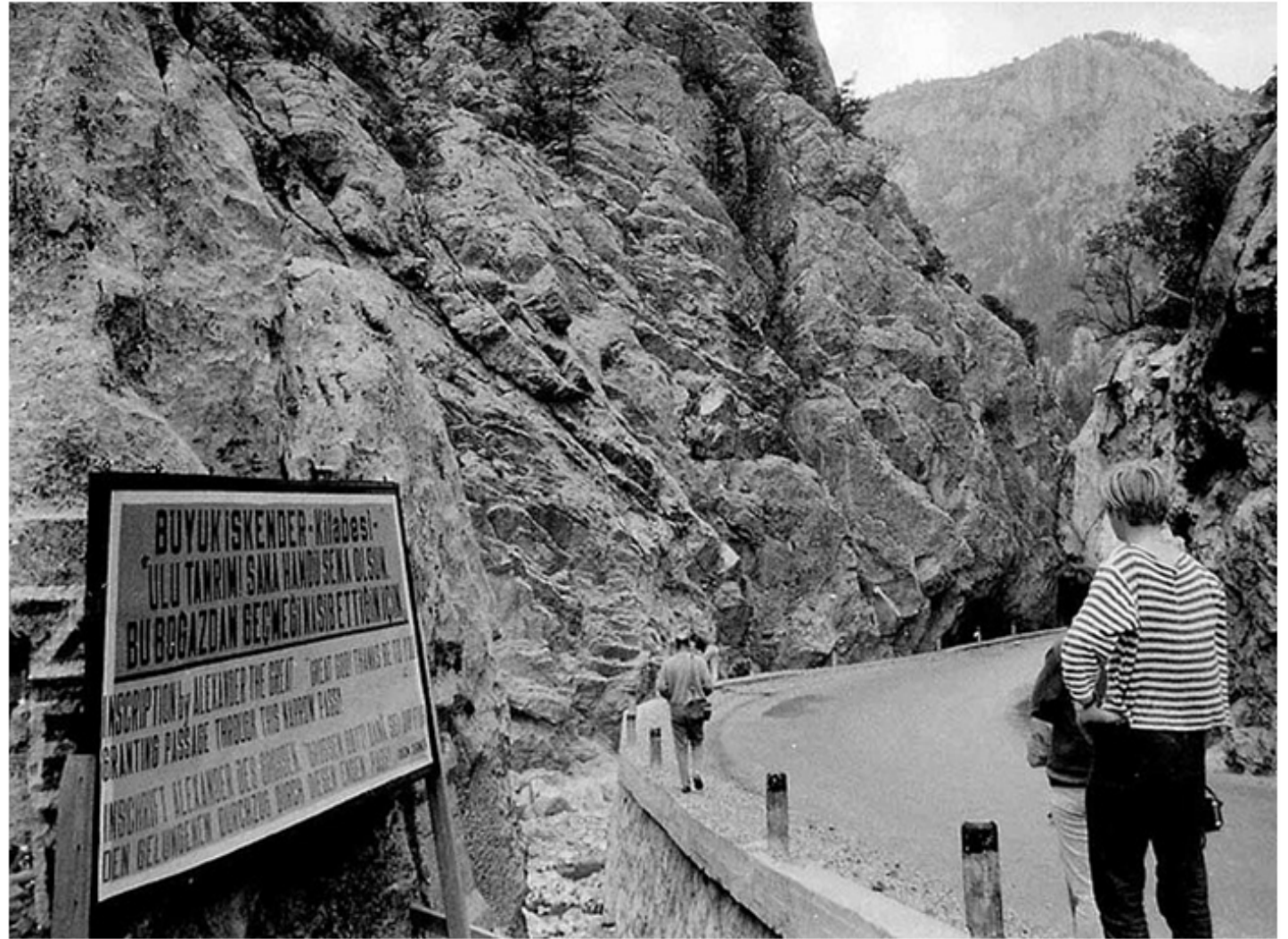
Cilician Gates

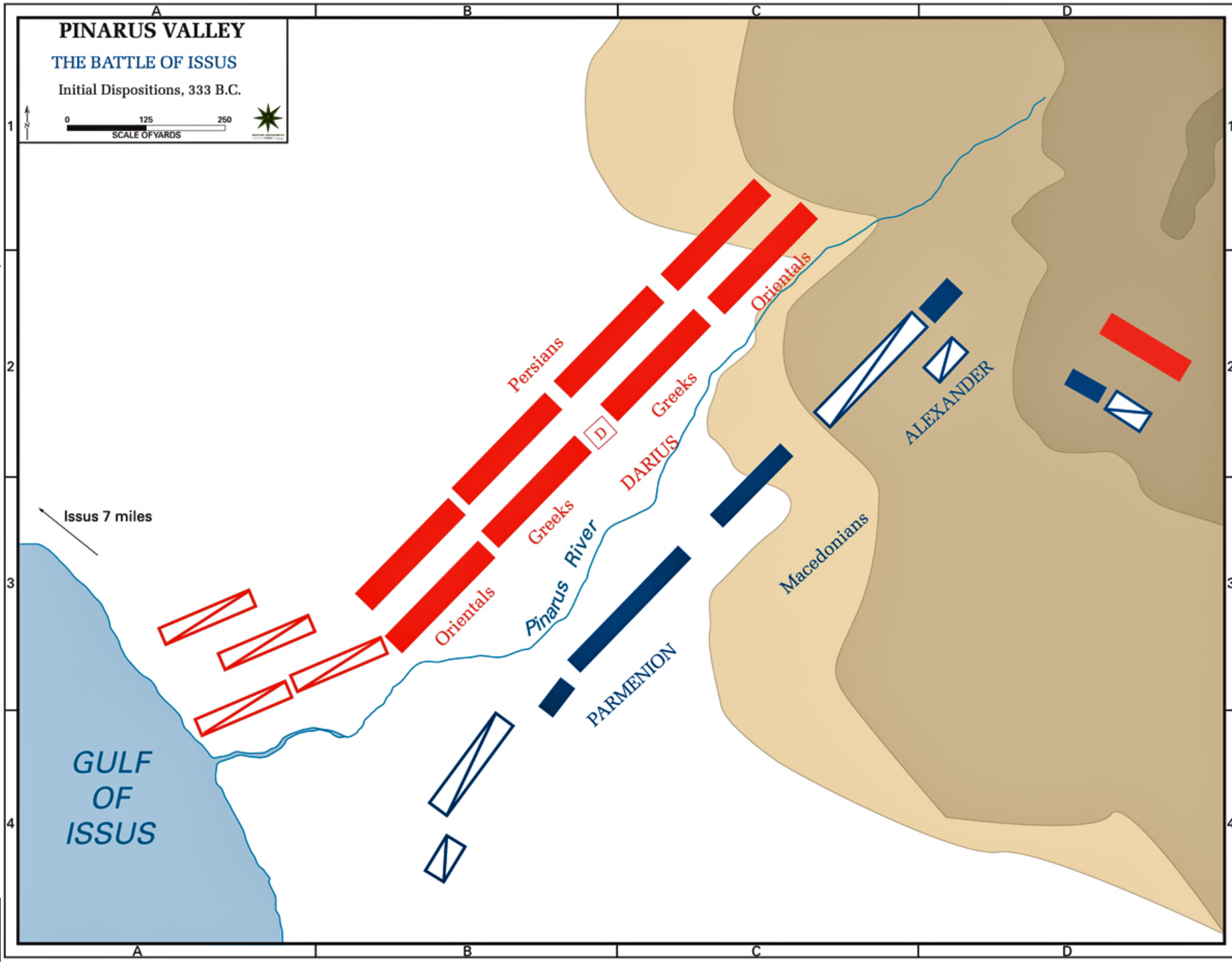
Arsames does not put all his forces across the gates

Leaves a small force and then devastates the land behind the gates

Wrong lessons learned from Granicus

Alexander marches through the gates largely unopposed

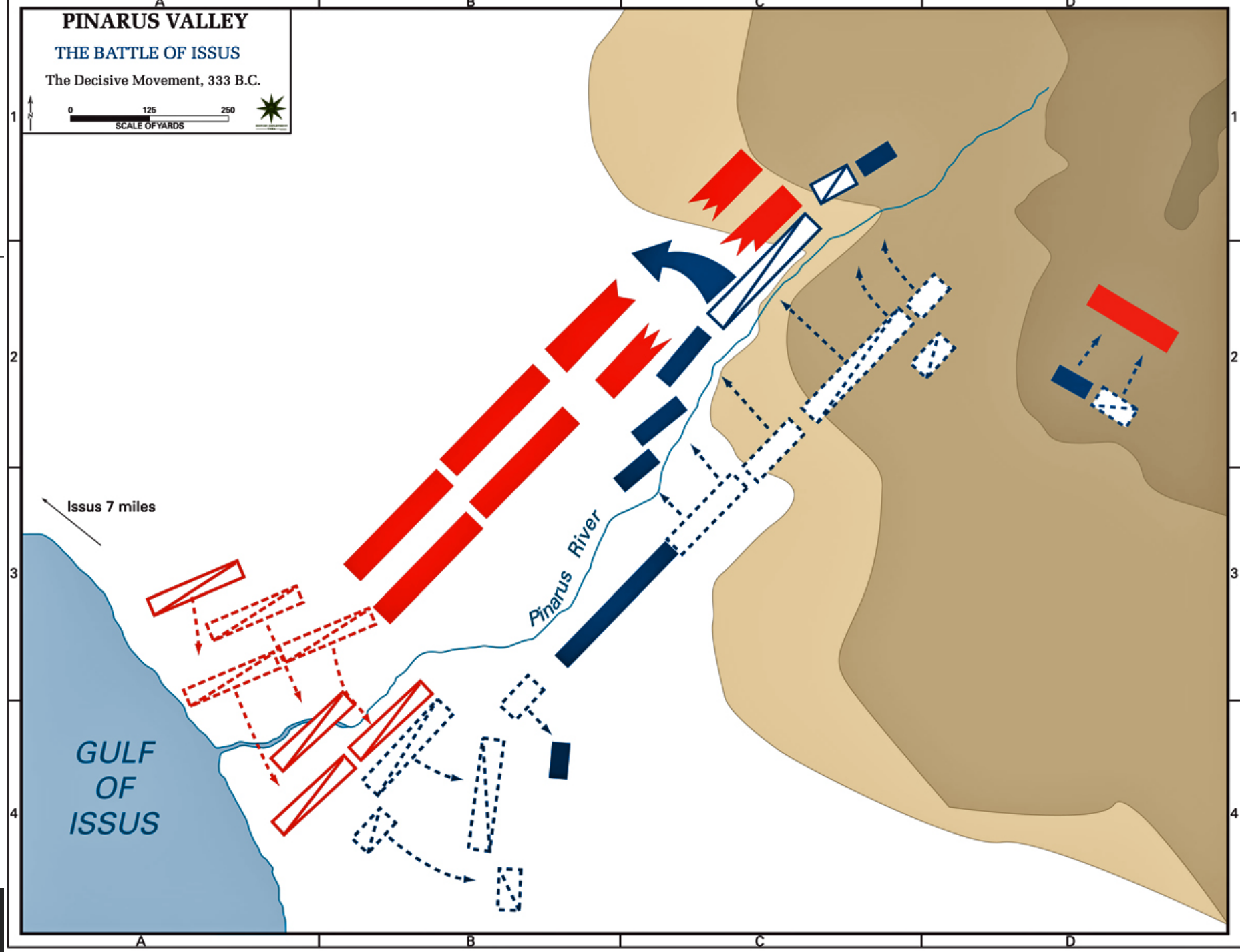
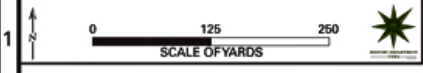




PINARUS VALLEY

THE BATTLE OF ISSUS

The Decisive Movement, 333 B.C.



Darius' plans

Control Aegean

Give money and ships to King Agis in Sparta

Retake the Hellespont

Support revolts in Cappadocia and Paphlagonia

Tyre

Asks Tyre to surrender

They kill his heralds

Alexander needs the city so that it can no longer be a base for the Persian fleet

Alexander decides to build a mole to attack the island

Tyre

City is eventually taken

Siege lasts over 6 months

Destructive violence once walls are breached

30,000 survivors sold into slavery

2,000 men of military age crucified



Darius' Letter

10,000 talents for Darius' family

All territory west of the Euphrates to the Aegean

Marriage to Darius' daughter

"These proposals were made known at a meeting of Alexander's personal advisers, and Parmenio, according to all reports, declared that were he Alexander he would be happy to end the war on such terms and be done with any further adventures. 'That,' replied Alexander, 'is what I should do were I Parmenio; but since I am Alexander, I shall send Darius a different answer.'

Arrian 2.26

Surrender of Phoenicia

Every city south of Tyre to Egypt surrender

Except Gaza

Siege Gaza (2 months)

Slaughter defenders

Gaza to Egypt

Gaza to Pelusium in a week (130 miles)

Alexander greeted as liberator

Must not offend local religious sensibilities

Coronation in Memphis?

- Alexander romance
- Alexander connections with Nectanebo (last Pharaoh)
- Olympias and the snake

Restoration of Karnak and Luxor

Alexandria

While the king was enjoying the symmetry of the design, suddenly a huge flock of birds appeared from the river and the lagoon, descended upon the site and devoured every grain of the barley. Alexander was greatly disturbed by this omen, but the diviners urged him to take heart and interpreted the occurrence as a sign that the city would not only have abundant resources of its own but would be the nurse of men of innumerable nations, and so he ordered those in charge of the work to proceed while he himself set out to visit the temple of Ammon.

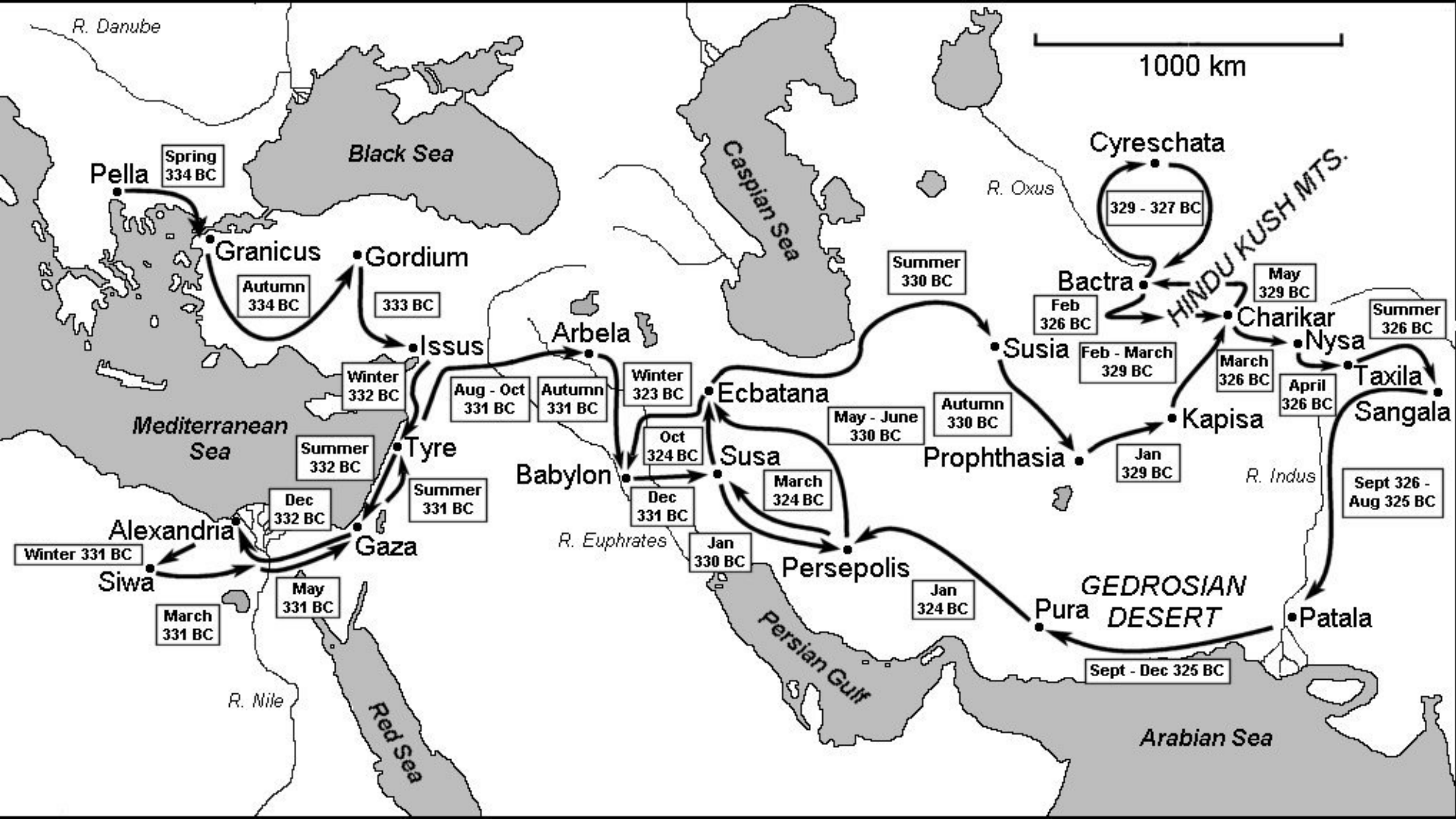
Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 26



'O paidion' or 'o pai Dios

Alexander's first question was to ask whether any of his father's murders had escaped punishment. At this the high priest commanded him to speak more guardedly, since his father was not a mortal. Alexander therefore changed the form of his question and asked whether the murderers of Philip had all been punished, and he added another inquiry concerning his own empire, and asked whether he was destined to rule over all mankind. This, the god replied, would be granted to him, and he also assured him that Philip's death had been completely avenged, whereupon Alexander dedicated some magnificent offerings to the god and presented large sums of money to his priests.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 27



The Road to Gaugamela

Back to Tyre

Heads towards Babylon

Darius plans for battle at Cunaxa

- Orders a scorched earth policy

Alexander does not follow the easiest route so as to avoid a battle there

4 possible crossings for Alexander, so Darius sends scouts to all of them

Darius picks a battlefield

Gaugamela: Darius clears the field of trees, rocks etc.

He does not occupy the hills three-miles to the NW

Alexander finds Darius, but first rests his troops

Darius attempts to bribe Alexander's officers

Darius' wife dies (in childbirth?)

Darius' offer

Euphrates west

10,000 talents for the Persian prisoners

"Alexander told his companions of this offer, whereupon Parmenio said, 'I would accept those terms if I were Alexander.' 'So would I, by Zeus,' retorted Alexander, 'if I were Parmenio!'

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 29

Darius' Army

Mostly armoured cavalry: 34,000 v 7,250

Chariots

Scythed chariots (Artaxerxes had used them at Cunaxa)

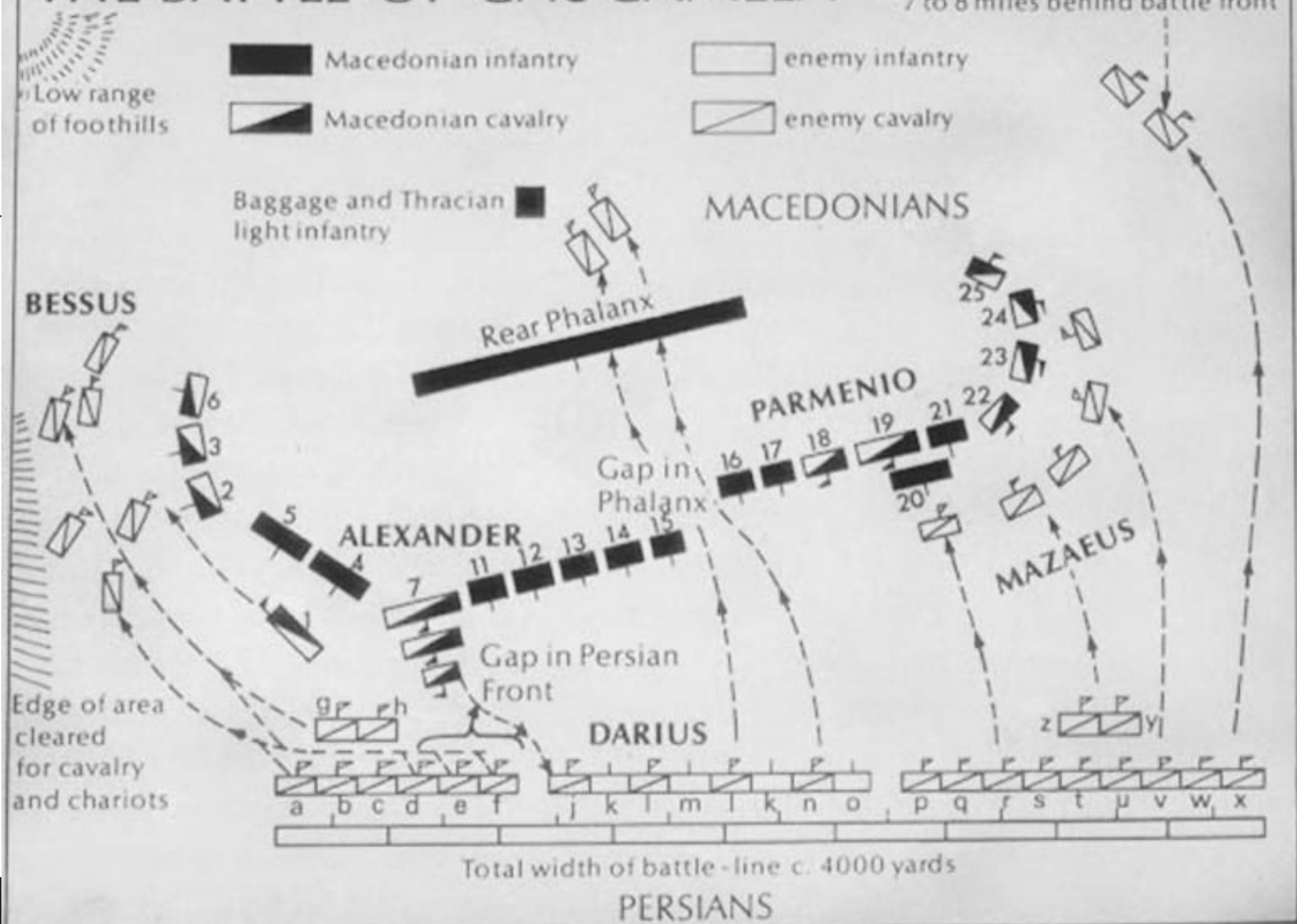
Alexander delays a day to scout the battlefield

“They therefore went to the king as soon as he had performed his sacrifice and tried to persuade him to attack by night, so as to conceal from his men the most terrifying element in the coming struggle, that is the odds against them. It was then that Alexander gave them his celebrated answer, ‘I will not steal my victory’.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 31

THE BATTLE OF GAUGAMELA

Raid on Macedonian Camp
7 to 8 miles behind battle front



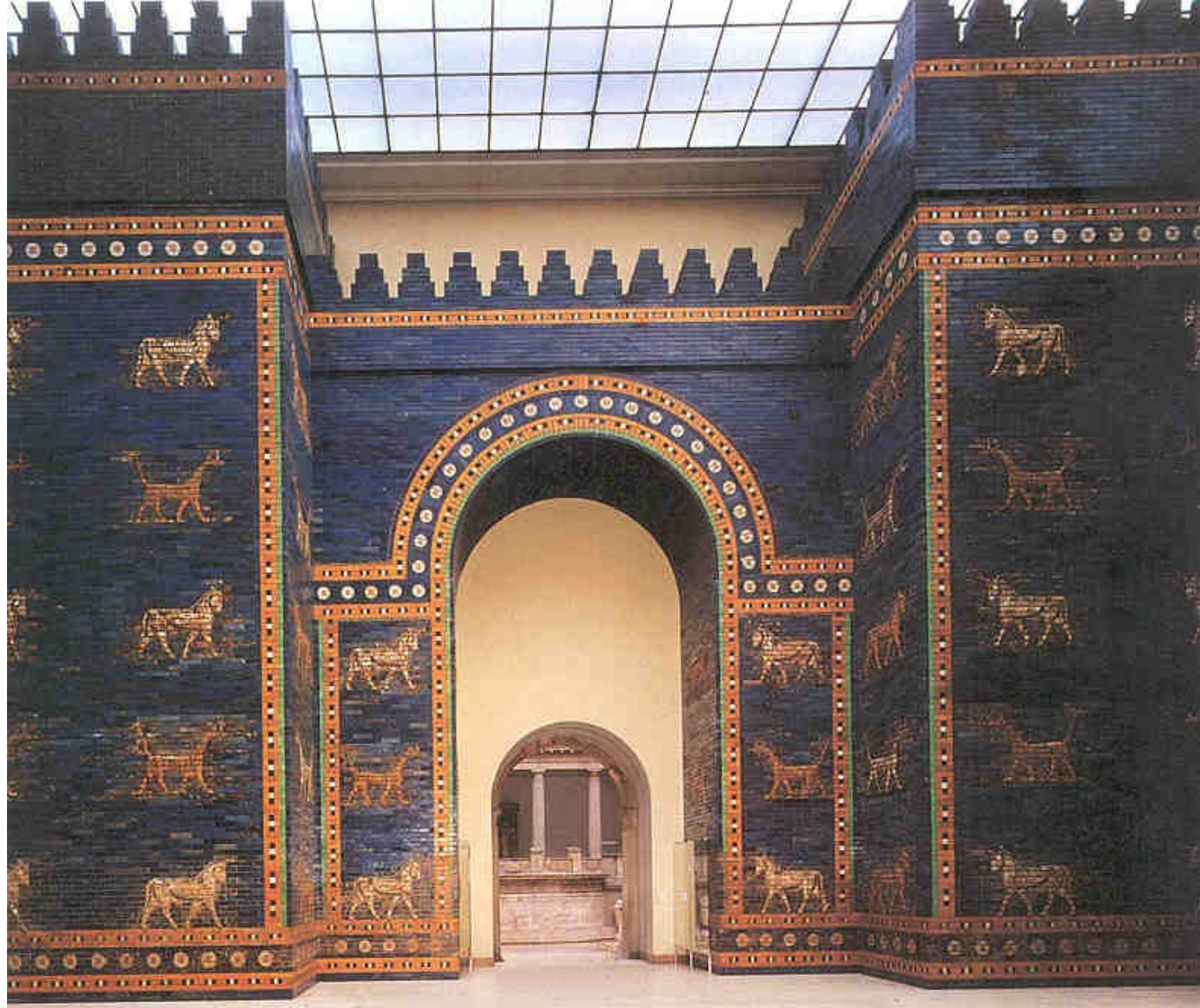
Aftermath

Alexander proclaims himself
'Lord of Asia'

Conquest rather than even most
tenuous liberation

Marches to Babylon which
surrenders

Rich beyond any Greeks dream



MONEY!!!!

SUSA

40-50,000 talents of gold of silver bullion

9,000 in coined money

'Tyrannicide' statue

Riches of other sorts

Spends winter in Susa

PERSEPOLIS

Treasury vaults: 120,000 talents

Bedchamber: 8,000 talents

= Thucydides has the income of the Athenian Empire at its height at 500 talents a year.

=The money Alexander has taken at Susa and Persepolis is roughly 300 years worth of the income of the Athenian Empire at its height.

Burning of Persepolis



According to a number of historians it was in this way that the place was burned down, that is on impulse, but there are others who maintain that it was an act of deliberate policy.

Plutarch *Alex.* 38

A final battle with Darius?

After 4 months around Persepolis, Alexander begins to pursue Darius

Darius building an army?

Darius retreats towards Bactria

All league troops are released

- Cavalry get a bonus of 1 talent
- Infantry get 1,000 drachmas
- Anyone who re-enlisted gets 3 talents on enrolment

Chasing Darius

Darius retreats through the Caspian gates and heads towards Hecatompylus

Alexander in pursuit, as he gets closer speed increases



Bessus, satrap of Bactria

Dispute in Persian camp, Darius resign and Bessus replace him?

Bactrians and East – Loyal to Bessus

Persians and Greek Mercenaries – Loyal to Darius

Bessus deposes Darius and takes him captive

Persians and Greeks leave, but quickly come back

Bessus now Artaxerxes IV

Can Alexander reach the rebels and capture Darius?

Alexander appears to cover 50 miles in a day to catch the Persians

Death of Darius

In the historians, a Macedonian reaches Darius before he dies, but not Alexander

In the *Alexander Romance*, it is Alexander who catches Darius. Darius then offers Alexander his kingdom and his daughter in marriage

Hunting Bessus

Alexander must now act as Great King

Bessus hunted as a rebel, not as a successor to Darius

Mercenaries and Persians slowly desert Bessus

Alexander pursues him into Parthia

East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet

Adoption of some Persian court traditions

Adoption of diadem (perhaps not actually Persian)

No adoption of trousers, but adoption of other Persian clothing

No pointed tiara

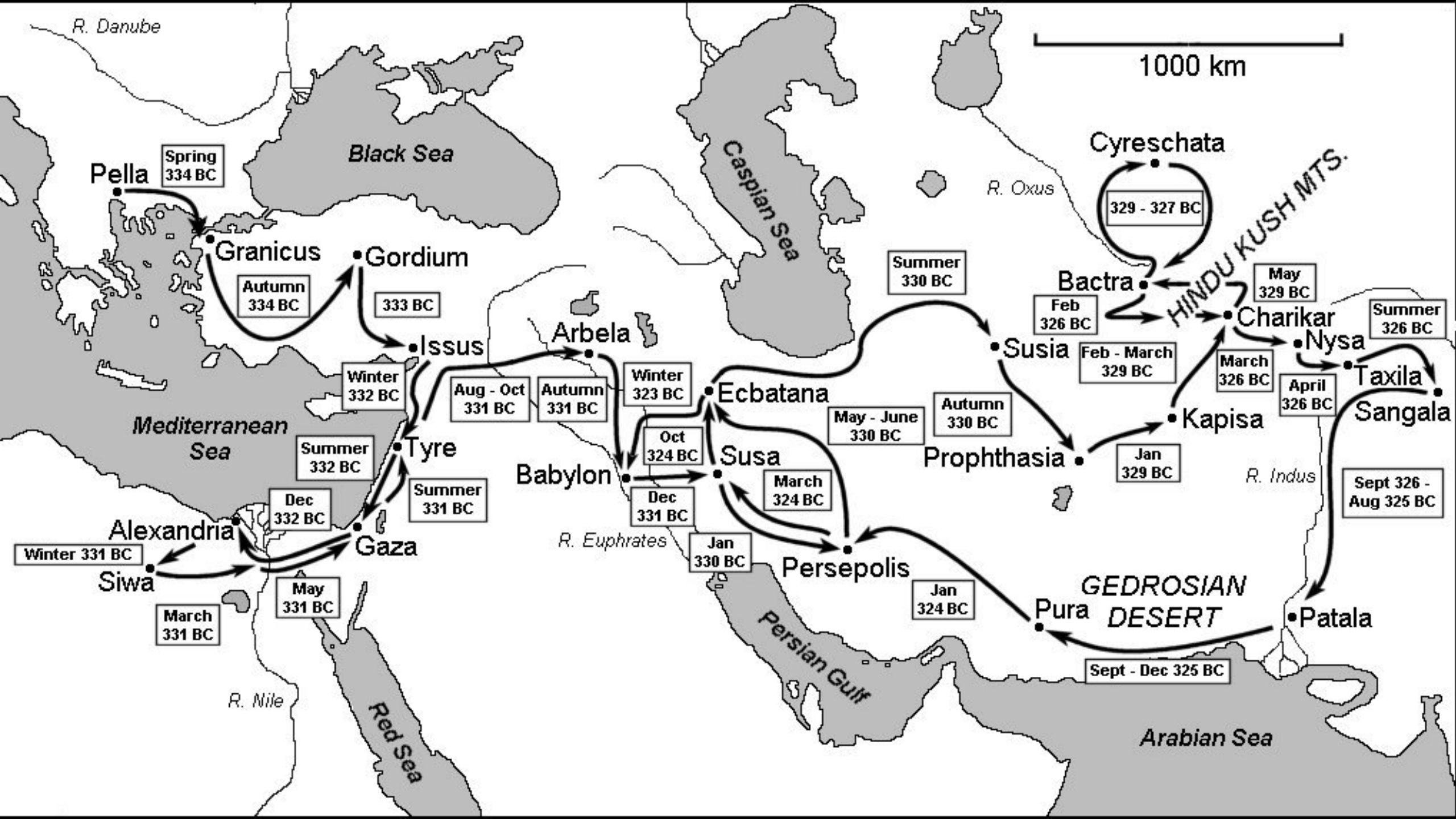
2 signet rings

- 1 Macedonian
- 1 Darius'

Into Legend

It was here that he was visited by the queen of the Amazons, according to the report we have from many writers...There is also a story that many years afterwards, when Lysimachus had become king of Macedonia, Onesicritus was reading aloud the fourth book of his history, which contained the tale of the Amazon, at which Lysimachus smiled and asked quietly, 'I wonder where I was then.'

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 46



Soghdian War

Spitamenes traps the troops that Alexander had sent against him and slaughters them

Alexander moves quickly and drives off the siege at Maracanda, Spitamenes retreats to wage a guerrilla war

Alexander winters in Zariaspa

After 2 campaigning seasons, Alexander is finally able to deprive Spitamenes of supplies

Spitamenes allies with Massagetae, they give up and kill him (or according to Curtius his wife does)

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 his 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.'

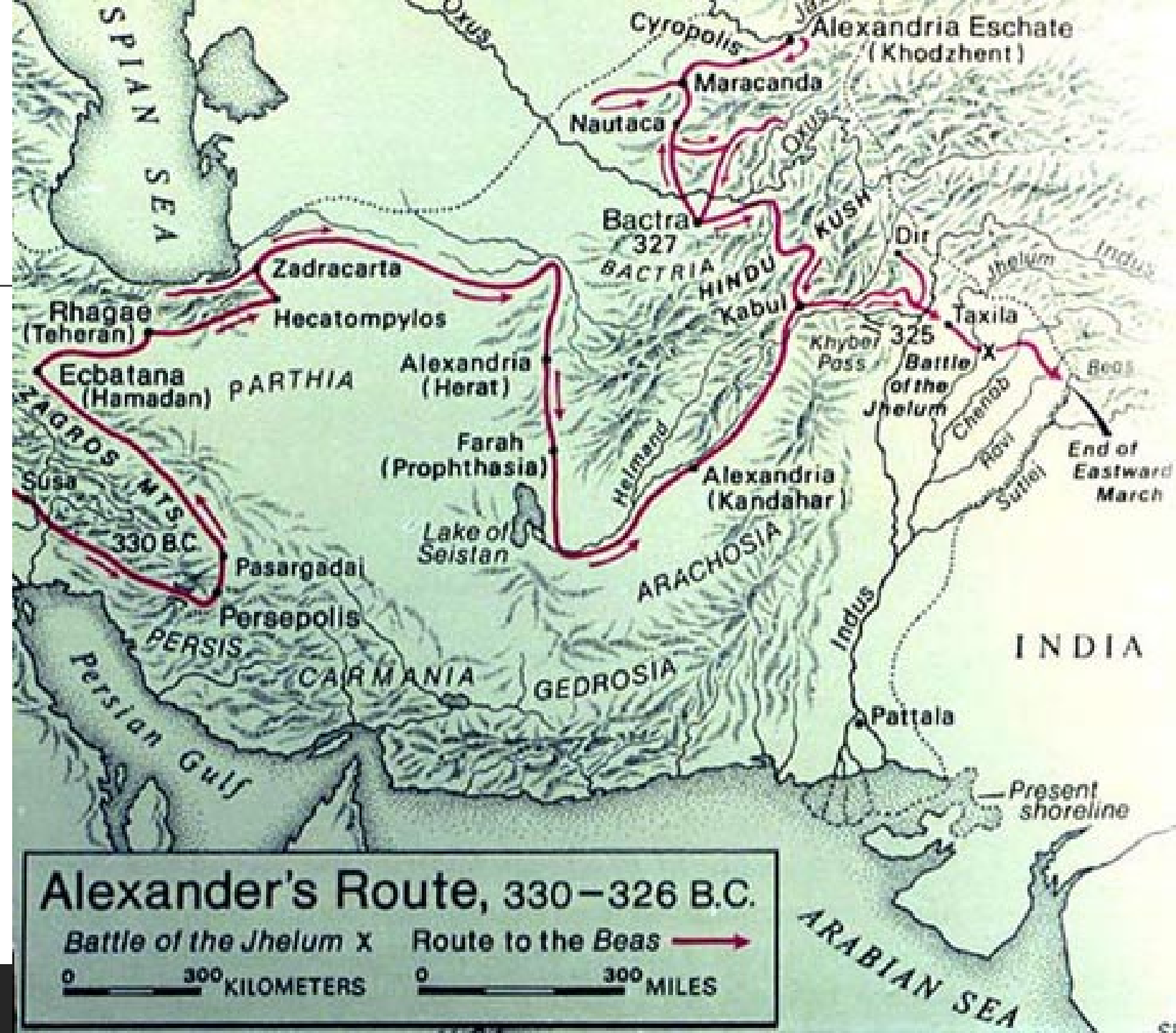
Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 54

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



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

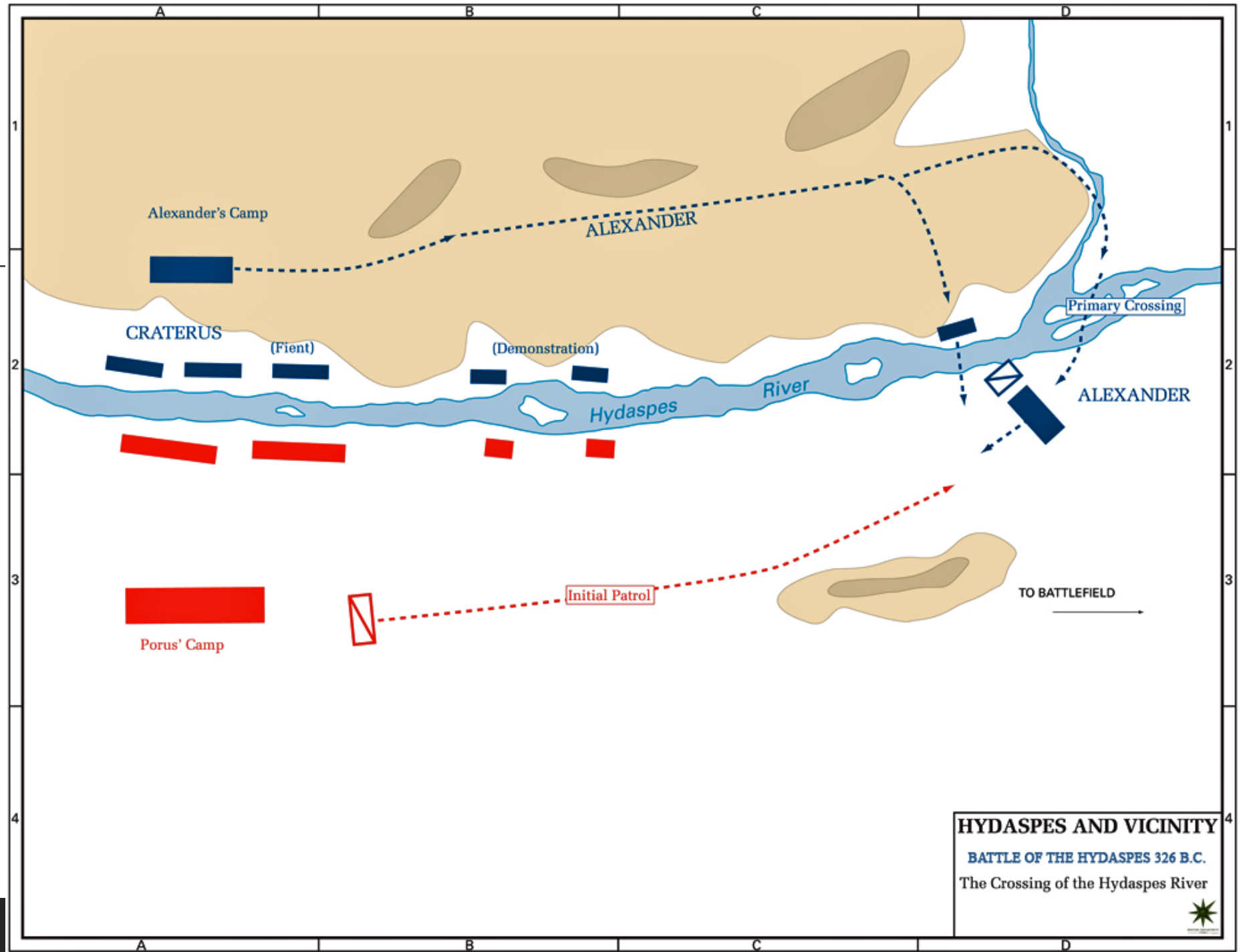
- Association with Dionysus
- People who make wine (rare in the region)
- Sacrifice goats for religious purposes

Rock of Aornus

- “not captured” by Heracles
- Alexander captures it



Battle of the Hydaspes



HYDASPES AND VICINITY
BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES 326 B.C.
The Crossing of the Hydaspes River



Battle with Porus



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

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



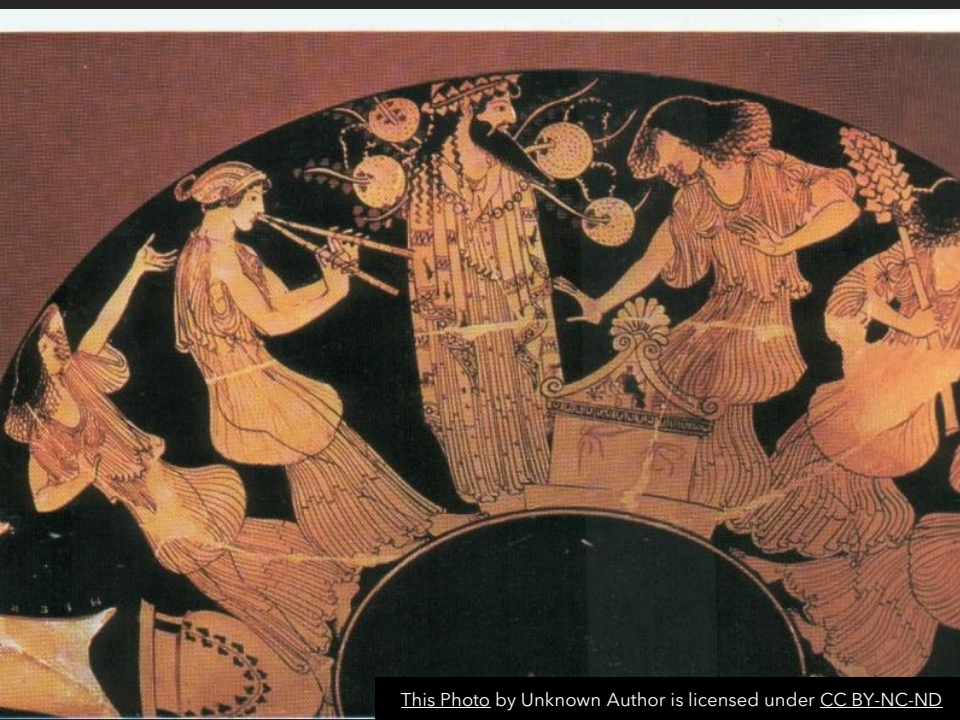


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Dionysiac Procession?

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



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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

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 Oxyartes, 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 [Apame]. 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

Mutiny at Opis

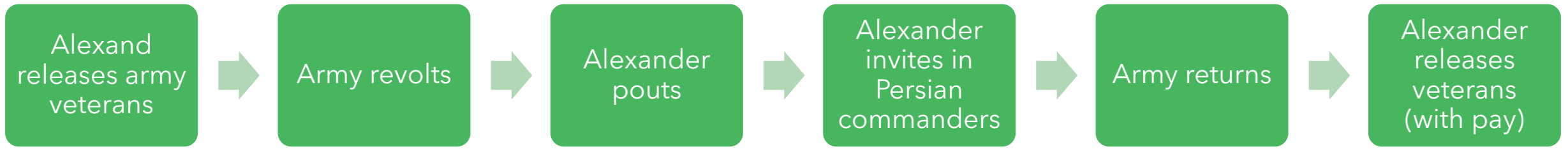
Alexander assembles his Macedonian troops and announced the imminent demobilization of:

'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.



‘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

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

Death of Hephaestion

Alexander moves from Opis to Ecbatana

Giant festival to Dionysus

Hephaestion gets very drunk and falls ill

Follows doctor's 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

Then there is the story – to me quite incredible – that he 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 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

May 30 – 9 June 323 BC

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

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