DEFENDERS, CONQUERS AND VANQUISHED

Lecture 18: Accession of Alexander

Recap

- Philip – assassinated
- Begin to eliminate the other possible claimants to the throne
- Alexander in control of Macedonian army

Rebellion

Greece rebels?

Athens supports the various Macedonia factions against Alexander

Thebes as well

Thessaly kicks out Philip's garrisons

Concessions and Diplomacy or Audacity?

- Marches south from Pella into Thessaly
- Thessalians ask him to halt
- Stops in the Vale of Tempe

Vale of Tempe

Audacity

- Orders his engineers to cut steps up the seaward side of Mt Ossa.
- Uses these to cross the mountains without Thessalian knowledge
- Now has his army behind the Thessalian troops and into Greece

Surrender of Thessaly

- Alexander having out flanked the Thessalians they surrender and name him Archon of the federation for life

Surrender of Thessaly

- First he dealt with the Thessalians, reminding them of his ancient relationship to them through Heracles and raising their hopes by kindly words and by rich promises as well, and prevailed upon them by formal vote of the Thessalian League to recognize as his the leadership of Greece which he had inherited from his father.

Surrender of Thessaly

Next he won over the neighbouring tribes similarly, and so marched down to Pylae, where he convened the assembly of the Amphictyons and had them pass a resolution granting him the leadership of the Greeks. He gave audience to the envoys of the Ambraciots and, addressing them in friendly fashion, convinced them that they had been only a little premature in grasping the independence that he was on the point of giving them voluntarily.

Diodorus 17.4

Amphictyony, Thebes, Athens

- Convenes Amphictyony, confirmed in his father's position
- Appears outside the Cadmeia (Thebes)
  - Recognised as *hegemon* of the "League of Corinth"
  - Athens sends an envoy and accepts the same terms (Demosthenes included as an envoy, but turns away before meeting Alexander)

Parmenio

- Attalus – killed
- Parmenio – agrees in the murder of Attalus (his son-in-law)
  - Parmenio brings all low-land Macedonian leaders with him
  - Almost all of the high ranking officers that Alexander takes to Asia are related to Parmenio

“League of Corinth”

- Calls a meeting of the league
- Receives formal vote as *hegemon*
- Only Sparta still holds out
  - pro-Macedonians put in charge of Achaea and Messenia (put in place right before the renewal of the treaty)
- Real plans for invasion of Asia, including military pay-scales, ect.

Alexander and the Philosophers

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

Alexander at Delphi

It so happened that he arrived on one of those days which were called inauspicious, when it was forbidden for the oracles to deliver a reply. In spite of this he sent for the prophetess, and when she refused to officiate and explained that the law forbade her to do so, he went up himself and tried to drag her by force to the shrine. At last, as if overcome by his persistence, she exclaimed, **'You are invincible, my son!'** and when Alexander heard this, he declared he wanted no other prophecy, but had obtained from her the oracle he was seeking.

- Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 14

Thracian and Illyrian Campaign

- Antipater – left in Macedon
- Fleet – sail up the Danube from Byzantium
- Army overland from Amphipolis

Tactics

- Group of Thracians blocks a pass
- Large number of carts formed into a defensive palisade
- Carts also to be used to roll down the hill at the advancing army

Tactics

Alexander had now to consider how to cross the ridge with the least loss, for cross it he must, as there was no way round. His orders were those sections of the heavy infantry which had room enough were to break formation when the carts came tearing down the slope, and so let them through; any sections, on the other hand, which were caught in the narrow pass were to form in the closest possible order, such men as were able lying prone on the ground with shields locked together above their bodies, so as to give the heavy wagons, as they careered down the hill, a chance to bounce over the top of them without doing any harm.

Arrian *Anabasis* 1.1

Death of Alexander?

- Thebans hear that Alexander dies on campaign in Illyria
- Thebes revolts from Alexander

He therefore decided to act, and proceeding by way of Eordaea and Elimiotis and the mountain ranges of Stymphaea and Paravaea, arrived within seven days at Pelinna in Thessaly. Six days later he entered Boeotia, and the new that he had passed the Gates did not reach the Thebans until his whole force was at Onchestus.

Speed

- Covers nearly 250 miles
- Average of 18 miles a day
- This includes very difficult terrain

Surrender of Thebes?

He made his forces ready for battle, then announced through a herald that any of the Thebans who wished might come to him and enjoy the peace which was common to all the Greeks. In response, the Thebans with equal spirit proclaimed from a high tower that anyone who wished to join the Great King and Thebes in freeing the Greeks and destroying the tyrant of Greece should come over to them. This epithet stung Alexander. He flew into a towering rage and declared that he would pursue the Thebans with the extremity of punishment. Raging in his heart, he set to constructing siege engines and to preparing whatever else was necessary for the attack.

Diodorus 17.9.5-6

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

Pan-hellenism?

With Thebes, on the contrary, it was a different matter: the lack of planning, the rapid movement of events which led to the revolt, the suddenness and ease with which the city fell, the slaughter, so appalling and so inevitable where men of kindred stock are paying off old scores, 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.

Arrian *Anabasis* 1.9

Pan-hellenism?

People felt that Thebes, at long last, had been punished for her treachery – she had paid the penalty for her betrayal of Greece in the Persian war, her capture of Plataea during the truce, the merciless enslavement of its population, and the massacre, for which she alone was responsible, of men who had surrendered not to her, but to Sparta, and the devastation of a country-side in which the united armies of Greece had driven back the Persian invader, and, lastly for the murderous malignancy she showed towards Athens when she voted in favour of the suggestion, put forward by the Lacedaemonian confederacy, that the people of Athens should be sold into slavery.

Arrian *Anabasis* 1.9

Results?

- Meeting of the league:
  - ‘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)

Long-term

- Resentment of Alexander?
- What will this mean for his successors?

Return to Pella

- Invasion of Persia:
  - Caution and slow going (Antipater and Parmenio)
- Marriage and a child?
- Debt?
  - Disband army or get money
  - Borrow money?
    - Athens?
    - Royal lands → barons?

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

Alexander's Invasion force

There were found to be, of infantry, twelve thousand Macedonians, seven thousand allies, and five thousand mercenaries, all of whom were under the command of Parmenio. Odrysians, Triballians, and Illyrians accompanied him to the number of seven thousand; and of archers and the so-called Agrianians one thousand, making up a total of thirty-two thousand foot soldiers. Of cavalry there were eighteen hundred Macedonians, commanded by Philotas son of Parmenio; eighteen hundred Thessalians, commanded by Callas son of Harpalus; six hundred from the rest of Greece under the command of Erigyius; and nine hundred Thracian and Paeonian scouts with Cassander in command, making a total of forty-five hundred cavalry.

Diodorus 17.17.3-5

Infantry: 32,000

- Parmenio's Command
  - 12,000 Macedonian infantry
  - 7,000 Allies
  - 5,000 mercenaries
- Thracians and Illyrians
  - 7,000
- Archers and specialist infantry
  - 1,000

Cavalry: 4,500

- Philotas, son of Parmenio
  - 1,800 Macedonians
- Callas, son of Harpalus
  - 1,800 Thessalians
- Greeks
  - 600
- Cassander
  - 900 Thracian and Panonian

Trojan War Redux

At Elaeus he offered sacrifice upon the tomb of Protesilaus, who was supposed to have been the first man of Agamemnon's Army to set foot upon the soil of Asia when the Greeks sailed against Troy. His purpose in performing the ceremony was to ensure better luck for himself than Protesilaus had.

Arrian *Anabasis* 11

Temporarily Like Achilles

Once arrived in Asia, he went up to Troy, sacrificed to Athena and poured librations 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

Spear won land

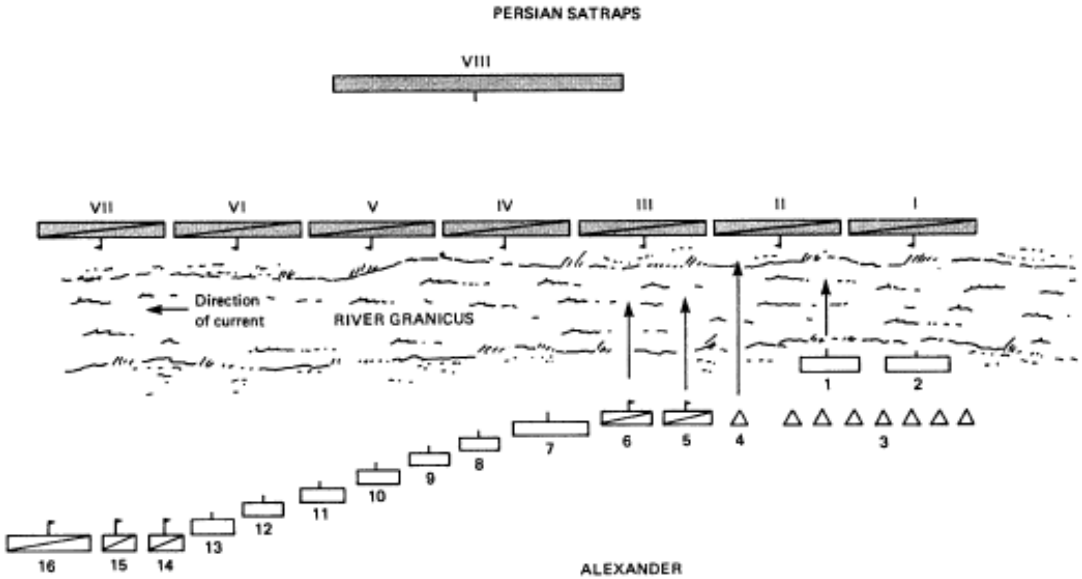
Alexander advanced with his army to the Hellespont and transported it from Europe to Asia. He personally sailed with sixty fighting ships to the Troad, where he flung his spear from the ship and fixed it in the ground, and then leapt ashore himself the first of the Macedonians, signifying that he received Asia from the gods as a spear-won prize. He visited the tombs of the heroes Achilles, Ajax, and the rest and honoured them with offerings and other appropriate marks of respect…

Diodorus 17.17.1-3

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



THE BATTLE OF THE GRANICUS
THE ORDERS-OF-BATTLE

The Macedonian Army:

1. Agrianian javelin-men.*
2. Archers.
3. Companion cavalry (Philotas).
4. The *ile* of Socrates.*
5. Paeonian cavalry.*
6. *Prodromoi.**
7. Hypaspists (Nicanor).
8. *Pezhetairoi* – *Taxis* of Perdiccas.
9. – *Taxis* of Coenus.
10. – *Taxis* of Craterus.
11. – *Taxis* of Amyntas.
12. – *Taxis* of Philip.
13. – *Taxis* of Meleager.
14. Thracian (Odrysian) cavalry (Agathon).
15. Allied Greek cavalry (Philip).
16. Thessalian cavalry (Calas).

*Advance-guard (Amyntas).

The Persian Army:

I. Cavalry (Memnon and Arsames).
II. Paphlagonian cavalry (Arsites).
III. Hyrcanian cavalry (Spithridates)
IV. Cavalry units of unspecified nationality.
V. Bactrian cavalry (2,000).
VI. Cavalry (Rheomithres) (2,000).
VII. Median cavalry (1,000).
VIII. Greek mercenary infantry (Memnon) (4–5,000).

Leading from the front

Many of them charged against Alexander himself, for he was easily recognizable by his shield and by the tall white plume which was fixed upon either side of his helmet. The joint of his breast-plate was pierced by a javelin, but the blade did not penetrated the flesh. Rhoesaces and Spithridates, two of the Persian commanders rode at him; he evaded the charge of the one and struck Rhoesaces, who wore a breast-plate with his spear, but the shaft of the weapon snapped, whereupon he fought with his sword.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 16

Leading from the front

While he was engaged with Rhoesaces, Spithridates rode up on the other side, and rising in his stirrups brought down a barbarian battle-axe with all his strength upon Alexander's head. The stroke split the crest of his helmet, sheared away one of his plumes, and all but cleft the head-piece, in fact the edge of the axe penetrated it and grazed the hair on the top of Alexander's head. But just as Spithridates raised his arm for another blow, 'Black' Cleitus, as he was called, struck first and ran him through with a spear, and at the same moment Rhoesaes was cut down by Alexander's sword.

Plutarch *Life of Alexander* 16

Propaganda

The Macedonian losses were small: about twenty-five of the Companion cavalry were killed during the first assault. Their statues in bronze now stand at Dium, executed, on Alexander's instructions, by Lysippus, who had been chosen from a number of competitors to make statues of Alexander.

Arrian *Anabasis* 1.16.4

Further Reading

- Read Arrian's *Anabasis*