

“Just Rage”: Causes of the Rise in Violence
in the Eastern Campaigns of Alexander the Great

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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IN THE EASTERN CAMPAIGNS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

presented by Jenna Rice,

a candidate for the degree of master of history, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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τῷ πατρί, ὅς ἐμοί τ' ἐπίστευε καὶ ἐπεκέλευε

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The following frequently cited ancient authors are abbreviated as follows:

Arr.	Arrian, <i>Anabasis Alexandrou</i>
Curt.	Quintus Curtius Rufus
Diod.	Diodorus Siculus
Hdt.	Herodotus
Plut.	Plutarch
Thuc.	Thucydides
Xen.	Xenophon

The following frequently cited modern works are abbreviated as follows:

Bosworth, <i>Alexander and the East</i>	Bosworth, A.B. <i>Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
Bosworth, "Calanus"	Bosworth, A.B. "Calanus and the Brahman Opposition." <i>Alexander der Grosse: Eine Welteroberung und Ihr Hintergrund (Vorträge des Internationalen Bonner Alexanderkolloquiums)</i> . Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1998.
Bosworth, <i>Commentary [I-II]</i>	A.B. Bosworth, <i>Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 1995.
Bosworth, <i>Conquest and Empire</i>	Bosworth, A.B. <i>Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great</i> . Cambridge: Canto Classics, 1993.

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- Romm, *Landmark Arrian* Romm, James. *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander*. Translated by Pamela Mensch. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010.

Trittle, *From Melos to My Lai*

Trittle, Lawrence. *From Melos to My Lai: A Study in Violence, Culture, and Social Survival*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Worthington, *Philip II*

Worthington, Ian. *Philip II of Macedonia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Worthington, *By the Spear*

Worthington, Ian. *By the Spear: Philip II, Alexander the Great, and the Rise and Fall of the Macedonian Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Translations

Translations of Arrian's *Anabasis* come from *The Landmark Arrian*. Translations of Herodotus, and Thucydides come from the Penguin Classics as cited in the bibliography. The translation of the title, a quote from Curtius, comes from the Penguin translation of *The History of Alexander*. All other translations of ancient authors come from the Loeb Classical Library except where otherwise noted.

Introduction

Alexander the Great of Macedonia (356-323) is perhaps the best known secular figure of antiquity. Acceding to the throne aged twenty in 336, in thirteen years he forged an empire that stretched from Greece and Macedonia in the west to India in the east, and its collapse drastically altered the political and intellectual spectrum of the Near East. The construction of this Macedonian Empire led Alexander and his army to the edges of the world; they travelled farther and for a longer time than any Greek army before them, spreading Hellenic culture in their wake.

Given the extent of Alexander's influence and the number of works written about him in antiquity, it is astounding that not one contemporary source survives intact; all are fragmentary. The only extant intact histories of Alexander's reign were written centuries after his death and under Roman influence by Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE), Pompeius Trogus (epitomized by Justin in the 2nd century CE), Quintus Curtius Rufus (1st century CE), and Arrian (2nd century CE). To these we can add the 1-2nd century biographer Plutarch, who wrote a biography of Alexander. The way in which these later authors used the earlier (now mostly lost) sources is unknown, and for this reason their accounts should be treated with caution.¹ Nevertheless, without them it would be impossible to proceed in the study of Alexander, and many of the obstacles the sources present may be overcome through consideration of credibility, purpose, and by presenting a reader with variations of an account.

¹ See E. Baynham, "The Ancient Sources for Alexander the Great," *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* ed. J. Roisman (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 1-29; A.B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

It is the nature of the ancient sources to center their reports on Alexander or his generals, making the perspectives of unranked men, the majority of the campaign's participants, difficult to determine. Such is the general state of accounts of war throughout history, but in his 1976 work *The Face of Battle* Keegan has shown that it is possible to reconstruct some degree of the common soldier's experience.² By considering the points of view of all participants in a battle, Keegan offered a fresh understanding of war through three case studies from between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. Hanson followed in his footsteps by reconstructing the experience of the ancient Greek hoplite soldier in his *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*.³ In my thesis, I attempt to use a similar methodology on a smaller scale to investigate the type and acceleration of violence in Alexander's army, aspects of his campaign in the East that bear further scrutiny.

The Macedonian invasion of Bactria, Sogdiana, and India in the latter half of the campaign stands out as distinct from operations in West Asia, the traditional Persian Empire. The degree of slaughter involved in the conquest and occupation of these lands is emphasized in the ancient sources and used by some modern historians as a basis for forming a "new...orthodoxy"⁴ in order to combat the romanticized Alexander of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, I do not think that something as complex as human brutality can be easily explained, and attributing the rise of violence to

² J. Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (London: Penguin Books, 1983).

³ V. Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁴ P. Briant, *Alexander the Great and His Empire*, trans. A. Kuhrt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 140.

Alexander's personality or suggesting that "killing was what he did best" is not sufficient.⁵ Rather, the causes of heightened violence are numerous, multifaceted, and unique to time and location.

In my thesis, I argue that the rise in carnage and incidence of massacre in Alexander's eastern campaigns stems from a combination of waging a foreign war, policy and native response to it, and a drop in army morale. In Bactria and Sogdiana, the Macedonian army faced guerilla warfare for the first time, a mode of fighting which stood in opposition to the traditional Greek rules of war (see chapter 1). In India, the frequent sieges and the difficulty of forcing pitched battle further complicated the attempt at waging a Western war in and on Eastern land. Alexander's policy of settling the land and maintaining a static population resulted in stronger insurgency in Bactria and Sogdiana, which had only been loosely controlled by Persia in the past. In India, a strong local sense of autonomy, especially among the Brahman caste, made opposition to Macedonian rule sharper and led to Alexander's policy of no resistance, in which a refusal of surrender was treated as rebellion. The chronology of the campaign is significant, as the apex of violence in India could not have occurred without two years of arduous fighting in Bactria and Sogdiana. War-weariness is a convenient but ultimately insufficient word to describe the extremity of cultural isolation, low level of moral, and sheer physical and psychological exhaustion that the Macedonians experienced in their easternmost campaigns. The army's refusal to continue beyond the Hyphasis River after eight years of combat is evidence of this intense fatigue. The violence that resulted from these campaigns cannot be directly linked to any one factor or individual, but a

⁵ Ibid., 61 discusses and quotes from Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, v.

combination of circumstance and environment and the manner in which both affected the army.

In the following work, I set out what may be loosely termed the Greek “rules of war” as they were in the Archaic and Classical Periods and discuss both pitched battles and sieges (Chapter 1). In the second chapter, I discuss Alexander’s and his father Philip’s adherence to these rules and their modifications to warfare which altered the manner, but not the spirit, of Greek battle. The bulk of this thesis deals with Bactria and Sogdiana (Chapter 3) and India (Chapter 4), which I argue contributed directly to the rise in the army’s brutality and weariness. Those chapters are subtitled and organized thematically rather than chronologically in order to discuss relevant issues. A brief conclusion summarizes my views.

Most spelling takes the traditional, Latin form, with the exception of specific All dates are B.C.E. unless otherwise noted.

Chapter 1: The Greek Rules of War

The life of Alexander the Great (356-323) comprised the last years of the Classical Period (479-323) of the Greco-Macedonian world, and his reign proved a turning point in the history of Greek warfare. Throughout most of the Archaic and Classical eras, war had a particular form, and there existed a set of “rules” or traditional practices by which armies operated. There was no comprehensive manual of war such as the sixth century Chinese had in Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*, which offers instruction on integral facets of warfare such as logistics, stratagems, and incendiary attacks.⁶ Greek soldiers were educated in war according to the traditions of their poleis, and the set of statutes which emerged in common throughout Greece was likely due to frequent intra-polis fighting, not canonized military texts. The Greeks did not have any all-encompassing law, written or understood, that governed just and unjust warfare in the way St. Thomas Aquinas’ thirteenth century *Summa Theologica* does.⁷ The concept of just war and a “fair” fight must be distinguished through observation of the Greek practice of war, as the Greek “rules” were a collective ideal and goal, and naturally there were exceptions to them and cases in which poleis diverged from the norm.

By the time of Alexander, many of the period’s technological and strategic conventions had been modified,⁸ but Alexander and his army cleaved to basic Greek

⁶ The date of Sun Tzu’s work, and indeed the historicity of Sun Tzu himself, are uncertain. See a general discussion in Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. R. Sawyer (Boulder: West View Press, 1994).

⁷ *Summa Theologica* 2.2.Q40

⁸ For a summary of the modification and evolution of hoplite tactics and armor, see L Rawlings, “War and Warfare in Ancient Greece” in *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21-4.

traditions in war throughout their campaign in Persia. It was not until the Macedonian invasion of Bactria and Sogdiana that the conventional form of warfare changed to combat unfamiliar enemies. The most comprehensive study of traditional Greek warfare is still Pritchett's *The Greek State at War*, and what follows consists of a summary of the most pertinent elements of Greek warfare for my thesis.⁹

I. Greek Warfare

Pitched Battle

War for the Greeks was brutal and personal, and it ideally hinged on a decisive pitched battle, either on land or sea. Although the Greeks did engage in skirmishing and sieges, an unquestionable victory in battle was preferable because it was definitive and of short duration.¹⁰ Sieges had the potential to last much longer and prove more costly in manpower and resources; further, they did not permit a confrontation between warrior and warrior, but between warrior and wall. It is not surprising that the most famous Greek siege, the decade-long siege of Troy, was described by Homer primarily in terms of personal, hand-to-hand combat between Bronze Age heroes. This gruesomely intimate

⁹ See Pritchett, *The Greek State at War I-V*. The present study does not include a discussion of naval warfare, a significant element of both Classical and Hellenistic military history, because Alexander's eastern campaigns were all fought by land battles. For an examination of naval warfare see Rawlings, *Ancient Greeks at War*, 104-27, and P. Souza, "War at Sea" in *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 367-82.

¹⁰ Battles normally ceased when the sun set. For a brief description and detailed table of battle duration, see Pritchett, *Greek State at War IV*, 46-51.

nature of battle remained a key component of Greek war even as the arrangement of troops and technology evolved.¹¹

Perhaps the preference for pitched battle and short-term, if extreme, violence, stemmed from the Greek tradition of citizen soldiers, the majority of whom were land-owners and farmers, who could not devote an extended amount of time to war.¹² There was a need for a manner of determining a distinct victor which would not result in prolonged campaigning. The consequence was the development of hoplite warfare, which predominated in Greece from the eighth to sixth centuries and continued down in modified form through the Hellenistic period.¹³ A hoplite was generally a land-owning citizen who furnished his own armor when called into duty for the defense of his polis.¹⁴ Hoplite battles were almost formulaic encounters between two armies. Smoothing off the battlefield beforehand, heavily-armored soldiers met in phalanx formation, a solid square of men whose numbers could vary.¹⁵ Each hoplite carried a shield, a spear, and a short sword, which were generally used in that order.¹⁶ During the advance, troops crashed against one another and leaned their weight into their shields while stabbing outward with

¹¹ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, xxiv, 12-13, 40-44. On earlier arrangements of troops in Homeric war, see Pritchett, *Greek State at War IV*, 7-32.

¹² V. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 1-16 and *Western Way of War*, 1-9.

¹³ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, xxvi; Rawlings, "War and Warfare in Ancient Greece" in *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 21. For an argument in favor of an Homeric predecessor of pitched hoplite battle, see Pritchett, *Greek State at War IV*, 7-33.

¹⁴ For further discussion of hoplite warfare, weapons, and reform see: A. Snodgrass, *Early Greek Armour and Weapons* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1964); P. Krentz, "The Nature of Hoplite Battles" *Classical Antiquity* 4, no. 1 (1985): 50-61; H. van Wees, *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2004); D. Kagan and G. Viggiano (eds) *Men of Bronze: Hoplite Warfare in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Rawlings, "War and Warfare in Ancient Greece," 18. J. Lee, "The Classical Greek Experience," in *Oxford Handbook*, 152-7. See also for a discussion of battlefield procedure and armor Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 27-39; 55-88.

¹⁶ For arms and armor see Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 55-88. Lee, "The Classical Greek Experience," 147-9. Rawlings, *Ancient Greeks at War*, 45-8.

their spears. This point of battle was called an *othismos*, or “push,” and it eventually dissolved into hand-to-hand combat.¹⁷ The phalanx formation allowed for a “concentration of warfare” which permitted an army to cut down a large percentage of its enemy and decide a victor with finality; the goal was to eliminate as large a percentage of the enemy as possible and win the field.¹⁸ In order to facilitate this, armies would often wait for their opponents to line up and prepare, and “battles normally began when both sides were ready;” this process occasionally led to several days of waiting in order to ensure a concentration of force.¹⁹

The “concentration of warfare” was the goal of the Spartan king Agesilaus at the Battle of Mantinea in 362. The king encamped outside the walls of the eponymous town and avoided separate conflicts between his enemies, the Arcadians and the Argives, in order to await the time when they might combine forces so that he could defeat them altogether. Agesilaus wished to fight his enemies *en masse* and ἐκ τοῦ δικαίου καὶ φανεροῦ (“in regular fashion and in the open”) in order to render any defeat utterly decisive.²⁰ Decades later at Chaeronea in 338, Philip II also sought a single, decisive pitched battle. Because he was able to defeat a coalition of the most powerful Greek poleis led by Athens and Thebes, Philip swiftly won control of Greece.²¹ The hint of artificiality involved in the planning of a pitched battle, which often involved seeking out a preferred battle site in advance and aiming for decisive casualties, characterized even

¹⁷ The use of this word is debated by scholars, as it is uncertain whether an *othismos* refers to a literal contest of pushing, shield-to-shield along the front line, or is merely used as a metaphor for the first contact of troops. Hanson argues for the literal meaning (*Western Way of War* 28-9; 169-70).

¹⁸ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 225; see also 12-18. Pritchett, *Greek State at War IV*, 65-73.

¹⁹ Pritchett, *Greek State at War II*, 148-9.

²⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.16. Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 17.

²¹ Worthington, *Philip II*, 147-51.

the Persian Wars. Herodotus wrote that the Persian general Mardonius claimed that the Greeks had “absurd notions of warfare” (7.9.2). Perhaps Herodotus meant to imply that after Mardonius’ total defeat at Plataea (479), the general better understood the logic of Greek war and the need to render a defeat so conclusive that further attacks would not be attempted.

Logic was not the only significant element of war, however. Large-scale pitched battles also allowed a demonstration of *andreia*, or manliness, and they often served as a turning point in war if not a decisive resolution altogether. It is not surprising that these feats, rather than skirmishes, were more commonly lauded and appreciated by the Greeks. The Persian Wars from Marathon to Mycale (490-479) consisted of pitched battles on land and at sea which served as a touchstone for Greek honor and valor well into the Classical period.²² However, the Greeks were more frequently at war with one another than with invading enemies, and their means of making war on other poleis varied. The battles and skirmishes of the Peloponnesian War (431-404), being both so numerous and spread over a duration of almost three decades, might prove more representative of the everyday reality of Greek warfare. Conflicts of this period consisted of seasonal raids, skirmishes, sieges, naval battles, and pitched battles, all of which hoplites were capable of doing.

²² Classical period theatre like Aeschylus’ *Persians* lauds both the victors of the Persian Wars (in this case, the Athenians at Salamis) as well as the superiority of their method of war and discipline (Bruce LaForse, “Fighting the Other Part I” in *Oxford Handbook*, 575-8). Thucydides calls the wars “the greatest achievement of former times” (1.23.1).

Set battles, however, were not always the reality.²³ Rawlings claims that the notion of Greek agonal warfare is entirely a modern construct because of the recorded frequency of other types of combat: “ambushes, deceptive stratagems, bloody pursuits, and massacres.”²⁴ It seems more likely that agonal warfare and the face-to-face combat which Hanson describes was the Greek ideal,²⁵ but circumstances did not always permit one army to force another into battle, and occasionally ruses were preferable. Although ambushes and surprise attacks were used by the Greeks, they were comparatively infrequent, as the distance between two hoplite armies was usually not great enough to allow for such measures.²⁶ Ambushes are not associated with dishonor in Homer, but Pritchett argues that the Greeks saw trickery as “a violation of the ancient sense of military honor.”²⁷

The inclination to engage in direct combat was strong. During the Archidamian War (431-421), Pericles specifically exhorted the Athenians not to allow their pride to overpower them when the Spartans ravaged the countryside, knowing that if the citizens yielded to pitched battle, they were likely to lose.²⁸ But then as today, there was often a gap between what was preferable in battle and what was necessary. Thucydides indirectly expressed this discontinuity between the ideal and the reality through the Spartan general Brasidas, who gave his soldiers contradictory advice. Facing an Illyrian assault, Brasidas

²³ See Lee, “The Classical Greek Experience,” in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 157-9.

²⁴ Rawlings, “War and Warfare in Ancient Greece,” in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 9.

²⁵ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 14-16.

²⁶ Pritchett, *Greek State at War II*, 156-60.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 178-9. Pritchett cites the association of bravery and ambush in Homer through speeches by Achilles (*Il.* 1.227), Idomeneus (*Il.* 13.277), Priam (*Il.* 24.779), and Odysseus (*Od.* 14.217). He contrasts this Homeric perspective with the later Greeks described by Polybius (4.8.11) who are opposite the Cretans with respect to ambushes, and do not engage in them.

²⁸ Thuc. 2.13. Cf. Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 81, 125.

deprecated tricks and evasion: “rather than meet you in close fighting, [the Illyrians] think it safer to make you frightened and to run no risks themselves” and they “only make threats...keeping well out of the way themselves” despite their behavior being “alarming...to the eye and to the ear.”²⁹ However, at the Battle of Amphipolis (424), Brasidas praises deception, claiming that “it is by these unorthodox methods that one wins the greatest glory; they completely deceive the enemy” (Thuc. 5.9). The use of stratagems and deception was not the Greek ideal, but because it often proved more useful in a situation than direct confrontation, it was a distinct facet of Greek war. Indeed, it was through a stratagem that the Spartan general Lysander won the Peloponnesian War at the Battle of Aegospotami (405). Lysander watched enemy Athenian ships line up and offer battle for four consecutive days, each time refusing to bring his own fleet out to meet them so that the Athenians did not believe him willing to fight. On the fifth day, when the Athenians beached their ships, Lysander pursued and caught them half-manned, wiping out his enemy’s naval force.³⁰

Post-battle behavior was also of great importance. The raising of trophies and stripping of the dead had deep roots by the Classical period, and the latter recurs with great frequency in the *Iliad*.³¹ Both of these practices clarified the victor of the battle, allowing the army which had won the field to claim it and take prizes from the slain in the form of armor, weapons, and likely whatever other objects of value the dead had upon

²⁹ Thuc. 4.126. Cf. Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 13.

³⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.20-8. R. Moore, “Generalship: Leadership and Command,” in *Oxford Handbook of War*, 462. See Pritchett, *Greek State at War II*, 180-3 for an extensive list of instances of Greek ambush.

³¹ Some of the most notable examples are upon the deaths of the Trojan Sarpedon and the Myrmidon Patroclus (*Il.* 16.531-4, 16.696-8; 17.123).

them.³² Thucydides describes this process in the wake of the Battle of Solgyeia (425/4): after the Athenians forced the Corinthians from the field, they were able to claim it, both putting up a trophy and stripping the dead, whose bodies were not defiled, but generally given over to the survivors of the losing side (4.43-4).³³

Battlefield trophies are a point of great significance, as they demonstrate the role of the honor/shame dichotomy in Greek warfare and society and how pitched battle was the traditional venue through which one's martial prowess was expressed. While the victors made their triumph public by physical display, for those who lost (and survived), defeat may have "involved humiliation and a recognition of martial inferiority."³⁴ It is significant that a war trophy could only be set up after a conflict involving direct contact, even if it amounted to no more than a skirmish. The Greeks used trophies frequently, but Pausanias claims that it was not Macedonian tradition to establish war trophies. As Pritchett points out, this is blatantly untrue. Diodorus' accounts contradict those of Pausanias in several cases, the most famous of which is Philip II's statue of a lion at Chaeronea, set up to honor the fallen Sacred Band of Thebes. Anyone observing the statue, then as today, is reminded of both the band *and* of the king who defeated it.³⁵

³² Rawlings, *Ancient Greeks at War*, 98-9.

³³ Philip II did not follow this custom after his victory at the Battle of Chaeronea (338), when he ransomed the bodies of the fallen Thebans (except for members of the Sacred Band) and sold the prisoners into slavery. See further: I. Worthington, *Philip II*, 154.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 99, 193. See Pritchett, *Greek State at War II*, 264-9 for a chart which details the construction of war trophies in the histories.

³⁵ Diod. 16.86.6; 16.88.2; also Philip against Bardylis in Diod. 16.4.7; Pausanias 9.40.7-9. On Greek use of trophies see: Pritchett, *Greek State at War II*, 262-3; 270-1.

Siege Warfare

Siege warfare was also used by the Greeks, and the variety of terminology ancient authors use to mean “besiege” suggests that it was a common form of combat.³⁶ Sieges tested a general’s ingenuity and a soldier’s patience and did not allow the hand-to-hand combat that the Greeks preferred; rather, sieges mandated the use of projectiles and combat at a distance, involving archers and slingers. “Those who fight from afar” were capable of destroying an enemy without ever meeting him face to face, and they were a “universal object of disdain in Greek literature.”³⁷ Siege combat may not have been the most glorious method of war, but it was often a necessary means of defeating an enemy, and it became more common in Greece during the fifth century at the time of Athens’ imperialistic expansion.³⁸ By the fourth century, Philip II and Alexander the Great both conducted a number of sieges, altering the nature of Greek warfare.

Seaman disagrees with the earlier theory that the preference for pitched battle began to disintegrate during the Peloponnesian War, when a large-scale and protracted war led to the accumulation of multiple enemies. The option of deciding the entire war in a few land and naval battles, like the Persian Wars, was not viable. Seaman emphasizes that siege warfare and the atrocities which accompanied it predated even this large-scale civil war.³⁹ During the period Thucydides calls the *pentecontaetia* (479-431), Seaman

³⁶ M. Seaman, “The Peloponnesian War and Its Sieges” in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 642 n.1.

³⁷ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 15-16.

³⁸ Lee, “The Classical Greek Experience,” 157.

³⁹ Thuc. 1.23. Seaman, “The Peloponnesian War and Its Sieges,” 643. For a brief but thorough summary of modern scholars’ treatments of siege and massacre during the Peloponnesian War, see Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 152-3. There is great discrepancy concerning the Greek toleration of massacre between the archaic and classical periods.

shows 30 city-states that were besieged, and during the 27-year Peloponnesian War at least 100 sieges were undertaken, over half successfully.⁴⁰ Perhaps the reason sieges are less conspicuous in written histories than pitched battle is because they are generally not remembered or especially revered unless they attract attention for an unusual duration, level of violence, or method of capture. The most famous siege of the ancient world is unquestionably Troy, but during the Classical period the siege of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War was likely the best known because it led to the collapse of an empire (404). Among Alexander's campaigns, the sieges of Tyre (333-332), Aornus (327), and Malli (325) are the most famous for violence, (technological innovations, a facet of war that advanced considerably under Philip and Alexander and well into the Hellenistic period), and in the case of Tyre, duration.⁴¹

A siege was prosecuted either by direct assault or circumvallation, the process of walling up a city and blockading it. The latter was often a protracted and costly endeavor which led a city to surrender through starvation. Direct assault was preferable.⁴² In some cases however, quick sieges and temporary captures of minor forts involved the labor of ravaging the surrounding land to agitate the enemy and little else; occasionally a skirmish could be induced. Such was the case for the Athenians at Pheia in Elis in 431 (Thuc. 2.25), and at Thronium in the same year, where the Athenian general Cleopompus ravaged the land, took hostages, and departed (2.26). Hostages might be taken to secure a city or region after a siege, as the Spartan Eurylochus did at Hyaea (Thuc. 3.101), or

⁴⁰ Seaman, "Peloponnesian War and Its Sieges," 644.

⁴¹ A. Chaniotis, "Greeks Under Siege: Challenges, Experiences, and Emotions," in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 440, 445.

⁴² Seaman, "Peloponnesian War and Its Sieges," 644-5.

inhabitants could be removed and displaced, as at Polichna in 411 by the Athenians (Thuc. 8.23), but the direst of terms appear to have been imposed only after particular cases.

There were no laws regulating a victor's treatment of a city or citadel after a siege, but his disposition was likely most heavily influenced by long-standing enmity (or lack thereof) and most significantly, the cost of a siege, which involved the investment of finances, manpower, and often a great deal of time.⁴³ The Corcyraeans' siege of Epidamnus (433) ended with the enslavement of foreign troops and execution of all other prisoners because of Epidamnus' earlier refusal to submit to an offer of clemency from its mother polis (Thuc 1.26-30). The siege of Thasos took Athens three years (468-465), and Thasos was punished by the destruction of its city walls and navy and total loss of *autonomia* (Thuc. 1.101). Samos, besieged by Athenian naval circumvallation for nine months, capitulated in 440 and suffered a similar fate, including the giving of hostages (Thuc. 1.117). The role of raiding is also alluded to in Thucydides' account of Potidaea, which fell to the Athenians in 430/29 during the Peloponnesian war. Thucydides reports that the inhabitants "with their wives and children and auxiliary forces, were to be permitted to leave the town, the men to be allowed to take one garment apiece, the women two...[and] a fixed sum of money for their journey...wherever they could find a place to go" (2.70). The survivors were displaced and deprived of the majority of their wealth, and the implication is that the contents of the city fell to Athens.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 153.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.* 140.

The aftermath of a siege was sometimes more dire, especially if it had been a long one. The Spartan siege of Plataea (429-427) cost the Spartans almost two years of labor, with the result that they imposed *andrapodismos*, or the killing of all adult men and the enslavement of women and children.⁴⁵ Some of the most famous uses of circumvallation, a lengthy process, occurred at Scione (423), Melos (415), and Syracuse (415-413).⁴⁶ Notably the first two, which ended in victory for Athens, also ended in *andrapodismos* for its enemies. Additionally, if a city fell after refusing surrender, the victors might destroy it. This could include looting, razing the city walls, or massacre, and “the sexual violation of women was largely a characteristic of siege warfare”⁴⁷ even when the enslavement of the population was not an enforced penalty. Such total destruction of a city was both a punitive measure and preventative, in order to render other poleis less liable to hold out against the besieger. However, the terms which ended a siege depended entirely on the “disposition of those whose decision it was to negotiate the terms of surrender,”⁴⁸ usually a general or, in Athens, the *demos*.

The ability of a victor to behave capriciously is well illustrated in the consecutive sieges of Cedreiae and Lampsacus at the end of the Peloponnesian War. The two cities were allies of Athens and resisted when Lysander assaulted the walls. Although both cities were captured quickly by storm, the inhabitants of Cedreiae were enslaved, but those of Lampsacus were spared and only their goods were plundered (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.15-20). The fate of the city of Mytilene earlier in the war was equally dependent on the

⁴⁵ Thuc. 3.68. For a discussion of the Plataeans' fate, see Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 144-6.

⁴⁶ Chaniotis, “Greeks Under Siege,” 645-6; Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 147-9.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 159. Cf. Rawlings, *Ancient Greeks at War*, 218-21.

⁴⁸ Seaman, “Peloponnesian War and its Sieges,” 652. Cf. Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 139

disposition of the Athenian *demos*; in 427, Mytilene's revolt from the Delian League caused Athens to place it under the watch of a fleet while deciding its fate in the famous Mytilenean debates (Thuc. 3.1-6). After the Assembly agreed to put the male Mytileneans to death and enslave the women and children, the following day it convened again to dispute the correctness of that resolution due to a "sudden change of feeling" (Thuc. 3.36). The change in the people that led them to repeal the decision came just in time to prevent the execution or enslavement of an entire polis and revealed the power a victor had over the fate of his enemy.

An assault on a city was not always only the decision of the general; often the frustration of the troops played a significant role, as a besieging army suffered projectile wounds and serious casualties through the process of penetrating the walls. Such was the case at the Athenian siege of Mende (423), where the gates of the town were opened during the fighting among its own inhabitants, and the Athenians under the general Nicias poured in before terms had been made or accepted. Thucydides says that the Athenians "sacked the town as though they had captured it by assault," indicating that a sacking was acceptable only when a city refused terms (4.130). Further, Thucydides notes that "the generals found it difficult to restrain their troops from massacring the inhabitants" (4.130), even though the generals ultimately did not intend to punish the city. In the end, they only put to death those responsible for the revolt, but allowed the people of Mende to continue governing themselves as before. This overzealousness on the part of soldiers could lead to massacres which fell outside of the Greek idea of just war. In 413, the Thracian allies of Athens behaved similarly when they stormed the city of Mycalessus

and massacred the inhabitants, including a boys' school, which was occupied at the time (Thuc. 7.29). Thucydides makes clear that this behavior was not in alignment with typical Greek war, classifying its perpetrators as "blood thirsty barbarians" and their action as "a disaster more complete than any, more sudden and more horrible" (7.29). Nevertheless, these troops were involved in Greek war because they had been recruited by Athens.

The Greeks could be uncompromisingly cruel in war as well, after both battles and sieges. The fate of Melos, mentioned above, is perhaps the most famous example of this. In 415, the Athenians demanded loyalty of the formerly neutral Aegean island of Melos. The Athenian Assembly presented the Melians with an ultimatum, alliance and submission or *andrapodismos*, and then besieged Melos when its inhabitants refused to yield, inflicting punishment within the year.⁴⁹ *Andrapodismos* was the most violent outcome of Greek war, mandating the execution of all military-aged males and the enslavement of women and children. While *andrapodismos* had been used before Melos, the Athenians' behavior towards the Melians was exceptionally cruel in light of the polis' neutrality and relative powerlessness in the war. Melos did not have the potential to become a significant enemy, and the Athenian response was markedly ruthless. A similarly excessive show of brutality occurred among Xenophon's men after the Battle of Cunaxa (399), when they mutilated the bodies of the Persian dead, "unbidden save by their own impulse," in order to inspire fear in the enemy.⁵⁰ Both examples reveal the extremes which participants in a war (including non-combatants, as in the Athenian

⁴⁹ Thuc. 5.84-116. Cf. Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 148-9. NB: Xenophon notes that there were Melian survivors whom Lysander returned to Melos after the war (*Hell.* 2.2.9).

⁵⁰ Xen. *Anab.* 3.4.5. For further discussion of mutilation, which is a highly uncommon occurrence in Greek war, see Tritle, "Men at War," in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 288-9.

Assembly) are capable of reaching. Philip and Alexander also exacted cruel penalties from the besieged, as we shall see in chapter two (pp. 24-5). Philip's razed Olynthus in 348 and allowed his men to massacre the city's inhabitants, and Alexander inflicted *andrapodismos* on Thebes in 335 and crucifixion on Tyre (p.32).⁵¹

Perhaps these explosions of violence were due to the gruesome nature of the Greek battle experience; both pitched battle and sieges were exhausting procedures. Hand-to-hand combat sapped even the best warrior of energy quickly due to the sheer effort of charging and fighting under 70 pounds of bronze and wood.⁵² Moreover, taking and dealing out blows was costly, and the effort of piercing an enemy's protective gear and maintaining the force of the "push" or defending oneself, if the ranks had been broken, were strenuous tasks.⁵³ It was typical for a Greek soldier not only to witness the "great bloodshed"⁵⁴ of battle, but to be smattered with it as well. For this reason it is very rare that an army would have engaged in pitched battles back to back; the process was too draining, mentally and psychologically, to be managed regularly. This may also explain why the massacres which could occur after a long siege never occurred after a pitched battle.⁵⁵ The experience was grisly, and even allowing for a greatly different mindset towards war and violence in antiquity, it must still have left a mark in a man's memory to see friends or relatives cut down brutally beside him.⁵⁶

⁵¹ For the siege of Olynthus see Worthington, *Philip II*, 78-80.

⁵² See note 11.

⁵³ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 191.

⁵⁴ Curtius' comment on the battle of Issus (3.9.5).

⁵⁵ Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 153.

⁵⁶ See Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 122-5 for bonds between soldiers and fighting alongside neighbors.

Herodotus hints at the psychological impact of battle with his description of the Athenian soldier Epizelus at the Battle of Marathon (490), who faced a particularly terrifying enemy. Epizelus' narrow escape from death resulted in permanent blindness (Hdt. 6.117), likely the effect of extreme hypertension resulting from fear. The fifth century sophist Gorgias described the madness and fear that those who experienced battle often underwent in his *Encomium of Helen*, a defense of Helen of Troy's betrayal of Menelaus. Tritle posits that Gorgias was directing his defense at an audience of Peloponnesian War veterans, relying on such men's understanding that the frightening elements of war can cause a person to do thoughtless things.⁵⁷ While it is likely that ancient soldiers suffered psychological trauma in some cases after battle, it is difficult to extend the use of modern medical classifications like PTSD to ancient individuals as Tritle does. Tritle's diagnosis of men such as the Spartan King Clearchus and even Alexander the Great involves the filtering of an ancient culture through a modern lens, and the true mental state of such individuals is ultimately unknowable.⁵⁸ An assessment of war-weariness seems a more cautious approach than speculation on neurological damage.

Displays of savagery like those discussed above likely occurred for Archaic and Classical Greek soldiers only once or twice, if at all, during a lifetime. The examples

⁵⁷ Tritle, "Men at War," 280-1.

⁵⁸ Tritle, *From Melos To My Lai* argues Clearchus, as a *philopolemos*, a "lover of war," suffered from PTSD and that "little separates Clearchus from those soldiers [Tritle] knew in Vietnam" (55). Although his use of Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* assessment of "psychological arousal" has its roots in biology and neuroscience which, arguably, has not much altered in the course of human evolution between Alexander's day and our own, I hesitate to employ culturally and chronologically specific terms like PTSD when describing the condition of soldiers in antiquity. I do not, however, find that parallels between ancient warfare and American experiences in Vietnam (especially considering the clash of western and guerilla warfare) are entirely unwarranted. See further on soldier's experiences in battle: Worthington, *By the Spear*, 283-8.

discussed were selected from across the Greek world. The soldiers who executed Melian civilians were not the same men who mutilated Persian troops at Cunaxa or who massacred the Thebans. The frequency of violence in hoplite warfare is not comparable to Vietnam, where an untrained soldier might have fought more extensively in a week's time than a practiced hoplite might have in his entire lifetime.⁵⁹ The Peloponnesian War provided the most consecutive string of conflicts for one Greek army, and even those were somewhat divided, interspersed with periods of peace. Certainly the same men were not involved in successive sieges or battles and forced to undertake constant slaughter, although being rigorously trained.

The circumstances of Alexander the Great's army were different. Alexander and his army marched from Macedonia in 334 to the banks of the Hyphasis (Beas) River in India by 326 and then back to Babylon by 323 in a decade. During that time the army fought four major pitched battles, prosecuted dozens of sieges, and engaged in guerilla warfare for the first time. Hanson notes that the traditional warfare of the Greeks was "guided by rules of engagement that often discouraged and deprecated ruse, ambush, night attack, and long, extended campaigns," and the Macedonian expansion eastward pitted the army against all of these things. As I will discuss in the following chapters, the effect of a greater frequency of combat and of distinctly non-Greek practices was a rise in the savagery of battle and discontent among the troops, ultimately leading to Macedonian resistance.

⁵⁹ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 220.

II. Alexander in Persia

Alexander' Inheritance

In eleven years (334-323), Alexander and his Macedonian army conquered a significant portion of the known world, expanding the Macedonian empire as far south as Egypt and as far East as the Punjab in India.⁶⁰ Both king and army managed this through effort, endurance, and most significantly, innovation. Alexander was heir to two types of war: the traditional hoplite warfare of his ancestors discussed in the previous chapter, and the renovated, highly mobile and exceptionally lethal warfare of the Macedonian phalanx, the creation of Philip II (see below). Philip's reign marked a watershed in both Macedonian and Greek history because of his rapid expansion of, and revolutionary alterations to, the Macedonian army.

Philip II of Macedonia was the youngest son of Amyntas III. During a twenty-three year reign (359-336) he united Upper and Lower Macedonia, exploited the country's natural resources, secured its borders, and perhaps most importantly he created the expertly trained army with which Alexander would conquer Asia. Philip professionalized the army and did away with conscript civilian soldiers in favor of an expertly-trained army, who, unlike mercenaries, owed allegiance to the Argead line.⁶¹ Philip expanded the size of his army through the incorporation of conquered neighbors, and some became specialist troops with expertise in javelin throwing or archery. All the soldiers went through rigorous training and frequent drilling in order to perfect

⁶⁰ "India" to the ancient Greeks was comprised of Pakistan and the north-west states of India: the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir.

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of Philip's military reforms, see Worthington, *Philip II*, 26-32; R. Gabriel, *Philip II of Macedonia: Greater than Alexander* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2010), p. 61-95.

maneuvers whose precision would be crucial in battle. Macedonian battle formation, even during drills, must have been formidable, as Alexander was able to scare the Illyrian king Cleitus into withdrawing by ordering the Macedonians to run through their practice maneuvers (Arr.1.6. 1-4).

Philip revolutionized weaponry as well. He created the sarissa, a pike that measured between 14-18 feet long and required both hands to wield. The sarissa gave the Macedonians the edge over a hoplite army, which would be stopped short by Philip's front lines, which bristled with ten-inch points. Because of the compactness of the Macedonian phalanx, soldiers did not need the extensive body armor of their hoplite counterparts,⁶² and this made troop formations very flexible. At Chaeronea (338), Philip ordered his phalanxes to retreat and then, when the enemy pursued them, the Macedonians were able to turn about, regain their momentum, and defeat the enemy.⁶³ At Gaugamela (331) for example, Alexander's phalanxes were able to separate and allow the Persians' 200 scythed chariots to pass through their ranks without inflicting a great deal of damage.⁶⁴

The role of the cavalry in battle rose to prominence under Philip, becoming the main attack arm of the army, and it continued to dominate Alexander's strategies as well. Because of its speed, the Macedonian cavalry took the offensive in battle and was used to carve openings in the enemy's formation. Riders were armed with lances or sabers and pitted against infantrymen, and once cavalry entered the phalanx, breaking it up from

⁶² Worthington, *Philip II*, 27; Gabriel, *Philip II*, 64-6. Macedonian troops did however carry a thin shield, a *pelta*, about their necks so that the metal hung down across their chests, offering additional protection.

⁶³ Gabriel, *Philip II*, 69-70.

⁶⁴ Worthington, *By the Spear*, 191.

within could occur rather quickly. The significance of Philip's reforms rests on his simultaneous use of infantry and cavalry, which allowed him to pin an enemy in place with infantry and assault its flanks with his cavalry.⁶⁵ In doing so, Philip pioneered "shock and awe" tactics.

Philip also presided over the advancement of siege technology which allowed him to conduct sieges fairly quickly, capturing six cities in under a year.⁶⁶ Earlier sieges of the Classical period were often long and costly,⁶⁷ but Philip's development of a department of military engineering changed this practice; he made use of siege machinery like towers, rams, and the *gastraphetes* ("belly-shooter") with the aid of engineers on-site. Philip's use of the torsion catapult, first seen at the siege of Byzantium (340), allowed an army to break through fortified walls rather than merely launch projectiles at the defenders.

Philip never made use of the Classical period custom of discussing the terms of a battle before an attack,⁶⁸ but some facets of his war practices remained distinctly Greek. For example, the tight link between Greek religion and war was still in place. At the Battle of Crocus Field in 352, Philip ordered his troops to wear festal wreaths in honor of Apollo whose pillaged shrine had been the basis of the Third Sacred War (356-346).⁶⁹ Philip's extreme treatment of Olynthus mentioned in chapter one (p.18) rested on a

⁶⁵ Cf. the Battle of Crocus Field in 352. Gabriel, *Philip II*, 72-82; Worthington, *Philip II*, 29.

⁶⁶ Gabriel, *Philip II*, 91.

⁶⁷ Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 112-3.

⁶⁸ The idea of an arrangement between two armies and a formula for battle may well have fallen out of use by Philip's time among Greeks as well as Macedonians. Philip himself was ambushed by Onomarchus in Thessaly, who had hidden catapults about the periphery of a valley to catch the Macedonians off guard. Diod. 16.35, Worthington, *By the Spear*, 44-5.

⁶⁹ Diod. 16.35.5; Justin 8.2; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 49-50. Although this measure has obvious psychological and political undertones, Philip's ability to utilize religion in this way shows that it was still a significant element in war.

religious pretext, as Olynthus had sworn and betrayed a religious oath of loyalty to Philip.⁷⁰ The king also maintained the Greek practice of ransoming captives and exchanging the dead after a battle.⁷¹ Even Philip's use of *andrapodismos*, as at the sieges of Sestus (353) and Olynthus (348), was not without precedent in Greek warfare, and generally Philip and Alexander both responded reasonably to cities which offered surrender.⁷²

The greatest change to Greek warfare under Philip and especially Alexander was the frequency and duration of campaigning. Philip's men would have been able to return to Macedonia between expeditions, even though his army marched further and longer than any Greek ones. This was even more so with Alexander, whose troops covered thousands of miles in the East and whose respites were always in foreign locations.⁷³ Even during the twenty-seven year Peloponnesian War, troops returned to their respective poleis after an expedition and did not generally fight strings of sieges or battles in succession. The soldiers who fought the Peloponnesian War were citizens first, but the Macedonian army after Philip comprised professional soldiers. Such constant exposure to

⁷⁰ Gabriel, *Philip II*, 22.

⁷¹ In exceptional cases Philip did not do this. For example, after the Battle of Crocus Field (353) Philip executed 3,000 captives and crucified the general of the opposing army, Onomarchus, as a penalty for temple robbery (Diod. 16.35.6; Worthington, *Philip II*, 62-3). After the Chaeronea, Philip did not return freely, but ransomed, the bodies of the dead Thebans (Worthington, *Philip II*, 154).

⁷² See Diod. 16.53 for the account of Olynthus and also for the fates of Mecyberna and Torone, which were surrendered (through treachery) and thus not harmed by Philip. The fate of Methone, which held out similarly against Philip from the winter of 355 to the following spring, mirrors that of Potidaea during the Peloponnesian War (Diod 16.34.5). Cf. Thuc. 2.70; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 43. Alexander's destruction of Persepolis, which had offered no resistance, was an exceptional case linked with the goal of his campaign, namely the toppling of the Persian Empire. Because of its ties to Xerxes, the destruction of Persepolis was meant to signify a successful, if not complete, campaign.

⁷³ Alexander provided occasional reprieves from war by staging festivals and games: after Issus (Diod.17.40.1; cf. Curt. 3.12.27), after the siege of Tyre (Arr.2.24.6), after Gaugamela and the capture of Persepolis (Diod.17.72.1) after the Battle of the Hydaspes (Arr. 5.20.1). Perhaps he had in mind Philip's celebration of the Macedonian Olympic festival at Dium directly after the successful siege of Olynthus, "in commemoration of his victory" (Diod. 16.55.1) as well in order to rest his troops.

war and rapid accrual of experience further altered the battle practices of the Macedonian army over time and became distinct from the behavior of a citizen soldier of a Greek polis, who would have spent less time in training and much less time experiencing war directly. This change was set into motion by Philip, who created an army with the potential for frequent action and brutal efficiency, and stretched to its limits by Alexander, who led the army in campaign as far as the banks of the Hyphasis and back to Babylon during a reign of thirteen years.

Alexander was already well-prepared for war even before he became king in 336 aged 20.⁷⁴ In 340 aged 16 Alexander was regent and fought a battle against the Mardi on the upper Strymon River, in 338 aged 18 he fought with his father at Chaeronea, commanding the left wing and defeating the Theban Sacred Band. In 335, a year after he became king, The year he became king, he campaigned in Thrace and Illyria before moving south to subdue a revolt of Thebes. Then, in 334 Alexander invaded Asia, a plan he inherited from his father.⁷⁵ The invasion was a pan-Hellenic expedition and a war of reprisal against the Achaemenid Empire for the Persian invasion of Greece and sack of Athens during the Persian Wars (490-479). This theme of revenge often shaped Alexander and his army's treatment of cities.⁷⁶ Alexander would, as we shall see, go

⁷⁴ For a further discussion of Alexander's youth and ascension see Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 19-35; Heckel, *Alexander the Great*, 28-30; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 103-5.

⁷⁵ Worthington, *By the Spear*, 103-5.

⁷⁶ The war of reprisal accounts for the sack and razing of Persepolis, the Achaemenid capital most closely associated with Xerxes (Diod. 17.72; Plut. *Alex.*38.3-4; Curt. 5.7.4-7; Arr.3.18.10-12), as well as the massacre of the Branchidae (Curt. 7.5.28-35). For a detailed discussion of the revenge theme, see G. Squillace, "Consensus Strategies Under Philip and Alexander" in *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives* (ed) E. Carney and D. Ogden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 69-80.

beyond the conquest of the heart of Persia, but if he ever anticipated so doing at the outset of his campaign, he did not make it public.⁷⁷

Pitched Battle

The Macedonians fought three major pitched battles in Persia: Granicus (334), Issus (333), and Gaugamela (331), all of which involved the face-to-face clash of armies which were organized opposite one another in linear formation. As discussed above, the brutality of combat aided in a direct and unquestionable victory, an element with which Alexander was especially concerned.⁷⁸ At the Granicus River, Alexander combated a coalition of Persian satraps under the command of the satrap Arsites.⁷⁹ In the interest of matching the Persian troops and utilizing a traditional battle order, Alexander went to great trouble to maintain an unbroken front line while crossing the steep banks of the eponymous river. He defeated Arsites' men with an innovative technique and the aid of the Macedonian general Amyntas, who forced an opening in the Persian order and thus tore through the belly of the Persian line and opened it for hand-to-hand fighting.⁸⁰

Although the *othismos* was not the central goal of battle, the traditional Greek preference

⁷⁷ For Alexander's goals in Asia, see P. Brunt, "The Aims of Alexander" in *Alexander the Great: A Reader* I. Worthington (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2012) 62-70; also W. Heckel, "Alexander the Great and 'the Limits of the Civilized World'" in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, 71-88.

⁷⁸ Both Plutarch (*Alex.* 38) and Arrian (3.10.2) report that Alexander refused Parmenion's advise to attempt a night attack because he had no wish to steal a victory. This emphasizes Alexander's need to attain unquestionable success against Darius in order to diminish the likelihood of revolt or further resistance from Persian satraps if he won.

⁷⁹ For the Granicus River Battle, see: Diod. 17.19-17.21.6. Plut. *Alex.* 16. Arr. 1.13.1-1.16.7. Cf. Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 147-54; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 144-50.

⁸⁰ See Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 147-54; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 39-44; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 144-50.

for close-range combat was still observed.⁸¹ The truly intimate nature of the fighting is perhaps best exemplified by the death blow the Persian noble Spithridates nearly dealt Alexander, halted only by the sword of the Macedonian *hetairos* Cleitus. Once the armies were entangled after the initial clash, even the king's person was at serious risk.⁸²

Alexander met the Persians in battle again in summer 333 at Issus (Iskenderun), where his army was greatly outnumbered. The Macedonians numbered 40,000 troops, and a plausible estimate of Persian forces is 100,000-150,000 men, who were led by the Great King Darius III himself.⁸³ The Macedonians won the battle thanks to Alexander's use of psychological warfare, which became a hallmark of his generalship. Because he knew how the enemy operated, Alexander suspected penetrating the Persian lines and killing or capturing Darius would demoralize the Persian army and cause it break formation in retreat, making it easier for the smaller Macedonian to cut down. The precision of the Macedonian cavalry, which Alexander led successfully through the Persian ranks, made this possible. When the Macedonians clashed with the Royal Bodyguard, Darius was forced to flee, which led to the collapse of the Persian offensive.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Interestingly, Alexander seems to have had no difficulty discarding the traditional preference for avoiding combat in the month of Daesius. If Plutarch is correct, some Macedonians were wary of fighting during a period when traditionally "the kings of Macedonia were not wont to take the field," but Alexander knew better than to linger for days and bade those who were troubled call the month "a second Artemisius" (*Alex.* 16.2).

⁸² Diod. 17.20.5-7; Plut. *Alex.* 16.8-11; Curt. 8.1.20; Arr.1.15.7-8. Cf. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 149-50.

⁸³ For the Battle of Issus, see: Diod. 17.33-34. Curt.3.9-3.12. Arr. 2.7.1-2.12.2. Cf. Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander*, 154-62; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 165-71.

⁸⁴ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 55-64.

The Macedonians did not combat the Great King again for almost two years, during which time they prosecuted more sieges (pp. 32-3) and took control of Egypt.⁸⁵ Then in 331 the Macedonians met Darius again at Gaugamela (near Tell Gomel, Iraq). Gaugamela was the sort of high-stakes battle which the Great King needed to maintain his rule or the Macedonians needed to end the Achaemenid dynasty. Like Agesilaus at Mantinea (p.8), Alexander was desirous of combating the sum of Darius' forces; he wanted to win the empire, rather than just the battlefield. Gaugamela was substantially different from Granicus and Issus in both participants and size. Darius' easternmost subjects and allies were present: fighters came from as far as Bactria, Sogdiana, Asian Scythia, and India, and the lattermost came with elephants (Arr. 3.8.3-6). This was the first time a western army encountered elephants in battle, and considering additionally the sheer size of the forces participating, Gaugamela was the most monumental and perhaps the "least Greek" of Alexander's battles before Bactria. The total of Persian forces involved in the battle varies widely in the sources, ranging from 200,000 infantry and 45,000 cavalry (Curt. 4.12.13) and, less reasonably, to 1,000,000 infantry and nearly 40,000 cavalry (Arr. 3.8.6). Alexander's forces are more reliably listed at 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry, and even if an extremely conservative estimate of Persian troops is accepted, Alexander's army was still impressively outnumbered at a ratio of at least 2:1.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid, 68-74.

⁸⁶ Bosworth notes that a conservative approach is to rely on Curtius calculations (*Commentary 1*, 293), as the other sources report excessively high numbers. (Diod. 17.53.3 and Plut. *Alex.* 31.1 both list a total of infantry and cavalry at 1,000,000, and Arrian gives 1,000,000 for the infantry alone, accompanied by 40,000 cavalry (3.8.6). Worthington provides a smaller estimate of perhaps 100,000 Persian troops (*By the Spear*, 188-9), which would make the Persian army at Gaugamela the same or smaller than that at Issus (cf. *By the Spear*, 166).

Because of this great difference in size, Alexander's goal was to break up the Persian army by leading his cavalry directly against the Great King, just as he did at Issus. Descriptions of the battle among the ancient sources are widely divergent, likely because the dust kicked up by the cavalry on the plains impeded visibility and so produced varying eye-witness accounts.⁸⁷ A general narrative can be patched together that Alexander was able to draw the general Bessus and his Bactrian forces far to the left of the Persian line, thinning it, and then pierce Persian defenses. Darius escaped while his men continued to press hard against Alexander's left, held by the skilled general Parmenion.⁸⁸ At the end of the day, Darius escaped to Media, but he had few resources left to him because the Macedonians had defeated the Persian army and its allies in battle. This time the Macedonians had won not the field, but the kingdom, and no seizure of symbolic prizes or statues were necessary: as Arrian notes, "Babylon and Susa were clearly the prizes of war" (3.16.2).

As noted in chapter one, battlefield trophies were a frequently-used advertisement of victory in traditional Greek warfare, but Alexander's record of battlefield trophies is rather spotty. This is likely because he was waging a large-scale campaign that required swift movement and involved a final goal and prize much greater than the field of battle. However, after the army's first battle at Granicus, Alexander did honor the fallen by commissioning the court sculptor Lysippus to craft bronze statues of the first twenty-five *hetairoi* who died in the initial charge; the statues were set up at Dium in Macedonia.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Diod. 17.61.1. Cf. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 191.

⁸⁸ Cf. Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 304.

⁸⁹ Arr. 1.16.4. Plut. *Alex.* 16.15 claims that nine infantry as well as the 25 cavalry mentioned in Arrian were sculpted. Bosworth agrees with Arrian that the first casualties of the battle, the twenty-five *hetairoi* under

Further, Alexander sent a trophy of three hundred Persian panoplies to Athens for dedication in the Parthenon; these suits of armor were a reminder of the purpose of the campaign: one of revenge against the Persians, who had sacked and destroyed the Parthenon in 480.⁹⁰ After Issus, no trophies or statues were erected, but Darius' battle chariot was seized and sacrificial games were held in celebration.⁹¹ Although statues on the battle site itself, like Philip's lion of Chaeronea,⁹² were not set up during Alexander's Asian campaign, the very public acquisition and display of prizes did emphasize that Alexander's was a Greek war against a barbarian enemy.

Siege Warfare

In addition to pitched battles, Alexander and his men prosecuted four major sieges in Persia. The first was Miletus (334), the capital of Caria (the west coast of Turkey).⁹³ Alexander needed to control all major coastal fortresses at which the Persian armada might anchor, and the superior Macedonian siege weapons, like towers and battering rams, allowed quick victory. Because the siege had cost little time or effort, only the Persian defenders who resisted and fought were taken captive, if they had not been killed

Amyntas, were sculpted (*Commentary 1*, 125). Only Valleius Paterculus 1.11.3-5 mentions Alexander's statue among the group.

⁹⁰ Arr. 1.16.4-7. Cf. Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 33.

⁹¹ Arr. 2.11.9. On games see Diod. 17.40.1.

⁹² As discussed in chapter one (p. 12), the lion statue at Chaeronea was commissioned by Philip to honor his fallen enemies, although it simultaneously reminded the viewer of the hand which felled them. Alexander did not erect similar monuments to his own opponents after battle, although his profound respect for the Indian raj Porus is well known (Cf. Diod. 17.88.4-7; Plut. *Alex.* 60.12-16; Curt. 8.14.31-46; Arr. 5.18.6-5.19.3; Justin 12.8.5-7).

⁹³ For the siege of Miletus: Diod. 17.22.1-17.23.1; Plut. *Alex.* 17.1. Arr. 1.18.3-1.19.11. Cf. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 46-7; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 152-3.

in the fighting. According to Diodorus, the Milesian civilians came before Alexander bearing branches as suppliants, and Alexander treated them kindly (17.22.4-5).

The siege of Halicarnassus in Caria during the same year cost the Macedonians more time and effort.⁹⁴ Defeating Halicarnassus involved the great physical labor of filling trenches (Diod. 17.24.4; Arr.1.20.8-9), combating sorties,⁹⁵ and putting out the fires set to Macedonian siege engines.⁹⁶ Ultimately the Persian commanders of the city fled to Cos (Diod. 17.27.5), setting the city on fire behind them. Alexander did not capture the inner citadel, but established a Macedonian garrison to guard it and burned the remaining walls of the city. The civilians who had remained inside their homes in the city were spared.⁹⁷

After Issus, Alexander and his army moved against Tyre (333-332), an allegedly impregnable citadel situated on a small island off the Syrian Coast. The siege was unique because it lasted seven months and cost the Macedonians great labor and heavy casualties.⁹⁸ The Tyrians defended the fort by heating sand and iron fragments over concave shields and pouring them from the walls onto the armored enemy. The defenders also pelted molten rock onto the flesh of the Macedonian soldiers and removed their shields or weapons with nets and ropes. If a Macedonian refused to be disarmed, he was

⁹⁴ For the siege of Halicarnassus: Diod.17.23.4-17.27.6; Plut. *Alex.* 17.1; Arr. 1.20.5-1.23.6. Cf. Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 200-06; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 47-9; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 154-6.

⁹⁵ Diod. 17.26.1-2; Arr. 1.21.3, 1.22.1-6.

⁹⁶ Diod. 17.26.3-4; Arr. 1.20.9, 1.21.5, 1.22.2.

⁹⁷ Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 206, suggests that the report that Alexander razed the city walls to the ground is “most unlikely” considering the effort he and his men had put into extinguishing the fires set by the fleeing Persian generals. Fuller suggests instead that Alexander tore down the homes of the incendiaries to build defensive walls near the citadels, which Ptolemy was left to man while the army departed.

⁹⁸ For the siege of Tyre: Diod. 17.40.2-17.46.6; Curt. 4.2.1-4.4.21; Arr. 2.16.7-2.2.24.6; Justin 11.10. Cf. Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 206-16; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 65-7; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 173-8.

hauled up the side of the wall and dropped down in full view of the army (Diod.17.43.8-17.44.5; Curt. 4.3.25-6). This vicious and personal nature of combat resulted in a more disastrous end for the Tyrians, whose civilian population was enslaved. In addition, Alexander ordered 2,000 of its military-age men crucified, likely in both revenge for his own men and in warning for any other fortress contemplating standing a siege.

In the same year Alexander and his army took on Gaza near Egypt, whose satrap Batis must not have been intimidated by the consequences of Tyre.⁹⁹ The army had to construct a mound and ramp with soil that consisted primarily of sand, and this took almost two months. During this time, Alexander was wounded twice, once in the shoulder (Arr.2.27-2) and once in the leg (Curt. 4.6.23), and the troops were at constant labor. The siege of Gaza followed the exhausting efforts at Tyre, and the army suffered from a shortage of water,¹⁰⁰ with the result that mounting frustration led to the infliction of *andrapodismos* when the city was taken. Curtius adds the story that Alexander, in imitation of Achilles, hooked the satrap Batis to the back of his chariot and dragged him around the city until he died (4.6.25-9). If it occurred, this highly personal act of vengeance was undoubtedly meant to warn any other citadels against resisting, and indeed the fort of Pelusium which led into Egypt offered no opposition.¹⁰¹

Alexander and his army's early siege warfare did not differ radically from the Greek norm. The most violent response to a recalcitrant city was the use of

⁹⁹ For the siege of Gaza: Diod. 17.48.7; Plut. *Alex.* 25.3; Curt. 4.6.7-30; Arr. 2.25.4-2.27.7; Cf. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 67-8; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 178-9.

¹⁰⁰ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 68.

¹⁰¹ As Bosworth notes, Arrian's omission of the story does not make it an invention of Curtius', and there is no reason to disbelieve it (*Conquest and Empire*, 68). On Egyptian surrender: Diod. 17.49.1; Curt. 4.7.1-5; Arr. 3.1.3

andrapodismos, which Alexander employed against the later two cities. Kern suggests the harsher treatment of Tyre and Gaza is tied to “the length of the siege, provocations...and the wounding of Alexander.”¹⁰² Additionally, it seems reasonable that the exceptionally brutal punishment of the Tyrians was due to the defenders’ very personal methods of attack. Even Alexander’s use of crucifixion, a mostly eastern form of punishment, had precedent among the Classical Greeks. Herodotus tells us that Xanthippus of Athens, the father of the famous statesman Pericles, besieged the Persian satrap Artayctes at Sestos after Artayctes robbed the heroon of Protesilaus on the Chersonese. When the citadel fell, Xanthippus crucified Artayctes and forced him to watch his son being stoned to death at the same time (Hdt. 9.116-22). As discussed in chapter one, the Greeks had their own particular brand of brutality in war, and cruel treatment of a city after a long or difficult siege was not unheard-of. However, in Persia, Alexander never had to turn back to reconquer a city, and his progress along the coast was one of consecutive victories, contributing to a sense of progress. In Bactria and Sogdiana this would change, and Alexander and his army’s responses to resistance would become more violent.

The Death of Darius III

After Gaugamela in 331, Alexander chased Darius over the Zagros Mountains, which led to a battle at the Persian Gates after a month-long stand-off. The satrap

¹⁰² Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 230. Alexander was wounded at Gaza by a catapult blow to his shoulder (Arr. 2.27.2)

Ariobarzanes guarded the pass to Persepolis, and his command of the heights prevented the Macedonians from advancing. Ultimately a shepherd with knowledge of a mountain pass allowed Alexander's troops to catch the Persians from either side of the gorge and decimate Ariobarzanes' army.¹⁰³

From the Persian Gates, Alexander's army moved to Persepolis and seized it as the war prize of a successful campaign.¹⁰⁴ In imitation of Xerxes' treatment of Athens during the Persian Wars, the Macedonians sacked "the most hated city in Asia."¹⁰⁵ At some point during the Macedonian occupation, Alexander burned the palace "to proclaim the end of Achaemenid rule."¹⁰⁶ However, Darius had yet to be apprehended, so in 330 Alexander led 20,000 troops after Darius, tracking him to the Caspian Gates, Choarene (Khar), and then across the Dasht-i-Kavir salt desert. The Macedonians who arrived at the Parthian capital of Hecatompylus (Shahr-i-Qumis) found Darius already dead, assassinated with the knowledge of his satrap Bessus, who was in league with other Persian noblemen.¹⁰⁷ The Great King's death left Alexander as "King of Asia," but his campaign was not complete. Bessus still needed to be apprehended because he had

¹⁰³ Diod. 17.68; Curt. 5.3.17; Plut. *Alex.* 37.1-2; Arr. 3.18. For a composite description, see Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 90-1 and Worthington, *By the Spear*, 202-4.

¹⁰⁴ Diod. 17.70.1-6; Plut. *Alex.* 37.3-5; Curt. 5.6.1-8; Arr. 3.18.10-12. Bosworth (*Commentary 1*, 329) notes that the account "has often been disbelieved" by historians, but there seems no reason to doubt it.

¹⁰⁵ Diod. 17.70.1; Curt. 5.6.1. Persepolis was closely associated with Xerxes because he completed its construction. See J. Hamilton *Plutarch: Alexander Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 100. For Xerxes' treatment of Athens, see Hdt. 8.53. Diod. 17.70.4-5 emphasizes the excess of the looting and the fact that an entire day was still insufficient to gather up all the property of value, which suggests that Persepolis was seen as the culmination of the campaign. Persepolis was certainly the richest capital of the Persian Empire, and Curt. 5.6.9 gives a value of 120,000 talents for the city's treasure. Cf. Diod. 17.70.6; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 204-6.

¹⁰⁶ Worthington, *By the Spear*, 206. Persepolis was likely burned to imitate and avenge Xerxes' destruction of the Athenian Acropolis. It is understandable why the Macedonians might have "hoped that the burning... was the act of one who had fixed his thoughts on home" (Plut. *Alex.* 38.4) and believed that the capture of Persepolis signaled the end of the campaign. Cf. Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 332.

¹⁰⁷ Worthington, *By the Spear*, 209-10; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 96.

declared himself Artaxerxes V. Related to Darius' line by blood,¹⁰⁸ Bessus had already won the loyalty and aid of Persian nobles at Bactra as well as a promised troop of Scythian riders (Arr. 3.25.1-3), and his actions made Alexander's pursuit of him imperative and justified the army's march into Bactria. By donning the *kitaris*, the upright tiara worn only by the Persian king, Bessus made his intentions clear, as this emblem "offered the clearest manifestation possible of one's claim to the throne."¹⁰⁹

In its pursuit of Bessus and entry into the wilds of Bactria and Sogdiana, the Macedonian army would be faced with a wholly foreign enemy. Unlike the Persians and their West Asian allies, the Bactrians and Sogdians would compel the Macedonians to endure, adapt, and innovate in the face of a form of combat that relied heavily on ambush, siege, and disdained pitched battle. It was in Bactria and Sogdiana that the Macedonian army began to respond to its enemies with greater savagery, antagonized by an opponent which operated according to an entirely different system of warfare and by a seemingly endless campaign. By the time Alexander led his army into India, the degree and incidence of violence escalated considerably, and the use of *andrapodismos* and even entire slaughter became more frequent.

¹⁰⁸ Arr. 3.21.5; 3.30.4. The second passage certainly comes from Ptolemy, and Bessus' kinship is not surprising given his post as satrap of Bactria and Sogdiana. This position was of great importance and traditionally held by relatives of the king within the history of the Achaemenid house (Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 343). Bessus' complicity in the assassination of his predecessor would not necessarily bar him from succession, as the killing of ruling relatives did not appear a major deterrent in collecting support in the Achaemenid house. In the fifth century, Xerxes' son Artaxerxes was willing to believe his brother Darius slew their father to gain kingship, and he in turn killed Darius in a misinformed attempt at revenge, but secured the throne thereafter (Diod. 11.69.1-6).

¹⁰⁹ Diod. 17.83.3; Curt. 6.6.13; Arr. 3.25.3; Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 355.

Chapter 3: Bactria and Sogdiana

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Darius' death meant that the goal of the League of Corinth had been accomplished. However, his kinsman and self-proclaimed Great King Bessus had not yet been apprehended, which meant that the empire the Macedonians had fought to win remained unsecured. Because their role in the campaign had been completed, Alexander disbanded his league troops with a hefty bonus, but he hired any who wished to continue in service as mercenaries.¹¹⁰ If Curtius' account is to be believed, the Macedonian response to this order is telling. Hearing that the Greek troops were to be sent home, the Macedonians assumed they would march back as well: men "ran as though crazed to their tents and made ready their packs for the journey; you would believe that the signal to

¹¹⁰ Arr. 3.19.5. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 97.

march had been given throughout the whole camp” (Curt. 6.2.15-16). By the time the Macedonians reached Hecatompylus (330), they had been away from their homeland for four years, and it is not difficult to imagine that they were ready to return home.

However, it was not to be.

Bactria saw the beginning of a violent change in Alexander’s men. The full manifestation of this shift, ferocious violence, physical and psychological degeneration, and finally insubordination, only became clear in India.¹¹¹ By necessity, the Greek “rules of war,” as they were, began to change with the army’s surroundings; the practices to which the troops had been trained were associated with the “civilized” homeland and proved increasingly inapplicable to the wilds of Bactria and Sogdiana.¹¹² The surges of violence perpetrated against the Macedonians in this land would be dealt back in spades to the natives of India, but the sort of psychological unwinding that prompted it occurred over a period of two years during which Alexander and his men were generally the victims. Holt notes that the Macedonians were “men of another world,” who expected to return to it.¹¹³ The army’s incompatibility with the land east of the Hindu Kush became increasingly apparent under the sporadic and resurgent bursts of revolt that plagued the territory. Alexander and his men were faced with frequent episodes of treachery and fierce local resistance which blunted their ability to trust and show leniency to the enemy. In Sogdiana, the army was confronted frequently by guerilla methods of war that were

¹¹¹ For a summary of Alexander’s activity in Bactria, Sogdiana, and then India, see W.W. Tarn *Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 129-31, 142-3, 167-71. The bulk of Tarn’s work details the reigns of Greek and Macedonian satraps and petty kings after Alexander’s death.

¹¹² On the nature of Bactria’s people and political traditions before Alexander, both of which were indeed more advanced than earlier scholarship suggests, see Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 11-51.

¹¹³ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 70-1.

foreign to it. Native revolts resulted in a rise in the rate and necessity of siege warfare, and the treacherous climate and terrain proved disadvantageous to pitched battle. With Bactria and especially Sogdiana as a backdrop, the famous carnage of the Indian campaign can be better explained.

The first sign of the army's exhaustion came as early as 330 at Hecatompylus, but the conditions of war and varying understandings of the expedition's purpose continued to drive a wedge between king and soldiers as the campaigning progressed.¹¹⁴ A war of reprisal was becoming a war to secure the borders of a new empire, and it was necessary for Alexander to seize what he did not yet firmly hold in order to avoid losing what he and his army had won (Curt. 6.3.10). The army's desire to return home at Hecatompylus was not a mutiny, but simply its impatience to return and belief that the king was "content with what he had accomplished" (Curt. 6.2.15) was to be expected after a long campaign.¹¹⁵ Although the army "regarded Darius' death as the end of the campaign" (Diod. 17.74.3; cf. Justin 12.3) it sought neither to overthrow its king nor to drag its heels. Alexander was able to convince the Macedonians to press onward, citing the need to seize Bessus and those loyal to him lest they raise an army and undo what the Macedonians had achieved when they returned home.

The exact speech Alexander gave to the army is unknown, but it must have been convincing.¹¹⁶ If Curtius is correct, the king heightened the mobility of his army by

¹¹⁴ For the dissent at Hecatompylus, see Worthington, *By the Spear*, 210-12. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 96-7.

¹¹⁵ According to Plutarch, Alexander did expect it, and for this reason left the majority of his troops in their winter quarters, taking 23,000 with him to Hyrcania (Plut. *Alex* 47.1).

¹¹⁶ Curtius offers characteristic elaboration and a historian's foreshadowing with mentions of conquering the Indi (6.3.9), and Plutarch has Alexander questioning the masculinity of his troops (*Alex*. 47.1). See also Diod. 17.74.3, Justin 12.3.2-3.

persuading his men to burn their cumbersome wealth, first setting his own baggage carts on fire (Curt. 6.6.14-17). Curtius claims that no one mourned the loss because each saw his king doing the same, but it is difficult to believe the spectacle was not disheartening. The combustion of battle prizes and the fruit of hard labor in order to facilitate mobility signaled a long journey ahead.¹¹⁷ There is nothing in the other sources to suggest that Curtius' detail is a fiction, but neither is it corroborated. The sources' commonalities do however cover the gist of Alexander's speech and the army's reason for pressing onward, which might have validated the haste Curtius indicates:¹¹⁸ Darius' betrayer had resources and support, and it would "not be hard labor for Bessus to seize a vacant kingdom" (Curt. 6.3.13). Further, Alexander received word that Bessus had also won the loyalty and aid of Persian nobles at Bactra as well as a promised troop of Scythian riders (Arr. 3.25.1-3). Bessus' action made Alexander's pursuit of him imperative and justified the army's march into Bactria.

I. The Macedonian Perception of Barbarians

The Macedonians' perception of the peoples beyond Persia and Media played a role in its desire not to march further into Asia; their understanding of the lands and peoples of the Far East, especially the Scythians, this merits a brief discussion here.

¹¹⁷ Booty was usually sold locally in Classical warfare or passed off to the *laphyropoloi* to be managed. Perhaps Curtius was describing personal items that might have been used daily by the men (cum...spoliis apparatusque luxuriate) (Curt. 6.6.14), which in any case they must have been sorry to lose (N. Sekunda, "War and Society in Greece," *Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 210).

¹¹⁸ Diod. 17.74.3.; Plut. *Alex.* 47; Curt 6.3.1-18; Justin 12.3.2-3.

Presumably the soldiers of Alexander's army would have known of Eastern cultures from Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon, a blend of myth and fact about the other side of the known world. Herodotus, for example, says little about the Bactrians beyond listing them among various army forces, but their association with barbarity slips into his stories between the lines. Even the Persian commanders under Darius I thought the Bactrians frightful; the Persians warned the Milesians who were in revolt that failure to surrender would result in their being sold as slaves, the young boys made into eunuchs and the young girls "carried off to Bactria," a fate seemingly equivalent to castration (Hdt. 6.9). The nomadic lifestyle of the Bactrians and Sogdians was a further sign of barbarity, perhaps evoking memories of similar tribal organizations in Thrace or Illyria along the western borders of the empire.¹¹⁹ As Holt notes at least a few of these apprehensions must have been dispelled upon entry into Bactria and Sogdiana, when Alexander's army was presented with a view of fortified and organized cities, the use of advanced irrigation, temples, well-trodden trade routes, and at least a small caste of artisans and craftsmen.¹²⁰

There were certainly nomads dwelling in Bactria and Sogdiana, many of them Scythian tribes like the Sacae, Dahae, and Massagetae, who are distinct from the Scythians tribes of Europe. The Scythians of Asia were a formidable enemy not only because of their famed archers, but also because of the legends that surrounded their ferocity in and after battle, a sure match for Alexander's own use of psychological warfare. According to Herodotus, the Scythians not only enjoyed making drinking cups of their enemies' skulls, but also tied scalps to the bridles of their horses or used an entire

¹¹⁹ Holt, *Into the Land of Bones*, 57-8; Holt points to Arr. 4.17.5 as well, where Arrian ascribes lawlessness and violence to the Scythians due to their nomadic lifestyle.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-30.

human skin for a cloak or quiver cover (Hdt. 4.64-5). If an enemy of the Scythians had the misfortune of falling in battle, a proper burial seemed unlikely, but perhaps more terrifying was the fortune of prisoners of war, who were supposedly sacrificed to the Scythian war god, dismembered, and left to rot after the sacrifice.¹²¹ A barbarous enemy associated with grisly post-battle practices that were anathema to the Greek tradition would prove unnerving,¹²² and a combination of loathing and fear might easily have intensified violence against the Scythians.

Battle in Bactria and Sogdiana was significantly different for the Macedonians; it was characterized by quick strikes and ambushes, and the Macedonian army's Scythian enemies were exceedingly mobile, often escaping capture, as we shall see. Since the people, customs, and terrain were entirely foreign, and the Macedonian army was far removed from any real bastion of western culture and support, Alexander's men had no place to which they might retreat for safe-haven. At varying times both Bactra (Balkh) and Maracanda (Samarkand), the fortified capitals of Bactria and Sogdiana, respectively, were occupied by the Macedonians and then besieged by the enemy,¹²³ and the sense of isolation and total self-reliance the army must have felt would have put a strain on men's nerves over a long duration. While fighting in Thrace and Illyria, the Macedonian army was able to return home, but each region the army passed through during the conquest of Asia had to be secured before further progress was attempted to ensure a passage homeward was available.

¹²¹ Herodotus 4.62. See also Mayor, *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows and Scorpion Bombs: Biological and Chemical Warfare in the Ancient World* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2003), 77-81.

¹²² On the traditional treatment of the dead after a battle see p. 25.

¹²³ Curt. 7.6.24; Arr. 4.16.4-4.17.2, 4.3.6-7, 4.16.4-5.

Bactria and Sogdiana were recalcitrant, and securing one territory did not guarantee its passivity; Alexander's troops marched back and forth throughout the land, safeguarding their rear or preparing a way forward, and they became a city unto themselves. Their campaign is comparable to Xenophon's Ten Thousand, a Greek army which fought in Asia (401-399). Leon of Thurii, one of the Ten Thousand, once expressed a sentiment that the soldiers of Alexander's army must have begun to feel as well: "Well, I, for my part, comrades, am tired of packing up and walking and running and carrying my arms and being in line and standing guard and fighting. What I long for now is to be rid of these toils."¹²⁴ Endless campaign life was becoming a burden, and a significant facet of that burden was the difference between Western and Eastern warfare. Louis Rawlings points out that "Herodotus was right to say that there was a qualitative difference in the expectations of Greeks and the armies of the Persians."¹²⁵ This difference was only amplified for Alexander's army as it moved further east into Bactria. The traditions of Eastern warfare relied on archery and sieges and a highly mobile cavalry, but in the West, "most hoplites probably shared a very different conception of battle" expecting to fight face to face and meet in an organized *othismos*.¹²⁶ Alexander's army was not a hoplite one, but it was still predominantly Greek in its behavior and depended on a direct clash of armies during the campaigns in Persia. Alexander and the Macedonians would find in Bactria and Sogdiana that attacks against them were more

¹²⁴ Xen. *Anab.* 5.1.2 Cf. similar qualities in Coenus' speech at the Hyphasis River: Curt.9.2.5-9.3.15; Arr.5.27.2-9.

¹²⁵ Rawlings, *Ancient Greek Warfare*, 94.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Granted that Alexander's army was better suited than the early classical period hoplite army to taking on a highly mobile cavalry force, as he had one of his own, but even so the frequent and creative reliance on cavalry by the Scythians (Arr. 4.4.6-7) posed a serious challenge.

similar to raids than pitched battle, and Macedonian victories over the enemy were not permanent or decisive.

II. Treachery and Unpredictability

a. Satibarzanes

While treachery was not foreign to Greek war, the army's encounter with it in Bactria and Sogdiana caused Alexander and his men to take preventative and punitive measures against possible sedition later in India. At first the transition from Achaemenid to Argead rule in Persia seemed a smooth one; as the army crossed the Tapourian Mountains, it received the peaceful surrender of several Persian satraps, and the remainder of its campaign appeared to require tying up loose ends and securing borders, not waging an entirely new war.¹²⁷ However, by the time it became clear that capturing Bessus would not be a quick task, the Macedonians were already well into hostile territory, and any opportunity for dissent had passed. En route to Bactra in 330, the king received word that Satibarzanes, the satrap of Areia from whom he had accepted surrender, had rebelled behind him. Satibarzanes had slaughtered the small garrison Alexander had left in place at the Areian capital of Artacoana as well as its commander, the *hetairos* Anaxippus. In addition, the satrap armed the Areians, convincing them to

¹²⁷ Arr. 3.23.3-3.24.5. Arrian lists some of the major Persian officials from whom Alexander received surrender as Darius' officer and assassin Nabarzanes, the satrap of Hyrcania and Parthia Phrataphernes (3.23.4). At Zadracarta Alexander received the surrender of Artabazus and his three sons, all noblemen who held high-ranking posts, as well as the satrap of Taupouria, Autophradates (3.23.7). The Mardians were subdued by force but released upon surrender and put under the watch of Autophradates (3.24.1-3). Alexander received coolly the Greek mercenaries who had been in service to Darius, enlisting them in his own army at the (lower) wages they had earned from the Persians (3.24.5).

throughout the capital. Alexander was forced to halt the army's progression and turn about with a fraction of his forces to cover a seventy-five mile march in two days' time.¹²⁸ Bessus had more allies than it had seemed, and the violent nature of Satibarzanes' treachery may well have guided the Macedonian perception of the peoples who dwelled beyond Persia. Satibarzanes' rebellion was the first instance of a pattern that would characterize the following two years: rapid movement, frequent treachery, and rebellions that required more than the army's presence and a garrison to prevent.

Curtius details the strenuous campaign in Areia and Satibarzanes' perfidy.¹²⁹ When Alexander bore down on him, Satibarzanes fled to Bactra, while 13,000 rebels took up a defensive position on a wooded plateau of a nearby mountain range. Because the plateau's sloping side was forested, an organized advance was impossible, and Alexander and his men were obliged to smoke out the rebels and cut them down as they escaped. At the same time, the general Craterus besieged the Areian capital Artacoana, and the arrival of siege towers finally ended the revolt. The entire process cost the Macedonian army thirty days, but when the inhabitants of Artacoana surrendered as suppliants, Alexander pardoned them and returned to them their property. The king's response to suppliant peoples and willingness to prevent a sack of the city (cf. Miletus p.31) indicated he believed the region under his control and the rebellion quelled. However, the territory proved difficult to settle; it rebelled again under Satibarzanes' prompting. The insurgency only ceased after Alexander sent two *hetairoi*¹³⁰ to manage the area, resulting in

¹²⁸ Diod. 17.78; Curt 6.6.20-3; Arr. 3.25.4-6; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 100.

¹²⁹ Curt. 6.6.22-34. See also Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 357.

¹³⁰ The *hetairoi* are named Caranus and Erigyus: Curt.7.3.2.

Satibarzanes' death.¹³¹ In isolation these two revolts of Areia might seem a minor setback, but they represented the beginning of a troublesome pattern characteristic of the recalcitrance and immutability of Bactria and Sogdiana. Alexander and his men would learn to be less trusting and, frustrated by treachery and revolt, less merciful than they were towards the rebels of the Areian citadel, whom they appear to have spared during the second revolt as well, with the exception of Satibarzanes (Diod. 17.83.4-6; Curt. 7.7.40).

b. Bessus' Betrayers

As the Macedonians chased Bessus farther into Bactria, they must have become increasingly chary of oaths of submission when even their enemies could not maintain loyalty among themselves. The army was in pursuit of a man who betrayed his king and kinsman Darius, and Bessus himself was in turn betrayed and turned over to Alexander by Spitamenes in 329, who was "most highly honored by Bessus among all his friends" (Curt. 7.5.19). Spitamenes was aided by two other Iranian noblemen, Dataphernes and Catanes, "in whom Bessus had the greatest confidence" (Curt 7.5.21); these men took Bessus to Alexander to win favor from him for their own sakes.¹³² This chain of treachery must have impacted the Macedonian perception of governors in this region. If they betrayed one another with such ease, how could stability ever be ensured by reinstating

¹³¹ Diod. 17.81.3; Curt 7.3.2-3; Arr. 3.28.2-3; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 100, 105; Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 88, 92; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 213.

¹³² Curt. 7.5.20-26. Ptolemy says that Spitamenes and Dataphernes lost their courage and Bessus was captured by Ptolemy himself (Arr. 3.30.1), but Bosworth asserts that Ptolemy likely enhanced his own role, perhaps as leader of the convoy, and it is mostly likely that the two Persians delivered Bessus themselves (Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 377). For a diverging interpretation, see Worthington, *By the Spear*, 222.

such men to power? Perhaps few were surprised when Spitamenes and Dataphernes went on to deny their earlier capitulation, refusing along with other Bactrian nobles the conference at Bactra (Arr. 4.1.5) for reasons that are unknown.¹³³ Spitamenes incited further rebellion throughout Bactria and Sogdiana, demonstrating that his “surrender was a mere expedient, to be revoked when the time was ripe,”¹³⁴ and this unpredictability proved a powerful campaign strategy against the Macedonian invaders. Spitamenes quickly became the author of an “anti-Alexander insurgency”¹³⁵ which resulted in the massacre of foraging Macedonian troops along the River Jaxartes (Syr Darya) (pp. 54-6), and the fierce resistance of the seven citadels along the Jaxartes to which the attackers fled for refuge (pp. 56-60) (Arr. 4.2.1). This sudden turn-around must have proved seriously disheartening to the troops, who might have imagined their campaign would wind down after the capture of Bessus. There is no record specifying that Spitamenes ever claimed to be king, but his highly combative response to the Macedonians’ entry into Sogdiana made their continued presence necessary, and it opened the gates to a flood of revolts managed through a string of violent sieges and deadly stands against Scythian cavalry (pp. 60-2).

¹³³ Bosworth posits a number of reasons, among them discontent over the manner in which Spitamenes was rewarded for his service, the imposing and lingering presence of the Macedonians in Sogdiana, and their effect on local independence, which was put in jeopardy by the founding of Alexandria Eschate, along the Jaxartes (Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 18.

¹³⁴ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 110.

¹³⁵ Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 154.

c. The Memaceni

Such treachery appears also in battle, as in the case of the Memaceni, a tribe which dwelled in Sogdiana near the Jaxartes River. The Memaceni's city was one of seven which rebelled from Macedonian control in 328. This *valida gens* (Curt. 7.6.17) stood a siege against Alexander's men, but upon receiving a promise of clemency in return for surrender, the Memaceni yielded and welcomed the Macedonian horsemen into their city. After entertaining the soldiers, the Memaceni slew them while they "were heavy with feasting and sleep" (Curt. 7.6.18). In response, Alexander, who was besieging the city of Cyropolis, quickly sent Perdicas and Meleager to capture the city of the Memaceni; the king himself joined his generals thereafter, during which time he received a stone wound to his neck that temporarily blinded and muted him.¹³⁶ One must note that the story of the Memaceni comes only from Curtius (7.6.17-23), but it fits neatly into Arrian's account as the last of the seven Sogdian cities, of which only two (Gaza and Cyropolis) are named specifically.¹³⁷ Arrian reports that Alexander subdued two cities neighboring Gaza¹³⁸ and "sent the cavalry to the two nearby cities with orders to keep close watch on those within the walls, lest they...contrive to flee...It turned out as he had guessed, and the cavalry was dispatched in the nick of time."¹³⁹ Given that no source

¹³⁶ Curt. 7.6.17-23; on wound see also Plut. *Alex.* 45.5 and *Moralia* 341B. Bosworth suggests Arrian (4.3.3) is incorrect to place the injury at Cyropolis (*Commentary* 2, 21).

¹³⁷ For details of the sieges of the seven cities, see Worthington, *By the Spear*, 222-4; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 110-11.

¹³⁸ Note that this is not the Gaza Alexander besieged in 332 (cf. pp.32-3).

¹³⁹ Arr. 4.2.5. See Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 20. Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great: The so-called Vulgate Authors, Diodorus, Justin and Curtius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 142. There is some disagreement within the sources, where Ptolemy reports that the rebels surrendered themselves, but Aristoboulus says the city was taken by force (Arr. 4.3.5). Bosworth and Hammond

names and describes each of the seven cities along the Jaxartes, it is plausible that a people called the Memaceni dwelled in one of them, and there is no compelling reason to disbelieve Curtius' account. If the story is true, this false surrender and brutal betrayal better explains both the strong recalcitrance of the Sogdian citadels along the river and Alexander's response to them.

Such crafty deception was not looked upon with admiration by contemporaries of Alexander. Using alcohol and false hospitality as a ploy to defeat enemy troops was closely related to the Greek perception of the weak-willed and generally inferior barbarians.¹⁴⁰ The cruel slaughter after the promise of surrender not only resulted in disaster for the Memaceni—their city was razed to the ground—but in a sharply restricted offer of mercy for future rebels. The nature of this sort of change is necessarily gradual, a realization built upon an amalgamation of examples of treachery, and in Sogdiana the Macedonians had no shortage of it.

suggest that Aristoboulus' account uses the same sources as Curtius', as they both indicate a fight for the stronghold after Cyropolis. Arrian makes no mention of the betrayal, but "it is more difficult to dismiss Curtius" (Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 20) because of his clear narrative and its applicability to Arrian's account. Bosworth notes that it is also possible that Ptolemy conflated the two unnamed citadels to give the impression of seamless victories in the seven citadel region.

¹⁴⁰ Consider Cyrus' attempt to lull the Massagetae forces into a drunken stupor so that the Persians could more easily be rid of them and his enemy, Queen Tomyris' response, clearly written from the Greek point of view: "You have no cause to be proud of this day's work, which has no smack of soldierly courage" (Herodotus 1.211-2). On inferiority, see Mayor, *Greek Fire*, 156-9. For further discussion of Greek stereotypes of Easterners and "barbarians" see B. Laforse, "Fighting the Other: Greeks and Achaemenid Persians" in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 569-87.

d. The Scythian Tribes

Perhaps equally detrimental to Macedonians' perception of barbarian ties of loyalty was the confusing combination of surrenders and attacks from various Scythian tribes.¹⁴¹ The Macedonians may have been familiar with the Massagetae from stories of Queen Tomyris in Herodotus (1.205-14), but the nuanced distinctions between other tribes may well have been lost to them. Arrian tells us that Alexander treated with the Saca king of the Scythians and accepted his surrender after a battle along the Jaxartes River (4.5.1). Alexander released the prisoners of battle without ransom (Curt. 7.9.18), and that particular tribe of the Sacae did not give the Macedonians further trouble. However, the Dahae Scythians, a branch further west but still part of the Sacae tribe, had no compunctions about siding with Spitamenes and slaughtering a Macedonian reserve force sent to Maracanda in battle along the Polytimetus River.¹⁴²

Although the Dahae and the Sacae were governed by different chieftains, their tribal relations and the fact that both were Scythian nomads would have made the task of pacifying or thrusting back all Scythian assaults seem daunting and hardly manageable. No sooner had the army defeated and accepted submission from one branch of the tribe than another took it by surprise. This pattern likely did nothing to enhance the Greco-Macedonian view of the inhabitants of Sogdiana and those allied with Spitamenes, and it

¹⁴¹ Note that the Scythians the Macedonians fought in Sogdiana are distinct from those who dwelled in Europe.

¹⁴² Arr. 4.5.6-9. However, Curtius 8.1.7-9 says that Alexander received the Sacae surrender at Maracanda after the sieges of the "Rocks" of Ariabazus and Sisimithres. This difference between Curtius and Arrian (who says it happened before the massacre of the reinforcements sent to Maracanda) is significant in the construction of the Macedonian perception of the Sacae. For the Dahae as a branch of the Sacae Scythians, see Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 113.

may have made it easier to justify violence against them. Considering the experience of the Macedonian troops throughout the Sogdian campaign, how long could an offer of surrender be taken seriously? It is not difficult to see how in future campaigns Alexander came more readily to believe himself betrayed.¹⁴³

III. Causes for Revolt

Throughout the Bactrian and Sogdian campaigns, the great majority of violence enacted by Alexander's army was a response to attacks upon it or a local revolt. Before discussing the nature of this violence, it is beneficial to consider potential causes for such recalcitrance and the reasons Bactria and Sogdiana especially refused to submit despite being a longtime satrapy of the Persian Empire.¹⁴⁴ There are no Bactrian or Sogdian sources similar to the extant Greek ones which might explain the resettlement in terms of the locals' perceptions. Frank Holt plausibly conjectures that Alexander's foundation of Alexandria Eschate (Khujand in Tajikistan) along the Jaxartes set off a string of explosive rebellions throughout Sogdiana, pointing to the fact that the king faced no serious revolts while crossing through Bactria. Holt's theory explains the vicious attacks leveled against Macedonian troops after autumn of 329 and the city's foundation. However, his explanation does not account for Satibarzanes' ability to stir the Areians

¹⁴³ See chapter 4, section III.

¹⁴⁴ Unlike India, Bactria and Sogdiana sent substantial aid upon Darius' call at Gaugamela: Arr. 3.8.3, 3.11.3, 3.11.6, and the kinship ties between the king and the traditional satrap of Bactria discussed above would indicate the region most definitely fell under the Persian king's sway.

into revolt¹⁴⁵ or the assault on the foraging Macedonians in the spring of 329 (Curt. 7.6.1-9; Arr. 3.30.10-11).

Holt explains that Alexander's desire to be recognized as the political authority posed no problem for the locals of Bactria and Sogdiana who were not affiliated with Bessus, and it was only when he sought to break precedent by founding a city and threatening permanent, large-scale military presence that revolt broke out. Under previous Persian rulers, there had never been any direct attempt to govern or settle nomadic populations, but a general reliance on local princes and dynasts to conduct business. Alexandria Eschate appeared a threat to the pre-existing system and the local sovereignty of princes and tribes, threatening to attach local populations to his Macedonian royal city.¹⁴⁶ While it is possible that all of this information might have been gleaned by locals from the mere foundations of the city, the revolts were so abrupt that it is difficult to believe attacking Scythians and Sogdians would have known "the native population as a whole" was to be "exploited as an agricultural labor force for the Graeco-Macedonian colonists who were given a *kleros*."¹⁴⁷ Holt cites in addition the excavation of Greek-style houses in Sogdiana that were inhabited by the "elitist" society which would have controlled the agricultural labor,¹⁴⁸ but the revolts began long before any of this might have been constructed, and there was no precedent for it in Bactria. It seems more logical that the fortification riled Sogdians and Scythians because it threatened to

¹⁴⁵ Bessus seemed strangely unable to prompt a similar reaction anywhere else, but in Areia his ally Satibarzanes stirs the population to revolt against Alexander twice (Arr. 3.25.7-8; 4.4.1-3).

¹⁴⁶ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 50-1; 58-9. Cf. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 248; Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 154.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, n.55.

form a guarded boundary between their lands, damaging their economic “symbiotic relationship” and threatening the commercial standing of Cyropolis, which was otherwise the most powerful city in the region.¹⁴⁹

However, it seems unlikely that Alexander had any plans to “exterminate the remaining Sogdian nobles”¹⁵⁰ and only gave up when he faced resistance. Rather, he pursued a fairly direct goal throughout Bactria and Sogdiana: defeating Bessus and then Spitamenes and incapacitating their allies and potential safe havens. Villages or citadels that supported either rebel were taken, but Alexander did not uproot the governing system of Sogdiana. Just as in western Asia where the satrapies were maintained, local rulers were often maintained in their power.¹⁵¹ It is also unlikely that the uprising against Alexander was “as political and *religious* as it was military.”¹⁵² The recalcitrance of the locals cannot be summed up on religious grounds through the explanation that Alexander slew Zoroastrian priests and destroyed their sacred texts.¹⁵³ Firstly, the *Avesta*, the sacred

¹⁴⁹ Holt, *Into the Land of Bones*, 48.

¹⁵⁰ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 68.

¹⁵¹ Satibarzanes was kept in power in Areia until he rebelled (Arr. 3.25.1; Curt. 6.6.20), and even after Arsaces, another Persian, was put to maintain the satrapy in his place (Arr.3.25.7; Curt. 7.3.1). As Holt *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 68 notes, Sisimithres/Chorienes surrendered and was reinstated (Arr. 4.26.6-9; Curt. 8.2.28-33), and Oxyartes of the Sogdian Rock was kept in power as well (Arr. 4.19.3-4), and Alexander married into his family (Arr. 4.19.5-7). There is no real evidence for any attempt at the extermination of the nobility, and the only clear pattern that emerges is Alexander’s desire to oust from power *rebellious* satraps.

¹⁵² Holt, *Into the Land of Bones*, 26 (italics added). Holt seems to support his argument with only a reference to Alexander’s outlawing of the “undertakers” in Bactra-Zariaspa referenced in Strabo 11.11.13. These were dogs to whom the Bactrians turned out their elders to be destroyed. Mary Boyce casts serious doubt on the veracity of this story, explaining that when Alexander arrived at Bactra it was already a Zoroastrian city, and such a practice would have been forbidden by the tenets of the religion. See M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism: Handbuch der Orientalistik: der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten* vol. III (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 6-8.

¹⁵³ In his book and travel log *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 117, Michael Wood describes Iranian Zoroastrians’ anger towards Alexander, quoting a congregation member who asserted that “he burned down our temples, killed our priests...he destroyed our most precious holy book...the *Avesta*.”. The congregation member goes on to describe the *Avesta* in detail,

Zoroastrian text, was not written down until the fifth or sixth century of the Common Era,¹⁵⁴ making it impossible for Alexander to destroy. Secondly, as Boyce explains, there is no mention of Alexander specifically seeking to kill Magi, or Zoroastrian priests. The sources freely mention his killing of the Brahman priests in India,¹⁵⁵ but it is only in Zoroastrian tradition that Alexander becomes a Magi-killer (the same tradition wherein he burned the unwritten book), which is likely rooted in a shared memory of the destruction which the Macedonian army caused in resisting regions.¹⁵⁶ Boyce theorizes that the Magi played similar roles in Bactria as the Brahmans in India, fomenting resistance and uprisings against the invasion, but there is no substantial evidence for this. Arguing that the sources indicate the “magi were singled out for death,” she points only to Alexander’s execution of a usurper in Media, Baryaxes. He was a Mede who donned the *kitaris* and was subsequently brought to Alexander for execution by the satrap of Media, Atropates (Arr. 4.18.3; Curt. 8.3.17), likely a Zoroastrian himself, along with “[Baryaxes’] associates in his revolution and rebellion,”¹⁵⁷ which by nature must have included Magi. This hardly suggests singling out a particular religious group, but rather restoring political order and giving no special treatment to treasonous priests. Further, the entire incident took place years *after* his resettlement of Bactria. Alexander’s only direct contacts with Magi are at the tomb of Cyrus and the Opis Feast (Arr.6.29.7-11; 7.11.8), as Boyce notes, and neither suggests religious persecution.

“written on 12,000 calf skins in letters of gold” which clearly highlights the anachronism, since the *Avesta*’s contents were recited and passed down orally during this period.

¹⁵⁴ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 16.

¹⁵⁵ See chapter 4, section IV.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15. Arr. 6.29.3.

Indeed, Holt's most prominent hypothesis, that the rebellion was touched off by Alexander's founding of Alexandria-Eschate, seems the most viable conclusion.¹⁵⁸ This was not the religiously-motivated rebellion that the Macedonians would face in West India in 325,¹⁵⁹ but one that was likely provoked by political and economic concerns. The Macedonian violence, the topic of this chapter, was mostly a reaction to assaults upon the army. The sometimes grisly character of this violence, which fell outside the bounds of classical warfare, was due to the nature of the attacks waged by Bactrians and Sogdians and the mounting distrust the Macedonians must have felt for the local populace. Alexander's relatively smooth passage through Bactria in 329 can be attributed both to the fact that "there was no passion for the cause of Bessus"¹⁶⁰ and the fact that Alexander had no need to accost local settlements, who neither resisted him nor offered any threat. But when his army was attacked, retaliation was necessary, and if the assault proved somehow underhanded or non-traditional, the army responded in kind, producing an excess of slaughter.

IV. Guerilla Warfare in Sogdiana

a. Ambush along the Jaxartes

A series of guerilla attacks on the Macedonian army began when it reached Sogdiana, and from 329-327 there emerged a cause and effect relationship between attacks upon Alexander's army and the degree of violence with which the army retaliated.

¹⁵⁸ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 54-9.

¹⁵⁹ See chapter 4, section IV.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

The first of many reactions against the Macedonian army in Sogdiana began in 329 at the Jaxartes River shortly before Alexander founded Alexandria-Eschate.¹⁶¹ While Macedonian troops were out foraging for food, a potentially intrusive and ecologically destructive action in the view of locals, 20,000-30,000 Sogdians descended on them from the mountains.¹⁶² Catching the Macedonians unawares and unarmed, the Sogdians cut them down or made prisoners of them, taking some back to a Sogdian mountain citadel, which Alexander quickly besieged. During the endeavor Alexander himself was wounded by an arrow which fractured his fibula, but he remained involved in the siege until the fort was taken and some of its inhabitants put to slaughter. Arrian reports that only 8,000 of the 30,000 natives survived, many being killed or choosing to hurl themselves from the cliff side.¹⁶³

Arrian's numbers may be exaggerated, but one cannot imagine there was not a massacre on a large scale in retaliation for the ambush against "a disorderly band" of Macedonians (Curt. 7.6.1), likely also poorly if at all armed. Curtius reports that "more [Macedonians] were captured than were killed" (Curt. 7.6.2), but still the death toll must have been high, based on the number of Sogdian attackers. The fate of being picked off

¹⁶¹ Curt. 7.6.1-9; Arr. 3.30.10-11. Holt makes it appear as though the foraging massacre of 329 occurred as a response to the foundation of Alexandria-Eschate, but both Curtius and Arrian place the foundation *after* the attack, making this impossible (Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 52-3) See Arr. 3.30.10-11 (foraging massacre) 4.1.4 (Alexandria-Eschate) and Curt. 7.6.1-9 (foraging massacre) and 7.6.12-13 (Alexandria-Eschate). The reasoning for the attack is unclear, but it did occur directly after Bessus' capture (Curt. 7.5.43) or execution (Arr. 3.30.4-5), possibly indicating he had more support than it appeared.

¹⁶² See Bosworth, *Commentary 1*, 379. Curtius 7.6.1-9 presents the story after Bessus' surrender and Maracanda, and he claims 20,000, not 30,000 were attacking. Arrian provides the larger number at 3.30.10.

¹⁶³ Arr.3.30.11. Curtius' account of the end of the conflict is too unrealistic to believe. He relates that during the siege, Alexander was carried from the field because of his wound, and when the Barbarians saw this they sent envoys on the following day who "declared that the Macedonians had not been more sorrowful than they themselves on hearing of the wound." They immediately surrendered because of a ruse that hid the injury and made them think Alexander a god, and it would be impious to make war against him (Curt. 7.6.4-6).

from a distance by arrows and slings during the ambush (Curt. 7.6.2-3) and again during the siege (Arr. 3.30.11) and the added factor of Alexander's own arrow wound must have severely worsened the results for the tribesmen. The attack along the Jaxartes fell outside the Macedonians' frame of reference for just war; local Sogdians assaulted foraging (unarmed) men and behaved in accordance with the Greco-Macedonian stereotyped perception of semi-nomadic and mountain peoples.¹⁶⁴

b. Seven Sogdian Cities

Perhaps one of the best-known accounts of Macedonian violence against Sogdians, many of them civilians, occurs during the siege of seven cities along the Jaxartes River, among which only Gaza,¹⁶⁵ Cyropolis, and the fort of the Memaceni are named in the sources. The carnage was not a random act, but a military response to fast-spreading rebellion. The soldiers may have vented their anger through violence upon the besieged, but their presence there was justified. In the late summer of 329, the Sogdians slew the Macedonian garrisons occupying their territory along the Jaxartes and refortified their strongholds. They were aided by Bactrians and incited by Spitamenes so that the rebellion fanned out from the Jaxartes and spread more quickly than Alexander could

¹⁶⁴ Arrian offers telling comment about the nature of the Scythians that leads to a generalization about nomadic peoples: "These Scythians live in dire poverty...they have no cities...and are easily persuaded to engage in one war after another" (Arr. 4.17.5). Nomadic peoples were "assumed by the Macedonians, and the Greco-Roman world generally, to be naturally inclined towards brigandage and violence" (Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 176). Cf. P. Briant, *Alexander the Great and His Empire*, trans. A. Kuhrt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 56.

¹⁶⁵ This Gaza is located near the Jaxartes River in Sogdiana and distinct from the Gaza Alexander besieged in 332 in Egypt (pp. 32-3).

contain it.¹⁶⁶ Reports of garrisons at Bactra, Aornus, and Maracanda suggest that almost every settlement had a garrison installed and hostility was widespread from the start.¹⁶⁷ Arrian supposes the attack was in retaliation to Alexander's call for a meeting at Bactra of all local governors, which "seemingly portended nothing good for them" (4.1.5). Curtius adds that Spitamenes and his ally Catanes fanned the flames by spreading word that "all the Bactrian cavalry were being sent for by the king, in order that they might be slain" (7.6.15), which widened the revolt.

In order to overcome constant rebellion, Alexander's tactics needed to change. The army was unable to continue operating according to the standards it had used in the West. Seizing the capital of a region did not guarantee that an entire area would capitulate; instead, it was imperative for Alexander to be as ubiquitous in the field as Spitamenes and his bands of rebels, who appeared and vanished often more quickly than they could be fought. Alexander began a methodical repression of the rebellion by siege; he split his army, sending Craterus and his men to deal with the rebellion at Cyropolis while Alexander invested Gaza (Arr. 4.2.2-3). Although the army could not have yet known it, the nature of its battle practice shifted considerably at this point; from 329 up through the king's death in 323, the Macedonians would engage in only one other major pitched battle, the Battle of the Hydaspes River, but countless sieges. Before separating from Craterus' division, Alexander ordered his infantrymen to construct ladders, and "each company was instructed to make a certain number" (Arr. 4.2.1). It is likely that

¹⁶⁶ See Arr. 4.1.4-5. Arrian specifies "the party that had arrested Bessus," (4.1.5) which must mean Spitamenes. Romm, *The Landmark Arrian*, 154. See also Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 17-8.

¹⁶⁷ See Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 17. Arr. 3.29.2 (Aornus), 4.16.4 (Bactra), 4.3.7; *Metz Epitome 9* (Maracanda).

these ladders, made on such a mass scale, were carried with the army thereafter, repaired or replaced as needed; ladders appear in accounts of sieges most frequently in India,¹⁶⁸ and Arrian's inclusion of this detail is not happenstance. Instead it serves as an emphatic reminder that the ladder would come to prove as essential an accoutrement of war as the spear.¹⁶⁹

The first sieges in Sogdiana were vicious. At Gaza, "obeying Alexander's instructions, [the Macedonians] killed all the men and made off with the women, children, and other plunder." Arrian reports that the army did this again at the second city, which goes unnamed, and implies that the same fate befell a third city (Arr. 4.2.4). The Macedonians isolated forts in rebellion with their cavalry to prevent inhabitants from fleeing and aiding or passing information to other strongholds, cutting down any who made a sortie (Arr. 4.2.5-6). The suppression was effected with a controlled brutality, and it was ultimately "understandable behavior" because of the unprovoked assault on Macedonian soldiers.¹⁷⁰ Alexander's rebuttal was "in keeping with Macedonian and Greek practices from the earlier classical period onwards,"¹⁷¹ even if the methods of war were changing. His policy against the Sogdian cities is understandable, with his

¹⁶⁸ Arrian is usually careful to include mention of ladder use in his accounts. Earlier in Alexander's sieges, they appear only at Miletus (1.19.5) and Gaza (2.27.5-6). Alexander's need to instruct his men to construct new ones in Sogdiana suggests that a supply of these tools was not kept at the ready, and perhaps an extensive number of sieges was not anticipated. Ladders appear again at 4.23.4, 6.7.5, 6.9.2.

¹⁶⁹ The architects under Philip and Alexander who greatly contributed to the evolution of siege warfare may have set a new standard for the Hellenistic period. Theophrastus, writing his *Characters* in the aftermath of Alexander's conquests, describes "the man of petty pride" in mocking jest as one who "will buy a little ladder for his pet jackdaw, make a little bronze shield for the jackdaw to wear, and have it hop up and down the ladder like a soldier taking a city" (Theophrastus. *Characters* 21.6). Although clearly a scathing joke, the consideration of both ladder *and* shield as typical war equipage, emblems that would designate the bird "a soldier," suggests siege warfare became more standardized and expected after Alexander. See also A. Chaniotis, "Greeks under Siege" in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 445 and *War in the Hellenistic World* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 168.

¹⁷⁰ Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 144-5.

¹⁷¹ I. Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man and God* (Harlow: Pearson, 2004), 180.

retaliation serving simultaneously as punishment for the massacre of Macedonian garrisons and as policy to prevent future insurrections.¹⁷² The king needed to drive a wedge between the Sogdians and Spitamenes, and he could not afford to demonstrate the same magnanimity that had characterized his earlier policies of cultural toleration. Alexander was no longer fighting “a regular war against a regular enemy, but one conducted against scattered rebel bands” who operated by an entirely foreign set of rules.¹⁷³

The king neutralized the region by defeating all seven cities, joining Craterus at Cyropolis, the largest, in which 8,000 occupants were slain, and the seventh city, potentially of the Memaceni (pp. 47-9), was captured and guarded (Arr. 4.3.4-5). The casualties were high due to resistance and undoubtedly some degree of frustration or haste among the Macedonians, but this method of eradicating rebellion may have worked in some cases. Curtius shows how this policy had at least some effect at Xenippa (8.2.15), where Spitamenes’ cohorts were driven from the city by locals upon word that the king (actually Hephaestion) was en route. Alexander’s approach to rebellion was, as Briant notes, inherently pragmatic and “fairly straightforward: those who surrender willingly escape with their lives, those who resist to the bitter end, or refuse to supply the army, run the risk of being put to the sword.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² See Curt. 7.6.16; Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 19.

¹⁷³ Briant, *Alexander the Great*, 59.

¹⁷⁴ Curt. 8.2.15. Briant, *Alexander the Great*, 62. This appears to have been Alexander’s initial policy in India as well: “Those who submitted [in India] were received kindly” (Diod. 104.4). Persepolis is the obvious exception to this because of its association with Xerxes, the Persian Wars, and its symbolic importance to Alexander’s campaign of revenge.

While sieges had the potential to be glorious, despite being somewhat secondary in importance to pitched battle, which allows the direct contact of two enemies and the potential for a proper death in battle, it is difficult to imagine any grandeur of those mud forts in Sogdiana compared to the six month siege of Tyre (Arr. 2.16.7-2.24.6). As Chaniotis asserts, it is the technology of a siege that is most noted by ancient historians because the most innovative weapons usually carried the day. If men were mentioned, it was perhaps only to note the first to scale the walls or, in the case of Malli, a debate over who held his shield over the wounded Alexander, and it was not frequent.¹⁷⁵ The exhaustion of the troops thereafter is not difficult to imagine, but the need for besieging rebellious cities did not abate. No sooner had the Macedonians subdued the region along the Jaxartes than they received word that Spitamenes was at Maracanda, besieging the Macedonian garrison there. Alexander sent a force of roughly 2,300 men to fight off Spitamenes, and the king passed almost three weeks fortifying his own foundation against further rebellion in the region (Arr. 4.3.6-4.4.1). Alexander's stay at Alexandria-Eschate would have provided a rest for the majority of his troops from war, if not labor, and simultaneously discouraged any final conflagrations of revolt.

c. Sacae Circling Tactic

However, a respite from attack did not come; within this time another revolt exploded from across the Jaxartes, this time not from the Sogdians, but the Sacae, a tribe of Scythians. This insurgency best fits Holt's theory of native response to Alexandria-

¹⁷⁵ Arr. 6.11.7. Chaniotis, "Greeks under Siege" in *Oxford Handbook of Warfare*, 445.

Eschate, and Curtius corroborates the idea, claiming that the Scythians believed the foundation would prove to be a “yoke upon their necks” (Curt. 7.7.1) and sought to undermine its completion. The Sacae taunted the Macedonians and then began to fire arrows at the army as it crossed the river. It is doubtful that Alexander attacked the Sacae for “brazenly insulting” him (Arr. 4.4.2); the Sacae’s continued presence *en masse* was suggestive enough of violence that leaving them to their own devices while marching back to Maracanda was out of the question for the Macedonians (Arr.4.4.1-2).

The Scythians were nomadic and not inclined to retreat to a citadel, yet they proved to be another deadly hurdle that also necessitated tactical innovation. The Macedonians had trouble both with the terrain and the enemy formation. Crossing the river under a hailstorm of arrows required the use of siege machinery to ensure a safe landing, but the army was learning how to combat the Scythians’ projectile warfare more efficiently.¹⁷⁶ The Scythian mode of war did not allow for an *othismos*; warriors on horseback encircled enemy soldiers and fired arrows at them. The Scythians created an artificial barrier of men, and Alexander turned their own trick against them by producing his own wall of soldiers. Fuller produces an excellent reconstruction of Alexander’s tactics,¹⁷⁷ showing how the king sent a small number of troops across the river as bait. When the Scythians encircled and attacked the small contingent of Macedonians, Alexander used his light infantry to form a crescent wall and then sent his cavalry around the infantry, cutting off the flanks of the Scythians who were riding in circles about his

¹⁷⁶ For the attack, see Arr. 4.4.1-7. Arrian reports that one Sacae rider was “struck by a shot that passed straight through his ox-hide shield and breastplate [and] fell from his horse” (Arr.4.4.4) a feat which astonished the assembled Scythians, famed for their archers. Alexander sent archers and slingers to the banks of the river first to guard the unloading of troops (4.4.5).

¹⁷⁷ Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 238-41.

men. This prevented the circle of Scythians from expanding and broke the ring, and thereafter Alexander's main cavalry force was able to thread through his light infantry and attack the circle of Scythians beyond, crushing them into a press. However, the Scythian line of retreat was still open because the Macedonians formed only a crescent on one side, and many of the Saca cavalry rode off. Arrian reports 1,000 dead and 150 captured, but once again the terrain interfered in the Macedonians' pursuit, which was stopped short by fetid water and an attack of the flux that incapacitated Alexander and, imaginably, many of his troops (Arr. 4.4.8-9). The Macedonian victory proved "decisive, if measured by its moral result—the defeat of [Scythian] tactics rather than of themselves,"¹⁷⁸ and while it was not a total defeat of the Scythians it did present the army with a view of native battle. Even after Macedonian success, past experience made Alexander wary of the Saca king's submission, and he accepted it only due to a pressing need to reach Maracanda (Arr. 4.5.1).

Alexander's army, although dragged back and forth across the rocky Sogdian landscape, was continually faced by new, fresh enemies where it least expected. The Macedonians could not match the ubiquity of Spitamenes and his cohorts, who sparked rebellion in every region through which they passed. Equally exasperating, like the Scythians at the Jaxartes (Arr. 4.4.7), Spitamenes had no compunctions about fleeing into the steppes when he risked being outnumbered or overpowered, relying on the element of surprise to gain the upper hand in the future. He had the uncanny ability to attack

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 241.

Alexander's army every which way but head-on and persistently evaded capture.¹⁷⁹

Spitamenes demonstrated this elusiveness once again at Maracanda, slipping away from the siege after receiving word that Alexander's relief force was fast approaching; he retired *es ta abata* of Sogdiana.¹⁸⁰

d. Ambush at the Polytimetus River

By autumn of 329, the Sogdians' and Scythians' preferences for retreat and strategic ambush must have been known, but nevertheless the Lycian commander Pharnuces led the Macedonian relief force astray from Maracanda in order to capture Spitamenes. A repeat of Jaxartes River incident awaited him. Arrian emphasizes that the troops followed Pharnuces into Scythian territory "without taking account of what they were doing" (Arr.4.5.3). The battle and ambush that followed are excellent examples of both the incompatibility of eastern and western fighting styles and the genuine distress to morale the Bactrian and Sogdian wars caused among the troops.

The instinct to pursue the enemy and prevent it from returning to catch the Macedonian army off guard again was logical, but the relief force was ill-equipped to handle Spitamenes' Scythian archers. Unlike Alexander along the Jaxartes, these men did

¹⁷⁹ Given Spitamenes' elusive nature, it is not surprising that when he was finally killed, it was by his allies, rather than his enemies, who could never get close enough. Arr. 4.17.7 and Strabo 11.11.6 report that Spitamenes' Massagetae allies beheaded him and sent his head to Alexander in surrender. Curt. 8.3.1-16 and the *Metz Epitome* 20-1 claim that Spitamenes' wife did this.

¹⁸⁰ Arr. 4.3.7, 4.5.3; Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 32-33. Bosworth suggests that the original *ta basilea* of the manuscript should be amended to *ta abata*, the "inaccessible regions," and this is in keeping with Spitamenes' pattern of behavior.

not have siege engines with them, and their horses were not fresh.¹⁸¹ The Macedonians under Pharnuces fell into the same wheeling cavalry trap and found themselves being shot at from a rotating circle of horsemen, powerless to advance. Unable to combat this technique, there seemed to be no chance of a proper battle, but only the constant threat of being entrapped and slowly picked off. The Macedonians' retreat to a glen along the Polytimetus River was foiled by a Scythian ambush. Curtius emphasizes the underhandedness of the plot: "Spitamenes...had secretly laid an ambush where he knew that Menedemus [one of the relief force's commanders] would come. The road was covered with woods and adapted to conceal the ambush; there he hid the Dahae [Scythians]" (7.7.31-2). Although Curtius does slip into a romantic narrative concerning the fate of Menedemus, the hopeless panic illustrated in the account at 7.7.34-9 is probably accurate, and it was worsened in part by confusion and haste among the commanders. General Caranus attempted to lead his men across the river without orders so that they slid down the steep banks "in a panicked, disorderly throng."¹⁸²

Ptolemy's choice to focus on the ineptitude of the generals in his account is unfair,¹⁸³ but it emphasizes a certain degree of disorder and genuine panic not often seen among Alexander's men. These soldiers were not new to war,¹⁸⁴ and the Scythians must

¹⁸¹ Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 33. Arr. 4.5.2-5.

¹⁸² Arr. 4.5.8. A variation of the account from Aristoboulus appears in Arrian (4.6.1-2) and is corroborated by Curtius (7.7.32) that suggests the Macedonians were ambushed along the Polytimetus River by the Scythians while already engaged in battle against Spitamenes' men. This pattern is certainly believable given prior Macedonian experience in Sogdiana (Arr.3.30.10-1; Curt.7.6.1-9). Because Bosworth argues that the ambush was a "genuine feature of the battle" (*Commentary* 2, 34) and likely omitted from Ptolemy's account, I have incorporated it here without discussing Ptolemy and Aristoboulus' accounts individually.

¹⁸³ Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 34.

¹⁸⁴ Caranus himself was one of Alexander's *hetairoi* and had distinguished himself in Egypt where he became commander of the allied infantry. In Arr. 3.5.6. Arrian writes "Calanus," which Heckel asserts is a

have been a sufficient threat in the field to provoke disunity among the commanders and finally a break from the phalanx formation. Perhaps the image of Scythians familiar to Macedonians and Greeks provided another potent ingredient of their sudden alarm, knowing what became of men taken alive in battle. Although no source reports scalp-cluttered bridles, the Scythians demonstrated sufficient viciousness in battle. Riding up alongside the edge of the river, horsemen shot at and chased the Macedonians onto a small islet of the river for shelter. They were not beyond arrow range (Arr. 4.5.6-9), and the Macedonians were shot down on the islet from the shores. A few of Pharnuces' relief force had been captured alive, but "all of those [on the islet] they killed" (Arr. 4.5.9). Curtius gives casualty numbers at 2,300 (7.7.39), which match up with the number Arrian records as having departed for Maracanda (4.3.7) and his mention of total slaughter. This massacre's potential for devastating the army morale was combated by Alexander directly, who held the information secret while marching his army swiftly to the site (Curt. 7.7.39), covering more than 180 miles in three days.¹⁸⁵

e. The Destruction of the Zeravshar Valley

At this point in the campaign, a strong cause and effect relationship of violence becomes clear. The assault on the seven cities along the Jaxartes was waged in response to widespread revolt, and the attack on Maracanda and total slaughter of a substantial

scribal error for Caranus (Heckel, *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great* [Malden: Blackwell, 2009], 78).

¹⁸⁵ Arr. 4.6.4. Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 35 notes that this is exceptional and very unlikely for an infantry force, either an exaggeration by Arrian or a confusion with Curtius' account (7.9.21) of a four day pressed march from Maracanda to the site of the slaughter.

relief force at the Polytimetus River was met in turn by the wrathful destruction of the whole of the Zeravshar Valley for its support of Spitamenes.¹⁸⁶ After burying the dead (Arr. 4.6.5), Alexander continued the policy established in the region of Cyropolis intended to divorce locals from the revolutionaries. The king and his army put the valley temporarily out of commission by plundering the countryside; Curtius claims Alexander ordered Craterus and his men to set the fields on fire, a great devastation for the season, and to inflict *andrapodismos* on the population (7.9.22). Arrian says that the Sogdians who fled to their citadels were killed, because they were reported to have joined in the attack on the Macedonians (4.6.3-5). Even if the locals had not offered anything but passive support to Spitamenes, it was imperative that he not be given any safe place to retreat to take up arms a second time. Even so, the violence against civilians was exceptional, fueled by a desire for retribution and the frustration of endless marching across a seemingly indomitable territory. The casualties must have been high,¹⁸⁷ and the attack was perhaps at least in part preemptive, a warning to any who might aid or give refuge to Spitamenes. Despite its scale, the repression was not effective and ultimately only prompted further resistance.¹⁸⁸

Revolts began again in the spring of 328, which showed that even garrison duty was deadly. The army had wintered at Bactra (Arr. 4.7.1; Curt. 7.10.13-5), leaving Sogdiana occupied only by garrisons, which were promptly compromised by a string of

¹⁸⁶ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 112. Worthington, *Alexander the Great*, 181-2.

¹⁸⁷ Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 35 notes that Diodorus' index hints that 1.2 million Sogdians were killed in this revenge; this must be a typographical error for 120,000, which is what Hammond suggests. Even 120,000 is an unlikely number and not an uncommon exaggeration for Cleitarchus, who was in this case the source (Hammond, *Three Historians*, 61-2).

¹⁸⁸ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 60.

revolts. The people had once again taken to their citadels, refusing submission and flouting the laws of the appointed satrap. It was imperative to locate and destroy the source of rebellion, which appeared to be Spitamenes (Arr. 4.16.1-3). The example made of the Zeravshar Valley did not last beyond the winter months, and may in fact have fueled already-present resistance, which would only necessitate further fighting. Marching his army again the two hundred plus miles to Maracanda, Alexander split up his troops to comb the land thoroughly for Spitamenes and put down regional rebellion. No sooner had the Macedonians arrived in Sogdiana than Spitamenes was behind them again in Bactria, sparking rebellion there with the aid of yet another tribe of Scythians, the Massagetae.¹⁸⁹ He attacked a Bactrian fortress and slaughtered the guards, taking only the garrison commander prisoner (Arr. 4.16.4-5). Spitamenes then raided the surrounding land and provoked the garrison in the capital at Bactra;¹⁹⁰ when it sallied out from the walls, Spitamenes and the Massagetae and caught the Macedonian force in an ambush near a wooded copse and slaughtered it (Curt. 8.1.3-6; Arr. 4.16.6-7). Once again Spitamenes appeared and disappeared when and where he was least expected, sending branches of the Macedonian army scrambling after its most elusive enemy, confronted just as at the Polytimetus River only by the bodies Spitamenes left in his wake (Arr. 4.6.5). Even when Craterus was able to cut off some of the Massagetae fleeing from Bactria and win a pitched battle, the surviving Scythians “had no difficulty reaching safety” in the desert, where they vanished and could not be pursued (Arr.4.17.1-2). This

¹⁸⁹ Curtius claims they were Dahae (8.1.6).

¹⁹⁰ Arrian specifies that the Macedonians’ initial success was because the Scythians were unsuspecting (4.16.7). However, it is equally likely that the raiders lured the Macedonians out as Curtius suggests (8.1.5). See also Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 115.

combination of ambush and extreme mobility, and Spitamenes' ability to rile local populations and occupy Macedonian forces in one region in order to permit his own raids elsewhere, proved deadly. For the army, there must have been a growing insecurity about not only marching through rebellious territory, but even managing garrison duty and or the transport of relief forces. The enemy could not be tracked, and the great mobility of Scythian horsemen meant, as Spitamenes had shown, that they might crop up anywhere at any time, a tactic formerly characteristic of Alexander's own rapid marches.¹⁹¹

f. Revolt Again in Bactria

A significant shift in the behavior of the Macedonian troops occurred in response to Spitamenes' darting about, always occupying the land from which the invaders had just departed. The slaughter of the Bactra garrison occurred in the summer of 328, and by autumn Spitamenes and 3,000 fresh Scythian allies reappeared in Sogdiana, but Alexander had positioned a strong force there under the general Coenus to lie in wait for the rebel. The king was adapting to eastern fighting, and planned to take Spitamenes by surprise.¹⁹² Because Coenus had received word of Spitamenes' approach, he was able to meet him in pitched battle, the first time Spitamenes had ever been compelled to fight the Macedonians in this fashion, and Coenus defeated the rebels, cutting down almost a third of their cavalry (Arr. 4.17.3-6). The result was catastrophic for Spitamenes, whose

¹⁹¹ Rawlings, *Ancient Greeks at War*, 73. He refers specifically to: Curt. 5.7.1, 7.4.1; Arr. 1.4.3, 1.7.5, 3.17.4, 3.25.7, 7.28.3.

¹⁹² Arrian specifically uses the word ἐνεδρεύσαντας, "after having ambushed," here (4.17.3) with respect to Alexander's own plans, as he used for Spitamenes at Bactra (4.16.7).

Sogdian and Bactrian allies abandoned him and surrendered immediately to Coenus, emphasizing once again to the Macedonians the need to corner and destroy them in order to defeat them. Spitamenes' Massagetae troops remained loyal only long enough to flee with him into the desert, but upon receiving word that Alexander meant to pursue them, they revolted and decapitated Spitamenes, offering his head to the king,¹⁹³ which likely did nothing to dispel the stigma of barbarism the western armies had attached to them.

Although the army must have felt as though it were chasing its own proverbial tail in pursuit of Spitamenes, Alexander's attempt to stabilize Sogdiana might have been more devastating in the long run. He tasked Hephaestion to resettle recalcitrant Sogdian populations (Arr. 4.16.3), which likely meant moving nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples to cities where a Macedonian garrison could keep an eye on them and thus curb their capacity for revolt.¹⁹⁴ This was not an attempt at changing the Sogdians' way of life either for their greater good or in order to enforce the superiority of Greco-Macedonian culture, but as a means of better guarding the region and preventing revolt in the empire as Alexander pressed onwards to India. The only manner of ensuring a lasting victory was to *contain* populations, thus preventing further rebellion from cropping up in unexpected locales. However, these garrison-occupied cities may well have only intensified resistance in the long run, even though force did something to quell it for a time. Arrian mentions only Alexandria-Eschate and the cities Hephaestion was ordered to

¹⁹³ Arr. 4.17.7. Curt. 8.3.1-16 claims that Spitamenes' own wife cut off his head, emphasizing the contrast between "barbarian lawlessness" and the "mild dispositions of the Greeks" (8.3.15) to such an extent that it seems a great embellishment if not a fiction.

¹⁹⁴ Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 174. See also Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 113. Bosworth asserts that no *new* settlements were founded, but rather Alexander ordered Hephaestion to populate cities that had been established already with Sogdian prisoners of war. Likely these were obtained from the recalcitrant citadels taken by Ptolemy, Perdikkas, Coenus, and Artabazus. Bosworth's argument rests on Arrian's prior use of *συνουκίειν* as "add population to" (Arr. 4.16.3).

συνουκίζειν (4.16.3), but Curtius suggests six other smaller foundations (*sedes*) were established along the Oxus (Amu Darya) near Margiana.¹⁹⁵ This direct degree of interference in the satrapies is what Holt argues intensified the resistance against the Macedonians, but it must have to some degree intensified the resistance of the Macedonians as well.

It seems reasonable that there were multiple settlements throughout Bactria and Sogdiana, small-scale and perhaps intentionally temporary, but they had to be occupied. Coenus, in his speech at the Hyphasis River in 326, complained that “Those [Greeks and Macedonians] who have been settled in the cities you founded do not remain there entirely of their own will” and “others, wounded from past fighting, are strewn across Asia.”¹⁹⁶ Many had no wish to be there; the Greek mercenaries settled as garrisons in Bactria and Sogdiana rebelled immediately upon the false rumor of Alexander’s death in 325 (Diod. 17.99.5; Curt. 9.7.1). The cost of suppressing revolt and controlling the eastern half of the empire proved enormous in terms of both time and manpower. Alexander could hardly have vacated the region and allowed Spitamenes free rein, thus losing a large portion of what was traditionally Achaemenid territory, but a constant bombardment of violence instigated by the supposedly conquered chipped away at the army’s resolve to march further into unknown lands. Deprived in part of their role as conquerors, the Macedonians were generally obligated to suppress rebellions and avenge attacks upon their comrades, and this was hardly the same thing as reaping the rich

¹⁹⁵ Curt. 7.10.15. On the use of συνουκίζειν to mean “add population to,” as opposed to “settle,” see Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 113.

¹⁹⁶ Arr. 5.27.5. Romm suggests this is a reference to the Greeks settled in Bactria and Sogdiana, pointing to their prompt revolt upon the false rumor of Alexander’s death (*Landmark Arrian*, 231).

rewards of a successful conquest as they had in the wealthy heartland of the Achaemenid Empire.¹⁹⁷

The nature of battle had certainly changed for Macedonians by 327, featuring a higher frequency of sieges and use of ladders, catapults, and siege towers, as well as ambush, and no pitched battles. Alexander's strategies of occupation had changed too. The light garrisoning of capitals and forts, symbolic of regional conquest, was no longer sufficient. Constant attacks on Bactra and Maracanda made leniency in the future less likely; it was easier to decimate and occupy a region than to leave behind a handful of Persian or Macedonian governors and guards who could do nothing in the face of united revolt.¹⁹⁸ The defection of smaller forts and towns, although less dangerous to their hold on the region, must have chipped away at Macedonian patience as well. Very few such villages are recorded specifically by the sources, likely because they did not pose significant enough threats, but accounts like those of the Memeceni fortress near the Jaxartes (Curt. 7.6.17-21) and the second revolt of Xenippa¹⁹⁹ indicate a broader swath of small-scale rebellion than is directly stated. A new territory merited a new method of repression, but Alexander's initial policy and willingness to hear surrender was still in effect (Diod. 104.4). Since the death of Darius, Alexander had reinstated those who surrendered peacefully: Nabarzanes, Phrataphernes,²⁰⁰ Autophradates (Arr. 3.23.7; Curt. 6.4.24-5), and Satibarzanes (Arr. 3.25.1-2), until he rebelled. Soon other minor Sogdian

¹⁹⁷ See Alexander's seizure of treasure at Arr. 5.26.7; vast hordes accumulated from: Sardis (1.17.3), Issus (2.15.1), Gaugamela (3.15.5), Babylon (3.16.3); Susa (3.16.6-7), Persepolis (3.18.10), Ecbatana (3.19.7).

¹⁹⁸ For Bactra: Arr. 4.16.4-4.17.2; for Maracanda: Curt. 7.6.24; Arr. 4.3.6-7, 4.16.4-5.

¹⁹⁹ Curt. 8.2.14-18 describes the safe haven for the Bactrians who had revolted against Alexander and were turned out by the locals. Even after their attack on Amyntas and the slaughter of 80 men, they were pardoned.

²⁰⁰ Arr. 3.23.4; Curt.6.4.23. See also Romm, *The Landmark Arrian*, 139. Because these men plotted but did not directly engage in the murder of Darius, they received clemency from Alexander.

kings, Oxyartes, Chorieneas (Arr. 4.21.6-9), and Sisimithres²⁰¹ were also reestablished in his position. Taxiles, the Indian raj of Taxila, unsurprisingly caught onto this pattern and offered his own submission the moment it was asked of him.²⁰²

g. The Rocks of Sogdiana

Movement against the “Rocks” or rock citadels of Sogdiana in rebellion helps to characterize Alexander’s adjusted method of patrolling the satrapy.²⁰³ Rather than installing large garrisons where power was already centralized by a native ruler, Alexander won the leaders’ submission and secured it against later treachery either through marriage or enlisting kinsmen into his army. The subjugation of the rock citadels was more akin to the nature of war in the West and Asia Minor than what the Macedonians had thus far experienced in the Far East of Bactria and Sogdiana. The army was not fighting an entire population, but the fortified capital of a local region. Perhaps more importantly, the enemy was stationary and not able to flee into the desert; an opponent’s fortress and the headquarters of his army could be taken and easily patrolled because it already controlled the surrounding region. Alexander managed to seize the

²⁰¹ If Sisimithres is distinct from Chorieneas, as Bosworth (*Commentary 2*, 125) supposes, his surrender and return to power occurs at Curt. 8.2.32-3. See also Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 67.

²⁰² Diod. 17.86.3-4; Curt. 8.12.5; Arr. 4.22.6.

²⁰³ Unfortunately there is some serious debate about the identity of the rocks that makes attaching particular people and incidents to specific locations very difficult. Arrian’s story and the Vulgate tradition both overlap in a confusing array, and the chronology, too, is hopelessly tangled. I emphasize above the overall results of capturing the Rocks, but for further assessment see Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 66 n.65. Holt notes that what Arrian calls the “Rock of Chorieneas” (4.21.1-10) is the “Rock of Sisimithres” for Curtius (8.2.19-33) and Plutarch (58), and Strabo (11.11.4). However the story of Roxanne cannot be placed; Strabo puts her at the “Rock of Sisimithres,” Arrian at the “Sogdian Rock,” and the story of the “winged men” appears in Arrian’s “Sogdian Rock” story in the same fashion as it does in Curtius’ “Rock of Ariamazes” (Curt. 7.11.1-29). Additionally, Bosworth gives his own interpretation of the contradictory sources; see Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 124-67.

local kings' centers of operations in both cases. Using his "winged soldiers" to capture the Sogdian Rock in the spring of 327,²⁰⁴ the siege was completed with minimal lives lost,²⁰⁵ and the king maintained his policy of clemency in return for surrender.²⁰⁶ The disastrous rebellions of Sogdian cities in the past prompted a different method of securing an alliance, and Alexander married King Oxyartes' daughter Roxane, taking a page from his father's book to ensure the king's continued loyalty.²⁰⁷

A similar account occurred in 327 at the Rock of Choriens in Pareitacene, the land between the Polytimetus and Oxus rivers East of Sogdiana;²⁰⁸ the army labored to fill in the steep ravine about the fortress, but it did not have to fight after having crossed it. King Choriens surrendered, and after he provisioned the Macedonian army, his good faith was secured through the enlistment of his two sons in Alexander's army (Curt.

²⁰⁴ Arr. 4.18.5-4.19.4. This is alternatively called the "Rock of Ariamazes." Curt. 7.11.1; Polyaeus 4.3.29; Strabo 11.11.4 ;ME 18. Also see Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 127. The men are "winged" because they successfully scaled the heights of the Sogdian Rock, which Oxyartes claimed could only be managed by soldiers with wings (Arr. 4.18.6). Cf. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 37-8.

²⁰⁵ Arrian tells us about thirty climbers who fell in the ascent (4.19.2).

²⁰⁶ Curtius' account is remarkably different. He claims that Ariamazes offered surrender in return for being allowed to "retire unharmed." Alexander in turn demanded unconditional surrender, and Ariamazes went to meet him, bringing his own family and a few nobles to negotiate. Curtius says that Alexander had them beaten and crucified and that he sent the rest who surrendered away to live in the cities he had founded in Margiana (7.11.26-9). No mention of Roxanne is made here, and the use of crucifixion is reminiscent of Tyre, but unlikely. Alexander had need of an ally familiar with the land who had monitored it and was a familiar presence to the locals. Placing Artabazus in charge in Alexander's name was likely to result in the very same sorts of rebellions he had faced elsewhere in the satrapy, appearing an overbearing foreign presence and a degree of royal involvement not previously known in Sogdiana. Oxyartes-Ariamazes as an ally was a wiser decision, and slaughtering men who surrender is not Alexander's *modus operandi*. The other most prominent use of crucifixion, Tyre (Curt.4.4.17; Diod.17.46.4), was the result of over half a year of labor besieging the citadel and the exceptionally cruel and unusual means of defense the Tyrians employed against the Macedonians (Curt. 4.3.25-6; Diod. 17.44.1-5). The Rock of Ariamazes required no such effort, and was taken overnight, making such brutal treatment of an otherwise highly useful ruler an unlikely account.

²⁰⁷ On the marriage, see: Plut. *Alex.* 47.4; Curt. 8.4.23-29; Arr. 4.19.5, 4.20.4; Strabo 517; Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 104-5; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 231-2.

²⁰⁸ Arr. 4.21.3-10. Curtius describes a similar rock as the "Rock of Sisimithres" (8.2.19-33), but Bosworth argues that both Rocks, of Choriens and of Sisimithres, existed, as both appear in the *Metz Epitome* (Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 135). See also Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 179. Cf. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 229-30.

8.2.33). Alexander's use of personal ties to ensure loyalty was a more secure means than the word of surrender, which had proved fruitless in the past. This strategy was possible only because power in the region of the rocks was sufficiently centralized, and submission from an established local ruler, rather than a foreign satrap, would better assure security in the future. Alexander had had no such opportunity against Spitamenes,²⁰⁹ who had central source of power or fortress to besiege. There mere act of cornering him for battle proved almost impossible.

Spitamenes was arguably Alexander's most vicious and dangerous enemy. The Bactrian's ability to outpace the Macedonian army and his talent for raising rebellions in seemingly conquered regions prepared the troops for great resistance in the future. He was able to use even the terrain against his enemy, mounting a guerilla war waged by warriors who "entrenched themselves on inaccessible crags, and when pursued vanished into the Turkoman steppes."²¹⁰ Despite Alexander's practical decision to lighten the equipment of his phalanxes, Spitamenes was still able to inflict greater devastation, numerically and morally, on the Macedonian army than any prior enemy at that point. The substantial reinforcements that the army required between the defeat of Darius at Gaugamela (331) and the end of the Bactrian and Sogdian campaign (327) is estimated at just over 47,000 infantry and cavalry combined.²¹¹ This highlights both the serious losses

²⁰⁹ Ironically, Alexander's friend Seleucus received in marriage Spitamenes' daughter Apame (Arr. 7.4.6; Plut. *Demetrius* 31.5), and he was the only one of the king's successors not to repudiate his wife. See further: Heckel, *Who's Who*, 39.

²¹⁰ Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 117.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 124 n. 2 Fuller comments on P. Jouguet, *Macedonian Imperialism and the Hellenization of the East*. Curtius notes that before entering into India, Alexander received reinforcements of 19,400 infantry and 2,600 cavalry (7.10.11-12).

in Bactria and Sogdiana as well as an anticipation of potentially similar struggles a few years later in India.

It is not difficult to see how the Macedonians might have had little patience when the peoples of India resisted their invasion, and Alexander and his army's experience in Bactria and Sogdiana made them less likely to trust offers of surrender. On the whole, Bactria and Sogdiana proved intractable lands, and the degree of their conquest is still hotly debated by scholars.²¹² The most immediate cause of this difficulty of conquest is militant rebellion. This was likely the first source of suffering and catalyst for violence in the minds of the Macedonian army as well, but a close second, which is easier for one reading or listening to an account to overlook, must have been the climate.

V. The Effects of Climate

Environment drastically affects one's ability to function on a day to day basis, especially in a military context, and the wildly vacillating weather of Bactria and Sogdiana exposed Alexander's army to the extremes of nature beyond what it had experienced in Macedonia.²¹³ Holt emphasizes the foreign and forbidding nature of the land with good reason: Bactria and Sogdiana were near the ends of the earth for the Macedonians and Greeks. When Alexander and his army passed through the Hindu Kush, they identified it as the Caucasus, the legendary mountain range where Zeus chained the titan Prometheus, supposedly located at the edge of the world. However, they must have

²¹² Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 68 n.73 points to Badian, Bosworth, and Hammond, all of whom argue that Alexander left few or no loose ends after the Bactria-Sogdiana campaign.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 72. Holt emphasizes that Bactrian and Sogdian winters were fiercer than those of Macedonia.

realized the world stretched a little farther than they once thought, when they were unable to view the Encircling Ocean from the tops of the mountains.²¹⁴ Although it was nothing to rival what would come in India, at the time the adverse climate, topography, military and social culture must have drastically and detrimentally affected the army.

The Bactrians and Sogdians “inhabited some of the most difficult regions in the world for any type of army to operate in.”²¹⁵ Everything in Bactria existed on a larger scale; it was studded by mountain ranges, the Hindu Kush and Amu Darya, and Sogdiana was a combination of open steppes and desert.²¹⁶ The fluctuation between seasons was far more severe than that Macedonian weather, which featured characteristics of both Mediterranean and continental climates in the eastern and western halves of the territory, respectively. The Macedonian introduction to the farther East came through the army’s crossing of the Hindu Kush, a mountain range with peaks between 14,000-17,000 feet, almost twice as high as Mt. Olympus, at 9,570 feet. Because of their height, the mountains maintain a cloak of snow year round, but the combination of rivers and deserts speckle Bactria with widely varying climates, from arid deserts to fertile and almost tropical valleys.²¹⁷ Flatlands occasionally spotted with forests and fortified hills made perfect launching places for surprise attacks by the natives, and the Macedonian army’s complete unfamiliarity with the region hampered its ability to prepare adequately for what its enemies, or the weather, might send at it. The terrain and climate of Bactria facilitated guerilla warfare, and “the fighting was especially difficult because of withering

²¹⁴ Ibid., 71 n.85. Reference to Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 1.13.15.

²¹⁵ Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander*, 116.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 117.

²¹⁷ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 11-13.

ambuscades and widespread revolts of a type often written upon the landscape.”²¹⁸

Additionally, the natives’ surroundings contributed to the perception of the Bactrians and Sogdians as the “other,” who not only behaved differently in combat, but occupied a land of wild extremes.

The army first encountered the severities of the climate at the onset of its eastward march. Alexander and his men crossed the Hindu Kush in the spring of 329 in pursuit of Bessus, who had initiated a scorched earth policy, laying waste the land ahead of the Macedonian army to discourage its advance. To avoid the worst of this, Alexander led his men through what is likely the Khawak Pass of the Hindu Kush, a more difficult (and therefore less expected) path than the Shibar Pass.²¹⁹ Nevertheless, the army ran into snowdrifts and ice-covered mountainsides; it was poorly provisioned, and despite the spring season on the ground, at higher altitudes the wind-chill was devastating. Supplies were few, and of the most effective source of calories, grain, “very little or nothing was found” (Curt. 7.4.23). The army was ultimately reduced to slaughtering its own pack animals for food until it was able to descend and enter Bactria proper. It is doubtful that the conquering army felt much like one, reduced despite the wealth they had won to consuming the flesh of the animals that bore it. There may well have been a collective frisson of apprehension at the thought of an eventual return might involve a doubling back through the Khawak Pass.

The effects of the climate were intensified by the army’s subsequent march through the Turkestan Desert (Curt. 7.4.27-9; 7.5.1-18). First plagued by freezing

²¹⁸ Ibid., 75.

²¹⁹ Arr. 3.28.8-9. Cf. Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 146; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 211-12.

temperatures, the men were then scalded by unforgiving terrain and a forty mile stretch of sand and heat. Curtius describes the army's desert march: "For 400 stadia, not even a drop of water is to be found. The heat of the summer makes the sands hot, and when they began to glow, everything is burned as if by a continuous conflagration" (7.5.2-3). The army travelled by night in order to avoid the worst of the heat and to navigate by the position of the stars (Curt. 7.4.28-30), but shorter nights in summer lengthened the overall journey. As a result, when the army reached the Oxus River, Curtius reports that many drank from it in a frenzy and died, "and the number of these was much greater than the king had lost in any battle."²²⁰ To make matters worse, Bessus had destroyed all the boats at the river crossing, providing yet another obstacle to overcome (Arr.3.28.9).

Holt asserts that the Macedonians' "actual experiences in the area fully justified any uncomfortable premonitions,"²²¹ and indeed there seems to have been some stirring of discontent among the Thessalian contingent directly after the desert crossing. Curtius accounts for the departure of 900 Macedonian troops "whose discharge was due" after the Oxus crossing (7.5.27). Arrian, who places the event before the crossing, reports that Alexander sent home the oldest of the Macedonians who were past fighting as well as the Thessalian volunteers who had travelled with him, citing no reason for the latter's discharge (3.29.5). However, in his speech at the Hyphasis River (326), Coenus claims that Alexander sent the Thessalians back from Bactria because they were exhausted and

²²⁰ Curt. 7.5.15-16. Curtius is the only source that gives this detailed account of the desert, but he does not explain in great detail why the army was not better provisioned for the journey. He notes that "Pauci...praeparaverant aquam" (7.5.7) because they had been warned in advance, but that overall the available wine and oil were consumed too quickly by men who did not consider the length of the march (7.5.7-8). While it is possible that individual rations may have been squandered too quickly, it is also likely that the distance was uncertain, and the capacity of an army to bear a sufficient amount of water along with weaponry and the basic equipage of the camp is limited.

²²¹ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 72.

“no longer eager for our toils” (Arr. 5.27.5). The use of ἀπολέμους (“unfit for war”) to describe the Thessalians suggests war weariness, but it is difficult to determine whether this was Arrian’s own inference or a statement present in his sources concerning Coenus’ argument.²²² In either case, it seems logical to assume that the discharge of the oldest soldiers was effected in expectation of greater physical hardship in Bactria (Arr. 3.29.5). Because he was in hot pursuit of Bessus, it was not an opportune time for Alexander to let go 900 men, and it cannot be coincidence that it occurred directly after a deadly desert crossing.

Treacherous terrain was made more difficult by rapidly shifting weather. A false spring of 327 led Alexander to lead his men from their winter quarters at Nautaca, but three days into the march to Gazaca, a torrential hailstorm opened up on the plains.²²³ Alexander led his men from their winter quarters at Nautaca, and three days into their march to Gazaca a torrential hailstorm opened up on the plains. Curtius’ detailed account, rather than appearing artfully embellished, gives a rather detailed look at what the experience must have been like:

“At first indeed they had received the hail successfully on the cover afforded by their shields, but finally their stiffened hands could no longer hold their slippery weapons, nor could they themselves determine in what direction to turn their bodies” (Curt. 8.3.5-6).

²²² Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 353. Bosworth further suggests that Parmenion’s death was a factor in the Thessalian discharge, and “disaffection probably also spread to the allied troops” (363). This is made much more likely when one considers that the Thessalians were brought to Bactria before the Oxus crossing by Philip son of Menelaus from Media (Arr. 3.25.4), where they would have been under Parmenion’s command.

²²³ Cf. Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 72.

Although Curtius emphasizes the ferocity of lightning and thunder (8.3.3-4), it is absurd that the Macedonians were frightened by it. Rather, it was the physical pain of the weather, accompanied by a sharp drop in temperature which usually trails a hailstorm, for which they were unprepared. After breaking rank to enter the forest, many of the Macedonians froze to death overnight and were found where they had knelt for shelter, “stuck to the trunks of trees, looking as if they were not only alive but even talking together” (Curt. 8.4.14). Although much of the army was able to return to camp, where fires were started, still Curtius reports that 2,000 died (Curt. 8.4.13). Even if this number is an exaggeration of the original, doubled or even tripled, that is still an astounding casualty figure for a battle with the *climate*.²²⁴ Weather does not often appear in discussions of warfare, but an army fighting against both an enemy and the weather is bound to wear out twice as quickly.

VI. Alexander Looks to India

Alexander’s army was a hardy one, but Bactria and Sogdiana wore it down. After defeating its original target, Bessus, the army was obligated to pursue the equally dangerous Spitamenes, chasing him back and forth between Bactria and Sogdiana while suffering explosions of local revolt and deadly ambushes along the way. The terrain could rise into icy mountains or split into miles of desert, and the seasonal changes were occasionally irregular, with disastrous results. But there was no outcry; occasional

²²⁴ Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria*, 72 n.90. Still today there is similar weather in the Pamirs, and herd animals left out overnight are sometimes found frozen to death.

reticence did not translate immediately into mutiny. Instead, frustrated by an elusive enemy and a string of revolts which Plutarch compared to the many-headed Hydra,²²⁵ the army vented its frustrations through violence upon its foes. Often, this translated into brutal attacks upon territories in revolt and undoubtedly a great loss of civilian life. While Spitamenes was regularly able to retreat into the desert, disappearing far out of the army's reach, his sedentary allies in local citadels suffered for him.

The refusal of local nobles to attend a conference at Bactra (Arr. 4.1.5) in conjunction with rebellions around the capitals of the satrapies, Bactra and Maracanda, left Alexander with the option of forceful repression or ceding the region to those already in occupation of it. The entire campaign in these satrapies set a new standard of battle for the Macedonians. It was less familiar, fought against peoples known only through literature, against nomads who had "no cities or settled communities and hence do not fear for treasured possessions" (Arr. 4.17.5) and had no use of citadels. There was no capital to take that might secure a region, and successful battles against Spitamenes' nomadic allies could not guarantee their passivity unless a large enough number was cut down to incapacitate them.²²⁶ War in these satrapies was more vicious. Raids and ambushes were often on a large scale and, due to the mobility of Spitamenes' Scythian allies, in large part fatal for the Macedonians. While Alexander might return prisoners once captured (Curt. 7.9.18), the rebels in Sogdiana did not make this their practice,

²²⁵ Plut. *Mor. De Fortuna Alexandri* 341F. This is the Hydra of Lerna, a monster which could not be destroyed because of its ability to regrow its nine heads. Although Heracles did ultimately defeat the Hydra, he did not kill it, but cauterized eight of its nine necks and trapped the immortal head beneath a large rock, as only the constant imposition of force could subdue it. Cf. Apollodorus 2.5.2.

²²⁶ Briant, *Alexander the Great*, 56. See Arr. 4.17.1-2, where Craterus compelled the Massagetae into pitched battle at Bactra. Despite forcing them from the field, he managed to cut down only 150, and the rest were able to flee into the desert, "where it was impossible...to pursue them farther."

likely because prisoners would hamper their retreat (Arr. 4.5.9). War was seemingly endless, and the quelling of a revolt was almost inevitably temporary. Alexander's army marched hundreds of miles of ruts into the lands of Bactria and Sogdiana, turning back and forth in pursuit of elusive enemies who preferred leaping out from among the trees to meeting on a leveled plain or even prosecuting sieges. The land itself seemed unkind, ruled by a climate as sporadic and unpredictable as its inhabitants.

Bactria and Sogdiana did not prove to be the endgame for the Macedonians, but merely a prelude to India, to which Alexander turned next. India was its own unique region, divided into principalities ruled by minor kings, stratified hierarchically according to a caste system, and operating under a venerated and ancient religion that far predated Zoroastrianism. India, like Bactria and Sogdiana, was also the Other. The soldiers following Alexander into India did not enter with a proverbial blank slate; they were weighted with personal experiences and exasperation brought in from the north. India would prove to be an even more wildly different and deadly enemy, contributing to the exhaustion and demoralization which had already begun. The traditional rules of hoplite warfare would be bent and stretched out of shape to accommodate a very non-traditional enemy, resulting in greater violence endured and inflicted, and finally a devastating collapse of morale.

Chapter 4: India²²⁷

- I. Macedonian Invasion and Autonomy in India
- II. The Nature of Fighting in India
 - a. The Assaceni
 - b. Massaga
 - c. Sangala
- III. A Policy of No Resistance
- IV. The Killing of Brahmans and the March Home
 - a. Philosophers and Politicians
 - b. The Malli
 - c. Musicanus and Sambus
- V. War Weariness and Violence
 - a. Endless Sieges and the Unfair Fight
 - b. The Importance of Pitched Battles
 - c. A Disheartened Army
 - d. The Psychology of War Weariness
 - e. Alexander's Wounds
 - f. Cultural Isolation
 - g. Rebellions of Settlers

In the summer of 327, Alexander entered West India (present day Pakistan) in what would be the last phase of the Macedonian campaign of expansion. The invasion and conquest of India would also prove to be the bloodiest of the army's endeavors. The precipitous rise in violence stemmed from both Alexander's policy of no resistance and his army's increasing exhaustion and frustration with a toilsome and seemingly endless campaign. The invasion culminated in such brutality because of a combination of factors unique to the region including the Indians' belief in their autonomy and Alexander's execution of Brahmans, which might not have produced similar results elsewhere. The

²²⁷ This chapter seeks to ascertain the cause of the Macedonians' sharp increase in violence in India, and therefore the content is divided thematically rather than chronologically.

Macedonians were often unable to force a pitched battle, but as in Bactria and Sogdiana, they were obligated to prosecute a string of sieges. Such monotony in combination with the cultural and physical environment of the land took a heavy toll on the army. The disaffection of the troops led to a gradual decline in morale that was characterized by anxiety over leadership, Alexander's increasingly risky behavior in battle, and a rise in war-weariness.

I. Macedonian Invasion and Autonomy in India

Alexander invaded India with the goal of expansion.²²⁸ He wanted to gain control of what he believed fell under Darius III's hegemony and insure that his own sovereignty be acknowledged.²²⁹ It is not impossible that Alexander would have wished to restore the empire to its former size under Darius I, which, as he would have known from Herodotus, extended "over the whole of Asia, with the exception of Arabia."²³⁰ This goal does not differ significantly from Alexander's policy and behavior elsewhere during his campaign,

²²⁸ For a succinct discussion of the Indian campaign, see A.B. Bosworth, "The Indian Campaigns 327-325 B.C." in *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*, ed. J. Roisman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 159-68.

²²⁹ Arrian's assumption that Alexander's desire for expansion was fueled by his *pothos*, or "longing" might be true, but it can hardly account for leading an army on a two year campaign (327/6-325). U. Wilcken (*Alexander the Great* [London: Norton & Co.], 1967) characterizes Alexander's invasion as the product of *pothos* and the desire to expand his empire "to the limits fixed by nature to the inhabited world" (174). For a contrasting argument, see P. Spann ("Alexander at the Beas: Fox in a Lion's Skin, *The Eye Expanded: Life and the Arts in Greco-Roman Antiquity* ed. F. Titchener and R. Moorton [Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999], p. 62-74), who argues that Alexander recognized that world sovereignty was impractical and that the mutiny at Hyphasis was no more than "public relations bunkum" contrived by Alexander and his senior generals to mask his unwillingness to continue East (69). Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 121-3 follows this line of argument by contending that Alexander intended Nicaea and Bucephalia as outposts of his realm. See further: W. Heckel, "Alexander the Great and the Limits of the Civilized World," *Crossroads of History: The Age of Alexander*, ed. L.A. Tritle (Claremont: Regina Books, 2003), 147-74.

²³⁰ Hdt. 3.88. Herodotus further details the divisions of satrapies under Darius I, with India being the twentieth and also paying the largest sum in 360 talents of gold dust (3.95).

but the political status of India (best conceived of as a conglomeration of local dynasts and tribes, rather than a single united region) as well as its traditions of battle meant the means by which Alexander *applied* his policy had to be changed, which resulted in a steep rise in violence.

Alexander entered India desirous of submission, but anticipating some resistance. He would have been well aware that Darius' influence had extended at least as far as the Kabul Valley, whose inhabitants had sent military support for Gaugamela.²³¹ However, just how much of India truly belonged to Darius is uncertain. We know from Arrian that the Assaceni peoples, in Lower Swat, had been "paying a set tribute" since Cyrus son of Cambyses, and before that, they had been part of the Median and Assyrian Empires (*Ind.* 1.3). Further, Arrian's frequent use of the term *hyparch* to describe rulers of Western India, a word that characteristically denotes a satrap, is a clear indication that those regions still fell under Persia's administrative jurisdiction.²³²

Persia does not, however, appear to have enjoyed direct control of India for some time; the Indian forces sent to Gaugamela were not substantial,²³³ and one would expect a more extensive contribution from a fully consolidated territory. As Stoneman points out, those ruled by the men whom Arrian labels *hyparchs* may have fallen under technical Persian jurisdiction, but there is no record of Persian satraps as such, and the connection

²³¹ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 74-85. I. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 187-93. Cf. n.6.

²³² Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 155.

²³³ Wilcken, *Alexander*, 173-4; I. Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man and God* (Harlow: Pearson, 2004), 196. Arrian notes that Indians from along the Bactrian border went to Darius' aid (3.8.3), but the sum total of assistance from Indians west of the Indus consisted of "οὐ πολλοί ... ἐλέφαντες," that is about fifteen, and of course none from the territories of the Hydaspes or Acesines (3.8.6). Arrian hints at where the Indian troops were stationed at Gaugamela at 3.11.5; 3.13.1; 3.14.5; 3.15.1. It is important to note that Arrian uses "Indians" to describe a wide range of ethnicities and in this case, while referencing the "Indians" along the Bactrian border he is describing Arachosians. Cf. Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 112; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 119 n.297.

must have deteriorated over the years.²³⁴ This indicates a loose relationship between the King and his easternmost holdings, though exactly where the border was is still debated. Heckel emphasizes how it is “wrong to speak of the Macedonian *conquest* of India”; although certain groups *were* certainly conquered, Alexander “had not, in fact, advanced beyond the boundaries of the Persian Empire,” but merely attempted to restore its original authority.²³⁵ This assertion conflicts with Arrian, who notes that the land beyond the Indus, and especially beyond the Acesines (Chenab), did not belong to Persia; Arrian explains that the people living much further East beyond the Acesines were Indians “who had from ancient times been autonomous” even if these in particular came over to Alexander willingly (5.24.8). Arrian’s statements suggest that the Great King’s power had not encompassed territory as far as the Hyphasis (Beas), and Alexander did indeed plan to expand, not only to consolidate.

The autonomy Arrian mentions and the severe resistance the Macedonians faced indicate that most Indian peoples did not see themselves as part of the Persian Empire. Forcing their compliance spurred a rise in the violence and body count of the Indian campaign. Many cities were and had been autonomous for generations and readily expressed a strong sense of independence in the face of attempted conquest; men who held “an emotional love of freedom and a patriotic sense of honor,” were politically

²³⁴ R. Stoneman, “India” in *The Landmark Arrian*, Appendix J, 376. While Arrian’s use of *hyparches* to describe native rulers (4.22.6; 5.8.2; 5.20.6) suggests that they were technically subjects, and while Alexander might have believed it so, the lack of aid from rajas like Musicanus, Sambus, and the autonomous (Arr. 6.14.2) Malli and Oxydracae suggests that “the arrangement must have lapsed” (Stoneman, “India,” 376). Had Indian peoples truly felt themselves under the suzerainty of the Achaemenids, surely assistance would have come in more significant numbers and from a wider range of territory. It seems more likely that Indian rajas were unconcerned with wars in the distant north and the problems of the Persian King and willing only to provide minimal aid in order to maintain tenuous relations with Persia and continue to be left to their own devices.

²³⁵ Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 112-3.

distanced enough from the Persian Empire to see Alexander's entry into and invasion of India as unjustifiable.²³⁶ Alexander's policy of clemency in return for surrender was habitually combated by free peoples (Arr. 5.24.6), further indicating that the local rulers of India, "unlike the tribal chiefs of Central Asia, had never been fully incorporated into the Persian empire and were not accustomed to foreign domination."²³⁷

II. The Nature of Fighting in India

a. The Assaceni

The nature of fighting in India was another serious obstacle for the Macedonian army that ultimately culminated in greater violence against civilians. Because of the divided nature of West India, consisting of many local tribes and petty dynasts, Alexander was generally unable to force a single pitched battle to win the entirety territory, in accordance with Greek war practices.²³⁸ Instead, the king and his troops were obligated to chase after sporadic conflagrations of opposition and combat a particularly slippery resistance technique. Indian defenders would flee from one location or citadel to take refuge in another, forcing their enemy to prosecute siege after siege rather than quickly progressing further. This pattern began immediately upon the Macedonian invasion. After a skirmish at the Choes (Sind or Khonar) River in the Assaceni territory

²³⁶ A.K. Narain, "India," *Impact of Alexander the Great*, ed. E. Borza (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1974), 62.

²³⁷ Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 185.

²³⁸ The exceptions include a pitched battle in Western India against a large force of Indians whom Alexander defeated "without much trouble" (Arr. 4.25.1), Craterus' land battle at Bazira, (Arr 4.27.8), and the only major pitched battle in India, the Hydaspes River: Diod. 17.87.1-17.89.3; Curt. 8.13.5-8.14.46; Arr. 5.9.1-5.19.3.

of West India in 327, the Indian combatants fled to their stronghold and forced the Macedonians to besiege it. Before the walls were breached, the inhabitants fled once again into the mountains, leaving the invaders to raze the city and prevent it from being reoccupied.²³⁹ In some cases, Indians also favored razing their own cities to the ground, rather than letting the Macedonians take them, as occurred among the Aspasiens and at Arigaion and Dyrta.²⁴⁰

It is important to note that sieges along the Near-Eastern coast (334-332) were not nearly so numerous and frequent as those in India, and populations did not tend to scatter and take up a defense elsewhere, forcing Alexander to fight them anew. During Near-Eastern sieges where populations did disperse such as at Halicarnassus, the citadels to which they fled after the destruction of Halicarnassus itself held no great importance for the region and could be bypassed.²⁴¹ In India however, which had no overarching political structure like Persia's satrapal system, Alexander was unable to win control of the entire land with a single pitched battle, as he had done at Gaugamela. In order to take over a region and its governing system, he had to defeat centers of resistance one by one, and no small regional fort could be left unassailed.²⁴²

As Hanson notes, one of the virtues of a pitched battle, for which the Greeks and Macedonians were trained, was its relatively short duration. This is not to belittle the

²³⁹ Arr. 4.23.1-5. See also the siege of Bazira, whose citizens fled before capitulating only to take up defense at Aornus (Arr.4.27.5-4.28.1). Cf. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 49-50 and *Conquest and Empire*, 123.

²⁴⁰ Arr. 4.24.2; 4.24.6; 4.30.5. Curtius records only that the people of Arigaion (Acadira) deserted their city (8.10.19).

²⁴¹ Arr. 1.23.5-6. Ptolemy was left to ensure that the occupants were finally subdued. See pp. 31-2.

²⁴² For example, Alexander seized and controlled Porus' kingdom after the Battle of the Hydaspes River (326) and installed Porus as his vassal king. However, after crossing through Porus' territory and over the Hydraotes River, Alexander had to repeat the process once again, this time with a siege against autonomous tribes at Sangala (Arr. 5.21-5.22.2).

extent of suffering and injury of hoplite battles or larger-scale battles in Asia like Granicus or Gaugamela, but to emphasize the comparatively limited window of time in which wounds could be inflicted during a set battle as opposed to a siege. The latter might last for days or even months, as at Tyre in 332, and it offered opportunity for innovation and the use of new, less familiar weaponry.²⁴³ A battle, however, whenever it might be initiated, had to end by nightfall. Pitched battle came with the security and familiarity of routine to the Macedonians; there was an assurance of a (relatively) brief encounter, the use of familiar weapons and formation, and a decisive outcome.²⁴⁴ Moreover, a siege in India did not always prove decisive. For example, the Assaceni in Western India (see above) were besieged successfully by the Macedonians (Arr. 4.23.1-5), but the Indians rebelled less than a year later and killed their governor, requiring further attention (Arr. 5.20.7).

The abandonment of cities and fortresses to flee further into India was a common Indian tactic of evasion, but when combined with Alexander's treatment of fleeing locals as rebels, it resulted in a high death toll.²⁴⁵ Arrian describes an attempt at pitched battle in the winter of 327/6 among the Assaceni (4.25.1-7) a people just east of the Gouraius (Panjkora) River who had gathered a substantial army of 30,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 30 elephants to combat the Macedonian approach.²⁴⁶ Upon seeing Alexander cross the river, and with great trouble at that, the Indians "disbanded, each to their several

²⁴³ See p.32. Arguably between the beginning of Alexander's eastern campaign and his arrival in India, the Macedonians had grown somewhat accustomed to the habitual use of siege towers and torsion catapults on their own side (see Romm "Alexander's Army and Military Leadership" in *The Landmark Arrian*, Appendix D, 345), but their enemies' weapons proved a difficult barrier (see further below).

²⁴⁴ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 25, 33. Cf. Rawlings, *Ancient Greeks at War*, 65-7.

²⁴⁵ Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 227.

²⁴⁶ See Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 49-53 and *Conquest and Empire*, 122-3.

cities, which they intended to defend and preserve” (Arr. 4.25.5-7). Although ultimately the defense was futile, this technique forced the Macedonians to fight by blockade, likely dampening morale among the troops and increasing the time spent in battle and thus opportunity for injury. The need to quell a rebellion once and prevent it from reigniting after the army passed through the territory, risking exposing its rear and communication lines to revolting locals, contributed to a sense of haste and distrust of declarations of submission.²⁴⁷ Such a fear of rebellious flare-ups appeared in Alexander’s speech at the Hyphasis River in 326 when he reminded his men that “If we turn back, the tribes we do not now hold securely may be stirred up to rebel by those not yet under our control. And then many of our toils will be profitless, or else we shall have to again undertake fresh toils and dangers” (Arr. 5.26.3-4).

b. Massaga

The flight of the Assaceni described above led to a siege at their well-fortified capital Massaga which proved exceptionally difficult to carry out.²⁴⁸ Alexander attempted to prevent a long siege by drawing the defenders away from the walls and out into battle. The king feigned a retreat and lured the defenders outside of the walls to fight them, but they fled back to their stronghold “as soon as [the Assaceni] found themselves fighting at close quarters” (Arr. 4.26.4). The Indian defenders knew that it was most effective for them to fight from the safety of their citadel, and they only combated the Macedonians

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Plut. *Alex.* 59; Curt. 8.10.22-36; Arr. 4.26.1-4.27.4. See also: Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great* 245-6; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 122; Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 114; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 238.

directly when they were well within reach of it (cf. Arr. 4.26.7). The siege continued for four days until the Assaceni leader was killed.²⁴⁹ Alexander clearly needed to allow his enemies to come together en masse in order that he might combat and defeat them all at once, in accordance with Greco-Macedonian battle tradition.²⁵⁰ If he had been able to effect this, his progression through India would have been swifter and arguably less violent and discouraging for his troops.

The consecutive sieges and skirmishes of India enhanced the likelihood of injury. Although the death toll for the army was not always necessarily high, on occasion and especially in the case of the siege at Sangala (pp. 91-2), “the number of wounded... was out of proportion to the number of dead” (Arr. 5.24.5). This is a ratio of 1200 :> 100, due in part to the fact that a siege did not allow for the protection of a phalanx, rendering troops vulnerable to traditional and makeshift projectiles, like the stones tossed down from the Massaga fortress.²⁵¹ Alexander himself was wounded with an arrow in his ankle (Arr. 4.26.4; Curt. 8.10.30-1), and his soldiers suffered a serious setback when a bridge collapsed beneath them. In phalanx formation, troops crossed a bridge through a break in the defense walls which collapsed, signaling the defenders to assault the troops both from the walls and the ground level (Arr. 4.26.6-7). One can hardly imagine that there were not severe casualties, considering the weight of the soldiers’ armor and the weapons they

²⁴⁹ Arr. 4.26.1-4; 4.27.1-2. A similar tactic to tempt the defenders into launching a sortie occurs at Bazira-Ora as well, with similar results at 4.27.7-8.

²⁵⁰ See Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 13, 17. Hanson explains the necessity of curtailing potentially lengthy conflicts. While a prolonged siege would offer men the opportunity to showcase individual bravery, that was not the goal of classical warfare. Rather, “its moral imperative is to end the fighting quickly and efficiently” (13).

²⁵¹ See Arr. 4.26.7. Wounds to both his men and his own person during sieges were a good reason for Alexander to prefer pitched battle. See Diod. 17.24-25 (difficulty with Halicarnassus); Arr. 2.27.2 (Gaza); Arr. 4.3.3 (Cyropolis and catapult blow); Arr. 5.24.5 (Sangala and Lysimachus wounded); Diod. 17.99 (Malli).

would have been brandishing.²⁵² Given this violent episode, it is difficult to believe that only 25 Macedonians perished in the siege (Arr. 4.27.5), but regardless, the effort and injury it cost Alexander's now veteran troops in combination with the series of sieges he prosecuted throughout the whole of India, interrupted only by one major battle, at the Hydaspes, had the effect of demoralizing and exhausting them.²⁵³ Furthermore, major or permanent injury might have threatened a soldier's hope of returning home. That was why Alexander installed a number of wounded veterans in cities and garrison outposts in the East.²⁵⁴

c. Sangala

In 326 during the Macedonian army's return march from outpost of the empire, at the Hyphasis River, it encountered resistance at Sangala, a fortress just east of the Acesines River.²⁵⁵ The combined autonomous tribes of the Malli, Oxydracai, and Cathaiae had come together to use this citadel as a basis of resistance.²⁵⁶ The defenders first met the Macedonians outside Sangala's walls, and the Indians' unconventional methods of battle unnerved their attackers. As in Sogdiana, the Macedonians had to contend with unfamiliar forms of war. Curtius explains that "the barbarians sallied

²⁵² Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 56 (armor weight), 55-88 in general on armor. NB: Macedonian armor was lighter than traditional hoplite armor. Bosworth suggests that the collapse of makeshift bridges was not an uncommon phenomenon in ancient siege warfare. He compares Arrian's account of Massaga to Appian's details of Augustus' siege at Metulus during the Illyrian Wars. When a bridge between two earthen mounds collapsed under the weight of the Roman soldiers, Appian reports fatalities and broken bones (Appian, *Ill.* 4.20), and despite some differences in armor and weaponry, we might assume a similar result for the Macedonians at Massaga three centuries earlier (Bosworth, *Commentary I*, 173).

²⁵³ Cf. the discussion of Coenus' speech at the Hyphasis p.110-11 and chapter 4 section V.

²⁵⁴ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 247-9.

²⁵⁵ Curt. 9.1.14-25. Arr. 5.22-5.24.8. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 132. Fuller, *Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 255-8.

²⁵⁶ The Malli and Oxydracae do so again in 325, citing the same reason, their long-held autonomy (Arr 6.14.1-3).

forth...with chariots joined together...with lances [and] axes, and they leaped rapidly from chariot to chariot, when they wished to aid their men who were under difficulties” (9.1.15-16; cf. Arr. 5.23.1). Even after dislodging the Indians from their chariots, the Macedonians had little success, as the defenders fled back inside the walls of their citadel. When the Indians realized that the Macedonians would penetrate their defensive structures eventually by siege, they attempted to flee during the night and were driven back inside, ultimately capitulating without having made terms and suffering enormous casualties.²⁵⁷ Importantly, the besieging army had endured a disproportionate casualty rate (see above p. 90) as well, testament to the strength of Assaceni defensive measures.

Alexander’s response was preventive. He burned Sangala to ensure the citadel would not be re-occupied by fleeing forces, and for the same reasons he temporarily pursued the escaping defenders. In the end, the king gave Sangala’s surrounding territory to those autonomous Indians along the Acesines whom Arrian mentions at 5.24.8. This use (or production) of local enmity was intended to secure territory and prevent Alexander’s having to turn around and reclaim it, but may have served equally effectively at heightening tensions and prompting rebellions. At the same time, Alexander sent word to Sangala’s neighboring cities, which had revolted simultaneously with the large citadel. Although he had promised clemency to those who remained in their cities and “none of the other autonomous Indians who had surrendered willingly had been treated harshly” (Arr. 5.24.6), the neighbors of Sangala fled the army’s advance. Those who fled and were

²⁵⁷ Arr. 5.24.3-5 claims that there were nearly 90,000 people in the citadel, which seems a gross exaggeration, although the *ratio* of those killed (he reports 17,000 died in the capture) may be accurate.

apprehended by the army were killed, evidence of a strengthened Macedonian policy of no resistance.

III. A Policy of No Resistance

Another key component in the rise of violence was Alexander's response to resistance. The king pursued a policy that tolerated no opposition and did not generally spare a defiant civilian population, and this included those who fled.²⁵⁸ After the frequent and exhausting revolts of Bactria and Sogdiana which took two years of campaigning to quell, Alexander and his army expected rebellion and were less merciful in response to it. Two particular examples stand out: the sieges of Massaga (327) and the Rock of Aornus (326). In both cases Alexander believed himself betrayed, which resulted in a radically violent treatment of native populations.

After the siege of Massaga (pp. 89-91), the civilian population surrendered and reached an agreement with the king, who promised amnesty if the Indian mercenaries in Massaga would join his army. Alexander appears to have reneged on the deal by surrounding the mercenaries in their camp that night and killing them, but the sources differ on his action. Arrian explains that the Assaceni mercenaries intended to betray Alexander first, planning to flee in the night and likely station themselves elsewhere in defense, being "unwilling to bear arms against other Indians" (4.27.3). This does fit the

²⁵⁸ This is distinct from his behavior during earlier sieges in Asia. Along the Syrian coast for example, Alexander treated besieged fortresses in accordance with classical warfare, with the enslavement or occasionally sparing of the population within. Tyre is the notable exception and the most similar to Macedonian treatment of the Indian citadels, but the causes are somewhat different. See further chapter 2, p.32.

pattern of Alexander's experience with Indian fighting, and regardless of whether or not these particular mercenaries *intended* to do so, it is not difficult to see why Alexander would *believe* it so, if he had been so informed.

Diodorus explains the massacre differently, claiming that Alexander tricked the mercenaries by twisting his words. The king had only agreed to allow them to leave the city peacefully, not to be "friends of the Macedonians forever" (Diod. 17.84.2). Additionally, Diodorus relates that the mercenaries had brought along their wives and children with them, whom the Macedonians also slaughtered (17.84.2-6), which was entirely inconsistent with the Greek paradigm of warfare.²⁵⁹ Plutarch reports the carnage similarly, without mention of families, but provides no reason for Alexander's doing so and says only that the king effectively "stained" his military career by slaughtering the mercenaries without provocation.²⁶⁰

Diodorus hints at what is essentially a communication problem, in that Alexander conveniently altered the meaning of his words, and there may be some truth to this. Hamilton, in agreement with Tarn, postulates that the killing likely had something to do with a gross miscommunication combined with Alexander's growing impatience.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ See p. 15 concerning *andrapodismos*, the most brutal punishment the Greeks inflicted on enemies, which involved the enslavement, but not the execution, of women and children.

²⁶⁰ Plut. *Alex.* 59.6-7. This moralizing strain likely stems from the Roman ethos under which Plutarch was raised. Although the Romans gloried in a high body count after battle, the massacre of non-combatants was at least in theory distasteful. Further, Plutarch's work is by nature a moral characterization based on an assessment of his subject's personality, and issues of courage, honor, and self-restraint are considered carefully through Plutarch's own cultural lens. See N.G. Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 163-7. See also Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 174-5 for support of Plutarch's assumption and rejection of Arrian's allegedly apologetic explanation.

²⁶¹ J. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 162. For an alternate interpretation, see A.K. Narain's "India," 59. Narain does not mention the possibility of genuine sedition or miscommunication, but prefers Diodorus' "heart-rending" account. While it is inarguably that, I think it is necessary to consider, as I attempt to above, the pattern of flight and treachery Alexander had already experienced.

Alexander had formerly behaved with clemency upon a city's surrender, as in the case of Nysa, which the Macedonians besieged in 327 until the leading politicians asked for peace.²⁶² Alexander had also decimated populations of cities and razed them in cases of severe recalcitrance prior to Massaga.²⁶³ If he had wished to eliminate the Assaceni mercenaries, then he might have refused negotiations as "too little, too late," and stormed the citadel without delay. Further, it would have been ill-advised to eliminate such a great source of manpower, especially individuals who were accustomed to Indian fighting tactics and the territory, and Alexander's touted practicality would not have endured it. There must have been a genuine perception of an attempt at sedition.

In either case, the fate of the Assaceni mercenaries created immediate difficulties in Alexander's campaign. If Diodorus and Plutarch are correct that the killing of the Assaceni mercenaries was unjust, then does the act signal the beginning of Alexander's rapidly-fraying temper? One would expect that, having secured their surrender, Alexander would make use of the native mercenaries to combat other Indian troops. Or, preferring them killed, that he might have refused peace negotiations as "too little, too late" and stormed the citadel without delay. It seems more likely that the slaughter stemmed not from temper but preventing further revolt in Assaceni territory. According to Arrian, Alexander supposed the inhabitants of the neighboring city Bazira (Bir-Kot)

²⁶² Arrian relates that Alexander attacked Nysa until the leader Acouphis attempted a parley (5.1.3-6), and Curtius gives a more detailed report that specifies the Nysaians were torn between surrender and putting up a fight. In response, Alexander ordered "a blockade but no bloodshed" and the siege alone caused the enemy to give in. Curtius does not record the Macedonians harming them in any way other than with their "uproarious reveling and yelling" during their Bacchic revelry, which the Nysaians mistook for the Macedonian battle cry (Curt. 8.10.10-16). Justin details only that Alexander ordered his men to spare anyone not resisting (12.7). Alexander's clemency cannot be solely attributed to the city's ties to Dionysus. The king showed himself willing to besiege it, and when he left he took with him Acouphis' son and grandson and a war contribution of 300 horses (Arr. 5.2.4; 5.2.2).

²⁶³ Consider the unnamed city of Western India beside the River Choes in Arr. 4.23.1-5.

would yield upon hearing that Massaga had fallen, but instead they decided to stand a siege, and Alexander's attempt to secure a quick surrender did not work (4.27.5-6). After the nearby city of Ora fell in siege to the Macedonians, the Bazirans fled in the night along with other tribes of the region to the Rock of Aornus, the modern day slopes of Pir Sar and a fortress of Greek legend.²⁶⁴

The details of the siege of Aornus are not discernable because of conflict within the sources, however Arrian's account of a slaughter makes the event relevant here.²⁶⁵ Arrian tells us that the defenders of the Rock agreed to terms of peace and to surrender the fortress to Alexander, but they attempted to flee in the night, and Alexander and his men slew them (4.30.2-4). Diodorus says that Alexander managed to fill up the surrounding ravine, and then drew up his siege engines on level with the defenders. In the night, the Macedonians abandoned their guard of the Rock's major exits and allowed the occupants to flee "without further fighting" (17.85.7).²⁶⁶ If Arrian is to be believed, then the siege of Aornus further highlighted Alexander's policy of treating fleeing individuals as rebellious. This reaction likely stemmed from haste in the face of slow progress through India and the assumption that those in flight would take up arms elsewhere and

²⁶⁴ Arr. 4.28.1-2. Arrian discusses how the name of the rock would have been familiar to Alexander and his men because even Heracles had failed to capture it.

²⁶⁵ For the Rock of Aornus see: Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 49-53; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 241-3.

²⁶⁶ Curtius' account is not included here because it seems the least likely, or to use Bosworth's phrase, "hopelessly confused" (*Alexander and the East*, 50), but in any case Curtius does not mention a betrayal. Curtius claims that Alexander abandoned the siege and only "made a show" of continuing it after having withdrawn his men (Curt. 8.11.19). The king only won the territory at all because for some reason the occupants of the rock gave up their celebration and decided to flee, and Alexander's men caught them midflight and terrified them, causing many to fall from the steep crags of the pass (Curt 8.11.20-22). Bosworth prefers Arrian's account, stating that "it is agreed" that the Indians were induced to leave the rock only to be slaughtered (Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 191), but this still does not account for the entirely different context of Diodorus' account.

force another siege. While cruelly logical, this sort of policy caused a steep rise in the Indian campaign's death toll.

The distrust of populations or leaders who flee instead of offering submission continued through the army's march eastward. King Porus, a cousin of the Porus who fought Alexander at the Hydaspes River, surrendered himself to Alexander through envoys (Arr. 5.21.3), but then recanted and fled his kingdom upon news of Alexander's advance. Although this Porus was not technically in rebellion, Alexander distrusted his flight and refusal of earlier surrender, a detail which emerges in the epithet attached to Porus in the sources, "πῶρον τόν ἕτερον τόν κακόν" or "the other Porus, the Wicked."²⁶⁷ Alexander sent his general Hephaestion to commandeer "Porus the Wicked's" lands and turn them over to Porus of the Hydaspes (Diod. 17.91.1-2; Arr. 5.21.3-6). This suggests that the flight of kings, like that of civilians, was also perceived as rebellion.

Arrian's detailed record of the siege of Sangala in the summer of 326 is another such example of Alexander's policy of no resistance and its effect in the level of violence in the campaign (pp. 91-2). After the fortress fell to Alexander's army, the king sent word to the people of the neighboring territories that they themselves "would suffer no harsh treatment" so long as they remained where they were (Arr. 5.24.6). Alexander's goal was to ensure surrounding territories would remain passive and not take up arms against him or unify elsewhere, forcing another siege. When locals fled before his approach, they were treated as resisters in the same way the defenders at Sangala had been, and those

²⁶⁷ Arr. 5.21.3. Romm asserts that titles came from Arrian's original source and were used by the Macedonians (Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 223); Bosworth entertains the idea and suggests the use of κακόν here indicates either the disloyalty of the cousin of Porus of the Hydaspes Battle, or his cowardice at fleeing in the face of Alexander's advance (Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 326-7).

whom the army caught were killed.²⁶⁸ Although this was not an all-pervasive policy, we will see that cutting down fleeing rebels did occur in circumstances where large numbers of people had the potential to regroup elsewhere. Such was the case of the Malli, whose revolt Alexander had to put down a second time in 325.²⁶⁹

IV. The Killing of Brahmins and the March Home

a. Philosophers and Politicians

Alexander's decision to execute and allow the slaughter of Brahmins revealed a great degree of cultural misunderstanding, rather than a willful overturning of an entire system.²⁷⁰ The Macedonian understanding of the caste system and the role Brahmins played in society is difficult to grasp from a modern perspective. Today we easily perceive of India as a cultural whole and understand that regions once ruled by different political leaders were all connected by a caste system. This understanding makes it easy to condemn Alexander for accepting the venerated status of Brahmins when he found them as philosophers in Taxila, but then then slaughtering them in Malli. However, as Bosworth notes, Alexander might have witnessed the high esteem in which the Brahmins

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 5.24.7. Diodorus gives only the briefest mention of Sangala (he does not even name it), saying Alexander took the strongest city of the Cathaeans and the rest of the nearby Indians were spared because they approached him as suppliants with branches in hand (Diod.17.91.4). Curtius also fails to name the city, but does corroborate Arrian's story of its successful siege, naming 8,000 men dead instead of 17,000 (Arr. 5.24.5), and he suggests that those caught fleeing were killed when he says "some were saved by their speed" (Curt 9.1.18). These individuals were able to warn other regions, who readily capitulated to Alexander.

²⁶⁹ See Arr. 6.9.1-6.6.11-12. The land of the Malli, between the Hydaspes and Hydraotes, falls South of the land of the Cathaiae where Sangala is located, but Arrian specifically notes that Sangala comprised a conglomeration of Cathaiae, Oxydracai, and Malli tribesmen who met there in order to defend the region (Arr. 5.22.1-2). The fact that Alexander had already forced a surrender from these regions' representatives likely has a great deal to do with his brutal policy upon return when they resist.

²⁷⁰ Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 97.

of Taxila were held, but “he can hardly have realized the privileged position of the entire *caste* of Brahmans.”²⁷¹ Although the Greeks had some knowledge about Indian topography, their understanding of customs and the intricacies of the caste system was limited and often “mixed with fable.”²⁷²

Among the Greeks, Brahmans were equated with philosophers so that their position in society was seen as a profession rather than a status or caste. There was a constant filtering of Indian culture through a Greek lens and often a Greek mouth, pasting Greek terms onto a foreign system. Aristobolus calls them philosophers who differ in belief and practice (like the Greeks), and Nearchus refers to them as political advisors. The fact that Brahmans consist of an entire *caste* is not mentioned by those accompanying Alexander’s court in India, indicating there was not a total understanding of the system.²⁷³ Relative cultural ignorance upon arrival does not, however, excuse continued ignorance, especially after the introduction of Calanus, a Brahman from Taxila (Pakistan) to Alexander’s court in 326. Nevertheless, the linguistic and cultural translation of ideas proved a serious barrier in understanding the Brahmans’ social and religious functions and made total grasp of the caste system impossible.²⁷⁴ Because Indian customs were translated into Greek terms, often borrowed from philosophy, there was no real way to explain fully the untouchables, nor those who fell outside of the caste system. Slavery in India did not reflect slavery in Greece, but the word *doulos* was still

²⁷¹ Ibid., 95 (emphasis added).

²⁷² Worthington, *Alexander*, 197. See further: Worthington, *By the Spear*, 257-8.

²⁷³ Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 90-3.

²⁷⁴ Bosworth, “Calanus,” 197. See further on cultural barriers: Worthington, *By the Spear*, 239-41.

used, implying a cultural parallel.²⁷⁵ The difficulty of language and of filtering societal descriptions through a western or Hellenic lens is an age-old problem. At Taxila, the Greek historian Onesicritus was sent to interview the ascetics and had need of a string of three interpreters in order to do so.²⁷⁶ This detail gives us a new perspective on Alexander's supposed direct conversation with Calanus (Plut. *Alex.* 65.2-4; Arr. 7.2.1-4), which loses some of its potency when imagined occurring through a chain of other interpreters, though it is likely that the two did converse.

Calanus would have been a significant resource for Alexander's understanding of Brahmans, and he seems to have been a respected figure of the king's court.²⁷⁷ The presence of a Brahman in the Macedonian court begs the question why did Alexander and his men *not* come to grips with the basic tenets of the caste system and avoid the slaughter of Brahmans? If Calanus advised Alexander against the killing of Brahmans, "he was notably unsuccessful."²⁷⁸ However, it is possible that Calanus did not play the role of an informer, but chose to follow Alexander's court because he had become disillusioned about the Brahman way of life and wished to abandon the unappealing aspects of it. His conduct, upon careful inspection, includes proscribed Brahman behavior. For example, when Calanus decided to commit ritual suicide through self-immolation in the spring of 324 (Arr. 7.3.1-6), he exhorted the Macedonians to celebrate and "make that day one of pleasure and revelry (μεθυσθῆναι) with the king" (Plut. *Alex.*

²⁷⁵ Arrian, in a more direct misunderstanding, writes that there are *no* slaves in India (*Ind* 10.8), but Sanskrit texts prove this untrue. See J. Atkinson, ed. *Alexander the Great: The Anabasis and the Indica, notes* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2013), 327.

²⁷⁶ Strabo 15.1.64; see Stoneman, "India," 376.

²⁷⁷ For a more complete discussion of Calanus' position at court and relationship with Alexander and other Macedonians, notably Lysimachus, see Bosworth, "Calanus," 175-6.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 200. Bosworth also suggests that Calanus was potentially a cause of the Brahman revolts in 325, a line of argument which is not followed here.

69.3). Plutarch's attribution of the word μεθυσθῆναι to Calanus is specific; this term connotes drinking and is in direct violation of the Laws of Manu that govern Brahman behavior. If this suggests that Calanus had assimilated to the Macedonian court, then it might have further contributed to the Indian perception of the invaders as a morally corrosive entity and prompted Brahman-backed rebellion.²⁷⁹

However, this response may also be in part the result of religious factionalism. Despite the Laws of Manu, drinking was not wholly foreign to Brahmans, and in fact those of North West India were known to do so. While alcohol was tolerated there, the "purists" of the caste strongly objected to it, as evidenced by the deprecation of Calanus in the writer Megasthenes' *Indica*, written in Taxila soon after Alexander's campaign. According to Brahmans in Taxila, Calanus' own homeland, even Calanus' mode of death was evidence of intemperance and antithetical to Brahmanic dogma. Different sources depict his suicide and its place in Brahman regulations in very different lights, exemplifying a "fissure in belief and practice"²⁸⁰ by region. These differing religious perspectives, if Brahmans serve as advisors, could also yield varying systems of rule and responses. The difference in perceptions of Calanus in India, expressed in the works of Arrian, Megasthenes, and Onesicritus, is reason enough to see "animosity within the Brahman community," even if "it may be an overstatement to categorize the differences as a schism."²⁸¹ A consistency which may be drawn from this is that as in most widespread religions, sects, variations, and strong disagreements over key components occurred. Among the Brahmans, differing beliefs about the necessity of an ascetic life,

²⁷⁹ See Bosworth, "Calanus," 180; 200-1.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 180-2; quote on 182.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

proper modes of suicide, and importantly the consumption of wine contributed to the perception of Alexander's court and its effect on the behavior of Indian holy people and political notables.

Even provided a complete understanding of the dual religious and political roles of the Brahmans, Alexander would not have been able to appeal directly to Indian religious sentiment as he had done elsewhere. In 332 in Egypt, he showed great respect to the native religion of the Egyptians through his sacrifices to the sacred bull Apis (Arr. 3.1.4), and in Babylon he performed traditional sacrificial rituals among the Chaldeans and ordered the reconstruction of the temple of Bel (Arr. 3.16.4-5). In Egypt and Babylon, key regions of the Persian Empire, Alexander had the advantage of succeeding religious oppressors.²⁸² In India, long removed from any direct Persian control, Alexander's entry made *him* the oppressor, and a foreigner as well who could belong to no caste. Calanus' presence, being an unconventional example of a Brahman, may have promoted the alienation of more cohesive Brahman sects elsewhere.²⁸³

It is also possible that Alexander was less concerned with appealing to local cultural traditions in India because he did not intend to be perceived as an *Indian* ruler. He was the heir to the *Achaemenid* throne in Persia, the *Pharaonic* tradition in Egypt, but would, as Darius I had done, rule India from afar. He had no need to be perceived as

²⁸² In Memphis, Egypt, Alexander sacrificed to Apis (Arr. 3.1.4). Cambyses, a former Persian ruler of Egypt, had stabbed Apis and left him to bleed to death in his sanctuary and then whipped his sacred priests (Hdt. 3.28-29). In Babylon, Alexander "met with the Chaldeans and did everything they advised with regard to the Babylonian temples. He even sacrificed to Bel in the manner they prescribed" (Arr. 3.16.5). He also endeavored to reconstruct their temple to Bel, supposedly destroyed by Xerxes (Arr. 3.16.4; 7.17.2-3). Romm notes that the "Persians in general" were viewed as religious oppressors of the Babylonians (*Landmark Arrian*, 126). See further on Alexander and religion: Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 70-1; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 239-41.

²⁸³ Bosworth, "Calanus," 202.

“Indian” in part, and if he understood anything about the caste system, he would have known that he, being Macedonian, could not have been incorporated into it. Alexander never actively repressed the practice of religion. In India there was no destruction of shrines or condemnation of holy rituals, only of holy individuals involved in *political* resistance because of their combined religious-advisory role. Nor, however, did Alexander attempt to transform himself into an Indian king.

Thus it is possible that Alexander’s court and regional differences within the Brahman caste of West India promoted stronger struggle against the invaders. However, Alexander’s policy of no prisoners contributed heavily as well to the rise in violence in India.²⁸⁴ The killing of Brahmans occurs in the sources in three primary locations: the Malli, the Kingdom of Sambus, and that of Musicanus. On these three occasions, Alexander’s army slaughtered Brahmans not in a concerted effort of religious oppression, but with the desire to crush political resistance.

b. The Malli

On his return march from the Hyphasis, Alexander crossed through the Malli region again to secure his territory before leaving India.²⁸⁵ The Macedonian army had defeated Malli tribesmen earlier at Sangala in the summer of 326, at which time the Malli had united with their neighbors the Oxydracae and the Cathaiae (Arr. 5.22.1-3; see pp. 91-2).

²⁸⁴ According to Curtius 8.10.5 Alexander gave orders that his troops take no prisoners during the skirmishes along the Choes River, the army’s first engagement in India in 327.

²⁸⁵ For the Malli campaign see: Diod. 17.98-99; Curt. 9.4.26-9.5.30 (Curtius places the Malli invasion story among the Sudracae); Arr. 6.8-6.12.3. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 135-7. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 255-6.

When Alexander crossed through the southern Malli territory in the winter of 326/5, the Malli tribes' preparations to fight constituted rebellion.²⁸⁶ It is not surprising that Alexander wished to cut the Malli off from uniting with the Oxydracae, aware that the Indians would prefer a drawn-out siege to a pitched battle. Alexander did not want to risk another siege like Sangala, especially with his men having overtly expressed their desire to return home at the Hyphasis.²⁸⁷

A change occurred in the execution of Alexander's policy during the Malli campaign. Nominally maintaining his usual policy of leniency in the case of surrender and the use of force otherwise (Arr. 6.4.2), Alexander's rapidity and unexpected approach through the desert (6.6.3) took the Mallians by surprise, giving them no opportunity to submit or prepare against him, rendering his offer of clemency relatively meaningless. It should be noted however that Diodorus contradicts this, affirming that "[Alexander] found them mobilized in force, eighty thousand infantry, ten thousand cavalry, and seven hundred chariots" (17.98.1). However, Arrian's account is far more detailed (6.6.1-6.11.2), providing the accounts of several sieges. Diodorus mentions only the siege in which Alexander is injured, which suggests that the Malli of that particular fort were mobilized, but those of the first, unnamed fortress (mentioned only by Arrian) were not expecting Alexander. Arrian's close focus on the Macedonians' surprise attack strongly suggests that the first assault, at least, was unexpected.

²⁸⁶ Arrian tells us that the tribesmen had "sent away their wives and children to the strongest of their cities and intended to meet [Alexander] in battle" (6.4.3).

²⁸⁷ Arr. 5.27.4-5.28.5. Cf. Curt. 9.3.5-15. A discussion of how this affected their effectiveness in battle, especially as reported in Arrian, follows below.

The Malli of the first (unnamed) city were ambushed from the desert and cut down fleeing and unarmed, and Alexander and his men besieged the city thereafter, killing its 2,000 occupants after breaching the walls (Arr.6.6.3-6). A contingent of the Macedonian army under Perdiccas' leadership marched to a neighboring city to prevent the escape of civilians and their spreading word of Alexander's presence while extending the same harsh policy. Finding the city deserted, Perdiccas interpreted flight as rebellion, chased down refugees, and "killed everyone except for those who escaped into the marshes" (Arr. 6.6.6). This seems to be the beginning of the disintegration of Alexander's policy of clemency towards those who might surrender. Not only does he not give the first Mallian citadel the opportunity to do so, he stations his men about it to prevent anyone from escaping and warning other cities in the region of his approach.²⁸⁸ It seems logical that, if anything, Alexander considered these tribes already under his dominion, and they were not offered a chance at surrender because they had already made war against him at Sangala, and lost. That, combined with the mounting frustration of a harried campaign, demoralized soldiers, and the need to stabilize his territory before leaving it to Macedonian satraps, necessitated a fiercer policy which dramatically escalated the rate of violence in his campaign.

²⁸⁸ I rely for the Malli campaign heavily on Arrian because of the highly condensed version of it provided in Diodorus (17.98-99) that reduces all the Malli fortresses to the one in which Alexander received an arrow wound to his lung. Justin is equally brief, enumerating the Oxydracae forces and glossing over the campaign in favor of focusing on the wounding (12.9). Curtius provides numerical detail, but often lapses into discourse concerning the state of the men, and his assessments will be considered more extensively later (Curt. 9.4). Plutarch does not make extensive record of the campaign.

The cost of the Malli campaign rose with the destruction of Arrian's "city of Brahmans."²⁸⁹ This episode is somewhat different from its predecessors because it constituted not only an attack on a locality, but on culture, custom, and religion. Many Brahmans among the Malli were householders and even warriors, distinct from the *ksatrya* (warrior) caste, but unrecognizable as Brahmans to the Macedonians. It is very unlikely that the Macedonians would have recognized men working in the fields outside the city or bearing arms like soldiers as Brahmans.²⁹⁰ Such an error highlights the Greek tendency to view Brahmans by profession rather than by caste, a mistake which only heightened resistance of neighboring territories. Like Brahmans, farmers were also inviolable during wartime. We might imagine as well that some of the men Arrian describes as outside the city and unarmed were farmers; statistically that seems difficult to avoid, given the inherently agricultural nature of most pre-industrial cities. The Greek rules of war often involved ravaging fields and potentially attacking farmers.²⁹¹ In India, however, farmers and their lands were protected by law even during wartime. Diodorus tells us that they were "sacred and inviolable... while opposing sides kill each other in battle, they allow those at work on the farms to remain unhurt, acknowledging them as the common benefactors of everyone" (2.36.6-7).²⁹² Arrian explains along the same lines that "it is not lawful to touch these workers."²⁹³ Even if the sources do not explicitly

²⁸⁹ Arr. 6.7.4. It is questionable that an entire city would have been composed of only Brahmans. What is more likely is that that particular Malli city had an unusually high population of Brahmans and, more importantly, that they did not perform solely religious and advisory roles, but were nondescript inhabitants belonging to that caste. See Bosworth, "Calanus," 196.

²⁹⁰ Bosworth, Calanus, 196.

²⁹¹ V. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 12.

²⁹² Cf. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture*, 13.

²⁹³ Arr. *Ind.* 8.11.9 in Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture*, 13.

name farmers among those cut down in surprise by Alexander in the first Malli city, it stands to reason that they, of anyone, would be passing time beyond the city walls. The fact that “few were taken alive” (Arr. 6.7.6) after besieging the City of Brahmans is highly suggestive of the death of farmers as well. Macedonian disregard for the Indian rules of war made the campaign appear to be one of religious persecution, which only intensified conflict. How could a region risk surrender to a man who did not appear to follow the rules of war as Indians understood them? The Indians were likely as confounded by the Greek approach to war as Alexander’s army was by the Indian defense.

While cowing the enemy into surrender worked in the case of the unnamed West Indian city in 327, winning immediate capitulation from its neighbor Andaca (Arr. 4.23.4-5), Alexander did not see the same results on his return march West in 325. The slaughter of Brahman caste members strengthened local resistance by infusing it with a moral undertone. Alexander responded with brutally repressive measures, ordering Peithon and Demetrius to hunt out fleeing Malli from yet another (unnamed) region which he found abandoned. Finding “the largest city of the Malli” similarly deserted, Alexander pursued its inhabitants to the Hydraotes River (Ravi) where 50,000 Mallian troops had assembled to stave off the Macedonians’ advance. Likely hopeful of a pitched battle, Alexander and his men must have been greatly frustrated to see the army break up upon the arrival of Macedonian infantry, fleeing to the nearest citadel (likely Multan) and forcing another siege (Arr. 6.8.1-8). It is at this city where the greatest carnage took place and where Alexander receives his near-fatal lung wound. The wholesale slaughter of the

population is a result of Alexander's policy of no resistance,²⁹⁴ the degree of trouble this particular band of Malli caused the Macedonians who pursued them across the countryside, and perhaps most significantly, the troops' reaction to Alexander's injury.²⁹⁵ Once begun, such a policy can hardly be discarded; although the remaining Malli cities and the Oxydracae surrendered, the Brahmans of Musicanus' and Sambus' realm incited a revolt.

c. Musicanus and Sambus

In the spring of 325, the region of the petty king Musicanus had surrendered to Alexander, but Musicanus rebelled once the Macedonian army had passed further south.²⁹⁶ According to Arrian, the Brahmans of the region had catalyzed the revolt, and Alexander executed them alongside their king for treachery.²⁹⁷ The king's orders that Musicanus "be hanged in his own country *along with* the Brahmans who were responsible for the revolt" (Arr. 6.17.2) suggests that the Brahmans were perceived as political advisors rather than priests or philosophers like Calanus. Alexander's behavior was certainly not an attempt at the eradication of an entire caste, in which case we would probably hear of the hanging or execution of Brahman women as well.

Between the time of Musicanus' initial surrender and later revolt, Alexander entered the kingdom of Sambus, the "self-appointed satrap of the Mountain Indians"

²⁹⁴ Diod. 17.99.6; Curt. 9.5.20; Arr. 6.10.3-4.

²⁹⁵ This will be discussed at greater length below in section IV.e as part of a wider pattern in India.

²⁹⁶ These were a people, the Musicani, according to Curt. 9.8.16. For the campaign see: Diod. 17.102.5; Curt. 9.8.16; Arr. 6.17.1-2. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 137-8 and *Alexander and the East*, 95-6.

²⁹⁷ Arr. 6.17.2. Curtius at 9.8.10 says only that Alexander reduced the Musicani, and Diodorus at 17.102.5 says Alexander killed Musicanus the first time he entered the territory.

(Arr. 6.16.3).²⁹⁸ According to Arrian, Sambus' family and capital Sindimana surrendered after the king fled, and there is no record of harm coming to it specifically. At least one city in the region, Harmatelia, was violently brought to submission.²⁹⁹ Harmatelia had revolted under the prompting of Brahmins, and these "wise men among the Indians" were executed for their instigation of rebellion (Arr. 6.16.5). Cleitarchus' report, used by Diodorus and Curtius, that 80,000 Indians were slain during the campaign suggests that more than one city offered resistance, and Arrian likely glossed the campaign by mentioning the most important.³⁰⁰ The figure seems an exaggeration,³⁰¹ but it does emphasize the widespread struggle throughout the region, and the actual death toll was undoubtedly very high. Revolts beyond Harmatelia, where the ruling family had surrendered, were likely also ignited by Brahmins. The treatment of Brahmins was brutal because of the widespread political resistance in the region, and Alexander's policy of no resistance meant, once again, persistent conquest. Diodorus explains that when the Brahmins did surrender (once again, suggesting they were the perpetrators of the resistance), they appeared to the king with branches in their hands and Alexander made terms, only "punishing the most guilty."³⁰² In the case of Porticanus' kingdom in the Indus Valley (325), any widespread slaughter beyond the king's citadel was cut short by

²⁹⁸ For Sambus see: Diod. 17.102.6-7; Plut. *Alex.* 64.1; Curt. 9.8.13-16; Arr. 6.16.3-5; Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 94-5.

²⁹⁹ Diodorus reports most cities were razed, their populations enslaved or killed (17.102.6). On the name Harmatelia: Diod. 17.103.5. Arrian does not name the city.

³⁰⁰ Diod. 17.102; Curt. 9.8.15; Arr. 6.16.3-5.

³⁰¹ Cf. Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 253.

³⁰² Diod. 17.102.7. Plutarch's account mentions nothing of execution. It focuses on the questioning of the gymnosophists occurs in Sambus' realm, what he calls the "Sabbas revolt," but the questioning turns philosophical and seems to have little to do with any relevant inquiries Alexander might have had for the men. The fact that Plutarch has the incident preceding Alexander's entry into Taxila and echoing themes of apotheosis makes the incident an unlikely anecdote (Plut. *Alex.* 64.1-5).

immediate capitulation in the surrounding region.³⁰³ Although there were undoubtedly Brahmans dwelling among the Praesti of Porticanus' realm, no mention is made of their execution because they do not appear to have initiated prolonged revolt, indicating that the ongoing brutality was the result not of any religious persecution, but the same, if increasingly impatient, policy against opposition.

Heavy fighting at the end of Alexander's campaign was in part the result of policy. The need to leave West Indian territory secured under the satrap Peithon meant weeding out dissent and potential revolts before departing with his army.³⁰⁴ His error in failing to recognize warriors and land-holders as Brahmans and then killing a number of them in Malli set off a chain reaction of resistance that Arrian glosses as an Indian desire for independence, but in reality was likely in large part furious defiance on moral and religious grounds. This spread south faster than Alexander's army could travel,³⁰⁵ resulting in passionate opposition to and terror of an individual who did not feel bound by Indian religious and cultural law. Alexander's entry into India and tendency to operate according to the western rules of war damaged his ability to win the easy surrender of many cities, especially those heavily dominated by Brahman advisors. As a result, the degree of violence necessary to subdue the region, most especially that below the confluence of the Indus and Hyphasis, steepened considerably.

³⁰³ Arrian calls Porticanus Oxycanus, and although his, Diodorus', and Curtius' accounts of the king's death vary slightly, none of them record an extensive slaughter. Diod. 17.102.5; Curt. 9.8.11-13; Arr. 6.16.1-2.

³⁰⁴ A.B. Bosworth, "The Indian Satrapies Under Alexander the Great," *Antichthon* 17 (1983): 37. [Reprinted in *Alexander the Great: A Reader* (ed) I. Worthington (New York: Routledge, 2012), 237-44.]

³⁰⁵ Arrian hints at evidence of how news outpaced the Macedonian army in his discussion of the ruler of Patala's surrender to Alexander. After the execution of Musicanus, the ruler of Patala, in the Indus Delta, offered surrender to Alexander in advance, clearly having received word both of his presence and, very likely, of Musicanus' and his Brahmans' fates (Arr. 6.17.2-3). See also Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 95-7.

V. War Weariness and Violence

While Alexander's decisions affected the casualty rate, determining when and whether to assault a city, Alexander himself was not singularly responsible for every death in his campaign. There had to have been willingness among his men, too, to carry out such wholesale slaughter. The experience of Alexander's soldiers is difficult to reconstruct, but Coenus' speech at the Hyphasis, a much-contested passage of Curtius and Arrian, provides us with potential insight into the worries of the Macedonians. Glimpses of the concerns of generals, like Craterus' harangue of Alexander after Mallia in Curtius, are also invaluable; even though their words are doubtless inventions of the historian often couched in elegant phrasing, it is possible to understand the themes or "gist" of the speeches as true.³⁰⁶ Coenus' speech, made on behalf of the army, is invaluable because it expounds reasons for the men's exhaustion, frustration, and

³⁰⁶ Although there is no way to prove the veracity or falsity of the speech, it is the only direct and substantial passage detailing the mindset of a non-general and cannot be cast aside based merely upon suspicion. In their works on Alexander, Bosworth, Heckel, and Worthington all give a nod to the speech without necessarily dissecting it, and for the sake of this work I intend to treat it with the understanding that the message and themes, although not the rhetoric and syntax, are historical. See Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 133; Heckel, *Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 123; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 252-3.

In Bosworth's assessment, the speeches Arrian gives both Alexander and Coenus at Hyphasis are "mostly elaborate and empty rhetoric" (Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 344), and Curtius' version is much the same; both authors use the occasion to consider Alexander's imperialism, a common Roman rhetorical topos. While the rhetoric cannot be given credit as historical and any firm source for Arrian's version of the speech is denied by Bosworth, that does not mean that the details woven into Coenus' reply concerning life in the Macedonian army are assuredly false.

Baynham, in her discussion of Curtius' use of speeches, emphasizes that although theory and practice do not always match up, it was expected that "a *verus historicus* should tell the truth, and this convention extended to the accurate reporting of speeches" (Baynham, *Alexander the Great: The Unique History of Quintus Curtius* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998], 46). When Curtius uses rhetoric to enhance, alter, or fabricate entirely what was initially said, he does not necessarily destroy or obscure the gist of what was in the original source. See further Baynham, *Alexander*, 46-56.

diminished morale, which arguably contribute to their haste and brutality in war, linked to their fierce desire to return home. Alexander's tendency to put himself more directly in harm's way and the need to protect him and their passage home leads the army to sporadic bouts of almost frenzied violence. In addition, the unique physical landscape of India—the flora and fauna and weather—made for a cruel extended campaign.

Ascribing the increase in violence in India to war-weariness is not an unjust assessment when the condition is parsed beyond the simple meaning of exhaustion. While terms like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are too culturally specific to superimpose upon the ancient world,³⁰⁷ it is reasonable that some human responses to war have remained unchanged between antiquity and modernity. Every army has a breaking point, a degree of frustration and exhaustion beyond which nothing further can be endured. Alexander's army reached that point at the Hyphasis.

a. Endless Sieges and the Unfair Fight

Faced with unending sieges which, as discussed above, ran contrary to war as they understood and took pride in it, the Macedonians' motivation and sense of purpose had become considerably corroded. By the Hyphasis, Alexander's men had travelled over

³⁰⁷ Tritle, *From Melos To My Lai*, 55-60, argues that the Spartan Clearchus, as a *philopolemos*, a "lover of war," suffered from PTSD and that "little separates Clearchus from those soldiers [Tritle] knew in Vietnam" (55). Although his use of Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* assessment of "psychological arousal" has its roots in biology and neuroscience which, arguably, has not much altered in the course of human evolution between Alexander's day and the present, I hesitate to employ culturally and chronologically specific terms like PTSD when describing the condition of soldiers in antiquity. I do not, however, find that parallels between ancient warfare and American experiences in Vietnam (especially considering the clash of western and guerilla warfare) are entirely unwarranted. Cf. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 283-8.

11,250 miles with him,³⁰⁸ and the clear purpose with which they set out, to bring down the Persian Empire, had been long since accomplished. India, however, seemed to have no end, and the perpetual prosecution of sieges made the army vulnerable. Coenus explains: “Look at our bodies, debilitated, pierced with all those wounds, decaying with all their scars” (Curt. 9.3.10)! The Macedonians had accumulated a number of injuries, and the chance of receiving an incapacitating wound put their hopes of returning home at risk.

The disdained use of distanced fighting in India demoralized soldiers and seemed to deprive them of a “fair” fight.³⁰⁹ Curtius emphasizes just such mentality during the crossing of the Hydraotes (cf. Sangala pp. 91-2); the Indians would fight from chariots and at a distance, refusing to stand and conduct battle in such a way as to lead to an *othismos*: “At first this strange style of combat terrified the Macedonians, who were sustaining wounds at long range, but their fear was soon replaced by contempt for such undisciplined tactics.”³¹⁰ The Indians’ use of poison-tipped arrows threatened an agonizing and undignified death, perhaps from an enemy one never lays eyes upon.

³⁰⁸ Wilcken, *Alexander*, 186.

³⁰⁹ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 14-16. For a discussion of “unfair” siege weapons and the moral ambiguity that surrounded it even as sieges became more common, see Adrienne Mayor, *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows & Scorpion Bombs* (Woodstock: Overlook, 2003), 30-31.

³¹⁰ Curt. 9.1.16. Even the Indians’ manner of fighting pitched battle, to which the Macedonians were accustomed, proved initially terrifying because of their use of war elephants. Although elephants had appeared as early as Gaugamela (Arr.3.8.6), there were reportedly only fifteen, a small portion of the Persian enemy. The Battle of the Hydaspes was the Macedonians’ first thorough exposure to elephants in battle, whose strange appearance unnerved not only the troops, but terrified the horses (Arr. 5.10.1-2). Just as facing elephants, a new weapon and vehicle of war, proved terrifying, so arguably did the sly and evasive tactics of the Indians that made victory difficult to distinguish.

Death by the thrust of a spear or blow of a club could be honorable, but to die miserably because of a small nick from a toxic arrow is another thing entirely,³¹¹ as:

“When a man was wounded, the body became numb immediately and then sharp pains followed, and convulsions and shivering shook the whole frame. The skin became cold and livid and bile appeared in the vomit, while a black froth was exuded from the wound and gangrene set in. As this spread quickly and overran to the vital parts of the body, it brought a horrible death to the victim” (Diod. 17.103.5).

Mayor has identified the poison as Russel’s viper venom based on physical reactions to the toxin. Although cobras dwell in India as well and are commonly thought the source of such poisons, a cobra’s venom kills quickly by asphyxiation and does not produce the grotesque spectacle which a viper’s venom might; the effects of the poison are as important as their ultimate conclusion, as they were undoubtedly used for psychological as well as physical attacks.³¹² Foreknowledge of a city’s ghastly armory might dissuade attackers, and as Mayor points out, it is likely for this reason that the Scythians were so free with the recipe for their own lethal concoction. Facing such a threat, it is not difficult to see how the Macedonians’ contempt for a perceived cowardly fighting style could translate easily into a surge in violence, a combination of desperation to push past yet another capture and to lash out against those who threatened inglorious death. Massacres on citadel occupants after a siege were as much pre-emptive against later rebellion as they were punitive.

³¹¹ Mayor, *Greek Fire*, 61. Mayor suggests that this sort of suffering might bring to mind the sad fate of Philoctetes, an Achaean abandoned by his comrades en route to Troy when he was accidentally wounded by one of Heracles’ poison arrows, resulting in an infected injury that refused to close and pained him throughout the war. Parallels with Homer continue in Alexander’s constant sieges in India, but the Indians were not fighting Homerically. Rather than sallying forth to fight before the city walls in hand-to-hand combat, Indians found it more effective to engage in combat from a distance.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 90.

b. The Importance of Pitched Battles

The importance of pitched battle to the morale of the army is highlighted by Alexander celebrating his victory at the Hydaspes with a competition in athletics and horsemanship at the river (Arr. 5.20.1). His victory over Porus and his elephant-mounted army was a considerable feat, to which Arrian devotes more detail than any other single event,³¹³ including the sieges of Malli where Alexander was almost fatally injured. In addition, Alexander founded two cities: Nicaea (victory city) and Bucephala (Jhelum), honoring Bucephalus who died of battle injuries.³¹⁴ He also had elephant medallions to memorialize the Hydaspes victory, which had on the reverse a soldier on horseback (likely Alexander) in *monomachia* against a man mounted on an elephant. The medallions appear to memorialize the Macedonian success against an Indian king's army of elephants, depicting on the reverse a soldier on horseback (Alexander) in *monomachia* against a man mounted on an elephant.³¹⁵ It is significant that of the many sieges and skirmishes which the Macedonians fought in India, only the *battle* was used as a source

³¹³ The account of the Hydaspes and its aftermath lasts in Arrian from 5.8.4-5.20.4. Even the account of the unnamed Mallian fortress where Alexander was injured endures only from 6.8.1-6.12.3. This might suggest that greater detail of the land battle was available in the original sources, Ptolemy's, Aristoboulos', or that Arrian, having inherited the western tradition of war, assumed his audience would be more interested in the glory of a pitched battle, rather than the details of a siege. Diodorus too gives it a comparatively extensive description, from 17.87-17.89.4, larger than the siege of Aornus and its accompanying legends (17.85-17.86.3).

³¹⁴ Plut. *Alex.* 61. Interestingly, Hamilton contends that Bucephalus may well have died of old age, supporting the tradition that he was 30 years old (Hamilton, *Commentary*, 169).

³¹⁵ See Bosworth *Conquest and Empire*, 130; Holt, *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 216; Heckel *Conquests of Alexander the Great* 124-5; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 249.

For competing theories and thorough analysis see Frank Holt, *Elephant Medallions*. Holt accepts the scholarly consensus that the figure with a thunderbolt on the reverse represents Alexander, but he discards the notion, and rightly I think, that the medallions might represent Alexander's other battle against elephants at Gaugamela (68-92).

of victory propaganda by the king.³¹⁶ After considering the unusual markings and weights of the coins as well as their relative rarity, Holt concludes that they were not currency but commemorative coins awarded to Alexander's men a combination of payment and trophy.³¹⁷ Holt posits that the Alexander *keranophoros* figure on the reverse of the medallion symbolized divine leadership and Alexander's control of the weather, which seems extreme. However, his emphasis on the unusual lack of label does lead one to think that the medallions were intended for those who could pick up on contextual clues because of their own experience.³¹⁸ Later, Alexander and the elephant came to serve as an emblem of the king's martial prowess and the wide-reaching extent of his empire, and he was portrayed on coinage wearing the scalp of an elephant by Ptolemy I.³¹⁹ Alexander and the Macedonians marched farther than Dionysus into India, capturing the legendary Rock of Aornus and spending most of their battle hours prosecuting sieges. The Battle of the Hydaspes was arguably the most momentous of their undertakings in India.³²⁰ It

³¹⁶ Further, Bosworth notes that the post-Hydaspes victory celebrations are the only ones mentioned in Arrian's entire account (Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 316). While from a modern perspective Gaugamela appears by far the most significant battle, "what really matters is the mindset of Alexander and his troops" (Holt, *Elephant Medallions*, 77), and they would have had need of reveling in a traditional victory with a clear-cut outcome and security between the Hydaspes and Acesines.

³¹⁷ For scholarship against this point of view, see Worthington, *By the Spear*, 249 n.32.

³¹⁸ Holt, *Elephant Medallions*, 146-150. See chapter 7 especially. Regarding the reverse of the medallion, which shows Alexander in battle gear and *chlamys* being crowned by Nike and wielding a thunderbolt, Holt asserts that Alexander takes credit through the coins for the lightning storm that covered the Macedonians' crossing and helped to win the battle (153). He argues that the king is "highlight[ing] his supernatural leadership" by "remind[ing] men that have grown wearied and worried that he has special powers to exercise on their behalf" (155). While I find his argument regarding the purpose of the medallions particularly compelling, asserting that divine attributes in art mean to indicate divine powers in life seems far-fetched.

³¹⁹ Silver tetradrachm minted by Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt. Alexander/Zeus Ca. 321-315 B.C. Private collection. Out of A. Stewart *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), Fig. 77.

³²⁰ Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 126-30. Worthington, *By the Spear*, 243-50.

allowed the Macedonians to perform in battle as they were accustomed and for a shorter duration, and to risk a glorious death in hand to hand combat.

c. A Disheartened Army

The army's constant occupation with sieges saw a mounting death toll as it progressed through India. The men were eager to return home, no longer in possession of "the bodily vigor they once had, while their spirits h[ad] sunk even further" (Arr. 5.27.6). The army's disheartened state was in part due to the condition of its armor. At the Hyphasis, Coenus declared, "Our weapons are already blunt, our armor is wearing out...How many of us have cuirasses? Who owns a horse?" (Curt. 9.3.10-11). The persistent monsoon rains that plagued the Macedonians for seventy days wore out their armor, which would have provided a daily visual reminder of the duration and difficulties of the army's eight year (334-326) campaign.³²¹ Diodorus notes that those horses present had hooves "worn thin by steady marching" (Diod. 17.94.2) and likewise emphasizes the sorry state of the troops' armor.³²² It is reasonable to assume that a large part of the reason for the army's refusal to march further stemmed from a feeling of exposure. Coenus asked his king, "Will you expose this fine army naked to wild beasts" (Curt. 9.3.12)? Not only were the Macedonians insecure in their inability to make use of the

³²¹ Diod. 17.94.3. For a summary of the difficulties of the Indian campaign see Worthington, *By the Spear*, 251-3. As Bosworth notes, Arrian curiously leaves out climate as a factor in his synopsis of Macedonian complaints (Arr. 5.25.2; Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 343), perhaps assuming it was understood under the general heading of "toils and dangers" (Arr. 5.25.5).

³²² Hammond rejects this description of the monsoon's effect on metal and morale as "an imaginative picture by Cleitarchus" (Hammond, *Three Historians*, 63. I find Bosworth's emphasis of the rain's crucial role in the deterioration of troop enthusiasm the more logical assessment (Bosworth, *Commentary 2*, 343).

phalanx formation because of siege warfare, their armor and weapons appeared to be falling apart on them.

A similar effect can be seen today in war. In 2004, the process of supplying U.S. soldiers with ceramic-plated body armor stalled significantly, with the result that almost a fourth of American troops in Iraq were without armor. In order to avoid the risk of passing months with incomplete or substandard protection, many soldiers and their families invested in their own armor, buying Kevlar vests independently. The terror a state of improper protection produced among present-day soldiers, and the distrust of the government and military among families, echo some of the themes in Coenus' speech millennia earlier.³²³

Unlike today, however, in antiquity armor was highly individualized, an extension of personal identity and a great source of pride. Vase paintings suggest uniquely-styled helmets, individually patterned breastplates, and other personal modifications that lend a soldier a sense of individuality,³²⁴ a characteristic discouraged in modern military practice. Although Alexander supplied his men with arms, many of them likely marched out in their own, either custom-made or inherited, and felt the loss of it. Additionally, Coenus pointed out that not only was their armor decaying, but also that “we put on Persian dress because our own cannot be brought out to us—we have stooped to wearing the clothes of foreigners” (Curt. 9.3.10)! The wearing out of the troops' clothing likely did occur and may have been hastened by the especially damp conditions of India's

³²³ The Associated Press, “Soldiers in Iraq Still Buying their own Body Armor,” *USA Today*, March 26, 2004, accessed November 20, 2013, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-03-26-body-armor_x.htm.

³²⁴ See Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 55-8.

monsoon season. In India cotton, not wool, would have been available for the production of clothing, and cotton is generally a thinner, lighter material that would not have held up well underneath armor.³²⁵ The psychological effect of marching and fighting in clothing that is not one's own, of dressing like a foreigner while traveling through foreign lands in antiquity, cannot be underestimated. To redress the men's grievances and mood, Alexander ordered 25,000 sets of armor, finely-wrought and "emblazoned with gold and silver" (Curt. 9.3.21), after he ended the mutiny. Further, in perhaps a symbolic attempt at destroying trepidation and disheartenment, he ordered all the old armor burned (Curt. 9.3.22).

But the damage had been done. The extreme cultural seclusion experienced in India and the forced change in the troops' behavior and lifestyle distanced them from their identity, making behavior that would not in most cases have been possible—the easy slaughter of unarmed men and the preference for killing, rather than enslaving, civilians—acceptable.³²⁶ They were not fighting in the Greek way because they were not fighting a Greek war. Additionally, the army was not fighting Greeks or a traditional Greek enemy. The Indians were culturally and ethnically distinct, but it is not viable that the increased carnage in India is the result of the Indians' physical appearance or the fact that they appeared darker-skinned than the Macedonians, hence it was not an issue of

³²⁵ Cf. Hdt. 3.105, Arr. Ind. 16.1. Wool or linen that comes from trees undoubtedly refers to Indian cotton, of the genus *Ceiba*.

³²⁶ Cf. Arr. 6.6.3-6. On the return from Hyphasis, when the Malli cities stood as one of the final barriers between the troops and a return to normalcy, the Macedonians did not hesitate to cut men down in the fields and pursue them as far as the marshes and appeared to have no interest in taking prisoners. The general Peithon's detachment only bothered to enslave those "who had not perished in the initial assault" and had escaped to a smaller refuge, which Peithon also took (Arr 6.7.3).

race.³²⁷ Rather, the Greeks operated by the recognition of *ethnos*, of which physical characteristics were only a small part, and not even consistent markers. “Common traits,” according to Konstan, who gives the example of red-haired Thracian slaves, “do not constitute an ethnic self-awareness.”³²⁸ Ethnicity is constructed based on a number of shared characteristics, and it is a “reactive phenomenon” that arises in the presence of an “other.”³²⁹

Although Indians would certainly have been recognized as “other,” so too would have been the Egyptians, Persians, Medians, Bactrians, and Sogdians, and closer to home the Thracians and European Scythians. The differing treatment of Indians and the violence used against them cannot be solely explained by their physical “otherness,” because the same behavior does not occur throughout the entirety of Alexander’s campaign. The possibility that the Indians exhibited a greater degree of “otherness” seems also unlikely, given Arrian’s easy comparison of them to two other peoples, the Ethiopians and the Egyptians.³³⁰ How could the Indians be unique in meriting this violence because they appeared somehow more foreign than any other peoples? It seems more likely that the altered nature of war, the Macedonians’ being away from their

³²⁷ It is a difficult concept to discuss because of how greatly it affects modern scholarship. Kathleen Brown posits that the modern construct of race which we know and make use of today is a recent occurrence, distinct from any concept of physical difference in the pre-modern periods. Even English travelers of the late 1500s evaluated African culture based on a variety of factors, mentioning but not consistently focusing on physical appearances. See Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 107-136.

³²⁸ D. Konstan, “To Hellenikon Ethnos: Ethnicity and the Construction of Ancient Greek Identity” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. I. Malkin, (Harvard: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001), 30.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ Consider Arrian’s description of them in the *Indica*: “There is no great difference either in the appearance of the human inhabitants of India and Ethiopia. The Southern Indians are more like the Ethiopians in the black color of their skin and hair, though they are not as snub-nosed or woolly-haired as the Ethiopians: the Indians more to the North have a great resemblance to the Egyptians” (Arr. *Ind.* 6.9).

homeland for so long, and sheer exhausted, rather than a loathing of a foreign people, inspired the rise in violence.

d. The Psychology of War-Weariness

While “war-weariness” is an oversimplified term to describe a very complex set of emotions and reactions, it seems the most compact way of communicating the physical, spiritual, and psychological exhaustion expressed at the Hyphasis and enacted throughout Alexander’s many sieges. Curtius has Alexander assume the men’s hesitation is out of fear; the king encourages them and reminds them of past braveries, brushing aside worries over the size of armies in the Nanda kingdom beyond the Hyphasis or the number of elephants they might have (Curt. 9.2.19-26). However, Coenus readily and directly corrects him: “If we are going on, we shall follow you...even though we be unarmed, naked and exhausted.” Coenus speaks not in anger or disloyalty, but his words are “wrung out...by dire necessity” (Curt. 9.3.5-6).

In Arrian’s version of the speech, slightly different in rhetoric but thematically the same, Coenus goes a step further. He asks, “Do not lead [the men] onward now against their will! For you may find that unwilling combatants will not prove equally formidable in the field” (5.27.7). Romm criticizes Arrian’s rhetoric in both Alexander and Coenus’ speeches, suggesting that it is “ill-fitting” because “both king and officer knew well that the army’s long experience of battle was its greatest asset.”³³¹ This is without a doubt the

³³¹ Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 231. Cf. A.B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

truth, however Arrian, who would have commanded his own legion before achieving governorship of Cappadocia,³³² would also be well aware that even the best-trained troops cannot be as enduring as Alexander's siege equipment. There is a point wherein the fighting experience of men can no longer counterbalance their exhausted morale and unwillingness to combat the enemy. According to Arrian, Coenus argued that fresh recruits would serve Alexander better,³³³ understanding that morale was as important to an army's success as its skill.³³⁴ According to Curtius, Coenus made a similar argument: "[Your plans are] a program appropriate to your spirit, but beyond ours. For your valor will ever be on the increase, but our energy is already running out" (9.2.9).

The men's exhaustion and the brutal extremes of the war have changed them, as extensive battle does. Many of those with Alexander in India were veterans (Arr. 5.17.4), having crossed the Hellespont with him eight years prior in 334. The constant exposure to combat and violent death on this extended campaign was "without parallel before Alexander."³³⁵ Before Alexander, sustained continuous conflict was unusual. The nearest parallel is Xenophon's report of seven days of constant fighting through the land of the Carduchians,³³⁶ hardly comparable to Alexander's veterans' long records. Hanson notes that during the Classical Period, the average man would not have spent an extensive

³³² J. Atkinson, introduction to *Arrian: Alexander the Great* trans. M. Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xv-xvi.

³³³ Arr. 5.27.7-8. As Bosworth notes, Arrian's Coenus is hinting not at further campaigning in India, but Alexander's plans to expand his empire and potentially the circumnavigation of Africa (Bosworth, Commentary, 353-4).

³³⁴ Cf. Romm, *Landmark Arrian*, 231, who calls Coenus' rhetoric (Arr. 5.27.7-8) "artificial" and "ill-fitting" because the army's skill and experience was a greater advantage than Alexander would find in fresh recruits. This may be so, but Coenus' argument hinges on the necessity of an army's willingness to continue, and his rhetoric is very suitable.

³³⁵ Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 25.

³³⁶ Xen. *Anab.* 4.3.2. Cf. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 26.

amount of time fighting in battle, “not even comparable to one week of combat for an infantryman on patrol in Vietnam.”³³⁷ Alexander’s mode of war, on the other hand, was characterized by almost constant fighting. Even if his men only fought four major pitched battles, the bloody skirmishes and ambushes in Bactria, followed by constant sieges in India, would have been severely exhausting.³³⁸ The seemingly endless campaign in India exacerbated the naturally brutal tendencies of the Greek way of war (see pp. 17-18). However, the unbroken campaigning in India resulted in violence on a regular basis, whereas incidents of *andrapodismos* in earlier Greek warfare, like the Peloponnesian War, stood out as watersheds and occurred comparatively infrequently. The Macedonian army’s desire to return home after it turned westward at the Hyphasis rendered it more destructive because of haste.³³⁹

Another modern comparison (considering testimony, rather than attempting any technical psychological evaluation) is a speech delivered by John Kerry in 1971, when he was the spokesperson for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Kerry appealed to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to end the campaign by speaking, like Coenus did, on behalf of the soldiers he represented. The U.S. had experienced only devastating failure in Vietnam, but its soldiers underwent a similar experience after prolonged exposure to violence. Kerry tells the committee that:

³³⁷ Hanson, *Western way of War*, 220.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 191. If the tension of the phalanx battle proved exhausting, multi-day, back-to-back sieges would have worn patience and endurance thin among the Macedonians.

³³⁹ I agree with Bosworth only to a certain degree, and I will not argue that Alexander “gloried in battle and killing” to explain the rise of violence in India. It is impossible that Alexander was the only one to effect any serious damage, even if Bosworth has him “in the midst” of a fight in every place “where two or three were gathered in his name” (Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 28). The troops, too, contributed to this slaughter, and I do not find that the capacity for massacre originates in a personality defect or nuance of either commander or army, but that a compilation of circumstances facilitated this willingness to kill freely as well as the Greek legacy of war, which often permitted it.

“Several months ago...over 150 honorably discharged, and many very highly decorated, veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia. These were not isolated incidents, but crimes committed on a day to day basis with full awareness of officers at all levels of command.”³⁴⁰

These soldiers were not green recruits, but, as Kerry pointed out, they were experienced enough to have been “highly decorated,” negating the explanation that they had gone mad with bloodlust or did not know how to conduct themselves in war. Kerry goes into greater detail about the atrocities in Vietnam than Arrian and Diodorus do in the sieges of the Malli, but a similar trend of behavior is recognizable in Alexander and his men.

“[The veterans] told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads...randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war...”³⁴¹

Kerry explains the dangerous effects of sustained exposure to bloodshed, of how men are “taught to deal and to trade in violence” and “accepted very coolly a My Lai.”³⁴² He discusses this in terms of morality, which are applicable to modern history, but hardly to ancient. It is for this reason that I hesitate to carry the parallel further, understanding that morality is a social construct which is necessarily different across time and space.

³⁴⁰ John Kerry, “Vietnam Veterans Against the War Testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee” In *The Movements of the New Left 1950-1975*, Van Gosse (ed), (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin’s, 2004), 166.

³⁴¹ Kerry, VVAW, 166.

³⁴² Ibid., 168.

Perceptions of war, too, have decidedly changed, and as Hanson notes, the percentage of Americans who have served in war is a minute fraction compared to the percentage of ancient Greeks. Nevertheless, the behavior of men in foreign territory (perhaps even in familiar territory, if one looks to the American Civil War), after prolonged exposure to and involvement in violent acts, cannot but alter their behavior. It was not merely their desire to return home that led the Macedonians to the enraged massacre of Indian civilians after prosecuting a difficult siege—indeed, if it were, violence would have tapered off after the Hyphasis, not increased—but a combination of concerns. Their disintegrating morale and armor, cultural isolation and a foreign, repetitive mode of fighting, and no end to the campaign in sight, led the soldiers’ aggravation to seek an outlet through violence. Knowing that they were returning west was not sufficient and did not immediately ameliorate the situation for the Macedonians. Rather, tension in the army became more noticeable *after* the Hyphasis due to rising anxiety concerning Alexander’s increasingly risky behavior in battle,³⁴³ and in fact some of the worst slaughters enacted against the Indians were in response to fear for the king’s welfare.

e. Alexander’s Wounds

In Greek war, it was necessary for a king or general to be seen fighting in the front ranks.³⁴⁴ A general’s “magnet” presence was key to soldiers’ willingness to fight,

³⁴³ Cf. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 59. I find suggesting that “Alexander’s entire career could thus be represented as a series of acts of irresponsibility” is an overstatement, but Bosworth does emphasize the “chronic anxiety” Alexander’s behavior caused his men.

³⁴⁴ Hanson, *Western Way of War*, 107.

and a king's presence would be especially potent, as strong leadership was imperative to overcoming the "enormous physical and psychological pressures of battle."³⁴⁵

Alexander's position was difficult because he was both *strategos* and *basileus*, and balancing the two roles was essential. To direct from behind was the duty of neither general nor king, but Alexander's risk taking, especially at Malli, jeopardized his kingdom and the good order of his army. However, this is part and parcel of the king-general tradition of Macedonia. As Worthington notes, Philip himself had a long list of brave battle exploits tied in with his role as king. Philip "never forgot what his duties as a king were" and "for the pursuit of his own glory and especially for that of his kingdom" Philip "lost an eye, shattered a collarbone, and suffered a near fatal wound that maimed a leg and made him limp for the rest of his life" with no reluctance.³⁴⁶ This kingly practice of suffering with one's men and asking nothing of them one would not do oneself has substantial precedent in Macedonia, though to note, the difference between Philip's risk taking and Alexander's was the presence of an *heir*. Philip had Alexander (and Arrhidaeus), but Alexander in the land of the Malli had no one.

Not all of the wounds Alexander incurred were serious or the product of any excessively risky behavior, but they did sometimes contribute to a violent reaction in his men. Along the River Choes, Alexander was shot in his shoulder (Arr. 4.23.3), at Massaga, he was struck in the ankle with an arrow (Arr. 4.26.4), at the Hydaspes possibly

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 109; 116.

³⁴⁶ I. Worthington, "'Worldwide Empire' versus 'Glorious Enterprise': Diodorus and Justin on Philip II and Alexander the Great" In *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, I. Worthington (ed) (London: Routledge, 2012), 406. Additionally, as Riginos points out, the record of Philip's war injuries has been muddied by exaggeration and the incorporation of mythic elements, giving wounds an emblematic status that render them more susceptible to invention. It is possible that some of Alexander's wounds, too, might not be historical. See A. Riginos, "The Wounding of Philip II of Macedon: Fact and Fabrication" *JHS* 114 (1994): 103-119.

wounded by Porus' son,³⁴⁷ and at the siege of the Malli he was wounded almost fatally in the chest (Arr. 6.10.1-2). At a siege along the River Choes in 427, Alexander's army hastened after escaping Indians because it was enraged over the king's wound.³⁴⁸ At Malli, the army believed Alexander dead and massacred the entire population in revenge (Arr. 6.10.3-6.11.1) This latter example emphasizes both the tension of the army regarding Alexander's well-being as well as its utter exhaustion and demoralization, which was ostensibly the cause for the king's self-endangerment.

In the territory of the Malli, which lays at the confluence of the Hydaspes and Hydraotes, Alexander and his army were met with strong resistance in 325. After repelling 50,000 enemy troops, the Macedonian army pursued them to nearby strongholds (Arr. 6.8.6-8). While besieging these strongholds, Alexander supposedly observed his men hesitating to attack. In response, Arrian says that the king αὐτός δέ προσέβαλλεν τῷ τείχει (6.6.4) (attacked the wall *himself*) in order to instill shame in the soldiers for their reticence.³⁴⁹ On the following day at the second siege in Malli, Arrian reported that “suspecting that the Macedonians bringing the ladders were shirking (βλακεύειν), Alexander snatched a ladder from one of them...and ascended it himself” (Arr. 6.9.3). In this case, Alexander's haste had almost deadly results, but in both instances we see a Macedonian hesitance to advance and risk injury or death now that a return home was guaranteed, or perhaps only Alexander's *perception* that they were

³⁴⁷ Arr. 5.14.4. Arrian comments that Alexander's wound is not corroborated by Ptolemy's account, and the type of wound Alexander received is not recorded. See Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 289 for discussion.

³⁴⁸ Arr. 4.23.5. Also due to the fact that the soldiers had been ordered to take no prisoners. Cf. Bosworth, *Commentary* 2, 158.

³⁴⁹ There is perhaps an earlier sense of this. Plutarch reports that Alexander's men were hesitant to advance into Nysa because of the deep river that surrounded it, using the word ὀκνοῦντων, which has the sense of “to shrink from” (Plut. *Alex.* 58.4). We see the same emphasis on Alexander's need to act first in order to inspire his men at Arr. 6.7.4, at the City of the Brahmins: “αὐτός δέ Ἀλέξανδρος...ἤγεν.”

unwilling to fight after they had already spoken out against continuing the campaign. In either case, the king's behavior inspired terror in his men because of the physical danger into which he flung himself, and their response to the threat of his death was unhesitatingly ferocious. It was a serious enough issue that his generals rebuked him for it.³⁵⁰ After the second siege of Malli, Craterus visited a recuperating Alexander and urged him not to risk his life so easily when so many men depended upon it, emphasizing the troops' anxiety over Alexander's wellbeing, allegedly asking, "Who wishes to survive you? Who is able?" (Curt. 9.6.9).

During this second siege of the Malli, Arrian reports that "those who saw Alexander...leaping into the citadel were roused by devotion and fear that the king might suffer harm in taking senseless risks" (6.10.3-6.11.1). Arrian's account emphasizes perhaps as much his own opinion of Alexander's decision as the Macedonians', but nonetheless pinpoints the cause of their desperate fighting even after Alexander's was borne out on a shield. Diodorus describes Alexander's decision to enter the citadel alone as "little expected" (17.99.1), and perhaps the king's technique startled the army into action because fear, rather than embarrassment. The accounts of Diodorus, Curtius, and Arrian all agree that the Macedonians responded "in a fury at the injury to their king" (Diod. 17.99.4), and believing him dead they tore the city apart and spared none (Curt. 9.5.19-21).³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ I use the plural because Curtius does report that Craterus was "charged with the task of conveying to [Alexander] the entreaties of his friends" (Curt. 9.6.6).

³⁵¹ On the siege of the Malli, see: Diod. 17.98-99; Curt. 9.4.26-9.5.30; Arr. 6.9.1-6.14.3. Justin 12.9 does not mention Alexander's risk taking, but reports only that he was caught up among a number of enemies and likely to be overpowered. See further: Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great*, 259-63; Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 135-7; Heckel, *The Conquests of Alexander the Great*, 128-31; Worthington, *By the Spear*, 253-6.

This is more than vengeance; it is sheer terror. If Alexander had died, then his troops would have been far from the center of the empire, farther still from Macedonia, and without a king, heir, or viable leader, “since a great many officers were held in equal esteem by both Alexander himself and the Macedonians” (Arr. 6.12.2). Indeed, there was great rivalry among Alexander’s generals which emerged at once upon his death in Babylon in 323 and lasted for forty-seven years in a series of Diadoch Wars (323-276).³⁵² During the king’s lifetime, this strife emerged between Craterus and Hephaistion, who brawled publically in India (Plut. *Alex.* 47.9-12) and were frequently so at odds that Alexander separated them, even having them march along opposite banks of the Hydaspes (Arr. 6.2.2).³⁵³ After Musicanus’ rebellion in 325, Alexander put his land forces under the command of Hephaistion and Peithon along the Indus, and Craterus was sent to escort retired veterans to Carmania (Arr. 6.17.3-4). However, Alexander was wounded in Malli before Craterus was sent back, and the rivalries of the generals and the lack of an individual capable of taking charge of the army uncontested inspired great anxiety. Craterus appeared to have been aware of this, reminding Alexander that “we have reached a place from which returning home without your leadership is impossible for any of us” (Curt. 9.6.9). That “the entire army raised a wail” when the men thought Alexander dead is not surprising. Along with what was very likely a genuine mourning because the Macedonians found themselves isolated and uncertain of how they might return home, surrounded as they were by many hostile enemy tribes (Arr. 6.12.1-3).

³⁵² I use Shipley’s date range for the Diadoch Wars, but the wars’ official end might also be dated to the Battle of Ipsus in 301. See Graham Shipley, *The Greek World after Alexander* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 40-6. For details, see: R. Waterfield, *Dividing the Spoils: The War for Alexander the Great’s Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³⁵³ Worthington, *Alexander*, 252.

f. Cultural Isolation

Revolt did indeed occur among “the Greeks who had been settled in Bactria and Sogdiana, who had long borne unhappily their sojourn among peoples of another race” when they received word that Alexander had died from his injuries (Diod. 17.99.5). The willingness of these settlers to riot so readily is suggestive of the same problem Alexander’s army faced: cultural and physical isolation. In this regard, India was unique, as “the coterie of Greek intellectuals which had followed [Alexander] to Central Asia” as well as his Hellenized headquarters were separated from him and did not follow him into India.³⁵⁴ Alexander left his court at Bactria and further split his forces into five parts (Hephaestion, Ptolemy, Perdikkas, Coenus with Artabazus, and Alexander himself) in 328, and this “depletion of staff” further increased the sensation of isolation.³⁵⁵ In response, there emerged a growing need to locate the familiar within the foreign, best exemplified by the Macedonians’ willingness to accept the legends of Nysa’s origins; seeing familiar vegetation like ivy and Mt. “Meros”³⁵⁶ must have brought comfort to them.³⁵⁷

Nonetheless, the Bacchic revelries of Nysa could have compensated for the onslaught of the *unfamiliar* which the army faced. India was a land of myth upon entry, and while fox-sized ants never materialized (Hdt. 3.102; 3.104), the Macedonians did

³⁵⁴ Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, 98.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ Mt. Meros was considered a reference to Dionysus, who was born from Zeus’ thigh after being removed from his mother, Semele, upon her death.

³⁵⁷ The Macedonians celebrated a Bacchic revelry in Nysa that is recorded by three historians: Curt 8.10.16-18; Arrian 5.2.5-7; Justin 12.7.8.

encounter monstrously large serpents, pythons reaching a length of sixteen cubits (twenty-four feet) long, and monkeys capable of imitating human expressions and behavior (Diod. 17.90.1-3). Apes and parrots—birds able to adopt human *speech*—might have been wonders, but not terrors (Arr. *Ind.* 15.8-10). Smaller snakes, however, were. Diodorus describes a “multitude” of them, variously colored and some with “thick, shaggy crests” (17.90.6) whose bite induced fearful pains and a bloody sweat. Curtius reports that a bite would lead to instant death (9.1.12), and it is not surprising that men took to pitching camp in the trees, slinging hammocks between trunks to avoid being bitten while asleep and “remained awake most of the night” (Diod. 17.90.7). The danger from snakes was serious, as Arrian reports from Nearchus that Alexander hired local physicians to travel with the army and “had it announced in camp that anyone bitten by a snake should go straight to the royal tent” (*Ind.* 15.11). Other diseases common to the region, dysentery and likely malaria, were less easily remedied, and a number of men died from them.³⁵⁸ Faced with not only unfamiliar battle and the drudgery of perpetual sieges, the Macedonian army was threatened too by their natural surroundings, and the rebellions against satraps after Alexander’s death only highlight this.

g. Rebellions of Settlers

The men settled in India (and Bactria) were not content to live there. Coenus points out that “those [Greeks] who have been settled in the cities you founded do not remain there entirely of their own will” (Arr. 5.27.5). These men suffered from cultural

³⁵⁸ Worthington, *Alexander*, 215.

isolation, and perhaps more significantly, the promise of the unending labor of defense and pacification. In the north-west, where Nicanor oversaw local governments from the Parapamisidae to the Indus, the natives refused Macedonian rule, and the satrap was finally assassinated by his own subjects.³⁵⁹ In the north, Philip son of Machatas kept watch over the Taxila region, but his Thracian mercenary troops rose up against him and killed him once Alexander was en route to Carmania in 325. The king did not send a replacement, but left Eudamus, an apparently more trustworthy captain of a Thracian contingent, to garrison the territory until someone could be sent (Arr. 6.27.2). Alexander died before he could dispatch anyone, and Indian opposition remained strong, making the Greek cities founded there as unsafe as they were unlivable for westerners, serious damaged by months of monsoon rains.³⁶⁰ By 321, after Alexander's death when he had taken over Philip son of Machatas' satrapy, Peithon was forced to cede territory east of the Indus to Chandragupta, whose guerilla tactics against him revealed the persistency of Indian opposition.³⁶¹

In 325 at Patala, Alexander found the region depopulated and brought civilians back with a promise of clemency. Nonetheless, as soon as Alexander marched away, the admiral Nearchus' fleet was attacked by locals and forced to disembark early.³⁶² The rebellion and refusal to recognize local authority was a constant problem, and only Porus and Taxiles appear to have had success in preventing it, because they ensured continuity and consistency with local traditions. The extent to which the two rajas were controlled

³⁵⁹ Bosworth, "Indian Satrapies Under Alexander," 37-8, 44.

³⁶⁰ Arrian 5.29.5 cf. P.M. Fraser, *Cities of Alexander the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 70.

³⁶¹ Woodcock, *The Greeks in India* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 41.

³⁶² Strabo 15.2.5; cf. Bosworth, "Indian Satrapies Under Alexander," 44.

by the Macedonian satrap Eudamus is questionable, and to their own people, they remained monarchs.³⁶³ On the local level little had changed, and “the Indian territories were now virtually ceded to the two native princes.”³⁶⁴ The impossibility of maintaining willing Greek and Macedonian populations in India and the revolts Macedonian satraps suffered there echo resistance at the Hyphasis, and one can imagine that their complaints might have been similar as well. Even if the settlers did not have a “longing for the homeland” (Arr. 5.27.6), they clearly did not wish to dwell in the radically foreign world of India.

³⁶³ Plutarch calls them satraps: Plut. *Alexander*, 60.15; cf. Bosworth, “Indian Satrapies Under Alexander,” 38 n. 8.

³⁶⁴ Bosworth, “Indian Satrapies Under Alexander,” 44.

Conclusion

The *Alexander Romance* credits Alexander with space travel as well as the first recorded deep sea exploration and use of a submarine.³⁶⁵ While these accounts are clearly fantastical, it is not surprising that Alexander was the core around which such legendary stories arose. This dynamic and young Macedonian king created a larger empire in his thirteen year reign than any other western ruler before him, spreading Hellenism where his army travelled, and manufacturing a new, personal form of a kingship to manage a multi-cultural realm.

However, the process of expansion and conquest took a heavy toll on the army. We have seen how resistance in Bactria, Sogdiana, and India affected the Macedonian way of fighting and decimated the morale of the troops. The traditions of Greek warfare that had held sway for centuries had to be altered to face the guerilla tactics of the Scythian and the Sogdians as well as the endless sieges of India. Bactria and Sogdiana were intractable lands whose topography facilitated enemy use of ambushes and encirclement, and Spitamenes' Scythian allies proved to be one of the Macedonians' most difficult enemies to defeat. Indians fought with chariots, toxic weapons, and war elephants, and they frequently fled their citadels to take up defense elsewhere, which made the maintenance of a static, controlled population impossible. In neither region did the capture of a fortress or capital city guarantee the submission of surrounding lands, resulting in frequent doubling-back in Bactria and Sogdiana, and constant sieges in India.

³⁶⁵ R. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 111-19.

As a result the Macedonians fought against individuals who had been combating them for years, from whom likely the majority of surviving soldiers had received some sort of siege-related injury. The explosion of violence that followed was the outcome of escalating animosity and utter exhaustion on the part of the soldiers who were unable, as Coenus said at the Hyphasis, to match Alexander's perpetual energy and desire to press onward (Curt. 9.2.9).

Alexander's policies of conquest also sharpened the degree of viciousness in the invasion. Learning that satraps could not be successfully installed in Bactria and Sogdiana as they had been in Persia, Alexander forcibly settled natives there and put them under the watch of garrisons. Such a high degree of interference in regional government had not been customary under the Great King, and the establishment of military outposts only intensified local resistance. In India a fierce local sense of autonomy meant there was a need to win every major city or fortress in the region, either by surrender or by siege, with the result that Macedonian conquest was piecemeal and gradual. The Brahmanic resistance of Western India complicated matters by infusing the Indian revolt with a moral and religious undertone which transformed Alexander's killing of resisters into a massacre of holy men and only stiffened opposition in other areas.

Throughout the campaign the disparity between Alexander's goals and those of his troops increased. The Macedonian army that Philip had forged and which Alexander had honed was not incapable of conquest beyond the Hydaspes River. It was unwilling. Thinned out by eight years of marching, fighting, and securing and expanding borders, Alexander's men in India were affected by enervation and cultural isolation. They

traveled through the inhospitable climate of an alien land, donning foreign clothes while their own armor visibly deteriorated and fell off around them. The march back West from the Hyphasis River was the bloodiest because the men had the most to lose. The Macedonians were finally departing from India, and securing it against revolt meant they would not have to return. Tensions between generals and concern for the king's life and increasingly risky behavior in battle ran deep when a return to the West was at hand. It is for this reason that the bloodiest act of the campaign occurred during the march out of India at the siege of Multan, after Alexander's almost fatal injury. This apex of the Indian campaign's violence was touched off by the army's terror at Alexander's wound, but the wholesale slaughter of the population was a frustrated response to the entire campaign. The circumstance of the siege prompted Curtius to write that "Whoever met [the soldiers], they believed to be the person by whom the king had been wounded. And at length by the slaughter of the enemy they appeased their just anger" (9.5.20).

It was not a love of killing for its own sake that drove the Macedonians to such limits, but a campaign whose duration, enemies, and forms of combat were not compatible with the traditions of Greek warfare. The shift the army experienced from skirmishing and pitched battles to sieges and cutting down rebels in flight did not occur at once, but in gradual stages and by necessity. Just as Alexander's campaign in the East transformed the Greek world and opened up East to West, so the invaders' experiences in Bactria and Sogdiana altered the nature of their fighting in India, which came to be characterized by a sense of isolation, exhaustion, and brutality.

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