Encyclopædia Iranica

ALEXANDER THE GREAT
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Published: December 15, 1985
Last Updated: July 3, 2018

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ALEXANDER THE GREAT (356-323 B.C.). Ascending the throne on the assassination of his father Philip II in 336, Alexander quickly took up Philip's grand scheme to land an army in Asia and "liberate the Greek cities from the Achaemenid yoke;" but from the first his territorial ambitions appear to have reached beyond the Mediterranean horizon (cf. his questioning of Darius' ambassadors, Plutarch, *Alexander* 5.1-3). Alexander lacked neither information nor informants; fugitive satraps had found asylum at the Macedonian court, and Macedonian troops had been engaged in Asia Minor since 336. He could also draw on the writings of the Greek historians and travelers, such as Xenophon, Ctesias, and above all Herodotus, in whose work Philip's court historians had evidently taken great interest (G. Murray, *Classical Quarterly* 22/2, 1972, pp. 200-13).

The main Macedonian army disembarked in Asia Minor in 334. A Macedonian force sent in 336 was still holding the town of Abydos on the Hellespont in 334, while Darius had not yet fully mobilized the royal army against a danger which the Achaemenid authorities must have somewhat underrated. The foolish tactics of the Persian satraps on the Granicos river in May, 334, gave Alexander a quick victory in his first pitched battle and a clear road to the Anatolian coast. Now he declared his intention to conquer Asia completely and permanently (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 18.17.2). From 334 onward Alexander had in view the whole extent of the empire as it had been in Darius I's time, a fact that is confirmed by his correspondence with Darius in the years 333-31 (P. Briant, *Alexandre*, pp. 136-43). In Anatolia Alexander was able

to count on the good will of Greek communities eager to be rid of their Persian-appointed tyrants; within a few months the Anatolian satrapies were "macedonized" while continuing to be administered on Achaemenid lines, which meant that many regions such as Bithynia and Paphlagonia were not in fact subjected to Macedonian rule.

In November, 333, at the battle of Issos, a town in Cilicia, Alexander for the first time confronted Darius, who had taken command of the huge royal army, and defeated him soundly. Darius fled, letting the insignia of power (robe, shield, bow, chariot) and the ladies of the royal household fall into the victor's hands. The scale of the defeat and the plight of the illustrious hostages explain why Darius, in his first diplomatic contacts in 333-32, offered to concede wide powers, though not to relinquish legal sovereignty over any territory. Alexander's refusals show just as clearly that he was unwilling to share power and intent on sole rule over a unified empire. In any case, Issos was not followed by a collapse of the Achaemenid structures. Darius remained alive, and immense human and material resources had not yet been mobilized. Moreover fierce Persian counterattacks on Alexander's rear in Anatolia took place in 332 (Briant, *Antigone le Borgne*, Paris, 1973, pp. 53-74).

Issos gave Alexander the option to continue his march either to the Euphrates or to the Nile. At the expense of giving Darius time to regroup, he chose the second alternative, since it was in line with the strategy planned at Miletos in the summer of 334: to capture the whole Aegean front of the Achaemenid empire. A second consideration was that Phoenicia, Palestine, and Egypt formed the empire's "soft underbelly," having several times rebelled in the 4th century. The Phoenician cities of Byblos, Arados, and Sidon quickly surrendered and thus were able to keep their traditional monarchic institutions, though they had to pay tributes, give up their mints, and supply levies of troops to the Macedonian satrap. But Tyre put up a long and fierce resistance which ended in its destruction. In Palestine, Gaza likewise remained loyal to the Achaemenids and suffered the same fate. The annexation of Egypt proceeded much more smoothly because of the Egyptian dislike for the Persian (see below). Possession of the delta enabled Alexander to achieve his objective of capturing Achaemenid coastal territories vital for his security; one result was that the remnants of Persian and Greek resistance in the eastern Aegean region soon collapsed. Concrete evidence of the transfer of power was given by the foundation of Alexandria of Egypt, the first of the cities of that name built on the conqueror's order (R. Cavanaille, in *L'Antiquité classique* 41,

1972, pp. 94-112). After organizing the administration of Egypt, Alexander marched by the same route by which he had come through Palestine and Phoenicia into northern Syria and the middle Euphrates region.

By now Darius had assembled a new army consisting largely of levies from eastern Iran. Despite the scorched earth tactics of Mazaios, the satrap of Babylonia, Alexander successfully crossed the Euphrates and advanced into Upper Mesopotamia. On 1 October 331 the two armies met at the village of Gaugamela, east of the Tigris in the district of Arbela (Erbel) (Figure 1). Once again Darius was defeated and put to flight; the two great administrative and strategic centers of Babylon and Susa surrendered without struggle, partly because the policy of the last Achaemenid kings had bitterly antagonized the Babylonian priesthood (K. S. Eddy, *The King is Dead. Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism [334-31 B.C.]*, Lincoln, 1961). At the same time Alexander appropriated the immense Achaemenid treasure hoards.

The advance to Persepolis, the seat of the politico-religious rites of the Nowrūz festival, was more difficult. The season was mid-winter (January, 330), and the royal road was guarded by Achaemenid garrisons. Strong resistance also came from the local Uxians (Uzians? i.e., Hūzī or Xūzī?) and from Ariobarzanes, the satrap of the province, who blocked the Persian Gates. Alexander fought his way through to Persepolis, which he burnt down in the spring of 330 (Quintus Curtius 5.7.2; Arrian, 6.30.1; Briant in *L'idéologie monarchique dans l'Antiquité*, Warsaw and Krakow, 1980, pp. 73-81). Without delay he marched into Media, where Darius had begun to muster a new army at Ecbatana. But in July, 330, Darius III was murdered as a result of the conspiracy of Bessos, the satrap of Bactriana, who felt that he could block a Macedonian advance into Central Asia. As soon as Bessos proclaimed himself king, under the name Artaxerxes, Alexander was able to present himself as the avenger of Darius' death. In the classical sources, the summer of 330 is noted as the start of the quickening of Alexander's adoption of Achaemenid court etiquette, royal robes, ceremonials, etc., which was one aspect of his broad strategy for securing the collaboration of the Iranian upper classes. This policy provoked strong opposition among the Macedonian nobles at a time (330-27) when the Macedonian army, after its rapid advances since 334, came temporarily to a halt because of the strength and extent of organized resistance in Bactria and Sogdiana (see below). Not until 326 could Alexander undertake the Indian expedition which he had for years been contemplating.

The northern Indian region which Darius I had conquered was by then practically out of Achaemenid control and split among a number of independent kingdoms and principalities. Alexander was met by a strong army but emerged victorious from the battle of the Hydaspes (Jhelum) in the spring of 326. Weary of campaigning and conquering, the soldiers now demanded and obtained his decision to stop advancing and to return to the west. The chosen route was down the Indus valley to Pattala (Hyderabad?). Following the precedent set by Darius I's dispatch of a fleet from an Indus port in 518 with instructions to sail for Arabia and Egypt, the admiral Nearchos was ordered in 325 to sail along the coast into the Persian Gulf. The short-term objective of the mission was to survey the coast and disembark supplies of food and water which would enable the land forces under Alexander's command to cross the wastes of Gedrosia (Makrān); this supporting task was completed in January, 324, when Nearchos and Alexander linked up in Lower Mesopotamia. The long-term objective was to implement Darius I's great political design of naval communication between the Persian Gulf and the Red and Mediterranean seas. With this in view some naval detachments were sent to the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf in 324, but the intended circumnavigation of Arabia was not achieved. Alexander also had in mind a "colonization of the Arabian coast and islands of the Persian Gulf; he actually thought that this region could be as rich as Phoenicia" (Arrian 7.19.6). The immediate aim, however, was to establish supply depots for a planned invasion of the lands of the Arabs, who had refused to submit to his authority.

Resistance to Alexander. On a superficial view, Alexander's conquest of the Achaemenid empire was made possible by his victories at the Granicos, Issos, and Gaugamela, but overemphasizing their importance has led to underestimating the strength and tenacity of the resistance organized or inspired by the Achaemenid authorities. Military defeat was not followed by an immediate collapse of the empire and a rapid, painless Macedonian takeover. After the battle of the Granicos, Alexander encountered many obstacles, such as the long resistance of the defenders of Halicarnassos in Caria. His advance from Issos to Egypt was far from easy; Tyre defied him for seven months, and Gaza under the eunuch Batis for several weeks. Nor was the problem solved by the victory of Gaugamela and the occupation of the empire's three great centers. Darius was still alive and ready to fight at the head of a new army. His assassination in July, 330, by east Iranian conspirators (Bessos, Nabarzanes, Barsaentes, Satibarzanes, Oxyarthes) marked the end of the Achaemenid dynasty but not the end of the Iranian

resistance. At first this was led by Bessos, the satrap of Bactria. After Alexander's invasion of Bactria and capture of Bessos, the struggle in Bactria and Sogdiana was kept up by Spitamenes and broadened into a general revolt. This was particularly dangerous because the Bactrian and Sogdian nobles were determined to maintain at all costs the privileged socio-political status that they had enjoyed under the Achaemenid regime, and were well provided with military, financial, and manpower resources (Briant, in *Klio*, 1978, pp. 70-77; idem, *Index* 8, 1978-79, pp. 70-72). Furthermore both Bessos and Spitamenes could, for the time at least, count on long-standing alliances with the chiefs of the Sacae beyond the Syr Darya (Briant, *Etat et pasteurs au Moyen-Orient ancien*, Paris and Cambridge, 1982). The virtual parity of the opposing forces explains why Darius's death in Hyrcania was followed by three years of heavy fighting before Alexander could leave Bactria by the Kabul valley route for India. To overcome the resistance, he had to modify his tactics and logistic arrangements, nor did he shrink from indiscriminate terror to coerce the nobles into early transfer of allegiance. The strength and duration of the resistance also account for certain steps which Alexander took before his departure to India. He settled thousands of Greco-Macedonian military colonists in dozens of garrisons, citadels, and new towns under the direct authority of the provincial administration, thereby putting an end to the socio-political dominance of the Sogdo-Bactrian nobility (Briant, in *Klio*, 1978, pp. 70-78). According to Diodorus Siculus, there were 23,000 colonists in Bactria and Sogdia in 324-23. In order to safeguard his rear Alexander ordered a levy from all the provinces of 30,000 youths who were to serve him both as soldiers and as hostages (Quintus Curtius 8.5.1).

In countries other than Iran, Alexander met little or no resistance; at times he was even welcomed by peoples whose deeply rooted traditions the Achaemenid regime had in one way or another affronted in the preceding decades; he showed remarkable skill in developing an ideological strategy to win their support. In the Greek cities of Asia Minor he presented himself as the leader of a pan-hellenic crusade to overthrow the rule of Greek tyrants or oligarchs imposed by Achaemenid power. In Egypt, which had been the scene of repeated rebellions against Persian rule, the resistance had been organized mainly by the priests; according to Quintus Curtius (4.7.1), the Egyptians detested the rule of the Persians and actually welcomed Alexander (cf. Diodorus Siculus 17.49.2). At Babylon, where the people had suffered from Achaemenid repression ever since their revolt in the reign of Xerxes, Alexander was welcomed with much the same enthusiasm (Quintus Curtius

5.1.17-23) that their ancestors had shown toward Cyrus two centuries earlier. In Egypt and Babylonia alike, Alexander took unfailing care to show respect for the local deities and cults and thereby to forge lasting links with the dominant classes, particularly the priests. He may be said to have resumed in his own interest the shrewd policy, over-simply described as "religious toleration," followed by the first Achaemenids. Like every successful conqueror, Alexander knew that military victory must be combined with ideological persuasion capable of drawing the conquered peoples to his side.

Alexander's orientalization. Under the Achaemenid regime, the top positions in the central government, the army, and the satrapies had been reserved for Iranians and to a large extent Persian noblemen, who in many cases were connected, through marriage alliances, with the royal family. For Alexander this posed the problem of whether or not to make use of the personnel and structures which had given the empire solidity and unity. Experience showed that it was not sufficient to exploit the internal contradictions of the imperial system, as in Asia Minor, Babylonia, or Egypt; it was also urgently necessary to create or recreate a central government with or without Iranian collaboration. Alexander had revealed his awareness of this need as early as 334, when he challenged Darius III by appropriating the main elements of the Achaemenid monarchy's ideology, particularly the theme of the king who protects the lands and the peasants (Briant, "Conquête territoriale et stratégie idéologique: Alexandre le Grand et l'idéologie monarchique achéménide," in *L'idéologie monarchique dans l'Antiquité*, Warsaw and Krakow, 1980, pp. 37-83). In a letter written to Darius in 332 (Arrian 2.14.4-9), Alexander even argued that he was worthier than his adversary to succeed to the Achaemenid throne. But the burning of the palace at Persepolis and the firm opposition of the entire Persian people made it impossible for him to pass himself off as the Great King's legitimate successor. Against Bessos-Artaxerxes, however, Alexander reasserted his claim to legitimacy as the avenger of Darius III.

It is at this time that the classical authors note a change in the public behavior of Alexander, who in the following years acted, so they say, more and more openly like an oriental despot; Diodorus cites the diadem, royal robe, and harem as particularly noteworthy borrowings. This caused resentment, which erupted on three occasions during the campaigns in eastern Iran: in 330 when Philotas and Parmenio were executed, in 328-27 when Cleitos was murdered, and in 327 over the matter of genuflection. All these incidents illustrate the strength of the opposition of certain Macedonian nobles to their king's

orientalization and abandonment of national customs; they also give proof of Alexander's determination to impose his views. The dispute was not merely theoretical, let along theological. The real issue was whether the Macedonian nobles were ready to share power with the Iranian nobles who had rallied to Alexander; in the king's view, this was the only reasonable course. He made his point by taking steps such as the choice of a Persian, Mazaios, to be satrap at Babylon in October, 331. Another move, during the campaign in Bactria and Sogdia, was the first recruitment of Iranian levies. Alexander's marriage to the Bactrian princess Roxana in the spring of 327 was apparently followed by marriages of some of his companions to Iranian women. In 324, at Susa, Alexander and ninety-one of his companions took Iranian noblewomen as wives in a single sumptuous ceremony designed to strike people's imaginations. Caution is necessary, however, in any assessment of what has often, following Droysen, been described as a "policy of fusion" (see A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander and the Iranians," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1980, pp. 1-21); there was no question of marrying Macedonian princesses or noblewomen to Iranians. Moreover the number of Iranian satraps continually fell until 324-23. The incorporation of the Iranian levies into the army did not produce a real amalgam. Alexander's measures were responses to the demands of the hour; he urgently needed Iranian civilian and military cadres, but had no thought of creating a new integrated ruling class, which the Macedonian nobles would never have accepted.

The element of continuity. In the classical scenario systematized by Plutarch and rehashed by Dorysen, Alexander's conquering invasion marks a violent break in the history of the Middle East. This thesis was reiterated and diffused in the European historiography of the 19th and 20th centuries, which sought to project an image of Alexander as the pioneer of colonization in Asia and Africa (see Briant, in *Dial. Hist. Anc.* 5, 1979, pp. 283-92). Underlying the thesis are various postulates, above all that of the "stagnation" of Asia under Achaemenid rule, which is completely belied by all that is now known about the development of the factors of production in that period (see *La Pensée* 217-18, 1981, pp. 2-23). While it remains undeniable that the Macedonian conquest introduced elements of short-term and long-term change, it is now clear that the elements of continuity deserve much greater emphasis (Briant, "Des Achéménides aux rois hellénistiques: continuités et ruptures," *Annali della Scuola di Pisa* 9/4, 1979, pp. 1375-414). In the first place, the conquest resulted in the restoration of the empire to the limits given to it by Darius I, including the recaptured Indian territory. Again in 323 Alexander followed

Darius in planning a maritime link between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. In the field of administration, the Achaemenid system of satrapies was maintained. In many cases sites already in use in the Achaemenid period were chosen for the foundation of new cities, the best example being Āy Ḵānom, where the irrigation network has been shown to be a creation of Bactrian rather than Greek engineering (J. C. Gardin and B. Lyonnet, in *Mesopotamia* 12-14, 1978-79, pp. 99-154). While the superimposition of a new ruling class from Europe was certainly an important change, the basic forms of community life and the overall structure of government which had existed in the Achaemenid empire were maintained and resuscitated in Alexander's empire. Alexander may therefore be considered to have acted in many ways as the "last of the Achaemenids."

For Alexander in stories and Persian traditions, see ESKANDAR-NĀMA.

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Detailed commentaries on various moments and aspects of the conquest are found in the useful work of A. B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander I*, Oxford, 1980.