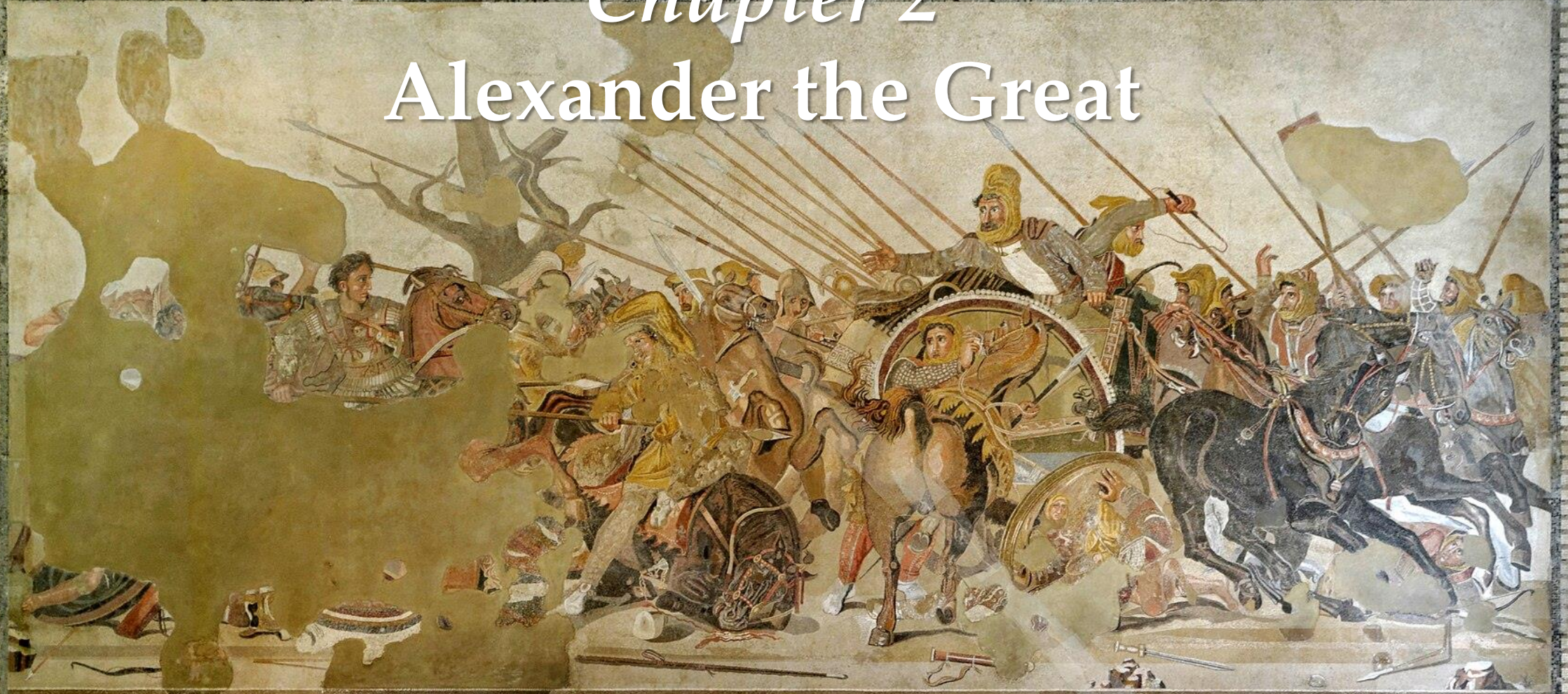


Chapter 2

Alexander the Great



BAAG 75602

Alexander to Kleopatra: History of
the Hellenistic period

Giorgos Mitropoulos





A satellite map showing the Eastern Mediterranean and Persian Empire region. The map is oriented with North at the top. The Aegean Sea is on the left, and the Persian Gulf is on the right. The landmasses of Greece, Turkey, and Iran are visible. The Persian Gulf is a large body of water on the right side of the map. The Persian Gulf is a large body of water on the right side of the map. The Persian Gulf is a large body of water on the right side of the map.

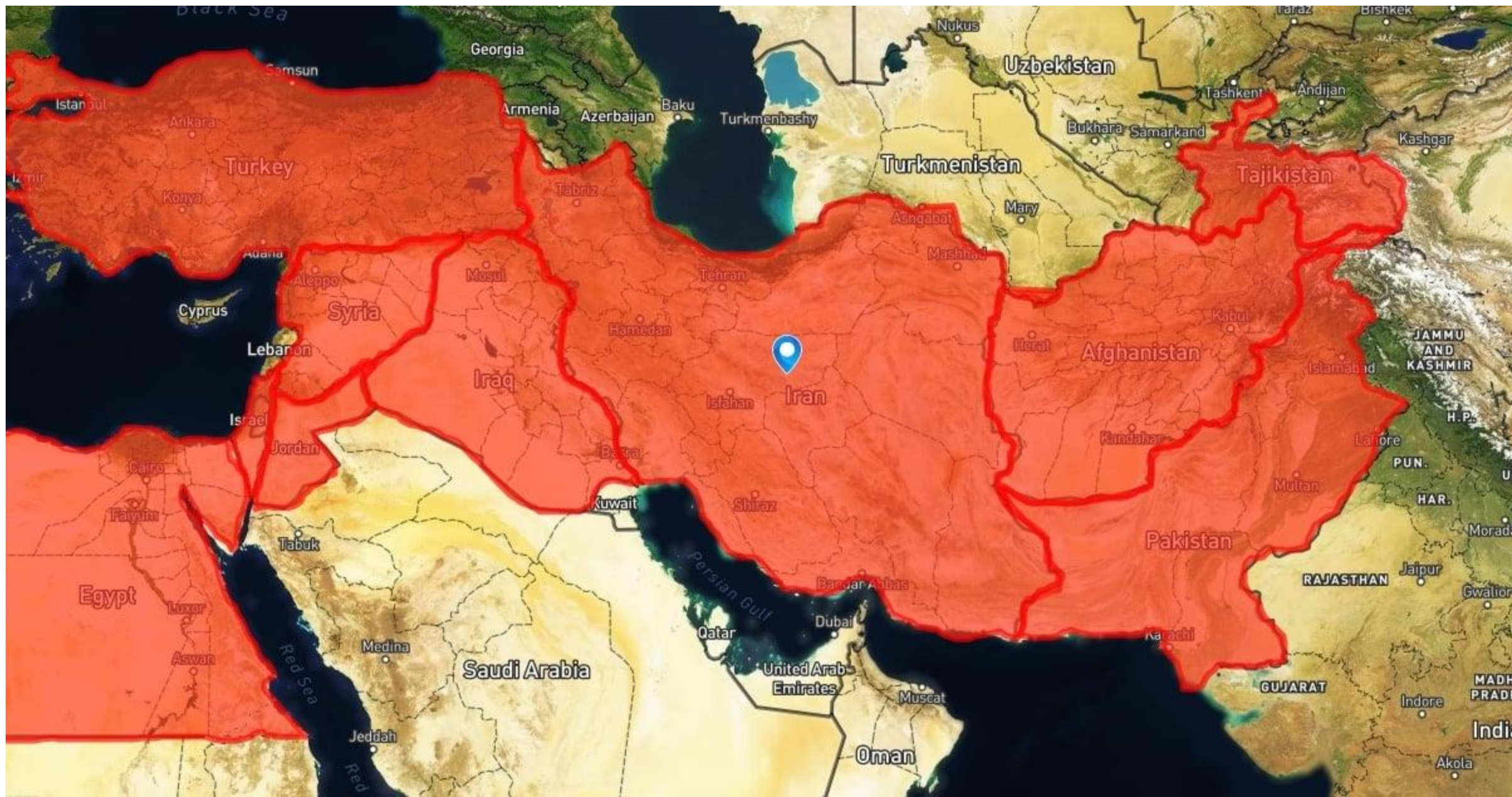
GREECE

IRAN

● Persepolis

Empire of Alexander the Great, 334-328 B.C.E.





The Empire of Alexander the Great

and his conquest course
from Greece to India
to Babylon (334-323 B.C.)





THE FAMILY OF ALEXANDER



- Alexander (born in 356 BC) was the son of Philip II and his fourth wife Olympias of Epirus.
- He had an elder brother by a year or so, Arrhidaeus, the son of Philip and his third wife, Philinna of Larissa
- Arrhidaeus was next in line to the throne, but at some point he was set aside, and Alexander became heir.
- Arrhidaeus was believed to have some mental deficiency that would affect his ability to be king.

EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING



- When Alexander was 14, Philip hired Aristotle to tutor him. Aristotle taught Alexander subjects such as geometry, zoology, philosophy and rhetoric. Several Macedonian boys from the local nobility were educated along Alexander, in Philip's attempt to create bonds of loyalty to and solidarity with the heir.
- Alexander was raised in Homeric tradition, in which personal success (arête), honour (timê) and glory (kudos) was the most important way to live one's life. His two heroes were Heracles and Achilles.

RELATIONS WITH PHILIP AND ACCESSION TO THE THRONE



- Philip's seventh marriage to Kleopatra deteriorated relations with Alexander; Alexander and Olympias left the court.
- Concerns that Alexander's succession could be challenged if Philip and his new wife Kleopatra had a son.
- In the summer of 336 Philip was assassinated at Aegae by his bodyguard Pausanias, the killer being hunted down and executed on spot.
- On the initiative of Philip's general Antipater, Alexander was immediately proclaimed king of the Macedonians.

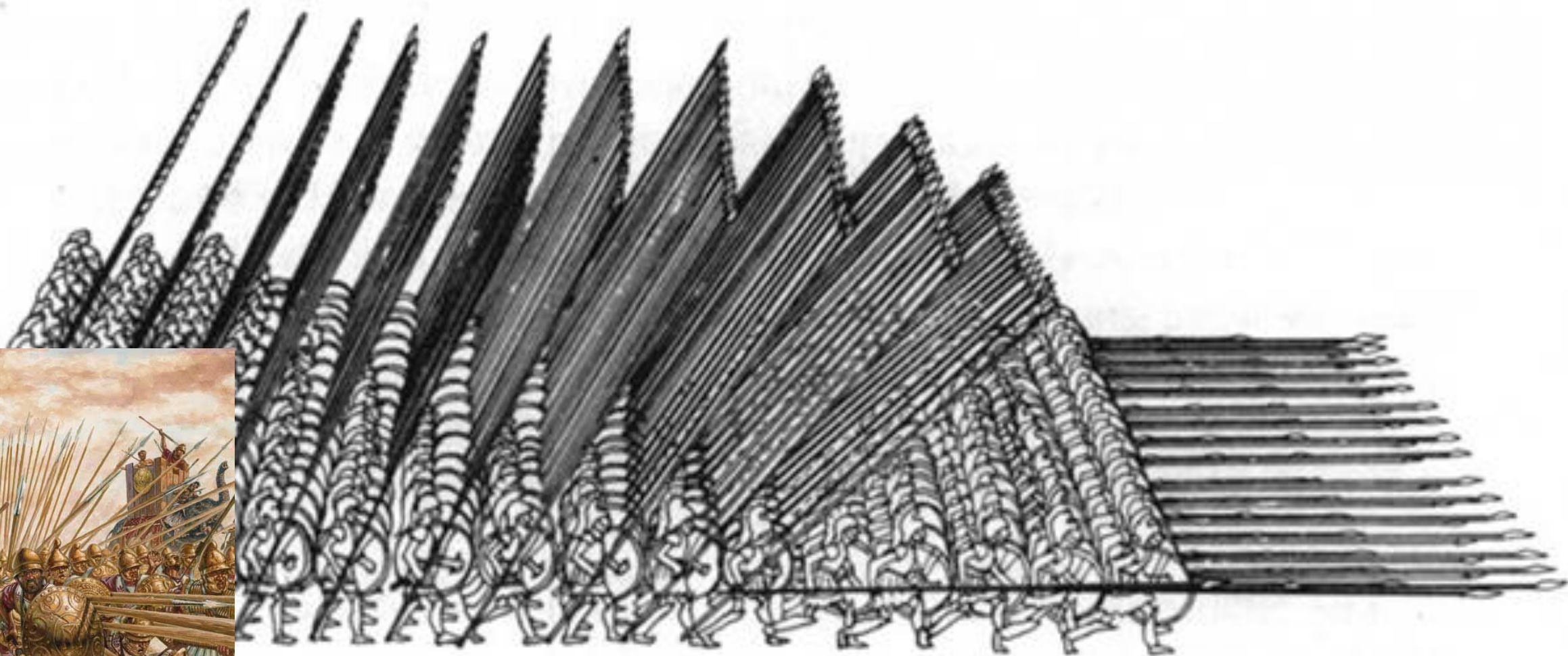
THE EARLY YEARS OF ALEXANDER'S REIGN

- Alexander murdered all potential rivals within reach.
- His mother Olympias killed the two babies that Cleopatra had borne Philip
- Alexander moved to Southern Greece, which was ready to revolt and reestablished Macedonian control.
- He was elected hegemon of the League of Corinth and given full powers to conduct the invasion of Asia as general of the Panhellenic army.
- In 335 BC Alexander turned against Thracian and Illyrian tribes in the north, so as to secure his frontier, to terrorize and plunder his northern neighbours, to take money and army units from them.
- Rumors about his death caused Thebes and Athens to revolt. Marching rapidly from the north, Alexander razed Thebes to the ground as a warning to any Greek state thinking of defying the king.



Beginning the Asia Campaign

- Alexander begins this campaign as both king of the Macedonians and leader (*hegemon*) of the Corinthian League. Gradually he becomes king of Asia as well.
- His army includes: 12.000 Macedonian troops forming the phalanx, 3000 hypaspists (royal guards), 1800 companion cavalry, supplemented by special light-armed units from Illyria and Thessaly and 9.000 allied Greek infantry and cavalry.
- Sufficient funds only for a brief campaign→ need to plunder the conquered territory and/or draw revenue from tribute
- Half of his Macedonian forces were left behind, in Europe, with Antipater (general of Europe). Second-in-command in Alexander's army was Parmenio, Philip's old general and an ally of Cleopatra's family.
- Alexander's first action upon landing was to cast his spear into the soil, declaring that he was to be the legitimate ruler by right of conquest.



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Alexander conquers Asia Minor

- There is a great deal of controversy regarding Alexander's initial aims.
- Did he intend right from the start to conquer the whole of the Persian Empire or just Asia Minor?
- The Persian satraps, are advised by Memnon (a Rhodian general in the service of Dareius III) to wage a war of attrition, retaining some strong points, avoiding battle and blocking Alexander's supply-system.
- The Persian satraps decide a direct confrontation and are defeated at the battle of Granicus river (334 BC)
- Asia Minor is now open for Alexander
- The communities and the peoples surrendered to him are ordered to obey the new Macedonian satraps and to pay to the Macedonians the same tribute they had paid to the Persians

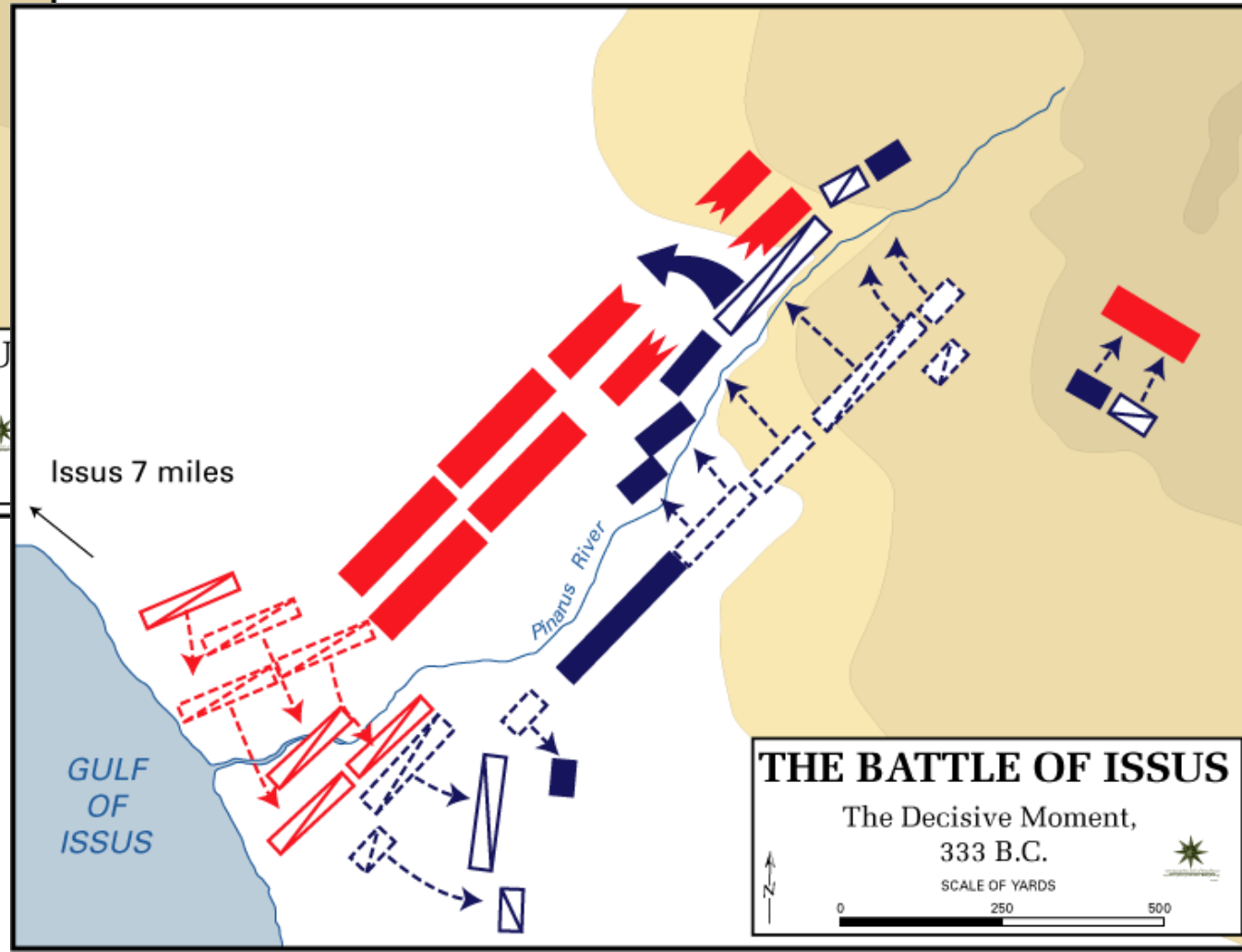
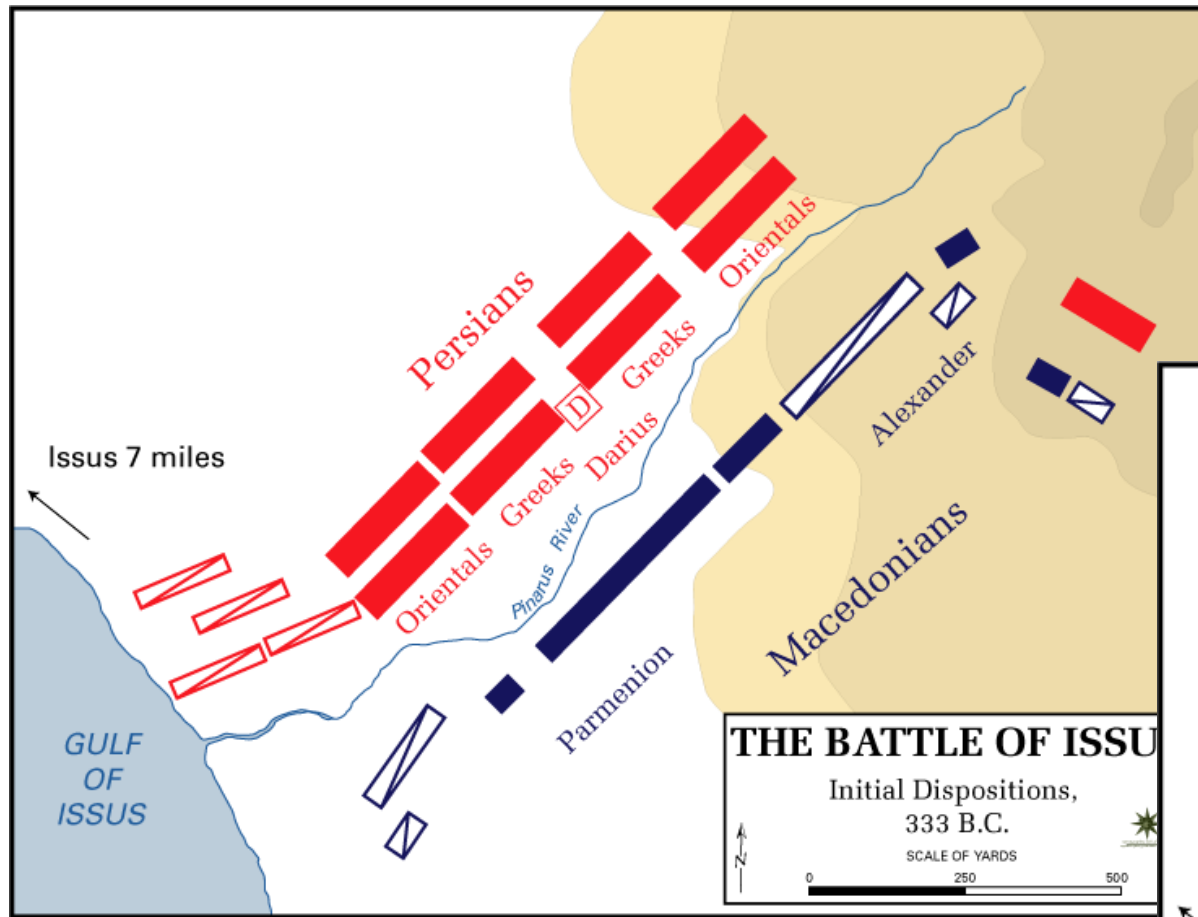
- In western Asia Minor only Persian garrisons at Miletus and Halicarnassus resist.
- By the spring of 333 BC Alexander reached Gordium, where he cut with his sword (instead of trying to loose) the complex knot that connected the draw-pole to the wagon once king Midas had ridden→ A new king by right of conquest was emerging in Asia.
- But Alexander chooses to work with local ruling classes. At Caria civil administration is given to Ada (a local queen) while the military command is exercised by a Macedonian.
- Alexander supports democracies in the Greek cities of Asia Minor which are relieved from tribute but have to make “contributions”



Alexander conquers the Eastern Mediterranean

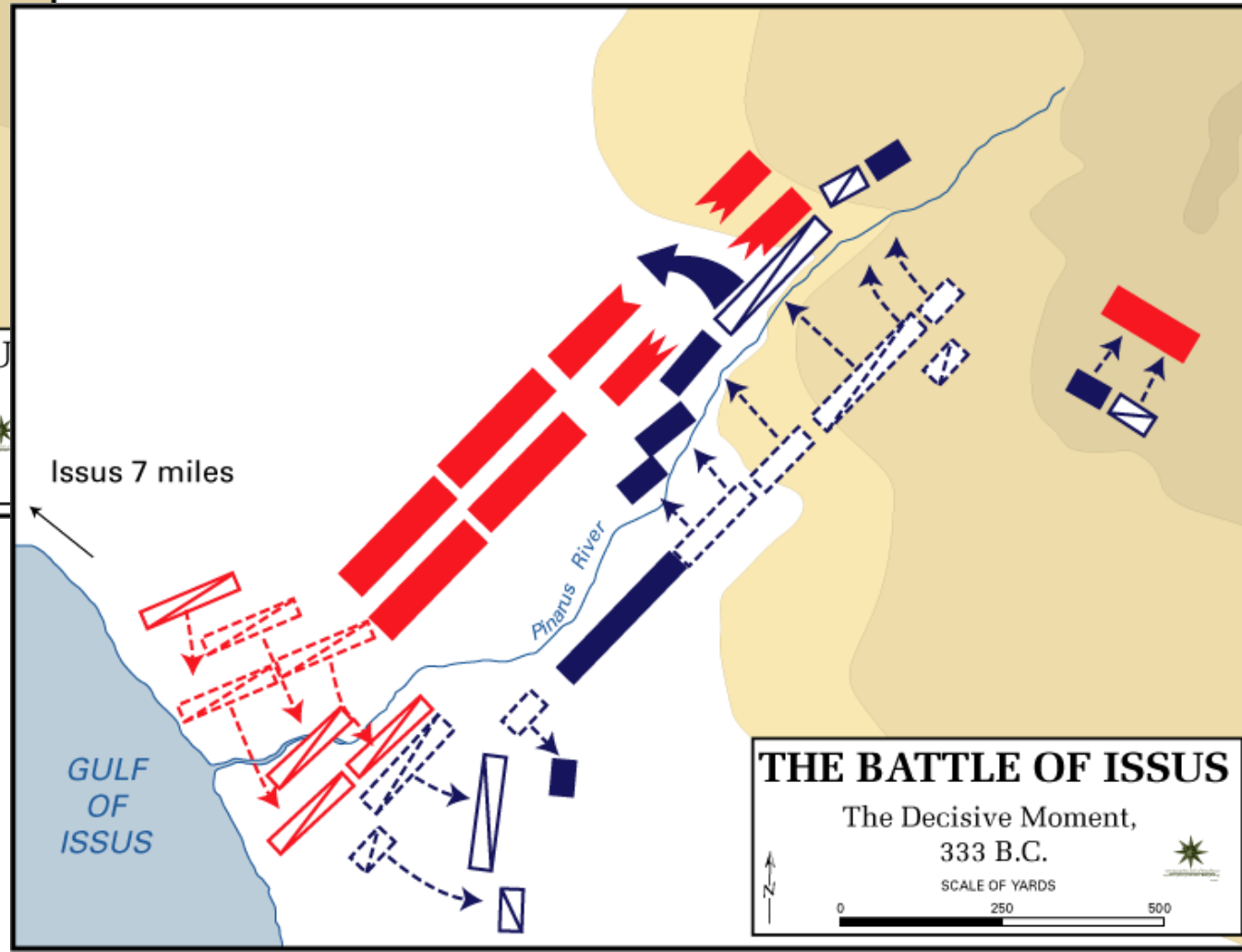
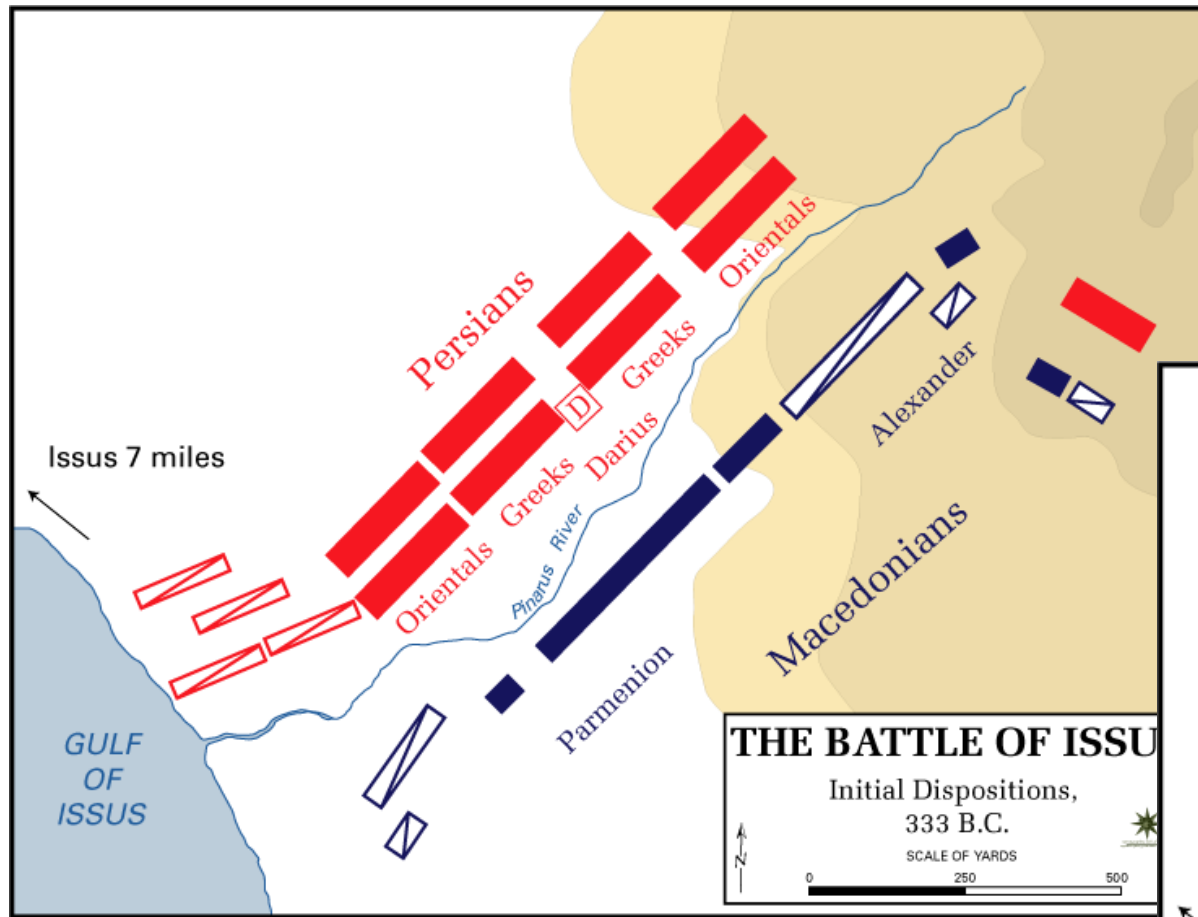
- Upon leaving Asia Minor and Cilicia, Alexander decides not to turn against Mesopotamia (the heartland of the Persian Empire) but to invade Syria, Palestine and Egypt, so as to deprive the Persian fleet still active in the Aegean of its bases
- Alexander crushes and humiliates Dareius III at the battle of Issus (fall 333BC)
- He takes control of royal treasuries stored at Damascus and captures the royal family.
- Resistance at Tyr and Gaza is met with severe punishment.
- The satrap Mazaces surrenders Egypt.
- The Egyptians welcome Alexander who pays respect to the Egyptian gods,
- visits the oracle of Ammon (hailed as Ammon's son)
- establishes Alexandria as a commercial center at the Delta (access to both the sea and the Nile).
- To avoid concentration of powers and resources at one man, civil, military and financial administration are assigned to different commanders.











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Alexandreia

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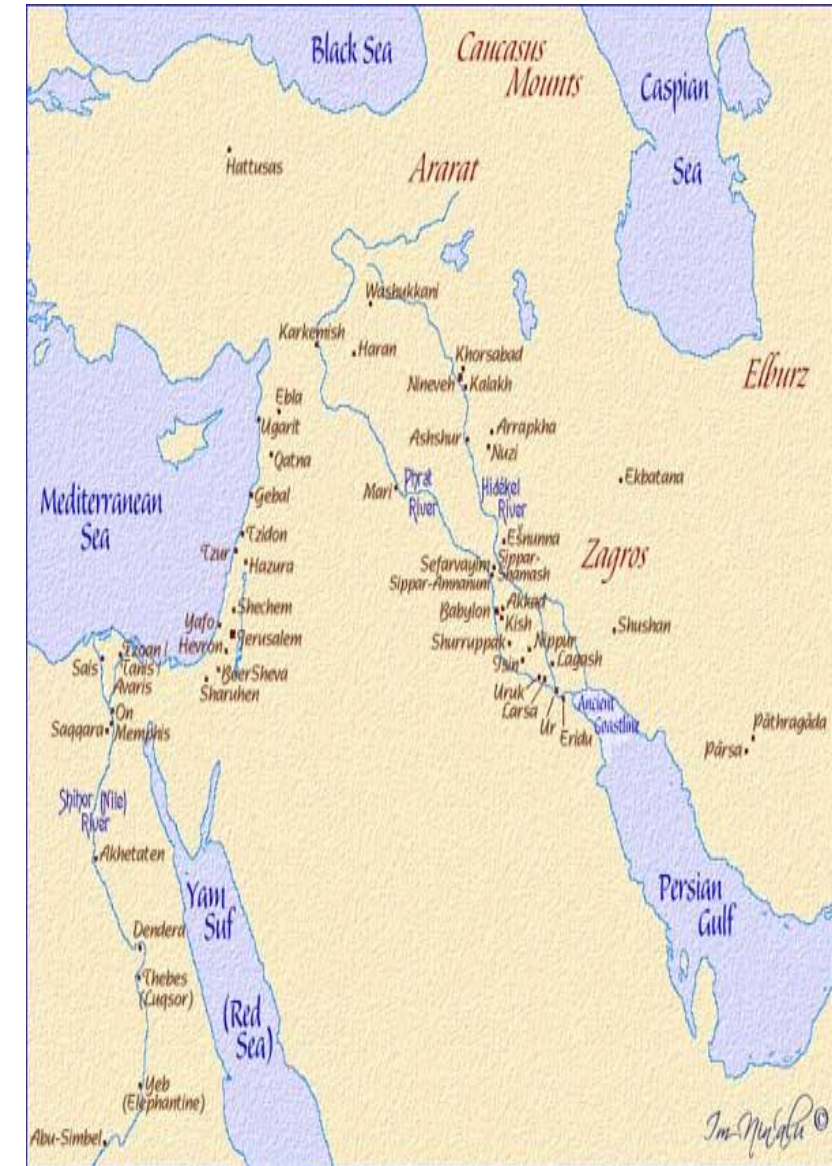
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Alexander in Mesopotamia and Persia

- A few weeks after founding Alexandria, Alexander marched to Mesopotamia seeking a last decisive confrontation, rejecting Dareius' proposals for dividing the empire between the two along the Euphrates river.
- At the battle of Gaugamela (331 BC) Alexander defeats Dareius who abandons once more his forces and escapes to Media.
- Alexander's soldiers hail him as king of Asia. The satrap Mazaeus surrenders Babylonia and he is confirmed at his post, military command being assigned to a Greek. Alexander enters Babylon in triumph and sacrifices to Marduk. Susa are also surrendered by the satrap Abulites who is also confirmed at his post.
- Alexander takes control of the Persian gold stored at these old Persian capitals.
- Persepolis' palaces are burnt as an act symbolizing the triumphant end of the Greek crusade.



The Empire of Alexander the Great

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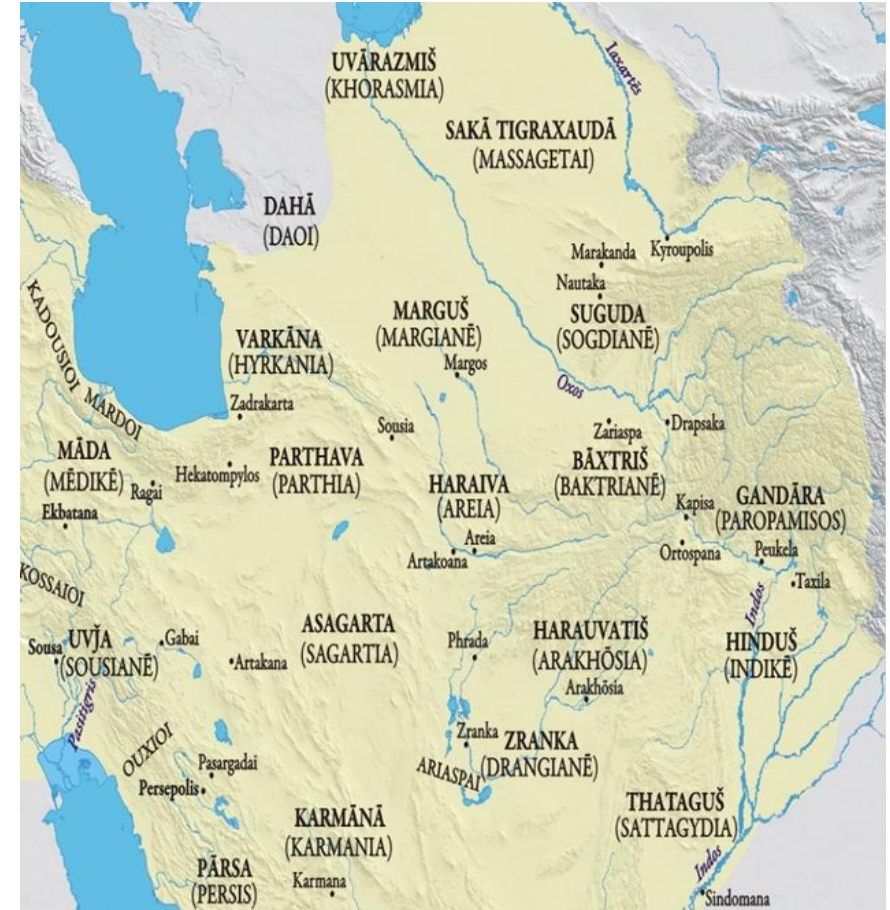
Alexander in Media and Bactria

- After leaving Persepolis, Alexander reaches Ekbatana and seizes the Persian treasures stored in the last Achaemenid capital.
- At Ekbatana he discharges his Greek troops and leaves there Parmenion to secure communications with the west.
- In pursuit of Dareius, Alexander learns that the eastern satraps arrested and executed Dareius. Their leader, Bessus, assumed the throne of Persia.
- Now Alexander poses not as the avenger of past Persian misdeeds, but as a successor and defender of Achaemenid legitimacy.
- As Bessus adopts a scorched-earth defense (destruction of resources potentially useful to the enemy), many Iranian nobles join Alexander and are rewarded with posts in his court, army and administration.
- In 329 BC Bessus' supporters surrender him to Alexander; Bessus is executed.



Alexander in Eastern Iran

- Alexander crossed the Iaxartes river in an attempt to extend his control over the nomadic Scythian tribes.
- He was faced with a revolt at Bactria and Sogdiane under the leadership of Spitamenes.
- Hard fighting for three years. Alexander put down the revolt by using:
 - massacres,
 - establishment of military colonies for veteran soldiers
 - Winning the favour of local nobles (marriage with Roxane)



Tensions, unrest and oppression

- Increasing discontent for the endless campaign leading Macedonians to Central Asia.
- Concerns about Alexander's gradual abandonment of the traditional Macedonian style of kingship in favour of Iranian practices and about Iranians' prominence in the court.
- Displeasure with Alexander's marriage.
- Alexander's demand that all members of his court, not only the Iranians, should perform the ritual prostration of *proskynesis*.
- Proskynesis for the Iranians was an affirmation of the hierarchical order, but for the Greeks a recognition of divinity.
- Faced with strong reaction (Callisthenes), Alexander abandons the plan.
- Philotas, Parmenion's son, is trialed and executed for failing to inform Alexander on an alleged plot. Parmenion is assassinated at Ekbatana on Alexander's orders.
- A drunk Alexander murders Cleitus the Black, who had saved his life at Granicus.
- A conspiracy of royal pages leads to executions and the imprisonment of their tutor, Callisthenes.

New realities in Alexander's army and court

- Extensive recruitment of Iranian units to supplement the decreasing supply of Greek troops.
- Iranian recruits trained to fight in the Macedonian way.
- The Macedonian “old guard” has largely disappeared after executions and purges.
- Preeminence of Macedonians personally tied to Alexander, such as Perdiccas, Craterus, Lysimachus and Ptolemy.
- The loyalty of the army remains unchallenged but obedience is no more unquestioning.

Alexander in India

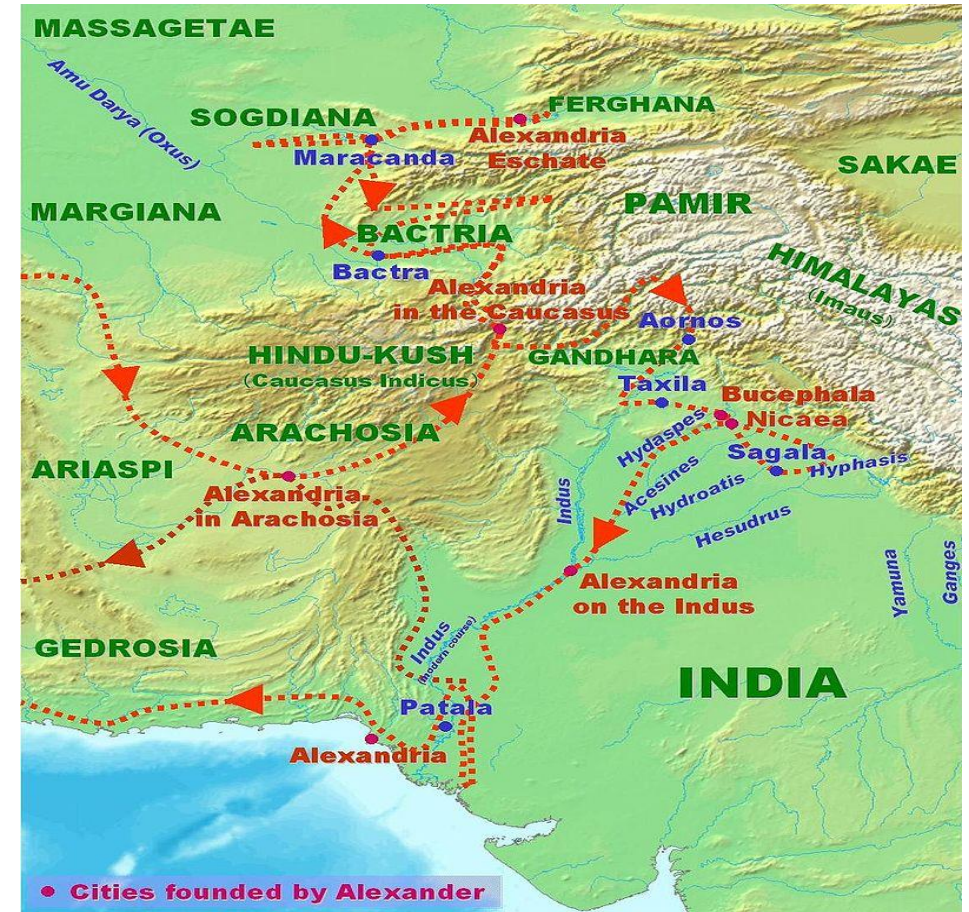
- In the summer of 327 BC, Alexander crossed the Hindu Kush and invaded India (modern Pakistan).
- The Indus valley had been conquered by Dareius I (late 6th century) but Persian rule had long since ended.
- Greek knowledge of Indian geography was rudimentary and inaccurate; For the Greeks it was a mysterious exotic land where monstrous humans coexisted with trees producing clothes and ants mining gold.
- Alexander found a complex network of peoples and competing dynastic states who tried to use him the one against the other.
- King Taxiles had already requested Alexander aid against his opponents, especially Porus.
- In the Battle of Hydaspes River, Alexander encountered fierce resistance, his army suffered great losses (Porus used elephants), Alexander himself was severely wounded, but finally emerged victorious. But Porus was restored to his kingdom as a nominal vassal.





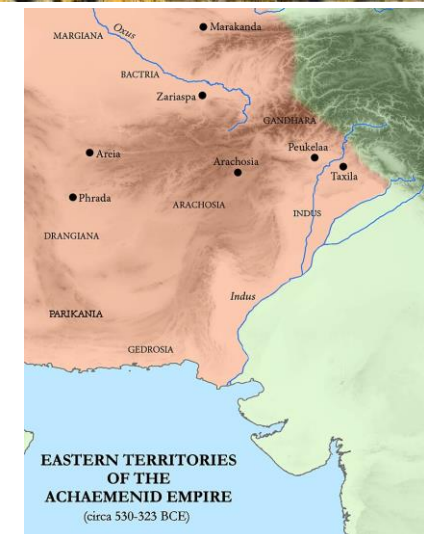
Alexander in India

- As the army moved eastwards moral dropped and the soldiers terrified by rumours about great kingdoms with thousands of elephants demanded to return (Hyphasis river).
- Defeated by his own soldiers, Alexander led his army back to the Indus, and from early 326 he moved southward against heavy resistance and reached the sea in July 325.
- Macedonian satraps were left in India, supervising local “allied” rulers.
- But Macedonian resources were inadequate and Macedonian rule soon vanished



Back to Babylon

- Alexander intended to lead his army back to Babylon through Gedrosia, while his fleet was to sail along the north coast of the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf.
- The army, which included the wives and children that the soldiers had acquired in the course of the campaigns, suffered tremendous losses in the desert of Gedrosia.
- In 324 Alexander was back to Babylon. Several satraps and generals, both Macedonians and Iranians, were deposed and executed, accused of corruption and oppression. Some of them were perhaps scapegoats for the disaster at Gedrosia. Several of them had assumed that Alexander would not return from India and had begun to exploit the empire for their own benefit. The treasurer Harpalus, together with vast amounts of gold, sought refuge to Greece (Athens).
- Satraps were ordered to disband their mercenary soldiers, who went back to Greece providing a military force available for those having money to employ them.



Alexander's imperial policies

- Alexander took two Iranian wives (daughters of Artaxerxes III and Darius III). 90 Macedonian nobles were “encouraged” to follow his example, while gifts were distributed to 10.000 soldiers who had already done the same during the campaign.
- Alexander introduced into the army 30.000 Iranians trained in the Macedonian fighting-style, the so-called “Successors”. He was also to send back thousands of Macedonian veterans.
- Army protests led to Alexander's public declaration that only the Macedonians were his true “companions”. However, soon after veterans were sent back, while their children produced by their marriages to Asia women stayed so as to form a new generation of soldiers loyal only to Alexander.
- Alexander tends to establish a personal monarchy, based on his charismatic leadership.

Alexander's final actions: increasing autocracy

- Alexander demands from the Greek cities to grant his dead friend Hephaistion heroic honours.
- Perhaps he demands cultic honours for himself as well.
- He issues a decree ordering the return of exiles to the Greek cities (unilateral act violating the principle of civic autonomy).
- Death at Babylon on June 10, 323 BC





- Alexander destroyed the Persian Empire which governed relations in the Near and Middle East for over two centuries.
- He also ended the role of Greek city-states as major players in interstate relations.
- But the new political order was shaped by his Successors...

Plutarch on Alexander's heritage

(**De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute, I 328C–329D**)

- But if you consider the effects of Alexander's instruction, you will see that he educated the Hyrcanians to contract marriages, taught the Arachosians to till the soil, and persuaded the Sogdians to support their parents, not to kill them, and the Persians to respect their mothers, not to marry them. Most admirable philosophy, which induced the Indians to worship Greek gods, and the Scythians to bury their dead and not to eat them! ... when Alexander was taming Asia, Homer became widely read, and the children of the Persians, of the Susanians and the Gedrosians sang the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles. ... Alexander founded over 70 cities among barbarian tribes, sprinkled Greek institutions all over Asia, and so overcame its wild and savage manner of living. ... Those who were subdued by Alexander are more fortunate than those who escaped him, for the latter had no one to rescue them from their wretched life, while the victorious Alexander compelled the former to enjoy a better existence. [. . .] Alexander's victims would not have been civilised if they had not been defeated. Egypt would not have had its Alexandria, nor Mesopotamia its Seleucia, nor Sogdiana its Prophthasia, nor India its Bucephalia, nor the Caucasus (the Hindu Kush) a Greek city nearby; their foundation extinguished barbarism, and custom changed the worse into better.

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- For he did not follow the advice of Aristotle and treat the Greeks as a leader would but the barbarians as a master, nor did he show care for the Greeks as friends and kinsmen, while treating the others as animals or plants; this would have filled his realm with many wars and exiles and festering unrest. Rather, believing that he had come as a god-sent governor and mediator of the whole world, he overcame by arms those he could not bring over by persuasion and brought men together from all over the world, mixing together, as it were, in a loving cup their lives, customs, marriages and ways of living. He instructed all men to consider the inhabited world to be their native land, and his camp to be their acropolis and their defence, while they should regard as kinsmen all good men, and the wicked as strangers. The difference between Greeks and barbarians was not a matter of cloak or shield, or of a scimitar or Median dress. What distinguished Greekness was excellence, while wickedness was the mark of the barbarian; clothing, food, marriage and way of life they should all regard as common, being blended together by ties of blood and the bearing of children.

