

**Warfare, Diplomacy and Elephants: A Reinterpretation  
of the Battle of the Hydaspes and its Consequences**

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Shiva Sairam

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## Abstract

This thesis will examine the Battle of the Hydaspes, Alexander the Great's last battle with the intention of challenging both ancient sources and modern scholarship for their predominantly one-sided portrayals of the battle. The battle is almost exclusively viewed as a Macedonian triumph, although Indian nationalists are adamant that Porus defeated Alexander. My analysis will dispute several key aspects of the battle to present the reader with an alternate viewing of the conflict and its consequences. Ultimately, I seek to prove that both Porus and Alexander can be perceived as victors by the end of the battle, in stark contrast to the views advocated by Indian and western historians who favour the former and latter, respectively. To achieve this, I will revisit necessary textual and numismatic evidence to explain why both belligerents could claim victory at the end of the battle. Alexander's victory was assured through textual and numismatic evidence, while Porus gained a larger kingdom, having lost no land at the Hydaspes.

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## Abbreviations

*Arr. Anab* = Arrian, *The Anabasis*  
*Arr. Ind* = Arrian, *Indica*  
 Diod = Diodorus  
 Hdt = Herodotus  
 Just = Justin  
 Luc = Lucian  
*Metz* = *Metz Epitome*  
*Plut. Alex* = Plutarch, *The Life of Alexander*  
 Pol = Polyaeus  
 QC = Quintus Curtius Rufus  
 Str = Strabo

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## Introduction and Context

### **Introduction**

Fought in May 326 BC on the banks of the Hydaspes, known now as the Jhelum, in modern Pakistan, during the monsoon, the battle of the Hydaspes was the final pitched battle in the military career of Alexander the Great. Following an absence of large set piece encounters since the decisive victory over Darius III at Gaugamela in 331, the encounter at the Hydaspes enabled Alexander's historians to concoct the tale of a grand triumph in the easternmost corner of the known world. The exotic climate of India and its fauna provided the ideal setting for a battle, smaller in scale than the clashes in Persia, albeit greater in difficulty. This is the narrative outlined by the ancient sources: after lulling his enemy into a false sense of security, Alexander attempted a risky crossing of the swollen Hydaspes under the cover of darkness, ferrying across a small force of infantry and cavalry which was no easy feat.<sup>1</sup> Through a combination excellent strategic manoeuvres, superior armament, courage, and no short amount of luck, Alexander emerged the victor in a brutal struggle in which infantry, cavalry and fearsome Indian war elephants fought to the last. The Indians suffered a greater proportion of casualties, although Porus' valour won the Macedonian king's favour and his life was spared. All ancient sources lauded Alexander's magnanimous treatment of the defeated Porus.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of Alexander's generosity, Porus was not only permitted to keep the kingdom he had previously ruled, but additional territories were added to his dominion. This is the most readily accepted narrative relayed to us by ancient historians, and an overwhelming number of modern scholars tend to agree with the description of events passed down, parroting the words of Arrian without a thorough examination of the battle, its practicalities and consequences.<sup>3</sup> This is a concept I intend to refute, and with the intention of reframing this from an Indian perspective, I will reexamine the battle as Porus against Taxiles, his hated enemy and the local dynast of Taxila, rather than Porus' struggle with Alexander and the Macedonians.<sup>4</sup> However, since Taxiles' participation in the fighting was minimal, his role as a belligerent will be confined to the battle's conclusion where he was actively involved. Additionally, I seek to enumerate the esoteric and contentious aspects of the battle, rebutting the interpretation of the battle of the Hydaspes as it is

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<sup>1</sup> Arrian, *The Anabasis*, 5.9.1-5.13.4; Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander*, 8.13.18-27; Plutarch, *The Life of Alexander*, 60.14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.2; QC. 8.14.44; Diodorus, *The Library*, 17.89.6.

<sup>3</sup> Cartledge, 2004; Roy, 2005; Lane Fox, 2004; Bosworth, 1988; Wood, 1997; Droysen, 2012; Tarn, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> QC. 8.13.5-13; Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.7.



presented in the both ancient and modern sources alike, to argue that Porus, just like Alexander, emerged a victor in the aftermath of an internecine battle. Specifically, I will be examining the perilous river crossing; the skirmish at the riverbank; the military capabilities of the Indian army, particularly the role played by the war elephant; and the surrender of Porus.

Upon second glance, a closer analysis of the events leading to the battle, the conflict itself, and its aftermath would indicate a situation which was starkly different from an easy Macedonian victory - I seek to clarify the reverse was true. Based upon my judgement of the battle's aftermath, the most viable outcome was a mutually beneficial conclusion for both belligerents resulting in the expansion of Porus' kingdom, and the establishment of at least one Greek polis on the Hydaspes. While modern sources may concede that the Hydaspes was the fiercest and most costly of Alexander's battles, I do not believe any available source material truly emphasises the tribulations encountered by the Macedonians. As such, scholarly opinion on the difficulty of the battle remains divisive with views ranging from an easy victory embellished into a grand struggle, to a hard won battle.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Alexander's victory at the Hydaspes was incontrovertible. There are no credible ancient sources which offer any indication that Alexander was defeated by Porus. Any attempt to pursue this is erroneous; it propagates a negationist narrative, rewriting the outcome of the battle as it was outlined by ancient textual evidence. Irrespective of what truly occurred, the circumstances were such that Alexander perceived the conclusion of the battle as a victory, and Indian historians would be remiss to ignore this in favour of Porus' status.

The battle itself had several eminent ramifications, immediate and gradual which benefitted both belligerents, cementing their footing as victors in the conflict's aftermath. Alexander's triumph resulted in the establishment of two cities, Bucephala and Nicaea on the banks of the Hydaspes - to commemorate his fallen horse and celebrate his triumph, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Several silver coins would be issued during his lifetime depicting his conquest of the Indus Valley. Porus' realm was expanded to the Hyphasis by the Macedonian army, granting him dominion over lands he previously desired, but never held and he was reconciled with his erstwhile adversary, Taxiles, through a marriage alliance.<sup>7</sup> However, when faced with unrest amongst the Macedonian contingents of his army at the Hyphasis, Alexander abandoned the Indus Valley, leaving Porus as the undisputed dominant power in the eastern frontier of his empire, and departed for the Persian heartland. Taxiles gained nothing from the Macedonians whom he served loyally and never gained the autonomy which Porus exercised over a vast buffer zone. The satrapies which Alexander established swiftly crumbled in the aftermath of his death and the Macedonians relinquished any

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<sup>5</sup> English, 2010; Prakash, 1994; Holt, 2003; Lane Fox, 2004; Devine, 1986; Bosworth, 1988; Tarn, 1948.

<sup>6</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.4.

<sup>7</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.2.1; QC. 9.3.22.

territory east of the Indus by 323, leaving it in the hands of Porus and Taxiles, granting the former even further control over the lower Indus Valley until his demise.<sup>8</sup>

In the decades after Alexander's demise, an attempted invasion of the Indus Valley under Seleucus Nicator was thwarted by Chandragupta Maurya in the little known Mauryan-Seleucid War, with a homogeneous outcome to Alexander and Porus' conflict at the Hydaspes. Seleucus ceded vast tracts of land to Chandragupta in exchange for a number of war elephants and a marriage alliance was arranged to cease hostilities between the two imperial powers, ensuring a mutually beneficial arrangement.<sup>9</sup>

### **Achaemenid India cc. 522-331 BC**

To comprehend the boundaries of India as it was known in the late fourth century BC, the historian must refer to earlier Achaemenid sources, in the form of textual evidence and archaeological discoveries. The available information is somewhat scanty, and the extent of Achaemenid sovereignty over the Indus Valley is dubious, generating no shortage of controversy, thus complicating an accurate reconstruction of the Achaemenid satrapies in India and their locations. A lack of documentation on Achaemenid India by Alexander's contemporaries suggests the invasion was either forgotten or transitory, failing to produce a noticeable impact. Even the precise role of the Achaemenids in the Indian subcontinent is an esoteric matter, and few historians have actively sought to ascertain the nature of Achaemenid interactions with the Indians. With this in mind, I seek to establish the borders of the Achaemenid satrapies in India, and the nature of relations between Indians and Achaemenids to provide a suitable framework for a through analysis of Alexander's own satrapal arrangements along his eastern frontier. Moreover, an establishment of Achaemenid borders will reinforce my hypothesis for the Hyphasis mutiny.

There are three satrapies in Achaemenid India which can be identified: Gandhara, Sattagydia and Hindush.<sup>10</sup> Upon the accession of Darius I in 522, the *Behistun Inscription* recorded Gandhara and Sattagydia as Persian territories.<sup>11</sup> The *Naqsh-e-Rostam* inscription commemorating Darius I's achievements recorded Gandhara, Sattagydia and Hindush as Achaemenid satrapies.<sup>12</sup> Of the aforementioned provinces, Gandhara is the easiest to locate, and there is little to suggest its locus

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<sup>8</sup> Diod. 18.3.2; Diod. 18.39.6.

<sup>9</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, 15.2.9; Plut. *Alex.* 62.4.

<sup>10</sup> Vogelsang, 1990, p. 98; Briant, 2002, p. 173; Bosworth, 1996, p. 154.

<sup>11</sup> Darius I, *Behistun Inscription*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Lecoq, 1997, p. 220.

differed from the historical Gandhara region, placing it along the Kabul River and Peshawar Valley. This information can be corroborated by Sanskrit sources, including the *Rigveda* and *Mahabharata* which identified Gandhara as one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas, or great kingdoms spanning across the ancient Indian subcontinent.<sup>13</sup> Although scholars have debated the precise location of Hindush, the lexical similarities its name bears to the Sanskrit term Sindhu and Greek noun 'Indos' strongly indicate a geographical boundary centred around the Indus river, either south of Gandhara, or along the lower Indus Valley. Since Cyrus' Indian conquests only encompassed Sattagydia and Gandhara, the lower Indus Valley appears to be a feasible location and Hindush is likely Sindh in Pakistan.<sup>14</sup> Sattagydia is regarded as the most controversial of the eastern Persian satrapies and its precise location remains ambiguous. A variety of feasible sites have been proposed, most notably Kabul in Afghanistan, or Multan in Pakistan, although recent scholarly consensus has disregarded the latter as a feasible site.<sup>15</sup> A paucity of source material describing Sattagydia has proven a hindrance, although Magee thought Sattagydia was the satrapy which Barzaentes, the satrap of Arachosia fled to during Alexander's invasion which would place it east of the Indus.<sup>16</sup>

The motives for Darius' invasion are credited by Chakravarti to be directly linked to a desire to bolster his lines of communication and for economic factors.<sup>17</sup> Rather interestingly, this second assertion appears to be valid if one places their faith in Herodotus and his account of the Persian satrapies. The satrapy of Hindush, generally regarded as the lower Indus Valley, was alleged to pay 360 talents of gold dust in annual tribute, testifying its economic value to the Achaemenids.<sup>18</sup> This incredible sum of wealth exceeded the combined tribute paid by Gandhara and Sattagydia, and even the imperial centre was not taxed so heavily.<sup>19</sup> Although Alexander's chroniclers ignored any reference to tribute in the lower Indus Valley, the kingdom of Musicanus was described as the wealthiest in India, implying there is a grain of truth contained within Herodotus' anecdote.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Rigveda*, 1.126.7; *Mahabharata*, 1.103.10; Fabrègues, 2006, p. 71; Khorikyan, 2016, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Dandamayev, 1989, p. 147; Olmstead, 1948, p. 145; Khorikyan, 2016, p. 28; Smith, 1914, p. 38; Bivar, 2008, p. 204.

<sup>15</sup> Magee and Petrie, 2007, p. 15; Vogelsang, 1990, p. 98; Briant, 2002; Bivar, 2008, p. 200; Fleming, 1982, p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> Petrie and Magee, 2007, p. 11; QC. 8.13.3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Chakravarti, 1982, p. 167; Salles, 1996, p. 256.

<sup>18</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, 3.94.2.

<sup>19</sup> Hdt. 3.91.4.

<sup>20</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.15.5.

Thus, having evaluated the geographical boundaries and nature of Indo-Achaemenid relations, another examination of the eastern Achaemenid satrapies in the years preceding Alexander's invasion requires evaluation. Although some historians emphasise the absence of Persian rule in the Indus Valley, this view does not appear to bear much credence.<sup>21</sup> During his commentary of the battle of Gaugamela fought in 331, Arrian noted the presence of various Indians in the Persian formation.<sup>22</sup>

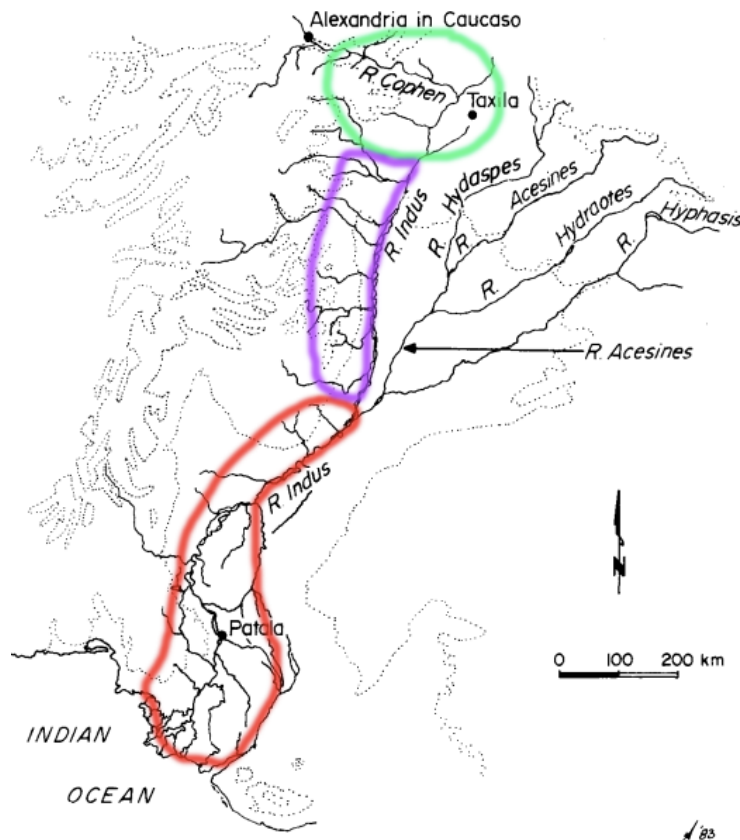


Figure 1: Achaemenid Indian satrapies (Gandhara: green; Sattagydia: purple; Hindush: red). Adapted from Bosworth, 1983, p. 46.

Contrary to the opinions of those who believed Achaemenid influence in India had ebbed, the composition of Darius' army plainly states otherwise. The actual extent of Achaemenid influence appears to be confined to the regions west of the Indus, synonymous with Gandhara. Ascertaining the nature of Achaemenid relations with the Indians is now made a possibility with Arrian's commentary. The Indians would be left to their own devices, but still subject to the satraps of adjacent provinces and required to provide military assistance when called upon. Continued payment of tribute was not beyond the realm of possibility, although it has not been documented. Pinpointing the borders of Bessus' control is relatively straightforward - the Indians bordering upon the Bactrians were undeniably the inhabitants of Gandhara when examining their geographical

<sup>21</sup> Singh, 2009, p. 456; Maniscalco, 2021, p. 122; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 331.

<sup>22</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.3; Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.4; Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.6.

proximity. A mystifying subject is the location of the Indians commanded by Barzaentes. Abisares' realm could be presented as a viable locus for these so called Mountain Indians, although several historians favour the realm of Sambus, contiguous with Arachosia.<sup>23</sup>



*Figure 2: Indian soldiers on the tomb of King Xerxes I. (L-R: Sattagydia, Gandhara and Hindush)*

Be that as it may, what can be confirmed is the boundaries of Achaemenid India never seemed to penetrate the Hydaspes, and Taxila was certainly the eastern frontier of the empire. East of this archaic city, there were virtually no traces of Achaemenid sovereignty. The three satrapies of Gandhara, Hindush and Sattagydia were situated along the western banks of the Indus which served as an imperial frontier while informal control was maintained over the Indian populace inhabiting these provinces. Both Gandhara and Sattagydia remained under Achaemenid control during Alexander's Persian campaign. With an understanding of the territories which comprised Achaemenid India, it is salient to comprehend the definition of India and alterations of the term over the course of history.

<sup>23</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3; Petrie and Magee, 2007, p. 13; Maniscalco, 2021, p. 126.

## **Redefining India**

Of utmost importance is the establishment of a redefined interpretation when discussing Indic terminology. Particularly in modern times, the term India, denoting the present day nation is inapplicable to Alexander's invasion. This is due to the boundaries of Alexander's empire in comparison to those of India - the Macedonian Empire occupied but a tract of land in the modern Indian state of Punjab. As such, these modern evaluations impact the scope of his campaign and the lens through which it is viewed. Prior to the Macedonian foray into the lands east of the Indus, knowledge of this distant and mysterious land was first made available to the Hellenic world through the Achaemenids and various expeditions launched under the authority of the Great King, particularly those of Ctesias of Cnidus and Scylax of Caryanda.<sup>24</sup> In a broad sense, delineating the boundaries of what defined "India" to the Macedonians mirrored earlier Achaemenid concepts. Achaemenid "India" can best be defined as the lands along and contiguous to the Indus, divided into the three satrapies of Gandhara, Hindush and Sattagydia.<sup>25</sup> Naturally, Alexander's perceptions of India would bear little difference to those of his predecessors, and was shaped by his tutelage under Aristotle at Mieza.<sup>26</sup> However, the geographical boundaries of India altered when the Macedonians were informed about the Ganges.<sup>27</sup>

Reframing Alexander's battle with Porus and the Indian campaign from a modern perspective is a complicated matter, exacerbated by alterations in borders over the course of history. This has certainly influenced the perspective of various Indian scholars on the subject of Alexander's invasion, who viewed it as a transitory raid which culminated in a failure to gain a secure foothold within the Indian subcontinent.<sup>28</sup> Indian historiography is therefore a product of its times, marred by the present day boundaries of the nation, drawn up hastily in 1947 at the conclusion of the British Raj. Even Pakistani and western historians who have written on the matter confine Alexander's activities within the Indian subcontinent to the modern nation of Pakistan.<sup>29</sup> Alexander's impact upon present day India was in name only.

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<sup>24</sup> Karttunen, 2017, p. 27. Stoneman, 2018, pp. 28-35; Tarn, 1948, p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Rapson, 1914, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Bosworth, 1993, p. 421.

<sup>27</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.21.3; Diod. 17.91.1.

<sup>28</sup> Singh, 2009, p. 456; Narain, 1965, p. 162; Raychaudhuri, 1927, p. 162; Tripathi, 1939, p. 370; Mookerji, 1943, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> Ahsan, 1997; Green, 1974, p. 427; Singh, 2009, p. 456; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 331.

To construct a thorough comprehension of ancient Indian history, it is crucial to undertake a rigorous study of the land in question and its topography. Retrojecting to Vedic times, the term *Sapta Sindhu* referred to a land of seven rivers, also called the *Haptahendū* in the Persian *Avesta*, suggesting the presence of six tributaries flowing into the Indus - whether this was the Kabul or Saraswati is debatable, but ultimately a moot point.<sup>30</sup> Even the etymology of the term Punjab is somewhat misleading, as is the term India. Initially derived from the Sanskrit *Panchanada*, or Persian 'panj' and 'ab', translating to five and waters, respectively, its geographical boundaries and definition have altered over time.<sup>31</sup> In antiquity, the Punjab itself earned its name from the five rivers which flow into the Sindhu/Indus and find mention in Indian literary sources - Vitasta/Hydaspes, Chandrabhaga/Acesines, Iravati/Hydraotes, Vipasa/Hyphasis and Satadru/Hesudrus.<sup>32</sup> This area can be identified as the region between the Thar Desert of Rajasthan and the Himalayan mountain range. The Mughal province of Punjab differed to the British Punjab province prior to the partition of India - it contained six rivers and was centred at Lahore in modern Pakistan.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Fourth Century BC Indus Valley**

With a greater understanding of Persian influence in the regions adjacent to the Indus river and an Indian perspective on the land, an examination of the political climate is necessary in order to set the scene for Alexander's foray. Best explained by N. C. Raychaudhuri, the political framework of the Indus Valley differed to that of Magadha in the Gangetic regions.<sup>34</sup> Comprised of numerous petty kingdoms and tribal confederates, the absence of a central power enabled these minor entities to thrive, presenting Alexander with an equal number of advantages and quandaries during his invasion. Characterised by perpetual warfare since the Vedic age, the inhabitants of this land were renowned for their military prowess, and it must be understood that the Hydaspes was just one of many battles fought in this turbulent region.<sup>35</sup> For the Macedonians, it was a phenomenon; for the Indians, it was simply another conflict. Annexing minor kingdoms was ostensibly a simple undertaking, although uniting a fragmented land was a taxing endeavour.

Ambhi of Taxila, the ruler of a kingdom situated in eastern Gandhara was instrumental during Alexander's invasion and sparked the battle of the Hydaspes. Dubbed Omphis/Taxiles by Greek

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<sup>30</sup> Grewal, 2008, p. 2; McLagan, 1885, p. 705; Ray, 2017, p. 3; Savarkar, 1923, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> McLagan, 1885, p. 705; Ray, 2017, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ray, 2017, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Grewal, 2008, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Raychaudhuri, 1952, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Bonnerjea, 1934, pp. 33-34; Hume, 1916, pp. 31-33; Roy, 2007, p. 234.

sources, Ambhi had allied himself with Alexander since 329 when the latter was in Sogdiana, encouraging his father to earn Alexander's trust.<sup>36</sup> Taxiles was a dynastic name, bestowed upon the king of Taxila.<sup>37</sup> Ambhi, like his rivals in the Indus was driven by a desire to expand his own borders and proved his mettle as a cunning and influential political mastermind, having persuaded Alexander to attack his neighbour and rival, Porus of Paurava. The expansion of Taxiles' realm came prior to the battle when he was granted territory in western Gandhara, already pacified by Alexander and placed under the jurisdiction of Nicanor, satrap of the western Indus regions.<sup>38</sup>

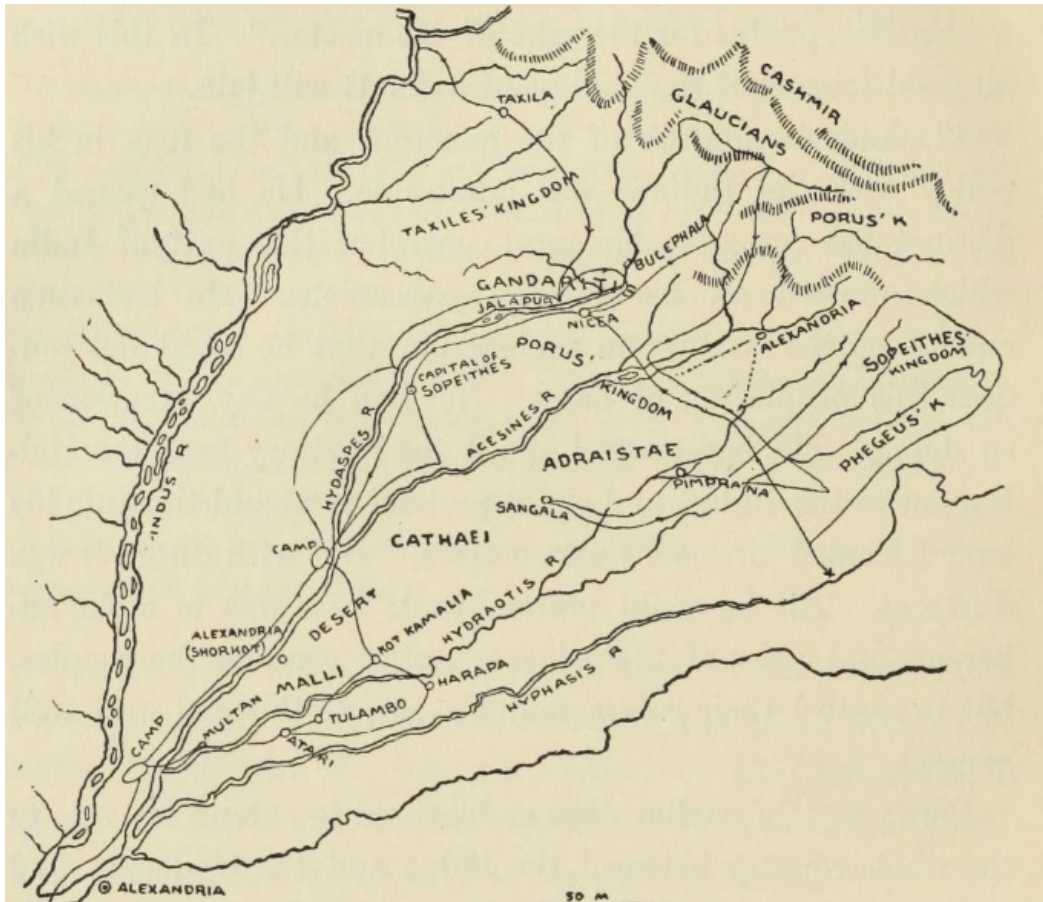


Figure 3: Locations of the tribes and petty kingdoms of the northern Indus Valley

Although the battle of the Hydaspes was regarded as a monumental event in Alexander's career, reframing it from an Indian perspective would diminish the magnitude of this battle. As it would happen, the sources disclose Alexander had arrived at the Indus Valley in the midst of an ongoing conflict between Taxiles and his rival neighbours, Porus and Abisares.<sup>39</sup> Pinpointing the precise

<sup>36</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.22.6; QC. 8.12.5-6.

<sup>37</sup> QC. 8.12.14.

<sup>38</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3; Bosworth, 1995, p. 260.

<sup>39</sup> QC. 8.12.12; Metz. 53.



boundaries of Porus' realm is an arduous undertaking, although it was situated between the Hydaspes and Acesines rivers, with the former dividing his kingdom from Taxila.<sup>40</sup> Regarding the hostilities between Porus and Taxiles, Arrian indicates they predated Alexander's arrival at the Indus, and he infers the nature of relations between kingdoms and tribes during Alexander's campaign.<sup>41</sup>

In ancient India, there was a practice known as Mandala in which kings would form alliances to maintain a balance of power and preserve their own interests.<sup>42</sup> Alliances did not seem uncommon, and Arrian noted that Porus had joined forces with Abisares before the Macedonian arrival to unsuccessfully capture Sangala and the Mallian territories, both of which would be pacified by Alexander.<sup>43</sup> Seeking to equalise the odds, Taxiles enlisted the assistance of the Macedonians, bolstering his military might. Although some Indian scholars vilify Taxiles for pledging his allegiance to a foreign invading force, it should not be forgotten that he was acting in defence of his kingdom, akin to Porus.<sup>44</sup> Both kings were acting in the best interest of their respective realms.

Indian revisionists such as Prakash and Pandey have made a case for Porus' alliance with Darius III during Gaugamela in 331.<sup>45</sup> At best, this belief is questionable and uncorroborated by any reliable source material detailing Alexander's campaigns. The notion that Porus' realm was initially subject to the Achaemenids during his lifetime is unlikely since there are no reliable documents or archaeological findings to verify this theory. A notable absence of Persian officials or customs east of the Hydaspes negates this belief.<sup>46</sup> With a thorough understanding of the context, political climate and geography of the region, the historian is now capable of viewing the battle itself, and its most contentious aspects through a different lens.

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<sup>40</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.4; Diod. 17.87.1; QC. 8.12.13.

<sup>41</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.7.

<sup>42</sup> Armour, 1922, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.22.2.

<sup>44</sup> QC. 8.12.12; Metz. 53.

<sup>45</sup> Pandey, 1971, pp. 1-7; Prakash, 1994, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> Maniscalco, 2021, p. 122; Lane Fox, 2004, pp. 331-348; Naiden, 2018, pp. 179-180.

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## Historiography

### **Indian Historiography**

With the onset of British colonialism, the image of Porus and his achievements saw a dramatic surge in popularity during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Attracting the attention of British explorers who sought to retrace Alexander's footsteps in the Punjab, Porus swiftly gained notoriety for his remarkable stature and nonpareil courage in the face of defeat.<sup>47</sup> Determined to battle the Macedonians until the bitter end, Porus refused to capitulate and his image was later compared to that of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the ruler of the Sikh Empire who was defeated by the British in the Anglo-Sikh Wars during the 1840s and similarly renowned for his bravery.<sup>48</sup> Almost a century later, historiography saw a decisive shift in favour of Porus, and for the first time, Indian historians established an alternate historical timeline in which Porus decisively defeated Alexander and forced the Macedonian conqueror to retreat from the Punjab, and return to Persia.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, other Indian scholars have agreed that Alexander defeated Porus, but his campaign was a debacle and failed to leave a lasting legacy.<sup>50</sup> These new branches of nationalist historiography emerged as counterattacks to colonialist historiography.

Moreover, Porus gained additional prominence during the Second World War, an event which was concurrent with the Quit India Movement, spearheaded by the Indian National Congress. A 1941 film titled *Sikandar* starring Prithviraj Kapoor and Sohrab Modi as Alexander and Porus, respectively, was notable for stirring anti-colonial sentiment among the Indian population, and perpetuated the narrative of the Indian defender repelling the foreign invader, and measures were taken to censor aspects of the film in India.<sup>51</sup> Despite the growth of an alternate narrative in which Porus defeated Alexander, the film adhered to the narrative established by the ancient sources in which an impressed Alexander returned Porus' kingdom to him after winning the battle. Like all historiographical narratives, this revisionist stance was undoubtedly shaped by the events of its time, namely the growth of an Indian national identity against western imperialism.

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<sup>47</sup> Vasunia, 2013, pp. 33-34.

<sup>48</sup> Hagerman, 2009, pp. 385-388; Vasunia, 2013, p. 97.

<sup>49</sup> Pandey, 1971; Prakash, 1994; Ahsan, 1997.

<sup>50</sup> Narain, 1965; Raychaudhuri, 1927; Tripathi, 1939; Mookerji, 1943; Majumdar, 1977; Singh, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Vasunia, 2013, p. 114; Wood, 1997, p. 195.

Even with the establishment of a new Indian nation in 1947, this alternate branch of history was espoused beyond India's borders. Its most notable proponent was Marshall Georgy Zhukov of the USSR who, in 1957, told Indian soldiers that he believed Alexander suffered an ignominious defeat in India and was forced to turn back.<sup>52</sup> Although an English translation of Zhukov's work is not procurable, the bias is discernible. By pitting the east against the west, Zhukov's outlook was a reflection of the Cold War which commenced less than a decade prior to his Indian sojourn. In more recent times, the school of thought advocating Alexander's defeat has undergone developments, chiefly under Buddha Prakash, Deena Pandey and Aitzaz Ahsan. However, the specious nature of these revisionist arguments must be brought to light. Scholars such as Prakash and Pandey have secured their arguments in disreputable material, namely the *Ethiopic Alexander Romance* and the *Shah Namah* of Firdausi.<sup>53</sup> Combining the *Shah Namah* with Arrian, Prakash argued that the enlargement of Porus' kingdom after the battle was tantamount to Alexander's defeat. However, Arrian's account never intimated a Macedonian defeat, and the historical credence of both the *Alexander Romance* and *Shah Namah* is inferior to that of earlier source material. Neither account is reliable, although some western historians such as Lane Fox have suggested the latter may contain a grain of truth.<sup>54</sup>

With the growing eminence of Porus as a historical Indian figure since the nineteenth century, I find it pertinent to establish a veracious term for Porus and his cultural heritage. Purely from a historiographical standpoint, the identity of Porus is often key to his portrayal as a character, and Indian scholars have emphasised the Indian identity of Porus.<sup>55</sup> However, viewing Porus as an Indian figure is a more complex concept than one might initially assume. The primary reason for this difficulty is the evolving definition of an Indian, a term which has undergone significant alterations over the course of history. From an entirely modern outlook, identifying Porus as an Indian seems baffling. If we were to view Porus from a modern, twenty-first century perspective, he would be Pakistani since the original borders of his realm were located within that country. Conversely, from a colonial era standpoint, one could argue that Porus was indeed an Indian since this was prior to the partition of India.

Nonetheless, these historical views are unsatisfactory, and in order to construct a judicious verdict of Porus' identity, it is crucial to examine the milieu in which he lived. Although arguments can be

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<sup>52</sup> Jankiraman, 2020.

<sup>53</sup> Prakash, 1994, p. 63; Pandey, 1971, pp. 1-7.

<sup>54</sup> Lane Fox, 2004, pp. 360-361.

<sup>55</sup> Jankiraman, 2020; Mookerji, 1943; Narain, 1965; Prakash, 1994; Raychaudhuri, 1927; Tripathi, 1939.  
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made that Hinduism and an Indian identity are synonymous, such an outlook is not viable.<sup>56</sup> That Porus was a Hindu king is assured, since the practitioners of Buddhism and Jainism eschewed warfare.<sup>57</sup> Retrojecting to the fourth century BC, when the concept of India did not exist, we can safely assume Porus himself would not identify as an Indian. His identity and nationality would be that of his clan, the Pauravas, and he would view himself as such - his lineage can be traced back to the Vedic texts.<sup>58</sup> However, from an ancient Greco-Macedonian perspective, Porus was very much an Indian in every sense of the word. He was an inhabitant of the country dubbed Indike by the Greeks which spanned over both sides of the Indus.<sup>59</sup> Although historians both modern and ancient are eager to emphasise Porus' identity as an Indian, he was a Paurava and can be ethnically classified as Punjabi - the term Indian should be approached with caution. When I use the term Indian in this thesis, it is referring to India as the Greek world perceived it - the regions of the Indus Valley, and later the Gangetic plains, unless stated otherwise.

A complete absence of any Indian evidence, textual or otherwise, presents the historian with several difficulties. Forced to rely solely on Greek and Roman interpretations of the event, one is immediately confronted by a bias which heavily favoured Alexander and the Macedonians. Historical events were seldom recorded in ancient India and any semblance of a chronology was nonexistent; the earliest discovered evidence about India's great emperor, Chandragupta Maurya originated from Greek accounts.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Indian sources have never mentioned Alexander or the battle, diminishing the scope of his achievements from an eastern perspective.<sup>61</sup> Considering that available texts on Alexander were written by historians who had access to primary material, their reliability is questionable in places, but their value as eyewitnesses compensates for any inherent biases one might expect to find. Therefore, assessing the outcome of the battle from both angles is rendered impossible and historians are compelled to work only with the available material to form an impartial judgement. Moreover, an examination of events from an Indian perspective becomes increasingly difficult, but not impossible.

Although Greek historians are eager to advocate Porus' position as the dominant reigning figure in the Punjab with a vast army under his control, there is a strong likelihood that the reality of the

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<sup>56</sup> Anderson and Longkumer, 2018, p. 374. Modern Hindu nationalists do not differentiate between an Indian identity and their religious beliefs.

<sup>57</sup> Naiden, 2018, pp. 190-191.

<sup>58</sup> Gonda, 1956, p. 133; Rayachaudhuri, 1952, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup> Arrian, *Indica*, 1.1-2; Str. 15.1.11-12.

<sup>60</sup> Rapson, 1914, pp. 16-20.

<sup>61</sup> Thapar, 2008, p. 291.

situation was otherwise.<sup>62</sup> Unlike his contemporaries, Chandragupta Maurya and Dhana Nanda who have received mention in Indian sources, there is no available information on Porus from ancient India.<sup>63</sup> Other regional powers encountered by Alexander in the Indus Valley, such as Taxiles, Abisares and Sopeithes find no mention in Indian sources either. It implies an embellishment of Porus' influence and power to aggrandise Alexander's victory at the Hydaspes. A narrative where Alexander defeated a minor Indian king would be an underwhelming tale when compared to his earlier triumphs over the Achaemenids who could field a greater number of forces than Alexander.<sup>64</sup>

Likewise, the scale of the battle as it has been presented in textual evidence was assuredly exaggerated to magnify the extent of Alexander's campaign. This argument has been proposed by some Indian scholars to dispute the scale of the conflict by drawing direct comparisons between the Macedonian incursion and future invasions through the Khyber Pass which amounted to little more than evanescent raids along the borders of what was once British India.<sup>65</sup> The ancient sources are not to be trusted blindly, particularly on the subject of military figures and casualties.

### **Alexandrian Historiography**

Having examined the nature of Indian scholarship and considered the problems associated with a lacuna in the Indian narrative from an ancient perspective, the wealth of information available on Alexander requires reevaluation. In fact, I believe the nature of these sources is crucial to proving why Alexander was not defeated by Porus. Of the extant sources which are treated as reliable wellsprings of information, there is Arrian's *Anabasis*, Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, Diodorus' *Library*, Curtius' *History of Alexander*, Strabo's *Geography*, Justin's *Epitome* and the *Metz Epitome* written by an unknown author. The aforementioned sources were written hundreds of years after Alexander's death. While one could argue that there may have been a conspiracy by historians to enshroud Alexander's alleged defeat at the Hydaspes, this argument seems contrived and rendered impossible by several factors.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Arr. *Ind.* 5.3. Arrian likened Porus to Chandragupta as a means of highlighting the latter's power and influence.

<sup>63</sup> Prakash, 1994, p. 91.

<sup>64</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 1.14.4; Arr. *Anab.* 2.8.8; Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.6.

<sup>65</sup> Stoneman, 2018, p. 377. Recalling Nehru's speech on Alexander which likened his invasion to a raid; Narain, 1965, p. 163; Majumdar, 1977, p. 102.

<sup>66</sup> Tripathi, 1939, p. 356.

For one, the secondary sources all relied upon varying sources of information, and they all lived and operated in different eras and locations. Secondly, the surviving accounts on Alexander drew their own knowledge from Alexander's contemporaries who had documented his exploits in the Punjab. These earlier sources consisted of Ptolemy son of Lagus, Aristobulus of Cassandreia, Nearchus of Crete, Onesicritus of Astypalaea and the enigmatic Cleitarchus along with several others such as Chares of Mytilene. While these sources were known to exaggerate various events, they too wrote autonomously and at different times to each other, further reducing the possibility of a conspiracy.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, with so many varying accounts, one would expect to find a single source of information alleging that Alexander was defeated by Porus, but nothing of this nature exists. Vital information describing Indian ethnography and geography which supplemented the lost accounts of the Macedonian king's entourage was supplied by Megasthenes, the first Greek to venture beyond the Ganges.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, it is crucial to enrich our understanding of the various writers who described Alexander's exploits to identify their merits and deficiencies as informants.

### **Ptolemy, Son of Lagus**

As an eyewitness to Alexander's exploits and holding a position as one of the Companions in the Macedonian king's army, Ptolemy was unquestionably one of, if not, the most invaluable source on the study of Alexander's campaign, used by both Arrian and Curtius in their respective accounts. As a close friend of the king, he was inclined to favour Alexander.<sup>69</sup> His active role in the battlefield rightfully earned him credit as a reputable source of information on the battle, and he was often fighting alongside Alexander, or tasked with seemingly vital responsibilities.<sup>70</sup> However, Ptolemy as a source was not without significant hindrances. Most notably, he was known to embellish the magnitude of his contributions. Key examples of this included his fierce clash with the tribes of Gandhara, and later at the Hydaspes where he held Porus' attention at the riverbank according to Curtius which was contradicted by Arrian.<sup>71</sup>

Maximising his own contributions at the expense of his rivals, Ptolemy proved to be a prejudiced informant during the battle of the Hydaspes and despite his value as a military source, his writing was peppered with political biases. Plutarch had described a bitter feud between Ptolemy's friend, Hephaestion and Craterus, and the lingering effects of their quarrel became prominent in Curtius'

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<sup>67</sup> Zambrini, 2011, p. 212.

<sup>68</sup> Bosworth, 1996, p. 120.

<sup>69</sup> Brown, 1949, p. 236.

<sup>70</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.24.3-8; Arr. *Anab.* 5.13.1; Arr. *Anab.* 5.23.7.

<sup>71</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.24.3-8; Arr. *Anab.* 5.23.7; QC. 8.13.27; Arr. *Anab.* 5.13.1.

narrative where Craterus' role at the Hydaspes was omitted entirely, something which Roisman overlooked in his analysis.<sup>72</sup> Writing decades after Alexander's death, roughly in the 280s, shortly before his own demise, Ptolemy had no need to fear Alexander's wrath if his commentary proved unsavoury. However, Ptolemy owed his position and prestige to Alexander, giving him little reason to slander the Macedonian king.<sup>73</sup>

Nonetheless, the span of time between the Indian campaign and the time of his writing proves incredibly problematic, especially when one considers Ptolemy was describing events which transpired forty years prior and relied solely on his memory. Naturally, there would be events omitted and one can safely assume that any speeches are either concoctions or riddled with flaws - ancient speeches in particular should not be readily accepted as genuine sources of information. Although generally accurate in substance, they would not be written in verbatim. However, Pearson believed Ptolemy cannot have committed military manoeuvres to memory and likely maintained a collection of letters with written orders and strategies.<sup>74</sup> However, I find this to be an implausible judgement since several decades had passed between the campaigns of Alexander and the onset of Ptolemy's writing, reducing the likelihood of him maintaining obsolete records. While Ptolemy's position as an eyewitness bolstered his authenticity, historians should remain wary of his overt political bias.

### **Aristobulus of Cassandreia**

Like Ptolemy, Aristobulus was another crucial primary source who was not only Alexander's contemporary, but prominent during the Indian campaign, deriving his value as an informant from his personal experiences. Very little about Aristobulus is known, although he lived past the age of 90 and began compiling his history of Alexander after the battle of Ipsus in 301 BC, although it is unclear how much time passed between the battle and the onset of his writing.<sup>75</sup> While his precise role in the battle of the Hydaspes was questionable, with many scholars disregarding his interpretation of the skirmish at the riverbank in lieu of Ptolemy's version, he remained an invaluable authority on the Indian campaign. Although he was not a soldier, Aristobulus was an engineer with a fascination for Alexander's military exploits - Arrian hints at his profession when Aristobulus was tasked with repairing Cyrus' tomb in Persepolis.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 47.11; Roisman, 1984, p. 385.

<sup>73</sup> Roisman, 1984, p. 384.

<sup>74</sup> Pearson, 1960, p. 194.

<sup>75</sup> Albaladejo Vivero, 2020, p. 99; Zambrini, 2011, p. 218; Badian, 1971, p. 39.

<sup>76</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.29.10.

I would argue his bias was conceivably heavier than Ptolemy's. After the battle of the Granicus River in 334, Aristobulus noted the Macedonians casualties as 34 soldiers, an unbelievably low number.<sup>77</sup> However, much of Aristobulus' value as a source stemmed from his descriptions of Indian culture and geography, dwelling upon the strangest customs he encountered, earning worth as the first writer to discuss Taxila's customs.<sup>78</sup> In describing the contents of Aristobulus' lost account, Beggiora erroneously claims Aristobulus focused extensively on military operations, inferring that any ethnographic knowledge on the Indians cannot be derived from Aristobulus.<sup>79</sup> Akin to Ptolemy, Aristobulus also wrote decades after Alexander's death which presents the same problems as Ptolemy's lost account. Although Aristobulus wrote before Ptolemy, there is nothing definitive to suggest Ptolemy borrowed information from Aristobulus, or had access to his writings.

Nonetheless, the hagiographic nature of Aristobulus' commentary was perceptible, and he was a flatterer of Alexander, often selecting the kinder narrative when compared to Ptolemy. Best evidenced by the death of Callisthenes, Ptolemy attributed his death to torture and crucifixion, while Aristobulus claimed he was taken as a prisoner by the army and accompanied them until he succumbed to disease.<sup>80</sup> Naturally, with two diametrically opposing views on the mysterious demise of Alexander's official historian, modern historians are presented with a dilemma and it is impossible to ascertain which version is correct. Unlike Ptolemy, he was more prone to embellishment, the best example being his alleged description of Alexander spearing Porus' elephant in single combat, an account which Alexander was said to have criticised during the retreat from the Punjab.<sup>81</sup> However, despite Aristobulus' tendency to romanticise, his works surely maintained a strongly reliability since he was one of Arrian's main sources alongside Ptolemy - Arrian saw reason to place faith in Aristobulus.

### **Onesicritus of Astypalaea**

Onesicritus of Astypalaea was another of Alexander's contemporaries, typically regarded as the most sycophantic and generally untrustworthy of the primary sources, dwelling primarily upon exaggeration and fantastical accounts.<sup>82</sup> A steersman in Alexander's ship during the voyage down

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<sup>77</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 16.15; Arr. *Anab.* 1.16.4.

<sup>78</sup> Beggiora, 2017, p. 248.

<sup>79</sup> Beggiora, 2017, p. 240.

<sup>80</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.14.3; Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.9.

<sup>81</sup> Lucian, *How to Write History*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Nawotka, 2019, p. 3; Pearson, 1960, p. 86.



the Indus, Onesicritus attracted criticism from the geographer Strabo for his fascination with marvels.<sup>83</sup> Pertaining to the battle of the Hydaspes, his commentary appears to be minimal, although his remarks are generally frowned upon as fictitious inventions and he was the only historian who attributed Bucephalus' death to senility.<sup>84</sup> Unlike Ptolemy, the nature of his writing deviated from military matters with a preference for geography and natural wonders like Aristobulus. When compared to Aristobulus, the embellishment in his writing was discernible - where Aristobulus described a pair of serpents as 9 cubits in length, Onesicritus claimed they were 80 and 140 cubits respectively.<sup>85</sup> Naturally, modern scholars are quick to dismiss Onesicritus as a trustworthy informant, and for good reason.<sup>86</sup>

Despite his fixation on the marvellous and fantastical, Onesicritus was credited to blend fact and fiction inextricably, complicating the historian's task of separating the two.<sup>87</sup> Most notably, Onesicritus is thought to be responsible for the idealisation of Indian kingdoms which can be gleaned from the sources, especially those of Musicanus and Sopeithes.<sup>88</sup> With the former's kingdom, a Hellenic bias is prevalent whereby Onesicritus likened the realm of Musicanus to Sparta, attempting to cast a Hellenic veil over an Indian settlement, thereby diminishing its standing as an Indian territory.<sup>89</sup> Through this erroneous comparison, our understanding of Hellenic historiographical limitations is enriched. Additionally, the kingdoms which did receive praise from Onesicritus were renowned for their systems of governance which incorporated aristocratic and even democratic elements, drawing an implicit comparison to various Greek poleis. The issues associated with Onesicritus shine through, evidenced by criticism levied against him in secondary sources. If ancient historians were sceptical about the nature of his writing, modern scholars should exercise similar levels of caution.

### **Cleitarchus**

As a primary source, Cleitarchus remains the most enigmatic figure. Of his surviving fragments, there is very little information, subsequently limiting our knowledge of his literary style as a historian and individual. It is impossible to determine whether he accompanied Alexander to India,

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<sup>83</sup> Pearson, 1960, pp. 83-86.

<sup>84</sup> Plut. 61.1.

<sup>85</sup> Str. 15.1.28; Arora, 2005, p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> Pearson, 1960, p. 111.

<sup>87</sup> Arora, 1992, p. 320; Pearson, 1960, p. 110.

<sup>88</sup> Arora, 2005, p. 58; Bichler, 2019, p. 51.

<sup>89</sup> Bichler, 2019, p. 65.

although he was rebuked for unreliability and embellishment as a source. However, Cleitarchus remained a prominent figure within the age of the Romans and was relied upon by secondary sources including Curtius, Diodorus and Plutarch. It is heavily postulated that he bore a strong influence on the vulgate tradition consisting of Curtius, Diodorus and Justin as their chief influence.<sup>90</sup> A shared figure within the writings of both Curtius and Diodorus which originated from Cleitarchus testifies his propensity to inflate the magnitude of events. When describing the massacre in Sambus' kingdom along the Indus, Cleitarchus alleged that 80,000 Indians were slaughtered by the Macedonians.<sup>91</sup>

On the subject of Cleitarchean historiography, there is much debate when attempting to provide a feasible date for his writing with a strong variance in chronology proposed by modern scholarship. Pearson and Tarn thought Cleitarchus wrote much later, between 280-260, after Aristobulus, whereas Badian favoured an earlier date prior to 304.<sup>92</sup> Tarn's belief that Cleitarchus was not a contemporary of Alexander appears to be a plausible idea - Arrian does not seem to rely upon Cleitarchus as a source, suggesting he did not accompany the Macedonians. However, this does not prove Cleitarchus wrote after Ptolemy and Aristobulus. Rather, literary evidence would strongly imply Ptolemy's lost account was written after Cleitarchus. Ptolemy refuted his presence at the Mallian citadel when Alexander was grievously injured - a falsehood concocted by Cleitarchus which negates the belief of both Tarn and Pearson.<sup>93</sup> As with other primary sources, it is imperative to remember Cleitarchus was prone to exaggeration.

### **Megasthenes**

Although he did not accompany Alexander in 326, the ethnographer Megasthenes was generally regarded as one of the most trustworthy authorities on India in the ancient world. While he cannot be credited as an Alexander historian, Megasthenes' knowledge on the Gangetic regions of India was unparalleled in his time. Having served as an ambassador to Chandragupta, emperor of the Mauryan Empire, he benefitted from his personal experience of being the first Greek to venture beyond the Ganges, bolstering the value of his lost writings. His sojourn to the Mauryan capital of Palimbothra east of the Ganges provided Megasthenes with the opportunity to report on the customs and geographical marvels he encountered. Although much of his work is now lost, it was

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<sup>90</sup> Zambrini, 2011, p. 216.

<sup>91</sup> QC. 9.8.15; Diod. 17.102.6.

<sup>92</sup> Hamilton, 1961, p. 448; Pearson, 1960, p. 242; Tarn, 1948, p. 127; Badian, 1971, p. 40.

<sup>93</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.11.8; QC. 9.5.21.

relied upon heavily by Arrian, Diodorus and Strabo, all of whom maintained strong interests in Indian ethnography and geography.<sup>94</sup>

Those who wrote on India were notorious for embellishment and a fascination with the marvels of India, and Megasthenes was no exception, taking inspiration from Onesicritus, and his predecessor Herodotus.<sup>95</sup> It is also thought Megasthenes' journey to Palimbothra introduced knowledge of the Ganges to the Hellenic world, and my inclination to uphold this view is firm.<sup>96</sup> The campaign spearheaded by Alexander was confined to the Indus Valley, and while the Macedonians were certainly aware of the Ganges in name, specific information pertaining to the river's dimensions and military statistics were likely introduced by Megasthenes himself.<sup>97</sup> It is unlikely that Megasthenes himself was at liberty to explore the Punjab and based his accounts on the findings of Alexander's contemporaries. For descriptions of the Punjab, he was only as reliable as the sources he used.

### **Secondary Sources**

With a reexamination of the value and hazards associated with primary historians, the secondary sources behove a concise evaluation of their own. All extant sources detailing Alexander's life were produced during the Roman age and are subsequently marred by their provenance, affecting Alexander's depiction in written material.<sup>98</sup> As with the lost accounts of the primary historians, the secondary writers all operated independently of one another in different locations and periods, once again nullifying the likelihood of a conspiracy to mask an alleged Macedonian defeat at the Hydaspes. These secondary historians consisted of Diodorus of Sicily, Arrian of Nicomedia, Quintus Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, Justin and the unnamed author of the *Metz Epitome*.<sup>99</sup> As Baynham has emphasised, historians could mould narratives to fit within the framework of their own agendas, but they remained faithful to the fundamental nature of their sources.<sup>100</sup> These Roman era historians all possessed access to the accounts of Alexander's contemporaries, and accounts of Alexander's characteristics were affected by Roman ideals - Alexander's courage and

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<sup>94</sup> Arr. *Ind.* 4.2; Diod. 2.35-2.42; Str. 15.1.20; Arora, 1991-1992, p. 307; Arora, 1982, p. 176; Majumdar, 1958, p. 274; Muntz, 2012, pp. 25-27.

<sup>95</sup> Arora, 1982, pp. 171-172.

<sup>96</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 275.

<sup>97</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 275.

<sup>98</sup> Baynham, 2009, p. 288.

<sup>99</sup> Zambrini, 2011, p. 211.

<sup>100</sup> Baynham, 2009, p. 291.

military prowess were commendable, but his adoption of eastern customs, inebriation and tyranny were odious traits. In the scope of Alexander's Indian campaign, examination of each historian's authenticity and overall value is paramount. Although Justin's *Epitome* and the *Metz Epitome* are credible secondary sources, they will only receive marginal consideration within the framework of this thesis and will be omitted from scrutiny since they are relatively brief.

### **Arrian of Nicomedia**

For the modern historian, Arrian is undoubtedly the most practical source for the study of Alexander and his Indian campaign. His *Anabasis* continues to be the most reliable account of Alexander's life to this day, although his trustworthiness should not be taken for granted and his work must still be subject to scrutiny.<sup>101</sup> The usefulness of Arrian's *Anabasis* stems from its superior detail, a strong focus on military tactics and imperial administration as well as a reliance on Alexander's contemporaries as his sources. For military matters such as the Hydaspes campaign, Arrian was inclined to select Ptolemy's narrative over Aristobulus, since the former accompanied Alexander.<sup>102</sup> Deviating from other historians who were snared by fantastical tales of India, Arrian's commentary was generally grounded in reality and he often dismissed myths, which bolstered his credibility.<sup>103</sup>

Hailing from Nicomedia, and active as a historian during the second century AD, he not only wrote the *Anabasis*, but also compiled a text on India and its inhabitants titled *Indica*. Built upon the primarily lost works of Megasthenes, whose account survives only in fragments, the *Indica* also derived its knowledge from the contemporaries of Alexander such as Nearchus of Crete and Onesicritus to a lesser extent, creating a comprehensive guide of India from a Hellenic perspective.<sup>104</sup> Despite drawing upon the accounts of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, it is difficult to pinpoint who said what, although I would argue that Arrian refrained from explicitly mentioning his sources when they agreed upon something.<sup>105</sup> Arora questioned Arrian's choice of source material for his *Indica*, criticising his reliance on outdated evidence by Alexander's entourage.<sup>106</sup> However, internal disruptions which affected both the Mauryan and Seleucid empires in 185 and 250 BC, respectively, restricted land access to India, reducing the flow of knowledge between east and

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<sup>101</sup> Bosworth, 1976, p. 139.

<sup>102</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.14.5.

<sup>103</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.28.2; Arr. *Anab.* 5.2.7; Arr. *Ind.* 5.10; QC. 8.10.12.

<sup>104</sup> Arrian, *Indica.* 3.6.

<sup>105</sup> Steele, 1919, p. 147.

<sup>106</sup> Arora, 1991-1992, p. 328.

west.<sup>107</sup> Although naval travel opened commercial relations between the Indians and Romans during the first century AD, direct contact was minimal with the Arabs monopolising much of the Indo-Roman trade which forced historians to rely on the bygone accounts of Megasthenes and Ctesias.<sup>108</sup>

Although his reliability as a historian is superior to his counterparts, Arrian was not without his flaws. A conscious imitation of Xenophon was one of these deficiencies, and one which pertained to his narrative of the Hydaspes. In this battle, Arrian had Alexander emulating the actions and personality of the first Achaemenid ruler, Cyrus.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, like his source Aristobulus, Arrian often opted for a kinder narrative which casted a favourable light upon Alexander. Best shown through his unique portrayal of Porus' surrender, this was a scenario which differed strongly from other accounts on the infamous event, and it was a stark contrast to the bloodbath Arrian had vividly described.<sup>110</sup> In addition to this, Arrian was prone to blindly accepting information at face value, ignoring Ptolemy's discernible bias during several occasions.<sup>111</sup> Howe disputed this point, believing Arrian's narrative was intended to counter Ptolemaic bias, although Arrian's description of Ptolemy's actions in Gandhara refute this claim.<sup>112</sup> Although I would argue that many of the flaws in Arrian's account can be attributed to his own sources, his inability to criticise his informants has attenuated his standing as a wholly reliable historian. For these reasons, the historian should exercise caution when utilising Arrian's account.

### **Diodorus of Sicily**

When collated with Arrian, Diodorus of Sicily has proven his reputation as a considerably less reliable source and a problematic one at that, forming part of the vulgate tradition along with Curtius.<sup>113</sup> Of the secondary sources, he is thought to be the first to write on Alexander with his accounts dated to the second half of the first century BC.<sup>114</sup> There remains a strong likelihood that Diodorus had the same sources as Arrian, sans Ptolemy, but their individual narratives are

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<sup>107</sup> Wittkower, 1942, p. 162.

<sup>108</sup> Wittkower, 1942, p. 163.

<sup>109</sup> Williams, 2021, p. 170.

<sup>110</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.4-6.

<sup>111</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.24.3-8; Arr. *Anab.* 5.23.7.

<sup>112</sup> Howe, 2017, p. 32; Arr. *Anab.* 4.24.3-5.

<sup>113</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 132. Tarn believed that a vulgate tradition with diametrically opposing views presented by Curtius and Diodorus could not exist.

<sup>114</sup> Zambrini, 2011, p. 211.

incredibly disparate, despite an adherence to the same overarching narrative.<sup>115</sup> Diodorus' literary style is a controversial matter, and it is often debated whether he emulated the accounts of others in verbatim, or if he possessed a unique methodology within his *Bibliotheca*.<sup>116</sup>

Additionally, the identity of his sources has remained a quarrelsome subject across western and Indian scholarship.<sup>117</sup> Of the sources he did use, scholars are widely in agreement that the Cleitarchean tradition was Diodorus' primary influence, although Tarn has disputed this.<sup>118</sup> The accuracy of Diodorus' account is reduced by careless mistakes and contradictory statements - in Book II, he described the Ganges as 30 stades in width, and 32 stades in Book XVII.<sup>119</sup> Diodorus' account eulogised Alexander, not dissimilar to Arrian, although he did not refrain from censuring the Macedonian king during the massacre of Indian mercenaries at Massaga.<sup>120</sup>

### **Quintus Curtius Rufus**

Pinpointing a feasible chronology for the written works of Curtius has been incredibly contentious amongst modern scholars.<sup>121</sup> Our knowledge of the historian is limited since the first two books of his *Historiae Alexandri Magni* are no longer available, and there are no references within the surviving account which reveal when he was active. Assessing his sources, he mentioned Cleitarchus explicitly, although he certainly employed Ptolemy and Aristobulus, evidenced by shared similarities with Arrian's account.<sup>122</sup> Errington thinks Ptolemy was known to Curtius, but the latter omitted him.<sup>123</sup> However, I do not find this to be a plausible assessment. Like Arrian, Curtius also fell victim to Ptolemaic bias, a careless error which lessened his overall reliability as a secondary source.<sup>124</sup> As with the other historians, it is crucial to gauge his benefits and failings as a

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<sup>115</sup> Steele, 1920, p. 295.

<sup>116</sup> Bigwood, 1980, p. 195; Arora, 1991-1992, p. 309; Drews, 1962, p. 383; Pearson, 1960, p. 217; Rubincam, 1998, p. 82.

<sup>117</sup> Majumdar, 1958, p. 274; Muntz, 2012, pp. 21-37; Pearson, 1960, pp. 224-225; Tarn, 1948, p. 102; Badian, 1971, p. 40.

<sup>118</sup> Hamilton, 1961, p. 458; Hammond, 2007, p. 108; Steele, 1920, p. 282; Heckel, 1994, p. 67; Tarn, 1948, pp. 102-129.

<sup>119</sup> Diodorus, *The Library*, 2.37.2; Diod. 17.93.2.

<sup>120</sup> Diod. 17.84.2.

<sup>121</sup> Steele, 1915, pp. 402-423; Tarn, 1948, p. 91; Zambrini, 2011, p. 211; Pearson, 1960, p. 217; Hamilton, 1988, p. 456; Devine, 1979, p. 150.

<sup>122</sup> QC. 9.5.21; Howe, 2017, pp. 25-40.

<sup>123</sup> Errington, 1969, p. 235.

<sup>124</sup> QC. 8.13.27.

source. When stepping back and assessing the intention of Curtius' narrative, it becomes readily apparent he wished to portray a specific image of Alexander for his readers, dwelling upon his negative aspects.<sup>125</sup> Deviating from the overwhelmingly positive portrayals provided by Arrian and Diodorus, this angle is equivalently practical and disadvantageous.

For one, it was particularly revealing of the reception to Alexander during Curtius' career as a historian, and Curtius own ideals can be discerned through his writing.<sup>126</sup> This stance on Alexander's personality was not atypical amongst the Romans who were known to view his adoption of Persian customs and tyranny with contempt.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, by casting light upon Alexander's unfavourable actions, it provided an impartial image, balancing the hagiographic descriptions of Arrian and Diodorus to produce a plausible account of Alexander's character.

### **Plutarch**

The historicity of Plutarch's writing is questionable although his motive to establish the validity of his account is perceptible, with modern scholarship preferring to label him as a pseudo-historian and biographer as opposed to a historian.<sup>128</sup> By contrasting the hagiographic narrative of Onesicritus with Alexander's letters during the river crossing, one may surmise Plutarch's aim was to emphasise his authenticity by citing Alexander as his source for the Hydaspes.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, Plutarch's status as a historian is contentious, for he is predominantly concerned with the characterisation of Alexander, differentiating his righteous actions from iniquitous episodes.<sup>130</sup> In the ancient world, character was thought to be a fixed concept, a belief which was prevalent throughout early Roman historiography.<sup>131</sup> However, Plutarch's narrative of Alexander deviated from this stereotype, instead presenting a figure who was corrupted over time by power and opulence.<sup>132</sup> While Plutarch's account provides inferior descriptions and is arguably less historical in nature, it does not detract from his overall value, evinced by a considerably impartial portrayal of Alexander.

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<sup>125</sup> QC. 8.12.17; QC. 8.13.26.

<sup>126</sup> Heckel, 1994, p. 76.

<sup>127</sup> O'Sullivan, 2016, p. 339.

<sup>128</sup> Howe, 2017, pp. 25-40; Harrison, 1987, p. 271; Scullard, 1974, p. 219.

<sup>129</sup> Plut. 60.7; Badian, 1958, p. 439; Hammond, 1988, p. 129; Howe, 2017, p. 17.

<sup>130</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 59.6-7; Plut. *Alex.* 60.15; Wardman, 1955, pp. 100-101.

<sup>131</sup> Gill, 1983, p. 469.

<sup>132</sup> Gill, 1983, p. 480; Hammond, 1993, p. 3.

## The Battle of the Hydaspes

### The Battlefield

Before delving into the specific details of the battle and its aftermath, the historian would benefit from a brief topographical analysis of the area to ascertain the location of the battlefield. Currently, one can only speculate where the battle of the Hydaspes took place, owing to an absence of archaeological findings and alterations in the course of the river over two millennia. The most cogent undertaking was that of Aurel Stein during the 1930s who sought to pinpoint the site of the battlefield through a combination of autopsy and descriptions provided by ancient historians such as Arrian.<sup>133</sup> While Vincent Smith thought Alexander crossed the Hydaspes at modern Bhuna, Stein favoured Jalalpur, where the lay of the land was in agreement with the description provided by ancient sources.<sup>134</sup> Although Stein was unable to identify the battlefield, the modern town of Mong is thought to be the site of the conflict.<sup>135</sup>

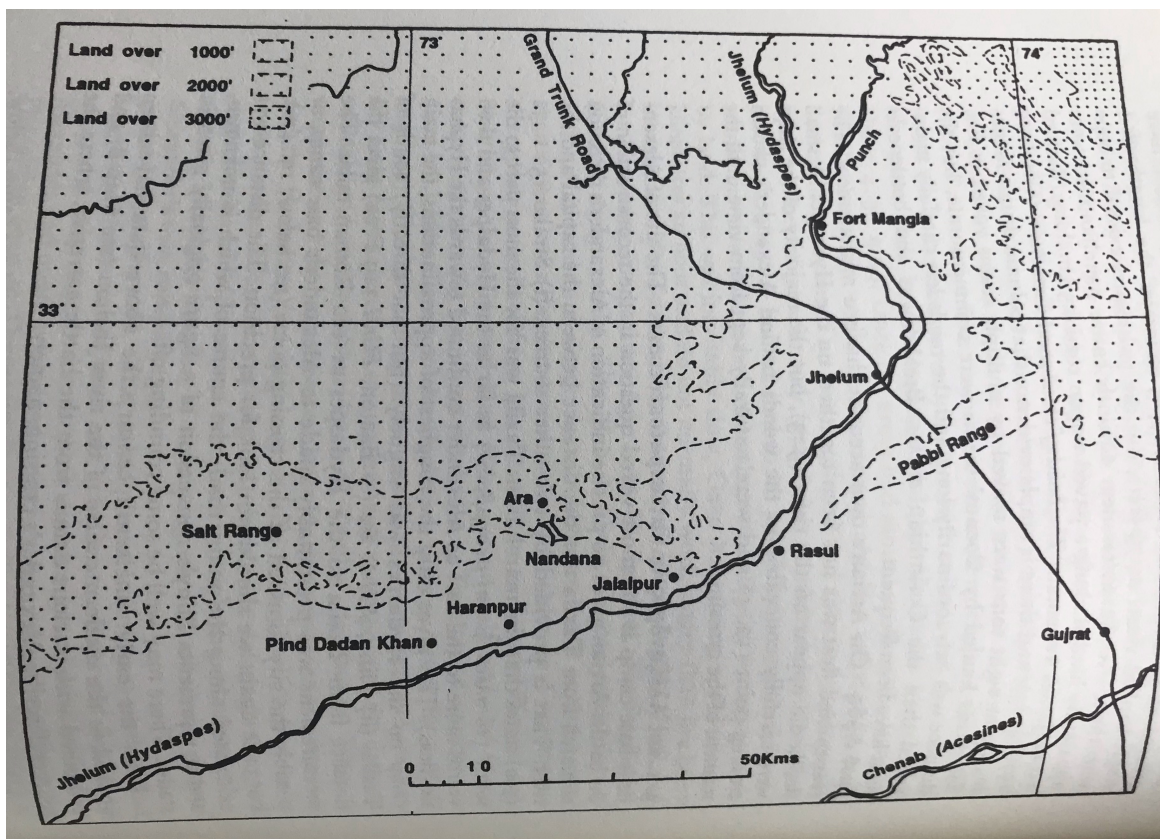


Figure 4: Topography of the Hydaspes

<sup>133</sup> Stein, 1932, pp. 31-46.

<sup>134</sup> Stein, 1932, p. 44; Smith, 1914, p. 67.

<sup>135</sup> Wood, 1997, p. 190.



### **Crossing the Hydaspes**

To fully comprehend the tactical difficulties of this battle, it is imperative to reassess Alexander's opening manoeuvre. Perhaps the most arduous task of the entire battle was its onset - Alexander's river crossing. It was this phase which the conflict itself rested upon, for no battle could be fought unless Alexander could overcome this natural barrier. Porus had no intention of crossing the river and was content to shadow the movements of the Macedonians, dissuading any attempts to reach the eastern bank by carefully guarding any fords - sites along the Hydaspes where Taxiles and the Macedonians could cross over. Barring the presence of his war elephants, this was the greatest advantage Porus possessed; if a battle was to be fought, the Macedonians would have to cross the river.

Nevertheless, both ancient and modern historians have attempted to curtail the risks by specifying the advantages provided by the seasonal Indian weather. By masking the sounds of Alexander's rudimentary fleet and obscuring their crossing, the stormy conditions and darkness proved to be an asset to the Macedonians.<sup>136</sup> In actuality, the electrical storm during the embarkation was a double edged sword, and although Plutarch's description of the weather is regarded as a fanciful invention of Alexander's flatterers, some modern historians are inclined to favour his account.<sup>137</sup>

Little light has been shed upon this clandestine river operation conducted by the Macedonian army, and modern scholarship has proven to be generally unhelpful.<sup>138</sup> After a voyage at dawn in the midst of a fog, a sizeable force of infantry and cavalry were led across the Hydaspes, crossing two islands abandoning their rafts to wade across the river until they reached the western frontier of Porus' realm.<sup>139</sup> Rivers were common barriers during Alexander's conquests, more prominent in the eastern territories of the Achaemenid Empire, although the waters of the Punjab were spectacles for Alexander's entourage, forming a vital facet of the Indian campaign.<sup>140</sup> Arrian, the

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<sup>136</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.12.3; QC. 8.13.23.

<sup>137</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 60.3-4;

<sup>138</sup> Bosworth, 1988, p. 128; Holt, 2003, p. 51; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 356; Naiden, 2019, p. 192; Stoneman, 2019, pp. 55-56; Tarn, 1948, p. 94; Wood, 1997, p. 186.

<sup>139</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.12.2-5.13.4.

<sup>140</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.29.2-4; Arr. *Anab.* 4.4.4-5.

most informative source on Alexander's battle reported the vessels at Alexander's disposal, although the *Metz Epitome* supplemented his commentary.<sup>141</sup>

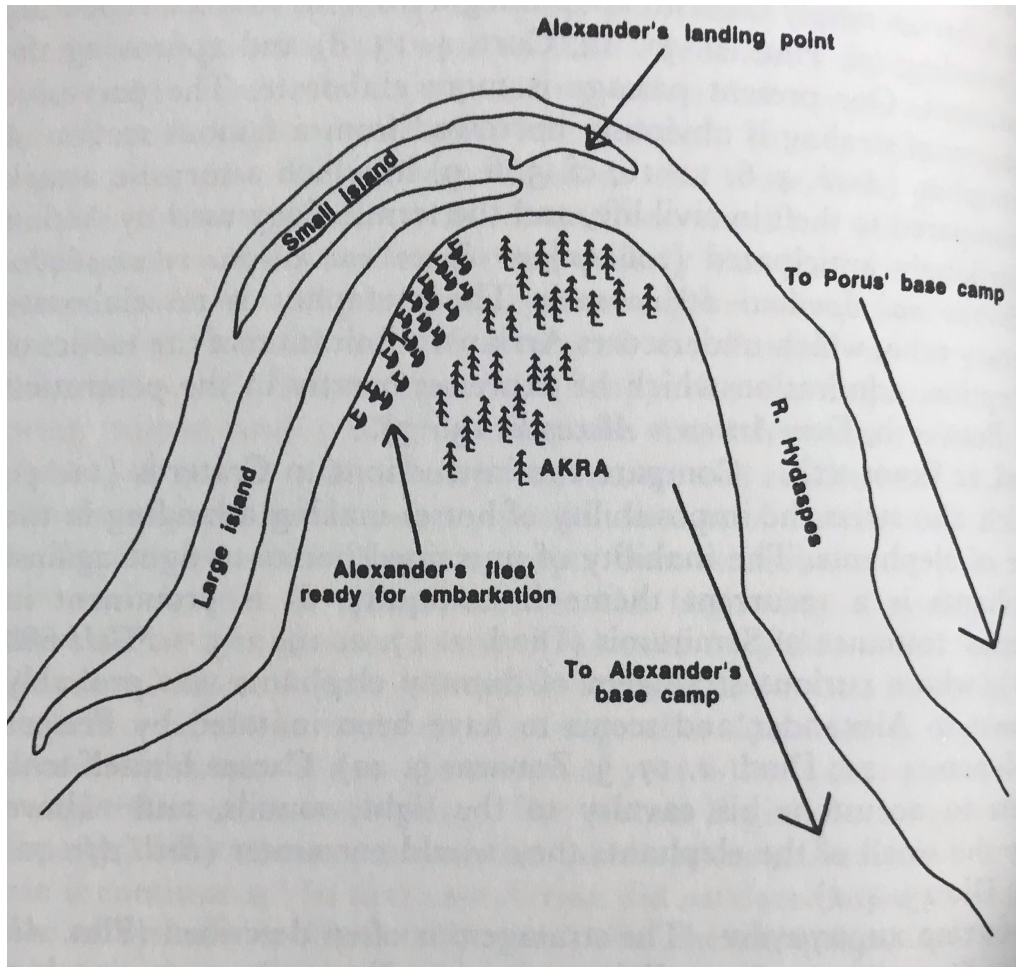


Figure 5: Sketch of the river crossing

Some modern scholars have simply regurgitated the words of ancient historians and commended the efficiency of Alexander's staff for producing ample vessels to ferry the army across the river within several hours.<sup>142</sup> Strangely enough, this impressive manoeuvre has received little to no attention from Indian and Pakistani scholarship.<sup>143</sup> Instead, we must examine this stage from an ancient perspective. Porus had previously challenged Alexander to battle, informing the Macedonians he would meet them with his army, prepared for battle.<sup>144</sup> Customary to Indian

<sup>141</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.12.4. The vessels used by the Macedonians included thirty-oared ships, triaconters and leather rafts; *Metz Epitome*, 59. "There he transported his force across the river, by means of inflated skins with large quantities of wood placed over them, and began to lead his light-armed towards the enemy."

<sup>142</sup> Green, 1974, p. 394; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 356; Hammond, 1989, p. 210.

<sup>143</sup> Prakash, 1994, pp. 53-54; Ahsan, 1997; Narain, 1965, p. 158; Tripathi, 1939, p. 353; Roy, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>144</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.4; QC. 8.13.2; *Metz Epitome*, 57.

traditions, Porus had announced his intention to wage war in defence of his kingdom.<sup>145</sup>

Alexander's clandestine crossing, bold and inventive though it was, represented a dishonourable action - he would rely on duplicity, ambushing his enemy by taking a risky gamble.<sup>146</sup>

Fewer historians still have undertaken a thorough examination of Alexander's river operations. Although a supplementation of Arrian and Curtius was produced, the practicalities of the task have generally been ignored and must be taken into consideration.<sup>147</sup> It is the condition of the Hydaspes which first warrants additional scrutiny. Upon Alexander's arrival, the river's width of four stades was sufficient to alarm the Macedonian army.<sup>148</sup> Likely recalling their troublesome journey across the Jaxartes several years earlier, the Macedonians had ample reason for concern when a smaller and slower body of water caused distress. Unable to comprehend the possibility of a voyage across the Hydaspes in such conditions, Pearson reported the journey of Sir Alexander Burnes in the Punjab during the nineteenth century, comparing this to Alexander's embarkation on the Hydaspes with the intention of proving its impossibility.<sup>149</sup> Burnes, with the advantage of firsthand experience, was able to travel across the Hyphasis during a monsoon in 1831 and he described the river as a mile in width.<sup>150</sup>

The nature of Alexander's crossing has not been objected by military historians either, although the effort required to ferry 11,000 men and 5,000 horses across the Hydaspes in darkness is considerable, and therefore sceptical. Perhaps the most comprehensive account on the logistics of the river crossing is that of General John Fuller. According to his calculations, the time required to complete a successful crossing would be fifteen hours.<sup>151</sup> However, Fuller's timing can only mean the operation began in the dark under the cover of the storm which is erroneous. The river was forded, contrary to Pearson's belief, and because it was unimaginable to complete this operation at night, another explanation must be provided. The evidence is paradoxical. A generally disregarded passage belonging to Curtius disclosed the bravado of two young Macedonians, Hegesimachus and Nicanor.<sup>152</sup> Swimming to an island between the two camps, they were either killed by ranged

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<sup>145</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.4; QC. 8.13.2; Basham, 1988, p. 124; Gonda, 1956, p. 154.

<sup>146</sup> Roy, 2007, p. 232; Brekke, 2005, p. 72; Armour, 1922, p. 72.

<sup>147</sup> Fuller, 1960, p. 180; Bloedow, 2002, pp. 63-65.

<sup>148</sup> QC. 8.13.8. This would be approximately 700 metres by modern estimates.

<sup>149</sup> Pearson, 1905, pp. 257-258.

<sup>150</sup> Pearson, 1905, p. 258.

<sup>151</sup> Fuller, 1960, p. 188.

<sup>152</sup> QC. 8.13.13.

attacks or forced to retreat, only to be swept away by the river's current, attesting to the considerable risks a voyage would entail.<sup>153</sup>

Neither Pearson nor Fuller can be correct. Alternatively, we should consider the possibility of two river crossings - one in the dark which was aborted, and another at dawn. My initial inclination is that Plutarch's river crossing was prone to romantic exaggeration, amplifying Alexander's triumph; it was derived from Onesicritus who was notorious for his unreliability.<sup>154</sup> Despite the advantages provided by a thunderstorm, the decision to embark across the Hydaspes during a stormy and moonless night would be foolhardy, and indications of two crossings can be glimpsed from ancient sources to support this theory. Curtius intimated the abrupt outbreak of a downpour forced the Macedonians to abandon their voyage, while in Arrian's version, the crossing commenced at dawn after the stormy conditions alleviated.<sup>155</sup> Curtius also described a dense fog which obscured any daylight while the Macedonian army was ferried across the river, indicative that the crossing did not commence at night.<sup>156</sup> Although the fog temporarily obscured the Macedonians from Porus' scouts, reduced visibility would exacerbate the difficulty of the voyage. According to Curtius, only one ship was destroyed, although further losses are probable in consideration of the river's condition.<sup>157</sup>

### **The First Engagement**

One of the ostensibly inconsequential stages of the battle is the skirmish which erupted along the eastern riverbank between Alexander's cavalry and a detachment of Indian horsemen and chariots.<sup>158</sup> There is much disparity within the ancient sources regarding the nature of this conflict along with its timing and location which necessitates exploration to clarify a lack of uniformity in the battle narrative. Therefore, it is crucial to reassess this event to examine not only the incongruence in historiography, but also the ramifications this skirmish had in the conflict's aftermath. I believe there may have been two minor engagements along the riverbank which were subsequently conflated into one clash, and it is equally plausible the battle proper was relocated by some historians to the riverbank through a simple error. Porus had stationed various pickets along his

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<sup>153</sup> QC. 8.13.15-16.

<sup>154</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 60.3-7.

<sup>155</sup> QC. 8.13.23; Arr. 5.12.4.

<sup>156</sup> QC. 8.13.24.

<sup>157</sup> QC. 8.13.27.

<sup>158</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.14.1-5.15.2; QC. 8.14.2-5; Plut. *Alex.* 60.8.

side of the riverbank and these bands possibly provided Alexander's forces with minor pockets of resistance as he advanced to the battlefield.<sup>159</sup>

Arrian's account is the most detailed and similarly impractical. He revealed an awareness of the various traditions, noting that Ptolemy, Aristobulus and several unnamed sources had all written extensively on this seemingly minor engagement. Equally problematic in nature, this casts doubt on the veracity of these irreconcilable incidents. Nevertheless, it must be clarified why Arrian chose to mention several incongruous versions although the most probable reason was to emphasise the veracity of Ptolemy's report. He accompanied Alexander on the king's triaconter, earning value as an eyewitness.<sup>160</sup> Aristobulus' role in the battle is dubious, and it is unlikely he participated in the fighting. The primary area of contention between the historians was the number of soldiers deployed by Porus. Aristobulus recorded Porus' son arriving with 60 chariots before Alexander had crossed over; Ptolemy insisted a larger Indian force consisting of 2,000 cavalry and 120 chariots was diverted upriver, but in his narrative, Alexander had successfully crossed the river *before* Porus' son arrived.<sup>161</sup> Aristobulus' report is tactically illogical. If Porus' son arrived before Alexander reached the riverbank, the Macedonians would be trapped and forced to retreat. It is irrational to assume Porus' son drove his chariots past Alexander and allowed him to land when he was tasked with preventing a crossing.

Aristobulus' figures are repeated by Plutarch, although his location for the skirmish differs from other narratives. It was only after the Macedonians had marched for twenty furlongs that they encountered an Indian detachment of 1,000 cavalry and 60 chariots which was summarily routed.<sup>162</sup> Evidently, Plutarch has relied on both Ptolemy and Aristobulus. By using Aristobulus' figures for the Indian vanguard, and placing the encounter *after* Alexander had crossed the Hydaspes, he conflated the two traditions and created a cogent narrative, clarifying the confusion caused by Arrian and his introduction of contradictory reports. The Ptolemaic version is universally favoured by modern historians, although I find little reason to believe it entirely.<sup>163</sup> While the location and timing of the skirmish are credible, the strength of the Indian vanguard should not be taken at face value. Whatever the true figure may have been, Aristobulus' estimate seems more reliable. Possessing a relatively small army, Porus cannot have diverted nearly 3,000 soldiers from his encampment. In consideration of the reconnaissance's triviality, its size was susceptible to

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<sup>159</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.10.4.

<sup>160</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.13.1.

<sup>161</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.14.3-6.

<sup>162</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 60.7-8.

<sup>163</sup> English, 2010, p. 192; Green, 1974, p. 395; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 357; Naiden, 2019, p. 193; Hamilton, 1956, p. 27.

inflation, as was the entire army Porus possessed. Additionally, Alexander quickly overcame this group of Indians with little difficulty, lending credence to Aristobulus' smaller estimate.<sup>164</sup> By exaggerating the strength of the resistance encountered, the Macedonian narrative could emulate the scale of battles fought in Persia where Alexander was outnumbered.

Furthermore, another tradition pitted Alexander against Porus' son in a duel which resulted in the death of Bucephalus and Alexander himself receiving an injury.<sup>165</sup> The ultimate source remains ambiguous, although it has been speculated Chares of Mytilene may have recorded this fierce clash.<sup>166</sup> In this report, the Indians were once again ready to oppose Alexander as he reached the eastern riverbank, a statement coherent with Aristobulus' account. This appears to find parallel with the account of Justin who seemingly relocated the battle proper to the riverbank. However, there is a key difference - Justin chose to replace Porus' son with Porus himself, perhaps a simple error stemming from shared names between the two.<sup>167</sup> Although it can be disregarded as a fictitious duel, I see little reason to doubt the possibility of this encounter. There could be an incentive to present a dramatised clash between Alexander and Porus' son, but the ultimate victor of the duel was Porus' son. I find it more plausible to believe the hagiographic nature of Alexander's historiography would omit such a detail unless there was a grain of truth to it. Both Arrian and Plutarch recorded 400 Indian casualties, including Porus' son according to the former, but neither historian noted any Macedonian losses.<sup>168</sup> The implication is that there were none, although this would be an unwise assumption in light of the fierce fighting. As with the river crossing, any mention of Macedonian casualties were omitted from the narrative.

Indian commentary on this skirmish scarcely differs from its western counterpart, although a revised narrative of the battle reported a ferocious clash between Alexander and a brother of Porus named Amar which resulted in the death of Bucephalus, Alexander's stallion.<sup>169</sup> Within ancient source material, the only reference to a kinsman of Porus is found in Curtius' *Historiae Alexandri Magni*. Spitaces, the alleged brother of Porus, is only found within his account and the name cannot be a corruption of 'Amar'; he was responsible for leading the combined force of chariots and cavalry sent by Porus to impede Alexander's advance.<sup>170</sup> Since there is no textual reference to

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<sup>164</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.15.1-2.

<sup>165</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.14.4.

<sup>166</sup> Bosworth, 1995, p. 289.

<sup>167</sup> Justin, *Epitome*, 12.8.3-4.

<sup>168</sup> Arr. 5.15.2; Plut. 60.8.

<sup>169</sup> Jankiraman, 2020.

<sup>170</sup> QC. 8.14.2; Arr. 5.18.2; Polyaeus, *Stratagems*, 4.3.21.

a brother of Porus bearing this name, nor any mention of the battle from Indian sources, the event can safely be regarded as fictitious. Several things can be concluded from a reexamination of the skirmish on the riverbank: Alexander crossed the Hydaspes before a small reconnaissance force arrived and defeated them, a second minor conflict erupted en route to the battlefield, and the Macedonians will have suffered some losses.

### **Military Strength**

Source	Infantry	Cavalry	Chariots	War Elephants
Arrian (5.15.4)	30,000+	4,000	300	200+
Curtius (8.13.6; 8.14.2)	30,000	4,000	300	85
Diodorus (17.87.2)	50,000+	3,000	1,000+	130
Plutarch (62.2)	20,000	2,000	60	N/A
<i>Metz Epitome</i> (54)	30,000+	N/A	300	85

*Table 1: Figures for Porus' army.*

A reassessment of Indian and Macedonian forces is vital to our understanding of the battle. Not only does it indicate the true scale of the combat, but it attests to the unreliability of ancient textual evidence. To rewrite the narrative, it is imperative to undertake a thorough evaluation of the military strength both armies commanded with the intention of disproving the given statistics in order to establish that it was Porus, not Alexander who was outnumbered.

From the onset, we can safely assume Alexander's fighting force dwarfed Porus'. Commanding the might of an empire stretching from the Hydaspes to Greece, it should only seem logical that numerical superiority favoured the Macedonians. Upon entering India, Alexander's army reportedly consisted of 120,000 men although this is a gross exaggeration, conflating camp followers with soldiers.<sup>171</sup> If one was to assume Alexander did not incur any casualties prior to the battle proper, an unlikely prospect, his total fighting force would consist of 6,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry.<sup>172</sup> However, several modern historians favour a larger figure of 10,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry based on the arrangement of forces Alexander took upriver.<sup>173</sup> Not all scholars are in agreement,

<sup>171</sup> Bosworth, 1996, p. 73.

<sup>172</sup> Arr. 5.14.1.

<sup>173</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 94; Fuller, 1960, p. 187; Jones, 1964, p. 426; Holt, 2003, p. 51; Scullard, 1974, p. 68.

with some favouring Arrian's numbers.<sup>174</sup> While a minimisation of troops to aggrandise Alexander's victory may be a viable solution for this error, the likelihood of casualties prior to the battle should not be overlooked.

The number of infantry mentioned by Arrian is significantly reduced, although figures provided for the cavalry are consistent within both modern and ancient approximations. The Macedonian foot soldiers did not participate in the skirmish against Porus' son, negating the likelihood of infantry casualties during this brief contest.<sup>175</sup> The most logical conclusion, then, is that some of these missing forces were capsized and swept away by the river's current, or struck dead by lightning. Prior to the climactic battle which awaited him, Alexander's army had already suffered considerable losses, a prospect which would only be exacerbated by the primary engagement.

The numbers provided for Porus' army vary considerably within the remaining sources as shown in the table above. Arrian and Curtius generally agree, indicating a shared source, although there are notable differences. Curtius' assessment of the Indian cavalry is erroneous, and by diverting this entire force to the skirmish at the riverbank, he has wrongly suggested that no Indian horsemen participated in the battle proper.<sup>176</sup> The greatest weapons in Porus' arsenal were his lumbering corps of war elephants and the historiography of the battle is particularly pertinent from a military perspective.<sup>177</sup> While Alexander's army had already seen elephants and even possessed a sizeable contingent themselves, Hydaspes was the first engagement with pachyderms. Since it has already been established that Ptolemy wrote about the battle many years after it was fought, elephants had been gradually introduced into the Hellenistic army by this point, and the strengths and weaknesses of the creatures became common knowledge. This information would also be available to Roman era historians with a military background writing centuries after Alexander's death, undoubtedly familiar with Hannibal and the elephants of Carthage.

Nonetheless, the ancient sources conveyed an unconvincing image of the elephants - their mahouts and riders killed, and overcome by wounds, the animals ran amok, trampling friend and foe alike, inflicting greater losses upon the Indians than the Macedonians.<sup>178</sup> A recurring motif becomes visible here. Once again, everything which provided the Indian army with an advantage miraculously turned against them; the river had been forded, and their greatest weapon was

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<sup>174</sup> Lane Fox, 2004, p. 355. Naiden, 2018, p. 192.

<sup>175</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.15.1-2.

<sup>176</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.15.4; QC. 8.14.2.

<sup>177</sup> Glover, 1944, p. 264.

<sup>178</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.17.5; QC. 8.14.30; Diod. 17.88.3.



rendered inert. The futility and unreliability of the war elephant must be an exaggeration. Their introduction to Hellenistic armies in the years proceeding the Hydaspes would suggest otherwise.<sup>179</sup> For all their disadvantages, be it clumsiness, or inferior manoeuvrability, the benefits of war elephants certainly outweighed any drawbacks. Of this, I am certain through a careful analysis of the elephants' role at the Hydaspes and in subsequent battles during the wars of the Diadochi. With the benefit of hindsight, Curtius inserted his own view of the pachyderms into Alexander's mouth, an erroneous assumption since the Macedonians were unaccustomed to combating elephants.<sup>180</sup>

Possessing a cadre of war elephants was not synonymous with victory, although the first military encounter with the animals cannot have proven so easy, and there must be ample reason to assume they were an effective fighting force when examining the unrest at the Hyphasis. The role of the elephants in this battle has received varying reception, although it is invalid to assume the elephants were overcome easily. Oddly enough, Plutarch failed to mention the pachyderms at all, surely the most memorable image of the battle. The vulgate tradition painted a more detailed picture of the havoc unleashed by Porus' elephants, and it was only after a great struggle that the Macedonians overcame the elephants. Curtius contradicted his previous statement on the capricious nature of war elephants and described in vivid detail the carnage they wrought upon the Macedonian centre.<sup>181</sup> Arrian, on the other hand did not give the elephants ample credit for their role in the battle, confining his thoughts to a single sentence; the beasts proved a greater liability than an asset in his narrative.<sup>182</sup> Curtius' contradictory statements and Diodorus' gruesome description elucidate the lacuna of Arrian, providing a tangible description of the carnage inflicted by the elephants on the Macedonian infantry.

In stark contrast to the general agreement of Alexander's military might, scholarship and ancient textual evidence remain divisive when enumerating Porus' capabilities. Favouring the lowest provided figures for the battle, some Indian historians agree with Plutarch's estimate, although this can be considered as an exaggeration.<sup>183</sup> However, even Indian scholarship lacks unanimity regarding Porus' military strength.<sup>184</sup> The incongruity of Porus' elephants must also be revised. Seeing Craterus and the remainder of the army stationed across from his camp, Porus left a small

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<sup>179</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 62.4; Diod. 18.35.1.

<sup>180</sup> QC. 8.14.16.

<sup>181</sup> QC. 8.14.26-28.

<sup>182</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.17.3.

<sup>183</sup> Jankiraman, 2020; Shrinivas, 2019.

<sup>184</sup> Narain, 1965, pp. 155-165; Prakash, 1994, pp. 56-57; Roy, 2005, p. 18; Singh, 2009, p. 497.

force of elephants to prevent them crossing, taking the majority with him to the battlefield.<sup>185</sup> If one were to take the ancient estimates for granted, this would still be a practical assessment. However, an alternate reading of Porus' division has been provided by Roy, assuming Porus took 85 elephants to confront Alexander and left 115 at the campsite.<sup>186</sup> It correlates with the assessment of both Curtius and Diodorus.<sup>187</sup> In theory, Arrian's 200 elephants constituted the entirety of the force, omitting the division of the Indian army prior to the battle proper. Nevertheless, this argument still takes the total figures at face value, reflecting an ignorance of the typical magnification of enemy forces found in Arrian which several scholars have overlooked.<sup>188</sup>

If Arrian and his sources inflated the magnitude of Issus and Gaugamela, it is unthinkable to assume Hydaspes did not follow suit. Prakash believed the quantity of elephants were exaggerated to justify the damage they inflicted upon the Macedonians, an idea shared by Bosworth who thought Porus cannot have possessed more than 50 elephants since his realm was a small tract of land along the Hydaspes.<sup>189</sup> Both Robin Lane Fox and Stephen English doubted Arrian's numbers of elephants, and I am inclined to support this view since it would intimate Porus' formation of elephants alone amounted to roughly six kilometres.<sup>190</sup> It should also be noted that Porus had infantry flanking his elephants, along with cavalry on both wings screened by chariots, and there must have been ample space along Porus' left for Coenus' flanking manoeuvre.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, it does not seem the Hydaspes acted as a barrier for Porus' left flank since this would nullify Coenus' ability to encircle the Indian cavalry from the Macedonian right. Polyaeus had the elephants positioned fifteen metres apart, and when combined with Diodorus' estimate of 130 elephants, the result would be a line nearly two kilometres in length which is still too great to believe.<sup>192</sup> However, a second glance at Taxiles' forces provides an accurate judgement of Porus' own elephant corps.

Arriving at Taxila in early 326, Alexander was greeted by the formal surrender of Taxiles who offered Alexander a grand total of 86 elephants.<sup>193</sup> Considering the geopolitical landscape of the

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<sup>185</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.15.4.

<sup>186</sup> Roy, 2005, p. 18.

<sup>187</sup> Roy, 2005, p. 18.

<sup>188</sup> Green, 1974, p. 389; Tarn, 1948, p. 95. Wood, 1997, p. 185; Hammond, 1989, p. 212.

<sup>189</sup> Prakash, 1951, pp. 219-220; Bosworth, 1996, p. 16.

<sup>190</sup> English, 2010, p. 194; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 358. Arr. *Anab.* 5.15.5-7.

<sup>191</sup> Stein, 1932, p. 39.

<sup>192</sup> Pol. 4.3.22; English, 2011, p. 194; Green, 1974, p. 396.

<sup>193</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.5; QC. 8.12.11.

Punjab, I am inclined to believe Porus and Taxiles wielded equal power, casting doubt upon Bosworth's assumption of fifty elephants which seems too small a figure.<sup>194</sup> Curtius' modest appraisal of 85 is more plausible. Moreover, the description of Eudemus' stolen elephants provided by Diodorus reinforce my earlier notion of exaggerated military strength. After the death of Alexander, both Porus and Taxiles were noted to have increased in power, likely due to the expansion of their respective territories.<sup>195</sup> According to Diodorus, Eudemus, one of Alexander's satraps, departed from India with 120 elephants after murdering Porus and usurping his pachyderms.<sup>196</sup> Diodorus' figure here was significantly lower than his estimate for the battle of the Hydaspes, almost a decade prior.<sup>197</sup> This can only mean Porus' military capabilities were embellished during the conflict.

A similar method can be applied to gauge the total number of infantry. Where Arrian, Curtius and Diodorus provided the greatest figures for the entire Indian army, Plutarch's lower suggestion is ostensibly more reliable.<sup>198</sup> At first glance, there is little reason to suggest incompatibility. 20,000 infantry could be an accurate estimate for the total number of men Porus took to confront Alexander, while the remaining 10,000 would be tasked with guarding the Indian camp to prevent Craterus from reinforcing the Macedonians. Barring Diodorus, the remaining sources are not entirely incompatible, although they have grossly overestimated the size of the Paurava army.

Challenging the ancient sources, Bosworth upheld the view that the provided figures for Porus' army were simply too great to be true since a grand battle was not compatible with his view of a massacre, although his assessment of the Indian military strength was inconclusive. Citing a demographic report conducted in the early twentieth century by British colonialists, he sought to reiterate the notion of an easy Macedonian victory. In 1901, the 15,000 sq. km tract of land between the Hydaspes and Acesines, where Porus' original kingdom was situated, consisted of 1,500,000 civilians, and no town possessed a population exceeding 10,000.<sup>199</sup> Contrary to its depiction within textual evidence, the scale of the battle was smaller than the erstwhile campaigns at Issus and Gaugamela which pitted hundreds of thousands of Persians against tens of thousands of Macedonians. While Bosworth's assessment of Porus' military strength remained unresolved, a verdict must be reached to authenticate the numerical inferiority of the Indians. Once again, the

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<sup>194</sup> QC. 8.12.13.

<sup>195</sup> Diod. 18.39.6.

<sup>196</sup> Diod. 19.14.8.

<sup>197</sup> Diod. 17.87.2. Porus possessed 130 elephants at the battle.

<sup>198</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 62.2.

<sup>199</sup> Bosworth, 1996, p. 9.

most salient piece of evidence is the size of the Indian force under Alexander's command during the battle.<sup>200</sup> Alexander's Indian contingent numbered 5,000, drawing upon all the petty Indian kingdoms west of the Hydaspes which either capitulated or were conquered by the Macedonians. This contrast is too great to be ignored since it would indicate the combined armies of Alexander's Indian allies amounted to a fraction of the power commanded by Porus.

Having reevaluated the respective military strength of both the Indian and Macedonian armies, a feasible conclusion is the deliberate enlargement Porus' capabilities. This magnified the extent of the fighting and minimised the size of Alexander's own forces to embellish his victory. This judgement is corroborated by the habitual exaggeration of Persian armies, the recorded military strength of Porus' neighbours and a knowledge of Macedonian military formations.

Paurava Army:

Less than 10,000 infantry and cavalry, 120 chariots and 85 elephants.

Macedonian Army:

Alexander's Main Force: 10,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry.

Craterus' Reserve Force: 8,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry.<sup>201</sup>

### **Casualties**

Source	Indian Losses	Macedonian Losses
Arrian (5.18.2-3)	20,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry.	80 infantry and 230 cavalry.
Diodorus (17.89.1-3)	12,000+ Indians killed; 9,000 taken prisoner along with 80 elephants.	700 infantry and 280 cavalry.
<i>Metz Epitome</i> (61-62)	12,000 infantry and 80 elephants.	900 infantry and 300 cavalry including many horses and wounded soldiers.

*Table 2: Casualties at the Hydaspes.*

The number of casualties recorded in the aftermath of a battle are often the most accurate indication of what truly occurred. As such, our sources are in agreement that Macedonian losses at

<sup>200</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.11.3; Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.5.

<sup>201</sup> English, 2011, p. 186.

the Hydaspes are dwarfed by the figures provided by the Indians who were subjected to a horrendous slaughter. However, this perspective has evolved within modern scholarship and Macedonian fatalities at the Hydaspes are generally thought to be higher than we were previously led to think. For what is regarded as Alexander's costliest battle, the price for victory would be taxing and it behoves an accurate reconstruction of the losses which both sides faced. Additionally, I will reiterate the unreliability of the numbers provided for both armies, drawing upon my earlier conclusion about the relative military strength possessed by Porus and Alexander.

Firstly, the Indian casualty figures should be examined. There are two given statistics which differ significantly. Emphasising the military prowess of the Macedonians, Arrian, likely reliant upon Ptolemy, reported the greatest number of Indian casualties.<sup>202</sup> From the description provided by Arrian, most of the Indian force fought valiantly and died honourably as warriors, although a few survivors fled from the battlefield, an ignominious action in the eyes of Indians.<sup>203</sup> Diodorus' lower estimate was reproduced by the *Metz Epitome* although the fate of the elephants remained disputed.<sup>204</sup> One may surmise a large number of Indians in the vulgate tradition and *Metz Epitome* fled, painting a cowardly image of Porus' soldiers who either surrendered or abandoned the battlefield altogether.<sup>205</sup> While there are certainly exaggerations to magnify the ferocity of the fighting, all sources are reaching the same conclusion - the Indian army incurred heavier losses which cannot be denied. Arrian's figure indicates a conflation of the Indian dead and prisoners although he makes a distinction between infantry and cavalry, unlike Diodorus.<sup>206</sup>

Less surprising are the recorded Macedonian losses. Arrian's estimate is too low to be considered at face value.<sup>207</sup> Firstly, Arrian's belief the infantry incurred fewer losses than the cavalry cannot be accurate; the fighting in the centre where the elephants were stationed resulted in greater losses than the flanks and Alexander's phalanx bore the brunt of the Indian onslaught. Secondly, the perseverance of the Indians to hold the field until most of the army was slaughtered can mean nothing apart from heavy fighting which dealt damage to the Macedonians. Most historians disagree with Arrian, tending to espouse Diodorus' generally accepted statistics approximating

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<sup>202</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.2.

<sup>203</sup> Armour, 1922, p. 77.

<sup>204</sup> Diod. 17.89.1-2; *Metz.* 61.

<sup>205</sup> Diod. 17.89.1-2; *Metz.* 53-61.

<sup>206</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.2; Diod. 17.89.1-2.

<sup>207</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.3.

1,000 losses.<sup>208</sup> The *Metz Epitome* enlarged the Macedonian losses, adding that they sustained many injuries and a great number of horses were slaughtered. Indian losses exceeded those of the Macedonians by ten times. Among the ancient sources, this is the most reliable estimate, although some might argue it falls shy of an accurate assessment.

Modern reception to the casualties has also varied. Peter Green theorised that 4,000 was a tenable number of deaths for a costly battle.<sup>209</sup> This augmented Tarn's outlook who speculated that Macedonian casualties were "carefully concealed", although he was unable to reach a feasible conclusion of his own.<sup>210</sup> However, Green has accepted the military figures provided by ancient sources at face value and his assessment must be erroneous since the Macedonians cannot have incurred such heavy casualties against a smaller army and continued campaigning in the Punjab. Writing in the late nineteenth century, the earliest estimation of losses and injuries incurred by the Macedonians was undertaken by Theodore Aryault Dodge. He argued a ratio of 1:10 was typically used in the ancient world to differentiate the dead from the wounded, although he espoused a higher ratio of 1:12 for the Hydaspes.<sup>211</sup> Of the Macedonians whom he believed participated in the battle, 930 were killed and a further 9,270 received grievous injuries.<sup>212</sup> However, the numbers are garbled and Dodge's appraisal would be erroneous. His chosen figures are uncorroborated by extant literary evidence, and they are simply too great to be granted any credulity. Like Green, he takes the figures provided at face value and ignores the subsequent campaigns which the Macedonians participated in.

Ultimately, it is an impossible task to gauge accurately how many soldiers perished. All we can conclude is that Indian losses outnumbered those of the Macedonians. However, both sides suffered heavily, a testament to the military prowess of the belligerents and the ferocity of the fighting. It should also be noted that the casualty figures provided by the ancient sources certainly omitted any Macedonian losses during the river crossing and ignored those who succumbed to wounds after the battle. Whatever the true number of Macedonian casualties were, they exceeded the figures provided by Arrian and Diodorus.

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<sup>208</sup> Diod. 17.89.3; Naiden, 2018, p. 193; English, 2010, p. 209; Roy, 2005, p. 23; Wood, 1997, p. 190; Cartledge, 2004, p. 156; Smith, 1914, p. 70; Rzepka, 2017; Heaney, 1982, p. 114; Engels, 1978, p. 150; Hammond, 1989, p. 215.

<sup>209</sup> Green, 1974, p. 401.

<sup>210</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 96.

<sup>211</sup> Dodge, 1890, p. 680.

<sup>212</sup> Dodge, 1890, p. 680.

## The Surrender of Porus

Regardless of the battle's narrative, rife with contradictory statements and embellishment, it is often the aftermath of a conflict which speaks in greater volumes than the vivid descriptions of the combat itself. This, too, has been predominantly incongruent within extant literary sources, and much of the Indian perspective on the battle is centred around its perplexing conclusion. Here, the scholarship of the Hydaspes is particularly contentious, with a plethora of motives for Alexander's generous treatment of Porus. However, by gaining a better understanding of the objectives for each combatant, one may gauge the outcome of the conflict through an impartial lens. Warfare is often not as simple as having one victorious party while the other is defeated, and such a situation can arise in which both belligerents may emerge triumphant or perceive the aftermath as ineffectual.

While we cannot claim that Alexander was defeated, it is imperative to assert that the outcome strongly indicates Porus also won; the Hydaspes was a paradoxical battle in which the ostensibly sole victor profited less than the defeated party. Both Alexander and Porus emerged as beneficiaries, although the latter's position was substantially preferable. The various surviving accounts are so disparate, that it becomes nigh impossible to discern fact from fiction. Whatever truly occurred in the aftermath of the battle gave birth to a variety of distortions where truth and legend were inextricably intertwined. Each narrative contained mutually exclusive events when retelling events leading to the surrender, or capture of Porus, but agreed upon several key points.

Most prominently, Porus did not lose any territory and he was not deposed by Taxiles. This much is attested by all surviving accounts.<sup>213</sup> Secondly, the outcome of the battle was such that Porus gained lands he previously did not own - only Justin omits this crucial facet.<sup>214</sup> Believing this constituted a defeat is inconceivable. Although the military cost was severe, little else was lost comparatively. Much was gained, and it was more than ample compensation for an honourable battle. In stark contrast to Porus, Taxiles gained nothing from this endeavour.

This is the version reported by Arrian:

*Alexander was the first to speak. He asked Porus what he wished to be done with him.*

*Porus is said to have replied: "Treat me, Alexander, like a king."*

*"For myself, Porus, I shall do as you ask: tell me now what you expect for yourself."*

*Porus replied that everything was contained in that one request.*

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<sup>213</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.3; QC. 8.14.45; Diod. 17.89.6; Plut. *Alex.* 60.15; Just. 12.8.7; Metz. 61.

<sup>214</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.3; QC. 8.14.45; Diod. 17.91.2; Plut. *Alex.* 60.15; Metz. 61.

*Yet more impressed by this answer, Alexander granted Porus continued rule over his Indian kingdom and added to its original extent further territory which more than doubled it.*<sup>215</sup>

Alexander's question to Porus should effectively preclude any notion of a Macedonian defeat - it indicated Porus was a captive, but even in captivity, he was defiant in his pursuit of equal treatment and ultimately lost nothing. Through Indian eyes, Alexander acted as a dharmavijayi - a "conqueror through righteousness".<sup>216</sup>

Curtius' conclusion of the battle is both similar, and yet incredibly different to Arrian. It is suggestive of a shared source between the two, but Curtius' account differs so strongly, giving ample reason to believe he relied upon additional sources along with his own inventions. Like Arrian, he noted the intervention of an Indian messenger, attempting rather unsuccessfully to persuade Porus to surrender.<sup>217</sup> However, while Arrian had many messengers, Curtius only recorded one.

Furthermore, he mentioned that Porus was wounded, inflating the number of wounds from Arrian's one to nine. That is where the similarities ended. It seems apparent the brother of Taxiles was also involved in the fighting, and probably served as one of the many unnamed messengers appearing in Arrian's account who unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Porus to surrender.

In this variant, there is a crucial difference. While Taxiles himself was able to narrowly evade the javelin hurled by Porus, his brother was impaled and instantly killed.<sup>218</sup> This may very well contain a grain of truth, and it is compatible with Arrian's conclusion of the battle, if one chooses to place faith in it. Whereas Arrian informs us Alexander did not resent Porus' acrimonious response to Taxiles, Curtius' characterisation of the Macedonian king is the more plausible of the two. Following the death of Taxiles' brother, Alexander ordered that no mercy be shown to the Indian army in response to Porus' defiance.<sup>219</sup> Porus' survival and capture were purely serendipitous. However, the description of Porus' armour is antithetical. Curtius implies Porus' armour was not impenetrable, for the Indian king incurred nine wounds.<sup>220</sup> Arrian, basing his judgement upon eyewitness accounts asserted nothing could pierce the metal and relocated a single wound to the

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<sup>215</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.2-3.

<sup>216</sup> Narain, 1965, p. 158; Green, 1974, p. 402; Tripathi, 1939, p. 357.

<sup>217</sup> QC. 8.14.35.

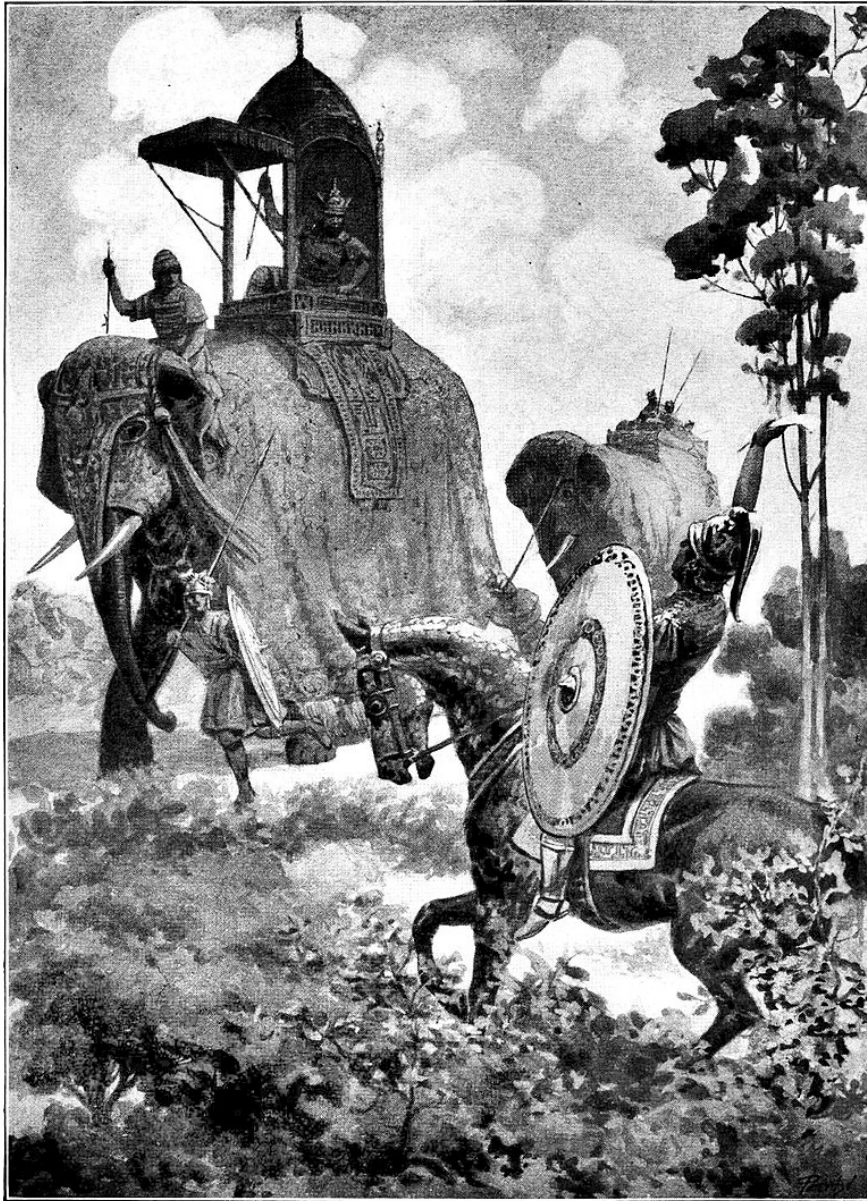
<sup>218</sup> QC. 8.14.35-36.

<sup>219</sup> QC. 8.14.38.

<sup>220</sup> QC. 8.14.32.



unprotected shoulder, perhaps with the intention of adding greater credulity to his account, and demonstrating an awareness of previous traditions.<sup>221</sup>



MEETING OF PORUS AND TAXILES

*Figure 6: Taxiles confronts Porus at the conclusion of the battle.*

The remaining accounts are rather vague in their description of the battle's conclusion. Diodorus had Porus fainting after receiving several injuries from Alexander's ranged troops.<sup>222</sup> Both Curtius and Diodorus maintained some semblance of coherence; in their respective accounts, Porus was presumed dead from the various wounds he sustained. Plutarch and Justin, both recording a large

<sup>221</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.5.

<sup>222</sup> Diod. 17.88.6.

number of injuries, merely claim he was taken prisoner.<sup>223</sup> The *Metz Epitome* differed significantly; there was no record of Porus' wounds, and he simply surrendered to Alexander upon realising his army was trapped between Alexander's advance force and Craterus from the south.<sup>224</sup> This disparity was likely caused by an error, muddling Porus himself with his homonymous cousin, a cowardly ruler known to the Macedonians as "the bad Porus", who maintained a kingdom east of the Acesines and displayed hostility to his namesake.<sup>225</sup>

Curtius, Diodorus, Justin and Plutarch all reported several injuries. There are two prudent explanations to clarify this inconsistency. The first, a rather simplistic interpretation, is that Porus was badly wounded - Arrian stands alone. Secondly, accounting for the large stature of Porus, the vulgate tradition and Plutarch embellished the number of injuries he sustained, bestowing a superhuman quality upon the gargantuan figure, and thus aggrandising the scale of Alexander's victory. Nevertheless, this seems too fantastic to be true and the result would surely be fatal, even for a man of Porus' stature. The entire narrative of the surrender also served an ulterior propagandistic motive: Porus himself may have been lofty, but Alexander's magnanimity was greater.

Similarly, the presentation of the battle's conclusion has shifted significantly over time, and no extant tradition is without its perceptible bias. Seemingly grounded in reality, it is Arrian's version of events which most historians have taken to be the most probable conclusion of the battle.<sup>226</sup> Devoid of the fantastic inventions of other historians, it does, at first glance, possess the appearance of the most trustworthy description of the battle's outcome. Deeming it an unreliable narration of the battle, it has been cited as a source for Alexander's defeat at the Hydaspes. By referring to Arrian, Indian and Pakistani historians have asserted that the outcome of the battle clearly favoured Porus, with Buddha Prakash arguing that Alexander offered Porus a truce while the battle raged on around them.<sup>227</sup> If Prakash and his revisionist stance are to be given any credence, there must be ample evidence that Alexander dispatched messengers to Porus during a tentative battle as he would have us believe.

To reinforce this claim, he cited Arrian, placing greater trust in his account over the others. However, Prakash cannot be correct and his argument is caused by a misreading. Arrian explicitly

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<sup>223</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 60.13; Just. 12.8.5.

<sup>224</sup> *Metz.* 60.

<sup>225</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.21.2-3; Diod. 17.91.1.

<sup>226</sup> Prakash, 1994, pp. 76-77; Bosworth, 1988, p. 129; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 360; Naiden, 2018, p. 194; Tarn, 1948, p. 96.

<sup>227</sup> Prakash, 1994, pp. 76-77; Ahsan, 1997.

stated that the Indian army had incurred substantial losses, but that alone was not incentive for Porus to give up the struggle; instead, he chose to provide resistance until he was wounded in the shoulder.<sup>228</sup> I would argue Arrian's assessment is erroneous - Porus continued fighting even after this.<sup>229</sup> To assume the battle was still undecided is a misinterpretation of Arrian who states the outcome was in favour of the Macedonians when Alexander sent messengers to Porus. The Indian king retired to another position on the battlefield, was bellicose and refused to balk.

In an earlier analysis, Prakash argued that Porus' retreat was intended to rally his fleeing soldiers, urging them to continue the battle.<sup>230</sup> This statement is self contradictory - a victorious force would have no incentive to abandon the field. It only asserts Porus possessed greater courage than his soldiers and refused to stop fighting until the timely intervention of Meroes. It was Meroes' friendship with Porus which prompted the Indian king to cease fighting and listen to Alexander, although I would postulate an additional reason, one which Indian historians have neglected.

However, Alexander's perseverance to gain the surrender of Porus in Arrian's account necessitates a separate exploration. Merely content with citing Taxiles and Meroes as the only messengers dispatched by Alexander, several modern scholars have omitted a crucial phrase in their favoured source.<sup>231</sup> Arrian specifically said "ἀλλ' ἄλλους τε ἐν μέρει ἔπεμπε καὶ δὴ καὶ Μερὸν Ἴνδον" which has been translated as "but sent out a succession of others, including finally an Indian called Meroes", or "sent a number of others, the last of whom was an Indian named Meroes", or "but sent others, one after another, and finally an Indian, Meroes". Taxiles was the first messenger, and Meroes, the last, was able to successfully convince Porus to cease fighting and listen to Alexander.<sup>232</sup> While the exact number of messengers Alexander sent is shrouded in ambiguity, Arrian leaves no doubt there were *more* than two. Prakash adamantly suggested this was not the action of a man on the brink of victory, causing him to impugn Arrian's narrative. In Prakash's mind, there was little room to suggest anything except an impending Macedonian defeat.

Perhaps there is another answer altogether. Eager to emphasise Alexander's magnanimity, the entire episode mirrored a previous occurrence in Alexander's career, one which has been overlooked by Prakash. Awed by the courage of the Greek mercenaries at Miletus, Alexander

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<sup>228</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.4.

<sup>229</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.7; Diod. 17.88.6; QC. 8.14.37-38.

<sup>230</sup> Prakash, 1951, p. 226.

<sup>231</sup> Lane Fox, 2004, p. 360; Holt, 2003, p. 75; Naiden, 2018, p. 194.

<sup>232</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.7.

chose to spare their lives on the condition they would serve in his army.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, this correlated with Arrian's earlier portrayal of Alexander at Massaga, an incident which Diodorus and Plutarch believe tarnished his military career.<sup>234</sup> As for Porus, he was not treated as a captive, but an equal.<sup>235</sup> One may surmise that Arrian was incentivised to select a narrative which favoured Alexander, and if that was not a possibility, he chose to craft his own. Once again, Arrian had Alexander acting in the manner of Cyrus, emulating the clemency he bestowed upon the Egyptians at Thymbrara, although the reality may have been different.<sup>236</sup> It should not be ignored that Arrian is the only historian who has Porus willingly surrender to Alexander since the latter allegedly wished to spare his life. Likewise, impressed by Porus' composure during the battle, Alexander was adamant to ensure his survival, although he placed the fate of the Indian king in his own hands. The commendation of Porus' bravery appears to be Arrian's own commentary, albeit with the purpose of contrasting his character with Darius' cowardice at Issus and Gaugamela.<sup>237</sup>

It becomes difficult to disregard the correspondence of these incidents and the implication is that Arrian has whitewashed Alexander's treatment of Porus; his adamance to ensure the safety of the Indian king is uncorroborated by our other sources. Therefore, Arrian's account is the first of many to contain a mutually exclusive event. Unlike his description of the skirmish at the riverbank where Arrian digressed upon several narratives, he did not leave any room for speculation with Porus' surrender and introduced a singular version. This was an event which Ptolemy and Aristobulus certainly agreed upon, recording an infamous exchange between the Indian and Macedonian kings. The historicity of the dialogue is questionable, although the similarity of the exchanges, and the subsequent actions of Alexander are indicative of some coherence among the three accounts which recorded a conversation between the two kings. The essence of the speech as reported by Arrian and Plutarch is virtually identical in its nature.<sup>238</sup> Curtius' version is elaborative, albeit dubious - the notable discrepancies are the manifestations of his own commentary.<sup>239</sup> Despite the variations in the speeches, all roads led to the same destination, that being the reinstatement of Porus and the enlargement of his realm.

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<sup>233</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 1.19.6. Alexander's decision to spare the lives of the Milesian mercenaries had ulterior motives.

<sup>234</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.27.3-4; Diod. 17.84.3; Plut. *Alex.* 59.6.

<sup>235</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.1.

<sup>236</sup> Williams, 2021, p. 176.

<sup>237</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.4-5.

<sup>238</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.2; Plut. *Alex.* 60.14-15.

<sup>239</sup> QC. 8.14.43.

Upon a reassessment of the pertinent textual evidence, the separation of fact from fiction is a challenging task, although glimpses of the truth can be discerned from the vague similarities these accounts possess. On a basis of probability, I can assert with confidence that: Porus was wounded once, he was a prisoner of the Macedonians, he kept his kingdom, and he acquired additional territory from Alexander. This is a conclusion shared by almost all extant literary material, and it cements his status as a victor in the aftermath of the battle. His sole loss was military and Porus did not make any territorial secessions. Moreover there is no supporting evidence in Arrian's commentary that Alexander sent messengers to Porus during a tentative battle, but Porus' position in the aftermath of the battle was more advantageous than Taxiles'. For the latter, it was fruitless endeavour, resulting in a failure to achieve a desirable outcome.

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 Aftermath

**The Death of Bucephalus**

A key consequence of the battle was the death of Alexander's stallion, Bucephalus, an event which has remained disputed since antiquity due to the conflicting nature of accounts surrounding the horse's demise. As such, I find it pertinent to establish exactly when and how the horse died, using textual information to support my hypothesis, while challenging the conventional view that Bucephalus was killed in battle. I seek to establish a connection between the demise of Bucephalus and Alexander's generous treatment of Porus - two events which I believe are intertwined and clarify the cause of Bucephalus' death. This is doubly crucial - not only does it challenge the mainstream argument, but it also factors into Porus' expansion. Ancient authors have all but confirmed the strength of the bond between Alexander and Bucephalus, the best example being the foundation of Bucephala - a city founded on the banks of Hydaspes dedicated to his late stallion. Moreover, Arrian informs his reader of an incident several years prior to Bucephalus' death, further solidifying the close bond between king and horse. Naysayers who are adamant Porus defeated Alexander could cite Alexander's generous treatment of Porus and a lack of punishment as a counterargument, although its credibility is undermined by the narrative in the sources. Best explained by Arrian who shared an anecdote about Alexander and Bucephalus, the reader is immediately apprised of the bond between king and horse.<sup>240</sup>

Source	Cause of Death
Arrian (5.14.4; 5.19.5)	Some historians say he was killed in battle by Porus' son; Arrian believes he succumbed to heat and senility.
Curtius (8.14.34)	Wounded in battle.
Diodorus (17.95.5)	Killed in battle.
Justin (12.8.4)	Wounded in battle.
<i>Metz Epitome</i> (62)	Killed in battle.
Plutarch (61.1)	Died after the battle from wounds; Onesicritus says it was caused by old age.

*Table 3: Bucephalus' death as described by ancient sources.*

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<sup>240</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.6.

Reviewing the commentary of ancient chroniclers, it becomes apparent that Bucephalus' death was attributed to wounds, either causing the horse to die in battle or shortly after - this is the common consensus. Prakash, a staunch adherent of Arrian's narrative, argued that Ptolemy never disputed the death of Bucephalus during the skirmish at the riverbank where the stallion was grievously injured by Porus' son.<sup>241</sup> However, he has overlooked Arrian's later commentary where the Greek historian assigned the horse's death to old age and exhaustion.

Arrian's account evidently reveals an awareness of the existing traditions surrounding Bucephalus' death, and includes the controversial death of Bucephalus at the hands of Porus' son, which Arrian himself does not believe.<sup>242</sup> Conversely, Plutarch brands Onesicritus as an outlier, asserting that many sources believed Bucephalus died from wounds in the battle in stark contrast to what the former alleged.<sup>243</sup> Onesicritus' claim that Bucephalus was thirty at the time of his death, the same age as Alexander, is thought to be a fanciful invention of Alexander's flatterer.<sup>244</sup> Notorious for his embellishment and branded by others a liar, it is unsurprising that Onesicritus' version is often disregarded by historians. It would seem that Arrian did use Onesicritus as a source and even chose to believe his narrative. Perhaps Alexander's historians thought it would be more honorific if the stallion fell in combat, serving his master in the battlefield until his last breath. However, it is equally viable to believe Onesicritus wished to depict Bucephalus as an invincible creature who nobody could kill.

Contrary to the vast majority of scholarly opinion, I view Arrian's account, derived from Onesicritus as the most reliable.<sup>245</sup> Bucephala's proposed location on the western side of the Hydaspes reinforces the validity of this theory. The city was alleged to be built where the horse died, and Strabo has placed this on the western bank, specifically at the site where the Macedonians crossed the river. While Tarn argued that Bucephala was situated on the battlefield, placing his faith in the geographer Ptolemy Claudius, the probability of the stallion even participating in the fighting is circumspect.<sup>246</sup> Its old age would undeniably prove a significant hindrance on the battlefield and Alexander was known to rely upon other horses in battles such as the Granicus

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<sup>241</sup> Prakash, 1994, p. 55.

<sup>242</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.14.4; Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.5.

<sup>243</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 61.1.

<sup>244</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.5; Plut. *Alex.* 61.1; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 361; Wood, 1997, p. 201.

<sup>245</sup> Lane Fox, 2004, p. 361; Anderson, 1930, p. 12; Tarn, 1948, p. 97; Scullard, 1974, p. 68; Green, 1974, p. 395; Naiden, 2018, p. 201; Cartledge, 2004, p. 156; Stoneman, 2018, p. 38.

<sup>246</sup> Tarn, 2010, p. 245.

River from as early as 334.<sup>247</sup> Curtius and Diodorus are the only historians to record an interlude between the founding and the naming of the cities, claiming that Alexander only named the cities after turning back from the Hyphasis in late 326.<sup>248</sup> For Hammond, this all but proved that Bucephalus' death occurred during Alexander's absence and it supports Arrian's account that he died from senility as opposed to injuries.<sup>249</sup> Deviating from the arguments purported by many scholars, I would argue that Bucephalus was not wounded in the fighting. It is impossible to ascertain the exact cause of his death, but on a basis of probability, senility was the primary factor. If the horse's capture warranted a threat of execution in Uxian country, it is unseemly that Alexander should not only spare, but treat Porus so generously. Despite the disagreement between the sources on Bucephalus' death, they have concurred that Alexander erected a city in the stallion's honour.

### **Bucephala and Nicaea**

Source	Bucephala	Nicaea	Unnamed settlement on the Acesines	Alexandria on the Indus
Arrian (5.19.4-5; 5.29.2-3; 6.15.2)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Curtius (9.3.23)	✓	✓	✗	✗
Diodorus (17.95.5)	✓	✓	✗	✗
Plutarch (61.2)	✓	✗	✗	✗
Justin (12.8.8)	✓	✓	✗	✗
<i>Metz Epitome</i> (62)	✓	✗	✗	✗
Strabo (15.1.29)	✓	✓	✗	✗

*Table 4: Alexander's Indian city foundations.*

Among the most pertinent, albeit undeveloped consequences of the Hydaspes campaign are the cities founded by Alexander following his victory. This emanates from a succinct and limited account of the cities within surviving texts, creating a lacuna in the narrative. As such, several western historians have confined their viewpoints to a single sentence without conducting a deeper

<sup>247</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 16.14.

<sup>248</sup> Diod. 17.95.5; QC. 9.3.23.

<sup>249</sup> Hammond, 2007, p. 112.



analysis of these cities and the exact roles they played in Alexander's Indian campaign.<sup>250</sup> Constructed in the summer of 326 under the supervision of Craterus, Alexander ordered the erection of twin cities on both banks of the Hydaspes.<sup>251</sup> Dubbed Bucephala and Nicaea, their names are indicative of their origins, attesting to a costly triumph, but success nonetheless. This section will primarily be concerned with establishing their place within Indian scholarship, the causes for disparity among their existence, the probable functions these cities served, and their location.

Bucephala's existence is unquestionable, having received mention within all extant literary material detailing Alexander's campaigns.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, it was recorded by various historians for centuries after Alexander's death, bolstering the credibility of the ancient sources.<sup>253</sup> On the other hand, Nicaea is absent within both the *Metz Epitome* and Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*. However, there is insufficient motive to dispute Nicaea's existence when the majority of extant literary material has explicitly mentioned it. An alternate reason must therefore be provided to vindicate its absence in both Plutarch's account and the *Metz Epitome*. Perhaps a natural assumption is the reliance on a source which was unfavourable to Alexander, diminishing the scale of the Macedonian victory. However, there is no shortage of disparity pertaining to the date of Bucephala's establishment, as well as the location, and the same can be said for Nicaea. Following Arrian's account, the building took place along the Hydaspes shortly after the celebrations were held, and before Alexander moved north to annex further territories.<sup>254</sup> Conversely, the vulgate tradition located both Bucephala and Nicaea along the Acesines, claiming they were built and named after the retreat from the Hyphasis.<sup>255</sup> However, both Curtius and Diodorus also described the erection of two unnamed cities on the Hydaspes, implying that four cities were founded by Alexander.<sup>256</sup> I find little reason to place faith in the vulgate tradition here. It should only seem logical that Nicaea was founded at the site where Alexander defeated Porus and named shortly after the battle, as opposed to months later.

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<sup>250</sup> Bosworth, 1995, pp. 311-316; Cartledge, 2004, p. 157; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 361; Stoneman, 2019, p. 77; Fildes and Fletcher, 2001, p. 117; Wood, 1997, p. 190.

<sup>251</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.2.

<sup>252</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.4-5; QC. 9.3.23; Diod. 17.95.5; Plut. *Alex.* 61.2; Just. 12.8.8; *Metz.* 62; Str. 15.1.29.

<sup>253</sup> Fraser, 1996, pp. 160-161.

<sup>254</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.4.

<sup>255</sup> Diod. 17.95.5; QC. 9.3.23.

<sup>256</sup> Diod. 17.89.6; QC. 9.1.6.

Having ascertained both cities were founded along the Hydaspes, their precise locations are still dubious and exacerbated by an absence of archaeological evidence. This inability to find any remains can be attributed to a shift in the flow of the Punjab's rivers over two thousand years, and the susceptibility of the city foundations to the elements.<sup>257</sup> Returning to the Hydaspes after the Hyphasis mutiny, Alexander found Bucephala and Nicaea in a state of disrepair, owing to the monsoon.<sup>258</sup> Following the Macedonian evacuation of the Punjab, I find it unlikely Porus was concerned with the maintenance of either city and the inhabitants of Nicaea may have abandoned the settlement after the departure of Eudemus in 318-317. This is a judicious explanation for Nicaea's absence beyond the extant sources detailing Alexander's exploits. The cities' susceptibility to the elements and the likelihood of perishable materials in their construction would suggest Nicaea faded into obscurity following Alexander's departure. Arrian, likely deriving his knowledge from Ptolemy and Aristobulus placed Nicaea on the eastern bank and Bucephala on the west at the site of the crossing.<sup>259</sup> Diodorus in his earlier account asserted the same point, as had Strabo.<sup>260</sup> The speculated site of Nicaea is credible, owing to Alexander's military victory on the battlefield, and putting Bucephala on the western bank supports my earlier theory on the stallion's death.

Dissimilar to its western counterpart, Indian scholarship on the subject of Alexander's cities is particularly divisive, and attempts have been made to erase them from the narrative altogether, thereby asserting Porus' supposed victory over the Macedonian army.<sup>261</sup> Such an angle is fallacious, detracting from the credibility of a revisionist approach since it is anchored in the omission of evidence. Immediately, it should seem impossible that Alexander, who purportedly lost, had ample time, resources and authority to construct twin cities infringing upon Porus' kingdom. Prakash, adamant that Porus defeated Alexander, has still mentioned the cities, creating a severe inexactitude in his argument.<sup>262</sup> Although he is not opposed to the establishment of either Bucephala or Nicaea, their ultimate existence is ample evidence to discredit a Macedonian loss. Nicaea in particular, deriving its name from Nike, the goddess of victory is particularly revealing.<sup>263</sup> Alexander evidently perceived the aftermath as nothing short of success and commemorated it as such, leaving little room to doubt his position as a victor. In addition to this, Arrian recorded another

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<sup>257</sup> Karttunen, 2017, p. 283.

<sup>258</sup> Arr. 5.29.5.

<sup>259</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.4-5.

<sup>260</sup> Diod. 17.95.5; Str. 15.1.29.

<sup>261</sup> Jankiraman, 2020; Singh, 2009, p. 497; Narain, 1965, pp. 155-165; Tripathi, 1939, p. 357.

<sup>262</sup> Prakash, 1994, p. 54.

<sup>263</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.4.

city on the Acesines, and one at the Indus-Acesines confluence, reiterating the invalidity of Prakash's stance.<sup>264</sup>

Scholarly opinion on the location of the cities remains divisive. Some propose the modern site of Jalalpur for the cities, whilst others favour the plains adjacent to Jhelum, north of Jalalpur.<sup>265</sup> Undertaking a reassessment of the city foundations, Tarn challenged Arrian's claim on the location of the cities, swapping their locations.<sup>266</sup> Since Tarn believed Bucephalus was killed in the heavy fighting, it would be natural for him to locate Bucephala on the battlefield, a currently undetermined site. Meanwhile, Nicaea would be situated at the point of embarkation because the river crossing was instrumental to Alexander's success. Since the postulation of this theory, it has received considerable rebuttal, and until the locus is ascertained, the subject will remain eristic.<sup>267</sup> Additionally, Arrian's vague description does not explicitly say which bank either city was located upon, nor do the other sources, giving validity to Tarn's claim. To reinforce this belief, Tarn cited the writings of the geographer, Claudius Ptolemy, who specifically placed Bucephala on the eastern bank of the Hydaspes.<sup>268</sup>

Another proposal has been brought forward by Indian literary sources. If any trust is to be placed in ancient Buddhist textual evidence, the placement of the two cities can corroborate Arrian's account, although the sites in question are disputed. The *Vinaya* of the Mulasarvastivadins alleged that both towns would be located on the eastern bank of the Hydaspes, where the Indian cities of Adirajya and Bhadrasha were situated.<sup>269</sup> Respectively, they would translate to "Place of the First Kingship" and "Place of the Good Horse." While the respective names seemingly bear similar definitions to Nicaea and Bucephala, particularly the latter, the comparison is inadequate to suggest the Indian cities could be traced to Alexander. Their locations do not corroborate the words of Greek and Roman historians, nor does the translation of Adirajya bear any resemblance to Nicaea.

Beyond their respective purposes of commemorating Bucephalus and celebrating Alexander's triumph, the roles of Bucephala and Nicaea are shrouded in ambiguity. However, there is insufficient evidence to prove that the functions of Bucephala and Nicaea were dissimilar to other

<sup>264</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.2-3; Arr. *Anab.* 6.15.2.

<sup>265</sup> Eggermont, 1993, p. 10; Fraser, 1996, p. 161; Stein, 1932, p. 41; Wood, 1997, p. 190; Arora, 2005, p. 90; Stoneman, 2019, p. 38.

<sup>266</sup> Tarn, 1948, pp. 96-97.

<sup>267</sup> Brunt, 1983, p. 61; Hamilton, 1969, pp. 169-170; Fraser, 1996, p. 70.

<sup>268</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 236.

<sup>269</sup> Eggermont, 1993, p. 12; Lamotte, 2000, p. 335.

cities founded by Alexander to the west and east of the Indus which either served as military outposts or settlements.<sup>270</sup> Green speculated the cities functioned as garrisons, exercising vigilance over Porus' activities in his enlarged realm, although this is purely conjectural.<sup>271</sup> Drawing upon the geographical locations of the erstwhile Persian satrapies in the Indus Valley region, I am inclined to believe the Hydaspes formed the eastern frontier of the Achaemenid Empire - Bucephala and Alexandria at the confluence of the Indus and Acesines were frontier outposts, operating similarly to Alexandria Eschate. Nicaea, symbolic of the victory over Porus may have been settled by soldiers who were grievously injured in the fighting and subsequently unable to continue campaigning although this is speculative. Nonetheless, the existence of both cities attests to Alexander's victory at the Hydaspes, serving as irrefutable evidence of his triumph. Since Bucephalus was not involved in the fighting, Bucephala would be located on the western bank and it seems natural to find Nicaea on the battlefield at the site of victory.

### **Alexander's Fleet; Annexing Glausae**

Another facet of the Indian campaign which deserves additional recognition, although it has generally remained unexplored, is the construction of Alexander's fleet which was simultaneous with the campaign against the Glauganicae/Glausae, a republican territory coterminous to Porus' realm.<sup>272</sup> Some Indian historians have identified them as the Glaucukayanaka of the *Kasika*.<sup>273</sup> This notable absence within modern source material can be attributed to the relative unimportance it was assigned by ancient authors.<sup>274</sup> Following the foundations of Alexander's twin cities, Bucephala and Nicaea, the Macedonians continued to move deeper into the Punjab, expanding the boundaries of the empire to the east of the Hydaspes. With this in mind, I intend to establish these two events as key turning points within the Indian campaign, perhaps of even greater magnitude than the Hyphasis "Mutiny" which would occur in the following months. As a consequence of the Hydaspes, this manoeuvre is vital to enriching our understanding of the battle. For one, this campaign made a Macedonian victory at the Hydaspes irrefutable. Secondly, it saw the expansion of Porus' sovereignty at the expense of his neighbours, cementing his position as a victor in the battle. Arguably, Alexander's decision to return from India was decided here, and not at the Hyphasis.

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<sup>270</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.22.4-5; Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.3; Arr. *Anab.* 6.15.2.

<sup>271</sup> Green, 1974, p. 403.

<sup>272</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.2.

<sup>273</sup> Tripathi, 1939, p. 357; Prakash, 1994, p. 78.

<sup>274</sup> Magee and Petrie, 2012, p. 12; Lane Fox, 2004; Karttunen, 2017; Stoneman, 2019; Wood, 1997.

What little information is available on this campaign is predominantly confined to Arrian's account, but Strabo and Diodorus have supplied their own elucidations to varying degrees of functionality, instead dwelling upon the natural wonders which they encountered in the wilderness. The geographical location is dubious, although a few modern historians believe it was located to the north of Porus' kingdom where the cooler climate enabled the growth of pine and fir trees, providing timber for Alexander's fleet.<sup>275</sup> While it was not explicitly mentioned by name, Diodorus maintained a notable interest in the flora and fauna of the region in stark contrast to Arrian who omitted such information. The northern locus of the Glausian territory can be supplemented by Abisares' capitulation who pledged his kingdom and a sizeable quantity of elephants at Alexander's disposal during this campaign.<sup>276</sup> Additionally, since Abisares was inclined to support Porus during the battle of the Hydaspes, his surrender to Alexander nullifies any misconceptions of a Macedonian loss. Abisares' territory was described as a mountainous kingdom within extant literary material, and has since been identified by a variety of historians as Kashmir.<sup>277</sup> Alexander's decision to subdue the Glausae would place him in proximity to the Indian king's realm, forcing Abisares to balk.

*“Alexander invaded their country with a force consisting of half the Companion cavalry, select infantrymen from each of the brigades, all of the mounted archers, the Agrianians, and the foot archers. The agreed surrender of the entire population brought him some thirty-seven cities, the smallest of which had no fewer than five thousand inhabitants, and many had more than ten thousand: the large number of villages also acquired were hardly less populous than the cities. Alexander also added this country to Porus' domain and effected a reconciliation between Porus and Taxiles: he then sent Taxiles back to his own home territory.”<sup>278</sup>*

Of greater eminence is the nature of the ephemeral conquest and its aftermath as described by Arrian.<sup>279</sup> Discounting any losses incurred at the Hydaspes, Alexander evidently took a sizeable force to annex Glausae, cementing his standing as a victor in the outcome of the aforementioned conflict. Conversely, no mention was made of Porus' army, although his participation in the campaign is evinced by Arrian, presumably with the remnants of his forces from the battle. Moreover, the exaggeration which was commonplace within ancient literary sources is prominent

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<sup>275</sup> Bosworth, 1988, p. 130; Dodge, 1890, p. 567.

<sup>276</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.5; QC. 9.1.7; Diod. 17.90.4.

<sup>277</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3; Holt, 2003, p. 51; Green, 1974, p. 392; Scullard, 1974, p. 68.

<sup>278</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.3-4.

<sup>279</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.3-4.

once again, and is rightly refuted by some, although others have taken these numbers for granted.<sup>280</sup> However, more importantly, the aftermath which resulted in the enlargement of Porus' kingdom can be attributed to the outcome of the Hydaspes.

*“Yet more impressed by this answer, Alexander granted Porus continued rule over his kingdom and added to its original extent further territory which more than doubled it.”*<sup>281</sup>

The statement can be described as anticipatory, and at first glance, it appears unreasonable that Alexander promised territories to Porus which were not yet subjugated.<sup>282</sup> It suggests the secession of lands already within Alexander's control, namely Taxiles' kingdom which is a counterargument espoused by some Indian historians to undermine a Macedonian victory.<sup>283</sup> However, literary source material can once again refute this claim. Plutarch claimed that Alexander granted Porus sovereignty over the independent tribes he conquered; Taxila functioned as a monarchy suggesting it was not ceded to Porus.<sup>284</sup> The misconception ultimately stems from a misreading of Arrian. However, the annexation of Glausae heralded a significant shift in Porus' favour. Bosworth, a leading expert on Alexander was correct to assume Taxiles would be furious at having been replaced as the primary “beneficiary” of Alexander's exploits.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, I will add that Taxiles' humiliation would be exacerbated by his participation in the expansion of his rival's domain and the reconciliation described by Arrian. Having served Alexander with unwavering loyalty prior to his arrival in the Punjab, Taxiles still reaped no rewards despite the Macedonian victory at the Hydaspes.

Of equal significance was the construction of the fleet. Assessing the nature of this campaign against the Glausians, one may surmise it was doubly important. Not only did Alexander fulfil his pledge to expand Porus' kingdom, but it became apparent the Macedonian king was already making preparations to depart from the Punjab and return westwards. Seizing this northern territory, the Macedonians acquired ample timber which could be ferried downriver to Bucephala and Nicaea where the fleet would be assembled over the coming months. The motive for constructing such a fleet has been supplied by Arrian and the vulgate tradition, although their explanation is unsatisfactory. The shared belief between the ancient sources is that Alexander

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<sup>280</sup> Prakash, 1994, p. 78; Tripathi, 1939, p. 357; Dodge, 1890, p. 569; Bosworth, 1996, p. 319.

<sup>281</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.3.

<sup>282</sup> Bosworth, 1996, p. 310; Brunt, 1983, p. 472.

<sup>283</sup> Jankiraman, 2020.

<sup>284</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 60.15.

<sup>285</sup> Bosworth, 1988, p. 131.

wished to sail to the Great Sea at the world's end after completing his conquest of India.<sup>286</sup> Despite my hesitance to lend credence to this assessment, it has been readily accepted and espoused by a number of modern historians.<sup>287</sup> However, proceeding events which unfolded at the Hyphasis river would disprove this misconception.

### **The Hyphasis “Mutiny”**

In the months following the battle of the Hydaspes and annexation of Glausae, the Macedonians ventured deeper into the Punjab, crossing the Acesines and Hydraotes rivers as they fought a series of campaigns against recalcitrant tribes and endured the torrential rainfall of the Indian monsoon. Some tribes and minor kingdoms capitulated, although the resistance encountered proved to be fierce. Casualties and injuries slowly rose among their numbers, and it swiftly became evidently the sole beneficiary of their labour was Porus himself who saw a gradual expansion of his realm. Arriving at the banks of the Hyphasis river in the autumn of 326, the Macedonians refused to advance further into India, sparking the event which was dubbed the Hyphasis Mutiny. This was thought to be the western frontier of the Nanda Empire's and reports of its army discouraged the Macedonians from following Alexander into the eastern Punjab. According to ancient accounts, Coenus voiced the collective opinion of the Macedonians, prompting Alexander to turn back from the Hyphasis to the Hydaspes where he found his fleet completed and fresh soldiers awaiting him. Several historians have argued that mutiny was an inappropriate term, instead opting for unrest as a more suitable definition for the events which transpired.<sup>288</sup> Having written their respective accounts during the age of the Romans, the secondary historians all possessed a concept of mutinies tainted by Roman military doctrine.<sup>289</sup> A conflicting variety of reasons have been presented to account for this outburst of military unrest. Historians have dubbed the event as a debacle and the sole defeat in Alexander's military career, and it is a scenario which has received considerable attention from Indian scholarship to argue in defence of a Macedonian defeat. Nevertheless, western scholarship almost unanimously agree that Alexander did intend to cross the Hyphasis and advance to the Ganges.<sup>290</sup> However, I believe a reconsideration of literary evidence is crucial to highlight the flaws in both western and eastern historiography to assert the

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<sup>286</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.1.1; QC. 9.1.3.

<sup>287</sup> Hammond, 1989, p. 216; Smith, 1914, p. 73; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 364; Wood, 1997, p. 191; Bosworth, 1993, p. 422; Anson, 2011, p. 94; Dodge, 1890, p. 569.

<sup>288</sup> Atkinson, 2010, p. 15; Carney, 1996, p. 20; Spann, 1999, p. 69; Howe and Müller, 2012, p. 38; Brice, 2015, p. 75.

<sup>289</sup> Carney, 1996, p. 30; Howe and Müller, 2012, p. 35.

<sup>290</sup> Droysen, 2012, p. 317; Cartledge, 2004, p. 184; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 367; Green, 1974, p. 407.

veracity of my own hypothesis - the expansion of Porus' realm was responsible for the growth of unrest and Alexander's decision to halt at the Hyphasis was premeditated.

When addressing the precise cause for the Hyphasis mutiny, the Indian revisionist argument has expressed unanimity, pinning a fear of the unknown as the predominant source of the mutiny.<sup>291</sup> While the ancient sources have highlighted the military might of the Gangetic regions, we must ponder if this can be reliably confirmed as the sole cause of the mutiny. Citing Plutarch as their source, they are eager to emphasise the costly nature of the battle and its consequences on Macedonian morale.<sup>292</sup> Nonetheless, I find several key issues with the narrative provided by Plutarch which appears to be readily accepted within Indian scholarship. For one, the passage itself is taken out of context and omits the journey from the Hydaspes to the Hyphasis which involved siege warfare.<sup>293</sup> Secondly, the version of events described by Plutarch intimate Alexander's arrival at the Ganges, a belief which is uncorroborated by other historians. Placing emphasis on the veracity of his account, Plutarch has alleged his given figures for the military forces beyond the Ganges were accurate, despite inflating the numbers found in the vulgate tradition. Akin to other historical accounts, Plutarch recorded a Macedonian victory although he delineated the costly nature of their pyrrhic victory, commenting on the trauma it inflicted upon Alexander's forces. However, this shared belief amongst Indian scholars does little to support the theory of a Macedonian defeat. Most prominently, the argument that Alexander was defeated by Porus is eroded by the onset of the Hyphasis mutiny. A decisive loss would halt Alexander's journey into the Punjab immediately after the battle, and surviving sources are in agreement that the Macedonians continued fighting after the campaign against Porus, nullifying the belief of a military defeat.

Unlike most Indian scholars, Prakash postulated an entirely disparate context for the mutiny from an Indian perspective. Meroes, the Indian in Arrian's commentary who successfully persuaded Porus to stop fighting and surrender to Alexander was alleged by Prakash to be Chandragupta Maurya, the future founder of the Mauryan Empire who overthrew Alexander's satraps and conquered the northern Indian subcontinent.<sup>294</sup> This is quite a remarkable claim and one which deserves further examination, since some western historians also believe Chandragupta Maurya was the enigmatic Meroes who was at the Hydaspes.<sup>295</sup> While it is possible that Meroes was a

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<sup>291</sup> Narain, 1965, p. 159; Raychaudhuri, 1952, p. 63; Thapar, 2006, p. 290; Singh, 2009, p. 456.

<sup>292</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 62.1.

<sup>293</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.22-5.24; Diod. 17.91.4; QC. 9.1.14-23.

<sup>294</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.18.7; Prakash, 1994, p. 82.

<sup>295</sup> Stoneman, 2019, p. 62; Naiden, 2018, p. 194.



Hellenic corruption of the Indian name Maurya, the name given to Chandragupta within extant material was Sandrocottus.<sup>296</sup> Arrian claimed that Meroes had been an old friend of Porus, and that this friendship was instrumental to Porus' decision to negotiate with Alexander. However, other Greco-Roman sources which speak of Chandragupta described him as an adolescent during his campaign against the Macedonians satraps.<sup>297</sup> Prakash had argued that Maurya and his advisor, Kautilya were planning to annex the Nanda Empire and deemed it prudent to form an alliance with both Porus and Alexander to accomplish their alleged mission.<sup>298</sup> This seems too fantastical to be accepted - not only was Chandragupta absent from the battle, but we can find no supporting evidence in Greco-Roman sources which credits Prakash's belief. Even within the scarce Indian records, namely the *Mudrarakshasa* which outlined Chandragupta's campaign against the Nandas, there was no mention of a proposed alliance with the Macedonians, nor any record of Alexander for that matter.<sup>299</sup> Taking a holistic approach on the mutiny, Tripathi favoured numerous factors which all contributed equally to the Macedonians' decision to balk and return west, citing weariness, homesickness and disease as primary factors in opposition to the mainstream Indian perspective.<sup>300</sup>

Source	Infantry	Cavalry	Chariots	War Elephants
Curtius (9.2.3-4)	200,000	20,000	2,000	3,000
Diodorus (17.93.2)	200,000	20,000	2,000	4,000
Plutarch (62.3)	200,000	80,000	8,000	6,000

Table 5: Ancient estimates of the Nanda Empire's military strength.

Ignoring the probable inflation of military figures, the implication was the presence of a vast army dwarfing anything which Porus or any of the Punjabi tribes and kingdoms were capable of fielding. These were figures rivalling the might of the Achaemenids. As I previously argued for Porus' forces, the numbers provided by ancient historians were susceptible to exaggeration and differed considerably. There is unanimity for the infantry, cavalry and chariot figures in the vulgate tradition although Plutarch quadruples some of these numbers, aggrandising the scale of the threat. Moreover, where Curtius and Diodorus describe a single tyrannical ruler dubbed Agrammes/Xandrames exercising sovereignty over the Gangaridae and Praesii, Plutarch's commentary

<sup>296</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 62.4; Just. 15.4.13.

<sup>297</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 62.9.

<sup>298</sup> Prakash, 1994, p. 87.

<sup>299</sup> Visakhadatta, *Mudrarakshasa*.

<sup>300</sup> Tripathi, 1939, p. 359.

indicates a union of at least two kingdoms.<sup>301</sup> In this circumstance, the historian benefits from the presence of Indian evidence to supplement Greek and Roman accounts although the available material is still scanty.<sup>302</sup> There are two possibilities which come to mind. Perhaps the lands directly east of the Hyphasis were not under direct Nanda sovereignty. Alternatively, the Nandas permitted frontier territories to exercise greater levels of autonomy.

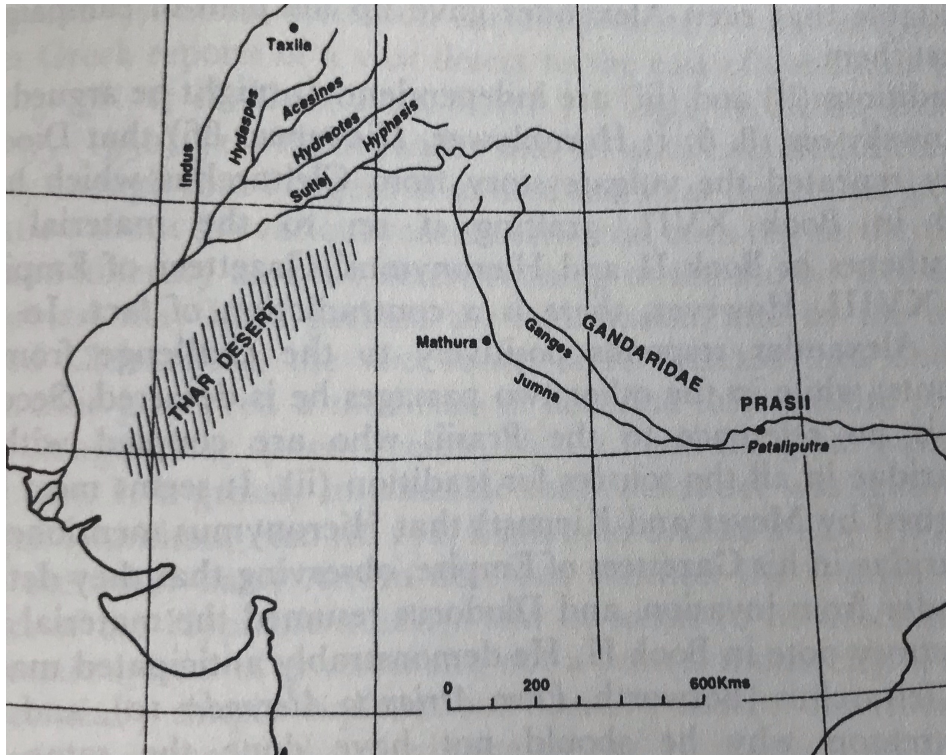


Figure 7: Approximate locations of the Gangaridae and Prasii

Conversely, western scholarship has produced a richer historiography on the events at the Hyphasis, and there is less uniformity regarding Alexander's decision to retrace his steps. The term mutiny is questionable, although a handful of academics endorse its appellation.<sup>303</sup> To summarise, western historians generally believe the Indian monsoon for seventy days, coupled with years of strenuous combat exacerbated an infectious sentiment of homesickness amongst the Macedonian contingents of Alexander's army. Combined with their hesitance to face the colossal armies awaiting them beyond the Ganges, the troops refused to advance beyond the Hyphasis, eventually forcing Alexander to turn westwards. However, the credibility of this alleged intention is eroded by the construction of the fleet on the Hydaspes which was ordered by Alexander in the aftermath of the battle of the Hydaspes. Although all ancient sources highlight Alexander's decision to cross the

<sup>301</sup> Diod. 17.93.2; QC. 9.2.3; Plut. 62.3.

<sup>302</sup> Singh, 2009, p. 494.

<sup>303</sup> Anson, 2011, p. 94; Tarn, 1948, p. 98; Lock, 1977, pp. 104-107; Cartledge, 2004, p. 184; Wood, 1997, p. 195.

Hyphasis, historians should not adduce this without further inquiry.<sup>304</sup> Following my earlier pattern of thought, the ancient sources require reevaluation to gauge their respective credibility. The aforementioned sources which infer that Alexander had designs to advance deeper into India and cross the Ganges are widely accepted for their alleged authenticity within western scholarship. However, with a plethora of underlying factors contributing to this ostensible mutiny, modern historians argued that each reason was equally viable for the mounting unrest among the Macedonian contingents of Alexander's multiethnic army, listing homesickness, weariness and a fear of the Nanda Empire as valid causes for their insubordination.<sup>305</sup>

Presenting an opposing view on the mutiny, Tarn argued that Alexander had no desire to annex territories east of the Hyphasis, and that he had no foreknowledge on the Ganges or of the vast armies beyond it, a view which Heckel has also espoused and developed into a staged mutiny masterminded by Alexander himself.<sup>306</sup> In an earlier commentary during the British colonial era, Johann Gustav Droysen believed Alexander intended to lead a raid on the Ganges without intending to retain formal sovereignty over the region, adducing the fleet on the Hydaspes to vindicate his assumption. In a 2012 article, Howe and Muller hypothesised that Roman era historians with different concepts of mutinies moulded the event into an act of insubordination while Alexander himself had no desire to advance beyond the Hyphasis, the eastern Achaemenid frontier.<sup>307</sup>

While I disagree with Howe, Müller and Tarn on the Achaemenid boundaries, Alexander's decision to halt at the Hyphasis and retreat was entirely intentional. The vulgate tradition provided additional supporting evidence to bolster the validity of this hypothesis. Returning to the Hydaspes, erroneously dubbed the Acesines by Curtius and Diodorus, Alexander was met by reinforcements consisting of some 30,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry along with 25,000 panoplies and medicinal supplies.<sup>308</sup> With auxiliaries reinforcing his beleaguered military, Alexander now possessed ample manpower and resources to resume his eastern march, yet his inaction confuted a desire to advance on the Ganges. While the ancient sources paint a picture of an unstoppable conqueror who was compelled to abandon his campaign at the request of his soldiers, Alexander himself must have realised the risk of waging war against the Nandas and deliberately aborted his Indian expedition. The Hyphasis was an ideal location to halt.

<sup>304</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.24.8; Diod. 17.93.4; QC. 9.2.12; Plut. *Alex.* 62.2.

<sup>305</sup> Wood, 1997, p. 195; Cartledge, 2004, p. 184; Green, 1974, p. 407; Naiden, 2018, pp. 195-197; Lane Fox, 2004, p. 369; Glover, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>306</sup> Tarn, 1948, p. 99; Heckel, 2020, p. 250.

<sup>307</sup> Howe and Müller, 2012, pp. 35-37.

<sup>308</sup> Diod. 17.95.4; QC. 9.3.21. Curtius gives the military figures as 7,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry.

Additionally, Alexander's geographical knowledge of the Indian subcontinent must be taken into consideration. Derived from his teacher, Aristotle, Alexander's belief of the Indian subcontinent was limited, and it is generally accepted that his awareness only expanded when he arrived at the banks of the Hyphasis. Aristotle thought the Indus Valley was contiguous with the Outer Ocean which he believed could be viewed from the heights of the Hindu Kush/Caucasus mountain range, indicating Aristotle, and subsequently Alexander had no foreknowledge of the Ganges.<sup>309</sup> However, during Alexander's journey to capture Porus' nephew, the Macedonians were informed that he fled to the Ganges. Moreover, there is additional evidence within extant material to infer that Alexander was informed of the Ganges prior to the Hyphasis mutiny. Having rested in the kingdoms of Taxiles and Porus for a month, it is not improbable to assume Alexander obtained knowledge about the geography of the Punjab and quite likely the Ganges to the east during this interval.<sup>310</sup>

Another aspect of the mutiny which the ancient sources are eager to emphasise are the combination of homesickness and weariness from perpetual campaigning. The former is certainly a credible theory, although the latter can be disproven. Several historians lend credence to this view, with some asserting the prominence of post traumatic stress disorder, owing to the reduced rotation of soldiers in a geographical location so distant from Macedon.<sup>311</sup> Revisiting ancient evidence, it is imperative to question the veracity of this assertion. When one steps back and examines the grand scheme of events, this argument falls flat in consideration of the quantity of conflicts which erupted during the voyage along the length of the Indus.<sup>312</sup> Driven by a desperation to reach their homeland, perhaps the Macedonians were eager to slaughter any resistance they encountered. Nonetheless, with an overwhelming probability of encountering additional elephants and ferocious tribesmen, such prospects would likely prompt them to return west through Bactria and pacified regions, as opposed to lands teeming with autonomous Indian kingdoms and tribes. The army's decision to follow Alexander down the length of the Indus rebuts any alleged weariness, a sentiment which swiftly faded immediately after Alexander halted his eastern campaign and merely redirected it along the Indus.

However, I would postulate another theory, albeit one which has remained unspoken and likely held a great degree of credibility in the light of the context of this unrest. Having emerged victorious in a gruelling struggle against Porus' army, Alexander continued to move eastwards into the

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<sup>309</sup> Bosworth, 1993, p. 421.

<sup>310</sup> Diod. 17.89.6.

<sup>311</sup> Atkinson, 2010, p. 16; Green, 1974, p. 407.

<sup>312</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.6.1-6.17.2.

Punjab, annexing further territories by force where necessary. It is the nature of this campaigning which necessitates reevaluation, and no source is more informative and detailed than Arrian who described the Macedonian capturing numerous Indian cities and handing them over to Porus.<sup>313</sup> Alexander's disgruntled forces gained no rewards for their laborious endeavours, while Porus reaped the fruits of their struggles, despite his minimal contribution. The siege at Sangala, a fortification east of the Hydraotes underpinned the ferocity of the combat. Alexander no longer held the support of his army, culminating in the collective unrest at the Hyphasis. Porus, the man they had fought against was now the sole beneficiary of their drudgery.

Alongside Alexander who was credited for his eagerness to cross the Ganges, the vulgate tradition inferred Porus' enthusiasm during this crucial stage of the Indian campaign. Despite the overwhelming military might possessed by the Nandas, Porus emphasised the unpopularity of the ruler, likely attempting to minimise the scale of the threat.<sup>314</sup> However, there does exist Indian evidence to corroborate Porus' claim - Dhana Nanda was notorious for his avarice and extortion of his subjects, attesting to his unpopularity.<sup>315</sup> There is little room to doubt the Indian king desired to be a beneficiary of the proposed campaign against the Nanda Empire, perhaps believing it would be added to his expanding realm. In the aftermath of the Hyphasis mutiny, Porus was installed as the undisputed master of a vast kingdom stretching from the Hydaspes to the Hyphasis, his influence substantially prodigious. He was in every regard the long term victor of the Hydaspes.

Halting at the Hyphasis was a premeditated decision, but it was not the eastern frontier of the Achaemenid Empire. The nature of the campaigning had altered drastically from a conquest of the Persian territories to the expansion of an Indian king's realm in an alien land. The Achaemenid boundaries had already been reached at the Hydaspes, and by pledging his support to Porus, Alexander found a motive to continue exploring India. However his men would not support this endeavour indefinitely and the Macedonians reached their breaking point at the Hyphasis. Halting at this river provided Alexander with a suitable buffer zone to bolster the eastern frontier of his empire against the Nanda Empire - Alexander knew he could not afford to continue indefinitely. It was politically expedient to end his eastern expedition at the Hyphasis and provide Porus with an enlarged realm to ensure his loyalty. Any suggestions that Alexander intended to continue were later inventions by Roman era historians who concocted the image of him as an indefatigable global conqueror.

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<sup>313</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.21.5.

<sup>314</sup> Diod. 17.93.3; QC. 9.2.6-7.

<sup>315</sup> Rayachaudhuri, 1952, p. 24; Singh, 2009, p. 454.

### **Alexander's Indian Satrapies**

The political composition of Alexander's Indian satrapies is particularly informative when assessing the advantageous positions of Porus and Abisares in stark contrast to that of Taxiles. Now that it has been established that Alexander and Taxiles emerged victorious in the immediate aftermath of the Hydaspes campaign, their triumph was fleeting, and the satrapal arrangements are the most viable form of evidence to bolster Porus' status as the primary beneficiary of the battle. The most comprehensive undertaking of the Indian satrapies and their functionality in the years prior to and following Alexander's death was conducted by Bosworth. Historiographically, the nature of Alexander's administrative arrangements for his Indian acquisitions remains contentious with a firm division between western scholars disputing the Macedonian king's intentions.<sup>316</sup> Indian reception to the satrapal arrangement has also remained divisive, although any such commentary undeniably denotes a Macedonian victory at the Hydaspes.<sup>317</sup> A defeated and fleeing army would have no time nor impetus to establish a functioning administrative system which persevered for almost a decade after the conclusion of the Indian campaign. Nonetheless, a review of the satrapal arrangements is crucial to comprehend Porus' position as a victor in the aftermath of the Hydaspes. Furthermore, Alexander's modifications to the political structure of the Punjab deviated from the Achaemenid system of governance.

At the time of his departure from the Indus in 325, Alexander possessed a total of four Indian satrapies. Philip son of Machatas controlled the lands west of the Hydaspes and Indus, Porus was the satrap of the kingdom between the Hydaspes and Hyphasis, Peithon son of Agenor ruled a vast territory spanning from the Indus-Acesines confluence to the Indian Ocean, and Abisares governed his own kingdom in addition to the lands of Arsaces, a key issue which Bosworth's commentary has overlooked.<sup>318</sup> A fifth satrapy, situated to the west of the Indus, initially under the jurisdiction of Nicanor was amalgamated into Philip's province in 326. Despite possessing rudimentary knowledge of the satrapies which can be gleaned from literary material, the nature of the sources leaves a prominent inadequacy pertaining to the administrative affairs of the Indian satrapies. As the easternmost frontier of the Macedonian Empire, the *modus operandi* diverged from the methods of control exercised in the centre of the empire. Firstly, the assessment and collection of tribute remains circumspect, particularly within the few Indian satrapies which lacked a formal Macedonian presence. Immediately, it becomes obvious that Macedonian hegemony on

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<sup>316</sup> Dodge, 1890, p. 567; Droysen, 2012, p. 311; Bosworth, 1988, p. 239; Badian, 1965, p. 179.

<sup>317</sup> Tripathi, 1939, p. 364; Raychaudhuri, 1952, p. 78; Narain, 1965, p. 162; Mookerji, 1943, pp. 45-51.

<sup>318</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3; Arr. *Anab.* 6.2.3; Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.2; Arr. *Anab.* 6.15.4; Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.5; Bosworth, 1983, pp. 37-46.

these satrapies retained a more formal presence. While the Achaemenid satraps of Arachosia and Bactria maintained influence over the Indus, Alexander installed his own satraps tasked with the administration of his Indian acquisitions.<sup>319</sup>

Source	Satrapy	Satrap
Arrian (4.28.6; 6.2.3; 6.27.2)	Gandhara; West of the Indus	Nicanor (327-326); Philip (326-325); Taxiles and Eudemus (325)
Arrian (5.8.3; 6.27.2)	Between the Indus and Hydaspes	Philip (326-325); Taxiles and Eudemus (325)
Arrian (6.2.1)	Between the Hydaspes and Hyphasis	Porus (326-325)
Arrian (5.29.5); Curtius (10.1.20)	Abisares/Arsaces' kingdoms	Abisares (326-325); Abisares' son (325)
Arrian (6.15.4)	Indus-Acesines confluence to the Indian Ocean	Peithon (325)

Table 6: The division of the satrapies during Alexander's Indian campaign (327-325).

In order to establish Taxiles' disadvantageous status compared to Porus, it becomes necessary to reevaluate the governance of this vast territory stretching from the western Indus to the Hydaspes. Philip's satrapy which eventually fell under the control of Taxiles was notable for significant alterations to its composition over time, generating no shortage of debate pertaining to the extent of its borders, and the nature of its administration. Taxiles' role and position have often been the subject of controversy among scholars, requiring clarification to assert his unfavourable position. Arriving at Taxila in the spring of 326, Alexander rewarded Taxiles with as much of the surrounding territory as the Indian king desired.<sup>320</sup> Locating the precise boundaries of this region is rendered impossible by a dearth of information, although it was certainly west of the Indus, consisting of land which Alexander had previously subdued en route to Taxila.

Despite his generous treatment of Taxiles, Alexander appointed Philip, son of Machatas, as the de facto governor of Taxila.<sup>321</sup> During this period, Taxiles can best be described as a king under a satrap. However, with the news of Philip's assassination reaching Alexander while the latter was in Carmania, Alexander promptly dispatched letters to both Taxiles and Eudemus, ordering them to exercise temporary sovereignty over Philip's satrapy until an official replacement was sent.<sup>322</sup>

<sup>319</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.3-4.

<sup>320</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.2.

<sup>321</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3.

<sup>322</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.27.2.

Here, we may view Taxiles as a provisional satrap and this arrangement was fortuitous, since Taxiles retained this position until his death, but Arrian leaves little room to doubt that Alexander was intent on substituting him for a Macedonian governor.

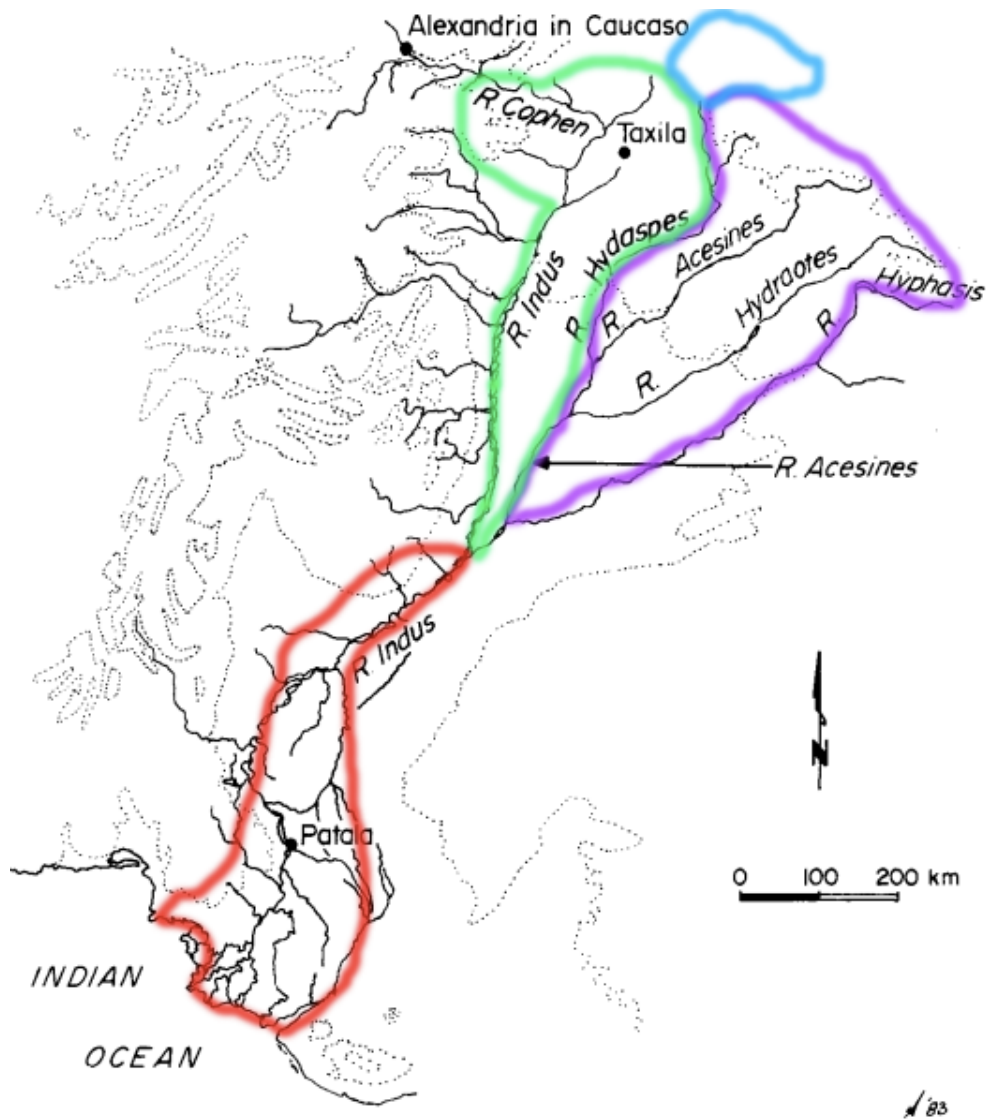


Figure 8: Map of the Indian satrapies in 325. (Philip: green; Porus: purple; Abisares: blue; Peithon: red).

Adapted from Bosworth, 1983, p. 46.

However, there are several glaring misconceptions with this satrapy and its intended function within modern scholarship. Firstly, some historians have used this to argue that Alexander intended to use Taxiles as a counterweight against Porus' kingdom to the east, although Arrian's commentary makes no such remark.<sup>323</sup> At first glance, this notion does seem to bear credence when one compares the relative sizes of their satrapies. Despite this assumption, Taxiles was not the de facto satrap of his lands, sharing his power with Eudemus who quite possibly exercised a similar role to

<sup>323</sup> Green, 1974, p. 402; Tarn, 1948, p. 97; Droysen, 2012, p. 311; Dodge, 1890, p. 567; Hamilton, 1999, p. 167.



Philip. The exact function of Eudemus is unclear, with some arguing he was responsible for the maintenance of Alexander's military garrisons, although Curtius discloses his position as satrap.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, Alexander intended to replace both men with an official governor, although his premature demise likely prevented this.<sup>325</sup> Therefore, Taxiles' ascension to prominence was entirely serendipitous and he functioned as a puppet ruler, not a counterweight to Porus in the east. Additionally, colonial era historiography thought Alexander planned to establish informal sovereignty over territories east of the Indus.<sup>326</sup> However, the presence of a Macedonian satrap along with city foundations and military garrisons strongly suggest Alexander intended to retain direct control over this satrapy along the Indus, contrary to the suggestions of historians such as Dodge and Mookerji. The Hydaspes formed the true eastern frontier of both the Macedonian and Achaemenid empires with city foundations such as Bucephala and Alexandria on the Indus serving as landmarks to denote this, dividing the empire from its allied client kingdom under Porus.

Conversely, the satrapy granted to Porus was comprised of a vastly different functionality. In the aftermath of the battle of the Hydaspes, the Indian king was granted the title of satrap by Alexander and the boundaries of his original kingdom were expanded, bestowing upon him a dominion which was nearly thrice the extent of his former realm.<sup>327</sup> His dominion was augmented by Glausae, the kingdom of the bad Porus, the Cathaeon territory, the kingdoms of Phegeus and Sopheithes and eventually all the lands between the Hydaspes and the Hyphasis.<sup>328</sup> Throughout Arrian's commentary, both Porus and Abisares were referred to as 'basileus', or king, implying their kingdoms were not subject to the erstwhile Achaemenid Empire, whereas Taxiles was dubbed 'hyparch'.<sup>329</sup> Akin to Taxiles, Porus enjoyed an extension of his kingdom, a practice which does not seem uncommon for Alexander's administration of the Indus Valley. However, unlike his former rival, the enlargement of Porus' realm can be attributed as a direct result of the battle. Alexander only expanded Taxiles' kingdom prior to the conflict, likely to retain his loyalty and reward his unswerving fidelity. Nonetheless, the growth of Porus' influence ensured his continued allegiance as both satrap and king - a shrewd manoeuvre which pacified the petty kingdoms and tribes of the Punjab under a singular ruler.

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<sup>324</sup> QC. 10.1.21; Stoneman, 2018, p. 159; Karttunen, 2017, p. 195; Bosworth, 1988, p. 239.

<sup>325</sup> Bosworth, 1983, p. 37.

<sup>326</sup> Dodge, 1890, p. 567; Mookerji, 1943, p. 46.

<sup>327</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.3; Plut. *Alex.* 60.15.

<sup>328</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.4; Arr. *Anab.* 5.21.5; Diod. 17.91.2; Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.2.

<sup>329</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.2-3.

Although the sources remain silent on the matter of tribute, we can assume they are correct to infer there was none. Payment of tribute was one of Alexander's demands prior to the battle, but no ancient author attests to its collection in the battle's aftermath or during the division of the satrapies.<sup>330</sup> Some modern historians exercise scepticism and do not believe the omission of this detail upholds the validity of the statement. Unlike Taxiles, Porus was permitted to install his own garrisons throughout his satrapy.<sup>331</sup> Although Bosworth has argued Porus' control was likely informal beyond the borders of his original kingdom, the presence of Paurava garrisons beyond the Hydraotes disputes his point.<sup>332</sup> Ancient accounts can verify the existence of two cities within Porus' realm, namely Nicaea and an unnamed settlement on the Acesines, although there is nothing to suggest these cities retained the same function as those in Philip's satrapy.<sup>333</sup> The latter in particular was constructed to house obsolete mercenaries, refuting any beliefs that Alexander intended to retain formal hegemony over Porus' satrapy.<sup>334</sup> This expansive satrapy spanning from the Hydaspes to the Hyphasis operated as a buffer zone against the Nandas in the east, shoring Alexander's easternmost frontier by unifying the myriad tribes and petty kingdoms under a singular monarch. For Porus, it was synonymous with victory - he received a larger kingdom conquered by Alexander and maintained his status as king without Macedonian infringement on his realm.

Within the realm of scholarship, there have been several notable misconceptions pertaining to the management of Porus' satrapy. First and foremost, there appears to be a misunderstanding regarding the plenipotentiary status Porus was granted by Alexander. Despite the considerable autonomy he was provided with, Maniscalco thought Philip and Peithon were strategically placed along the adjacent Indus satrapies to monitor Porus' activities.<sup>335</sup> Based on the locations of the Achaemenid satrapies, I am inclined to believe Alexander placed Macedonian satraps in former Persian territories while installing indigenous rulers in regions which the Achaemenids never conquered. There was also a misinterpretation regarding the status of other Indian rulers within Porus' enlarged satrapy. In an earlier commentary, Droysen maintained the belief that Phegeus and Sopeithes were autonomous rulers tasked with balancing each other, although Arrian's account confirms Porus was granted power over both petty monarchs, suggesting neither Phegeus or Sopeithes were ever truly autonomous, nor tasked with acting as a counterweight to the other.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> QC. 8.13.2; Metz. 55.

<sup>331</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3; Arr. *Anab.* 5.24.8.

<sup>332</sup> Bosworth, 1983, p. 45; Arr. *Anab.* 5.24.8.

<sup>333</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.19.4; Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.3.

<sup>334</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.3; Diod. 17.

<sup>335</sup> Mookerji, 1943, p. 48; Maniscalco, 2021, p. 133.

<sup>336</sup> Droysen, 2012, p. 322; Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.2; QC. 9.1.24; QC. 9.1.36.

Like his ally Porus, Abisares also enjoyed the benefit of plenipotentiary status, being granted the rank of satrap, and his realm was even expanded by Alexander to incorporate the lands of Arsaces.<sup>337</sup> However, a salient difference was the imposition of tribute upon Abisares, likely caused by his unstable alliance with the Macedonians. Once again, we find Alexander displaying a perfunctory attitude towards the lands east of the Hydaspes. As with Porus, Alexander was suspiciously trusting of Abisares, despite Arrian noting his role in the tribal resistance against the Macedonians in Gandhara, his role at the Hydaspes, and his constant attempts to avoid formal surrender.<sup>338</sup> After the death of Abisares in 325, likely caused by his illness, Alexander appointed his son to serve as his successor without a Macedonian garrison or satrap presiding over the kingdom's affairs.<sup>339</sup>

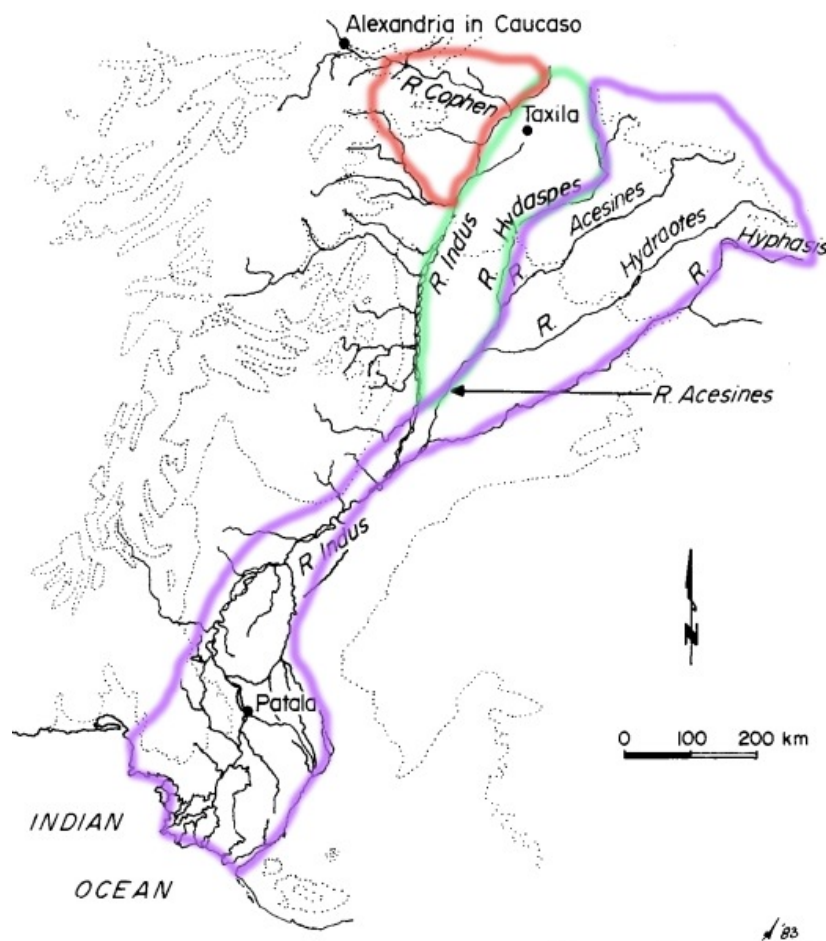


Figure 9: Map of the Indian satrapies in 323-321. (Peithon: red; Taxiles: green; Porus: purple). Adapted from Bosworth, 1983, p. 46.

<sup>337</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.5.

<sup>338</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.27.7; Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.3; Arr. *Anab.* 5.20.5-6.

<sup>339</sup> QC. 10.1.20-21.

By 325, at the conclusion of the Indian campaign, it becomes apparent that both Porus and Abisares maintained a prodigious advantage over Taxiles within their respective satrapies. While tribute was imposed on the latter, likely for his role during the insurrections of Gandhara, his autonomy was all but assured and continued after his death. Porus enjoyed the benefits of an expanded realm and there was no requirement to pay tribute to Alexander. In the event of Alexander's death in 323 and during proceeding years, fortune continued to favour Porus. As Macedonian control was relinquished east of the Indus, Porus was granted Peithon's former satrapy, providing him with additional territory and subjects.<sup>340</sup> For all intents and purposes, Alexander's foray into the Indus Valley significantly altered the geopolitical climate, establishing Porus as the undisputed master of this region, and this should be viewed as nothing short of a victory for the Indian king. Concurrently, the Macedonians would regard the Indian campaign as a triumph, evidenced by a series of silver coins produced in the aftermath of the battle.

### **Alexander's Indian Coins**

Designed to commemorate Alexander's foray into the Indus Valley, a series of decadrachms and tetradrachms were minted in the aftermath of his campaign, necessitating examination of Alexander's reception to the Hydaspes and his expedition to the Indus Valley. Since this vital facet of the Indian campaign is ignored almost entirely by Indian historiography, I will predominantly focus upon western scholarship pertaining to the iconography of the coins. As with the ignorance of Bucephala and Nicaea, rejecting numismatic evidence serves little purpose beyond eroding the credibility of the Indian revisionist argument.<sup>341</sup> Nevertheless, scholars such as Pandey have attempted, rather unsuccessfully, to prove this decadrachm was celebrating Alexander's victory over Darius at Gaugamela.<sup>342</sup> Immediately, the very existence of these coins, scarce though they are, indicate that Alexander perceived his Indian campaign as nothing less than a victory. In this section, I seek to clarify the ambiguous imagery on the decadrachms and tetradrachms, ascertain the location these coins were minted, and identify the intended audience of these pieces.

As an Indian commentator on this decadrachm, Pandey's view necessitates a separate exploration. In stark contrast the vast majority of Indian scholars who have omitted any mention of numismatic evidence from their narratives, Pandey constructed an unconvincing argument to suggest the coin was not depicting Alexander's Indian campaign. Holding a shared belief with

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<sup>340</sup> Diod. 18.39.6; Photius, *The Library*, 92.

<sup>341</sup> Jankiraman, 2020; Narain, 1965, pp. 155-165; Prakash, 1994; Roy, 2005; Singh, 2009; Tripathi, 1939; Majumdar, 1977.

<sup>342</sup> Pandey, 1971, pp. 1-7.

scholars such as Prakash and Ahsan, Pandey was an Indian historian who believed the Macedonians were defeated by Porus, and subsequently, in his opinion, the coin cannot have represented the battle of the Hydaspes. According to Pandey, who cited his source as the untrustworthy *Shah Nama* of Firdausi, the decadrachm was commemorating Alexander's victory over Darius III at Gaugamela.<sup>343</sup> As a medieval Persian composition, the *Shah Nama* was hardly a reliable chronicle, owing to its later provenance. To reinforce this claim, Pandey claimed that Herodotus' account mentioned a group of Indians acting as Darius' bodyguards.<sup>344</sup> Since Herodotus was dead almost a century before the battle of Gaugamela, he cannot be cited as a source, reducing the viability of Pandey's revisionist argument. Pandey then turned to Arrian's commentary, noting the presence of elephants on the battlefield, emphasising their role and claiming that Darius would be seated atop an elephant.<sup>345</sup> However, Arrian's narrative painted an entirely different picture of the battle. Darius was seated in a chariot, not atop an elephant, and the pachyderms themselves were not involved in the fighting which is ample evidence to discredit his view.<sup>346</sup>



Figure 10: Silver decadrachm depicting a Macedonian cavalryman pursuing a war elephant with two mahouts and a figure in military regalia crowned by Nike

Commonly known as the Porus Medallion, this decadrachm is one of several pieces struck in the aftermath of Alexander's Indian campaign. First found as part of the Oxus Hoard in 1877 in modern day Afghanistan, it was unearthed in greater quantities in the 1973 Babylon hoard, and it is thought

<sup>343</sup> Pandey, 1971, pp. 1-7.

<sup>344</sup> Pandey, 1971, p. 6.

<sup>345</sup> Pandey, 1971, p. 6; Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.6.

<sup>346</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.15.6.

by some to be a genuine primary source for Alexander and thus a particularly informative piece of evidence.<sup>347</sup> The Babylon hoard contained seven decadrachms, eleven tetradrachms with the same markings, depicting an archer and elephant, and three tetradrachms without markings which featured a quadriga and war elephant.<sup>348</sup> Any doubt regarding the coin's authenticity has since been allayed, and it is indeed confirmed to originate within Alexander's lifetime.<sup>349</sup> Not only is it particularly revealing about Alexander's portrayal, but it also emphasises the prominence of the Indian campaign in his military career. The iconography on both sides denotes themes of victory and military prowess, and irrefutably depicts the Battle of the Hydaspes with the symbolic and literal elements of the coin featuring in some capacity within literary source material.

When examining the obverse of the elephant decadrachm, a readily accepted assumption among modern historians is the presence of both Alexander and Porus on the imagery, seated atop their respective mounts.<sup>350</sup> As the key belligerents in the fighting, it seems natural to assume both kings would be present on the coin, engaged in battle. Although this theory does hold some degree of viability in my eyes, it warrants closer examination. Perhaps the most salient aspect to address is its incongruence with ancient textual evidence. Most prominently, the ancient sources are unanimous in their decision that Porus and Alexander never met prior to the conclusion of the battle. Although one could cite Justin and Curtius to refute this, neither of these arguments are without critical flaws. In Justin, the text strongly infers Alexander charged at Porus while the two were facing each other and his injured horse promptly collapsed, dropping the Macedonian king to the ground.<sup>351</sup> If this narrative is to be believed, it would be not be fitting for Alexander to commemorate a duel which he lost. Curtius recorded Alexander attempting to give chase to Porus, but since his horse was injured, he was forced to send Taxiles' brother to pursue the Indian king.<sup>352</sup> The obverse clearly depicts a mahout, widely thought to be Porus, attempting to spear the horseman who is believed to represent Alexander. On the other hand, Curtius makes no such distinction in his commentary about Porus attacking Alexander's mount, nor do Arrian or any other literary sources. Aristobulus was alleged to concoct a narrative rooted in fantasy, in which Porus' elephant was killed by Alexander in a duel between the kings.<sup>353</sup> Not only was this account fictitious

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<sup>347</sup> Lane Fox, 1996, p. 87; Habicht, Chugg, Varotto and Galassi, 2018-2019, p. 25; Holt, 2003, p. 93.

<sup>348</sup> Le Rider, 2007, p. 247.

<sup>349</sup> Burnett, 1986, p. 71; Collins, 2012, p. 395; Le Rider, 2007, p. 249; Bopearachchi, 2017, p. 20; Palagia, 2012, p. 371.

<sup>350</sup> Heckscher, 1947, p. 159; Le Riders, 2007, p. 248; Collins, 2012, p. 395; Epplett, 2021, p. 208; Holt, 2003, p. 155; Cartledge, 2004, p. 156; Scullard, 1974, p. 75; Wood, 1997, p. 187; Hammond, 1989, p. 216.

<sup>351</sup> Just. 12.8.3-4.

<sup>352</sup> QC. 8.14.34-35.

<sup>353</sup> Luc. 12.

according to Alexander himself, but the imagery does not resemble a duel between equals, nor is the elephant dead.<sup>354</sup> Instead, an alternate motive must be sought when deciphering the deeper meaning of this iconography.

In stark contrast to the source material, the obverse illustrates an *idealised* clash between a Macedonian horseman and a pair of Indians seated atop a war elephant, and in the opinion of some historians, there is a distinct possibility to suggest it could commemorate a notable event from the battle. However, I find this view to be dubious. This owes to the skittish nature of Alexander's horses who were unaccustomed to the presence and scent of elephants, causing them to fear the creatures.<sup>355</sup> Conversely, the decadrachm features a horse chasing an elephant. Not only is this unrealistic, but is once again in direct contradiction to the ancient sources. An additional theory has been postulated by Miller, claiming this to be a commemorative piece in honour of Bucephalus' death and the founding of Bucephala.<sup>356</sup> One need only examine the coin to observe the stallion is not the central motif on the obverse and is completely absent from the reverse, nullifying this possibility. A theory proposed by Hollstein argued these were Indian coins, minted by Taxiles for the Macedonians when Alexander arrived at Taxila.<sup>357</sup> However, this cannot be a viable theory either since the decadrachm appears to be representing a scene from the battle, and minting coins was an uncommon practice in the Punjab during Alexander's invasion.<sup>358</sup> I would argue that the obverse is presenting the image of a costly victory. Although the elephant appears to be fleeing the battlefield, the mahout is embroiled in conflict with the Macedonian horseman, attempting to spear him and thus highlighting the ferocity of the Indian resistance encountered at the Hydaspes.

Moreover, one must question the potential presence of Porus on the decadrachm. Relying upon the available descriptions of Porus and the battle, this does seem like a viable theory. However, the argument is fallible. Discounting the possibility of embellishment, Porus' large stature is commented upon by most extant material, distinguishing him from the rank and file of his army.<sup>359</sup> Upon examining the figures on the decadrachm, both men, while impossibly large by human standards, maintain equal proportions. There are no physical differences, nor is the absence of any text particularly helpful. The sole commonality I find between Porus and the mahout on the coin are

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<sup>354</sup> Luc. 12.

<sup>355</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.11.4; QC. 8.14.23.

<sup>356</sup> Miller, 1994, pp. 109-120.

<sup>357</sup> Hollstein, 1989, pp. 5-17.

<sup>358</sup> Pandey, 1971, p. 7.

<sup>359</sup> QC. 8.13.7; Diod. 17.88.4.

their choice of weaponry - Porus is credited with using javelins by ancient historians, akin to the warrior on the decadrachm.<sup>360</sup> If we were to rely solely on extant literary sources, it would all but confirm Porus *cannot* be represented upon the coin. Additionally, Curtius explicitly mentioned a mahout controlling Porus' elephant, but this sentiment is not echoed by other sources who ignore the mahout's presence.<sup>361</sup> However, this does not preclude the likelihood of a mahout controlling the king's mount throughout the battle.

With the identity, or lack thereof, of the Indians ascertained, I now examine the Macedonian horseman. In stark contrast to the Indians, I find little motive to dispute the probability of this mounted soldier depicting Alexander himself. For one, the figure bears an uncanny resemblance to the unnamed individual on the reverse of the decadrachm. The most notable similarities are the helmet, attire and weaponry. Another key point to address is the difference in size between the Macedonian and Indian soldiers. Noted for their remarkable height by ancient authors, the decadrachm embellishes this aspect of the Indian physiology, and closer measurements have indicated the stature of the Indians exceeds that of their mount.<sup>362</sup> This reinforces the propagandistic function of this particular piece, magnifying the scale of Alexander's achievements.

Addressing the reverse of the decadrachm, the central motifs appear to be divinity and victory, best evinced by the presence of a winged Nike crowning a figure who is universally thought to be Alexander himself. The thunderbolt in Alexander's hand has attracted no shortage of speculation surrounding its deeper meaning. Most commonly, historians have believed the thunderbolt was undoubtedly connected to Zeus, either as a means of Alexander celebrating his divinity, or thanking the king of the gods for his victory over Porus.<sup>363</sup> Plutarch's commentary reveals the night of the river crossing was masked by a violent electrical storm, perhaps indicative that Alexander was attributing his triumph to divine intervention.<sup>364</sup> However, I possess the inclination to espouse both theories, for they are not mutually exclusive and speak deeply about Alexander's image. By surpassing the achievements of both Dionysus and Heracles who also ventured to India, he was now at liberty to depict himself in a divine manner akin to his forebears.<sup>365</sup> Nonetheless, this theory

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<sup>360</sup> Arr. 5.18.7; Diod. 17.88.5; QC. 8.14.31.

<sup>361</sup> QC. 8.14.33; Arr. 5.18.5; Diod. 17.88.4.

<sup>362</sup> Arr. *Ind.* 17.1.

<sup>363</sup> Habicht, Chugg, Varotto and Galassi, 2018-2019, p. 33; Holt, 2003, p. 153; Lane Fox, 1996, pp. 100-101.

<sup>364</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 60.4.

<sup>365</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 4.28.4; Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.1.



has been met with opposition, particularly by Lane Fox who refuted the motif of divinity by arguing that Alexander was presented in military regalia.<sup>366</sup>



Figure 11: A tetradrachm from the Babylon hoard depicting an archer and an elephant

With the motifs and imagery of the decadrachm ascertained, the tetradrachms require evaluation. Bearing the same stamp as the decadrachm, the archer/elephant are unquestionably derived from the same mint and series, evidenced by their stylistic similarities and identical markings. A shared symbol across almost all numismatic evidence for the Indian campaign, I am inclined to believe the presence of the elephant refers to India, as opposed to the Hydaspes exclusively. That the archer is Indian can be evidenced by the height of his bow, but the coin also reinforces the concept of hard won victories and military might, celebrating the prowess of the opponents which the Macedonians faced and overcame with no shortage of difficulty.<sup>367</sup> While chariots were noted in the battle by all ancient sources, their presence upon the coins seems inappropriate; archers were only mentioned by Curtius, attesting to their irrelevance.<sup>368</sup> Drawing upon the battle narrative of Curtius, it becomes apparent that neither archers nor chariots played a prominent role in the fighting, owing to the infelicitous conditions of the battlefield.<sup>369</sup> In stark contrast to the elephants which wrought havoc upon the Macedonian centre, the chariots and archers proved ineffective and were easily overcome. Instead, I find it more pertinent to search through the literary sources for events where archers played a conspicuous part in the Indian campaign. In particular, one scenario justifies the celebration of the archer - the siege of the Mallian citadel. Fought in 325 during the voyage along the Indus, this event was the closest Alexander came to death in combat - his contemporaries even

<sup>366</sup> Lane Fox, 1996, p. 92.

<sup>367</sup> Arr. *Ind.* 16.6.

<sup>368</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.15.4; Diod. 17.87.2; QC. 8.13.6.

<sup>369</sup> QC. 8.14.4-8.14.19.

believed for a time that the king had succumbed to his injuries.<sup>370</sup> That Alexander survived was a testament to his durability, and one which certainly deserved memorialisation. Akin to the decadrachm, this coin lauded the ferocity of the resistance encountered in India, drawing the eye to the length of the arrow and height of the bow.



*Figure 12: A tetradrachm discovered in the Babylon hoard featuring a war elephant and quadriga*

Although chariots were present at the Hydaspes, forming an integral part of Porus' vanguard, the designs of the two chariot tetradrachms are anomalous when examined in closer detail alongside their counterparts. As per the description provided by Curtius, this does not seem to represent an Indian chariot - Porus' chariots carried six warriors and the vehicle on the coin only shows two.<sup>371</sup> An appraisal of this tetradrachm reveals several distinguishing factors which separate it from the elephant decadrachm and archer tetradrachm. For one, the unusual thickness of this tetradrachm coupled with the irregular iconography is indicative of an entirely different origin.<sup>372</sup> Moreover, the die axis of this coin is another notable distinction, differentiating the tetradrachm from its counterparts.<sup>373</sup> This is only bolstered by the absence of the markings which are defining traits of the other coins found within this hoard, and the dotted border present on the decadrachm and archer tetradrachm is all but absent here. In more recent years, another argument has been proposed to account for this aberration. Some have speculated these coins were minted by other

<sup>370</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 6.12.1; Diod. 17.99.5; QC. 9.6.1.

<sup>371</sup> QC. 8.14.3.

<sup>372</sup> Habicht, Chugg, Varotto and Galassi, 2019, p. 38.

<sup>373</sup> Habicht, Chugg, Varotto and Galassi, 2019, p. 31. This quadriga tetradrachm does not have randomised axes.

Indian dignitaries who offered them as tokens of submission to Alexander.<sup>374</sup> Subsequently, these chariots tetradrachms as they are known, went on to inspire the coins which were struck in the aftermath of the Indian campaign. While minting techniques were prevalent in ancient India, Indian coins were rectangular punched marked bars, nullifying this possibility.<sup>375</sup> An Achaemenid origin for the chariot tetradrachm appears more plausible, minted before the battle of Gaugamela, perhaps to pay Indian mercenaries for their service in the battle.

Evidently, there must be a recurring theme linking both the elephant decadrachms and archer tetradrachms. Of the Indian imagery on these pieces, the elephant is a recurring symbol, present on both the decadrachm and tetradrachms. As mentioned earlier, I believe this is indicative of military might. Secondly, a lone archer has also gained prominence to warrant their presence on a Macedonian coin. Both symbols also bear strong ties to earlier Achaemenid depictions of the Indians, with the most striking resemblance being that of the archer. Similar in design to the *Naqsh-e-Rostam*, commissioned during the reign of Darius I, the archer on the Macedonian tetradrachm is adorned in matching attire.

The origin of the coins and their location are disputed, although the majority of scholarship readily agrees these pieces were minted in Babylon during the final years of Alexander's life or shortly after his death.<sup>376</sup> However, a number of opposing theories have been proposed, attempting to trace the coins back to India.<sup>377</sup> Accounting for the relatively poor craftsmanship and inferior detailing when compared to other coins of Alexander, this is not an implausible assumption. Struck on the march and under the downpour of the monsoon by Indian craftsmen, we have sufficient reason to believe they were minted in India, if all the aforementioned pieces represented the battle of the Hydaspes.<sup>378</sup> However, I do not see India as a valid origin for these silver pieces. Addressing the BA monogram, historians are divided on its deeper meaning. It could be interpreted as an abbreviation of Basileus Alexandros, not atypical to the design of other coins minted by Alexander.<sup>379</sup> However, one must also factor into consideration the mysterious symbol featured alongside the elephant on both the decadrachm and archer tetradrachm. These markings are

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<sup>374</sup> Hollstein, 1989, pp. 5-17; Habicht, Chugg, Varotto and Galassi, 2019, p. 38.

<sup>375</sup> Bopearachchi, 2017, p. 16.

<sup>376</sup> Bosworth, 1988, p. 130; Naiden, 2018, p. 195; Scullard, 1974, p. 75; Wood, 1997, p. 187.

<sup>377</sup> Hollstein, 1989, pp. 5-17; Holt, 2003, p. 148; Bopearachchi, 2017, p. 20; Smith, 1914, p. 73; Cartledge, 2004, p. 156; Hammond, 1989, p. 216.

<sup>378</sup> Holt, 2003, p. 148.

<sup>379</sup> Habicht, Chugg, Varotto and Galassi, 2018-2019, p. 37; Head, 1906, pp. 1-16.

interpreted as Xi and AB.<sup>380</sup> Lane Fox argued both markings were abbreviations for Abulites and Xenophilus, the satrap and garrison commander of Susa, respectively, and the former was executed on Alexander's orders.<sup>381</sup> While this is highly unlikely since neither men participated in the Indian campaign, Susa itself is a feasible location. Coins originating from the royal mint in this Persian city bore the markings which can be seen on both the elephant decadrachm and archer tetradrachm.<sup>382</sup>

Similarly, the intended audience of the coins is shrouded in ambiguity. The scarcity of these pieces could infer a commemorative purpose, although the existence of further samples is not beyond the realm of possibility. On the surface, the most cogent hypothesis was presented by Holt who thought these coins were made for the Macedonian soldiers after the battle was fought and presented to them at the banks of the Hyphasis to dissuade military unrest, albeit unsuccessfully.<sup>383</sup> This hypothesis possesses little credence and would be counterproductive if one wished to quell a mutiny. For Holt, the imagery on the tetradrachms would remind the Macedonian soldiers of the foes they had faced and overcome at the Hydaspes.<sup>384</sup> Meanwhile, the decadrachm would invoke thoughts of Alexander's divinity and reiterate the victory over Porus. However, the imagery on the coin would hardly produce Alexander's desired result.

Rather than minting coins celebrating the achievements and sacrifices of his soldiers, he was instead showcasing the very soldiers who had inflicted heavy losses upon the Macedonians. If anything, the coins would exacerbate the swelling unrest amongst the rank and file. The invalidity of Holt's theory is reinforced by the rarity of the samples available. Basing my judgement purely upon the amount of samples which have currently been discovered, they would hardly be sufficient in quantity for an army as numerous as Alexander's. Taking a similarly fallacious stance, Bosworth theorised these coins were designed to terrify the Greek population and dissuade potential rebellions against Macedonian hegemony.<sup>385</sup> However, the silver pieces have never been discovered west of modern Iraq and the limited quantity we currently possess all but confirm they were never minted for this specific purpose.

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<sup>380</sup> Lane Fox, 1996, pp. 106-108.

<sup>381</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 7.4.1; Plut. *Alex.* 68.6. Plutarch only says Abulites was incarcerated; Lane Fox, 1996, p. 106.

<sup>382</sup> Lane Fox, 1996, p. 106.

<sup>383</sup> Holt, 2003, p. 156.

<sup>384</sup> Holt, 2003, p. 156.

<sup>385</sup> Bosworth, 1996, p. 8.

Additionally, the absence of writing reinforces this belief. The exclusive focus on iconography among these pieces is indicative they were created for an audience which was familiar with the events and figures depicted on the obverse and reverse. For a Greek audience who had not participated in the Indian campaign, their response to the silver coins would be unlikely to produce Bosworth's desired result. I am therefore inclined to believe they were granted to veterans who fought at the Hydaspes and Mallian citadel, detailing Alexander's most daring exploits in the easternmost corner of the known world. The telltale signs of usage reinforce this assertion of their functionality as currency, but they can easily be construed as commemorative pieces, considering the value of the decadrachm. Their message has been clarified. Alexander overcame an army of elephants, and escaped death at the hands of an Indian archer, feats which were his most noteworthy and heroic throughout the entirety of the Indian campaign, and both were scenes which would be memorable for the veterans. Indeed, these elephants would play a key role in the iconography of Alexander's successor, Seleucus Nicator which became a dynastic image following his attempted annexation of the Indus Valley at the end of the fourth century BC.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Kosmin, 2013, p. 106.

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## Conclusion

To conclude, what has often been deemed a decisive Macedonian, or Indian victory, dependent on the historiography, cannot be viewed as such through a careful reanalysis of events. To argue that only one belligerent emerged victorious is an untenable judgement, rendered impossible by the aims of the combatants. Misinterpretations of Porus' supposed victory were little more than products of their time and counterattacks to an emergence of colonial historiography and anti-imperial sentiment. While textual evidence emphasises Alexander's victory at the expense of Porus, this outcome is not viable. From a purely Indian perspective, it becomes apparent the Hydaspes was another conflict in a region defined by perpetual warfare. Taxiles had enlisted the Macedonians to defend his borders from Porus and Abisares although the outcome of the battle substantiated that Porus, and not Taxiles was the primary beneficiary.

Through a reanalysis of the battle it becomes discernible that various details were embellished, most notably the number of elephants and soldiers which Porus possessed. These can be discredited by reports of his strength after Alexander's death and the comparative power of his rival, Taxiles. As a minor sovereign with no trace of his existence in Indian sources, Porus cannot have commanded an army as large as ancient sources would claim. However, there is also ample reason to infer the military prowess of the Indians and the hazardous conditions of the river crossing were concealed for propagandistic purposes. Surprisingly, no losses were recorded during the arduous voyage across the monsoon swollen Hydaspes, although this should not be readily accepted, since it is contradicted by ancient sources and debunked by modern studies.

Although the Paurava forces suffered a greater percentage of casualties, Porus lost nothing, and his military strength was swiftly consolidated within a few years. Prior the battle, there is little to distinguish the aims of Taxiles from Porus - for both kings ensuring the protection of their respective realms was paramount. In the aftermath, neither Porus nor Taxiles were deposed. However, only Porus' borders were augmented by the Macedonians whom he fought against. Moreover, his eventual marriage alliance with Taxiles' family ensured lasting peace between their respective realms. The variation in their status highlighted Porus' superiority. For one, his sphere of influence was greater, and unlike Taxiles, Porus was not subject to a Macedonian satrap. Moreover, it was Porus' ascendancy which sparked the unrest at the Hyphasis river in late 326, prompting Alexander to return to Persia. Porus' power and position were products of the toiling of the Macedonians who became disillusioned with Alexander's designs and voiced their opposition. Having fulfilled his pledge to expand Porus' kingdom, Alexander also had little reason to continue venturing farther east - his geographical interpretations were undoubtedly supplemented by

information from his Indian allies prior to the unrest, discrediting beliefs of his flawed Aristotelian geography. That his fleet was constructed immediately after the battle is hardly a coincidence. Even Alexander would not be foolhardy enough to declare war on the Nanda Empire and certainly realised the advantage in redirecting his campaign along the lower Indus which was a former Achaemenid satrapy.

Conversely, Alexander's victory was assured by surviving records of the battle as well as numismatic evidence. While there is no material evidence of the city foundations in Pakistan, the existence of Alexander's cities is all but assured by historical records dating centuries after his death. Since the extant literary material is the sole authority on the battle, it would be remiss to acknowledge its existence but disregard the overarching narrative. Bias within written sources is unavoidable since all the writers had their own intentions and agendas, and with a paucity of Indian evidence, one is compelled to accept a partisan view. However, since it has been established that Alexander's contemporaries and later writers crafted their respective accounts independently and during different time periods, the notion of a conspiracy to mask Alexander's alleged defeat at the Hydaspes is rendered impossible.

While the message of the coins remains controversial and shrouded in ambiguity, their imagery distinctly illustrated events which transpired in India, and the significance of the Hydaspes to Alexander who perceived the conflict as nothing short of a victory. The decadrachm in particular bore a strong resemblance to the battle, while the archer tetradrachm certainly depicted the Mallian who wounded Alexander. Although Alexander's own activities within the Indus Valley and their effects were evanescent, his brief campaigning heavily altered the geopolitical climate of the region, benefitting nobody more than Porus. In the long term, he can be credited with the creation of a gateway between the Indian and Hellenic worlds, resulting in future invasions of the Indus Valley and the hybridisation of Indo-Greek culture, best expressed through the art of Gandhara. A salient long term consequence of his invasion was the emulation of his actions by future rulers of the Hellenistic kingdoms, most notably Seleucus Nicator who fought against Chandragupta Maurya, only to be defeated.

Ultimately, the battle of the Hydaspes should be viewed as a rare occurrence where both belligerents could claim victory, and scholarship has looked upon this event with a predominantly one sided view. Despite the lack of Indian evidence, it is crucial to assess the conflict and its outcome from the perspectives of both Porus and Alexander. Conversely, adherence to the source material is equally important for the historian - nationalist narratives which propagate Porus' victory over Alexander can and have been disproven by available evidence.

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