THE LANDMARK

ARRI AN

THE CAMPAIGNS OF ALEXANDER

Anabasis Alexandrou

A New Translation by Pamela Mensch
with Maps, Annotations, Appendices, and Encyclopedic Index

Edited by James Romm
Series Editor Robert B. Strassler

With an Introduction by Paul Cartledge

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Frontispiece: fourth-century ivory bust usually assumed to represent Alexander as a young man, found in Tomb II of the royal burial complex at Aigeai.

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INTRODUCTION
Paul Cartledge

Arrian’s Literary Models

§1.1. The book you are about to read is a history of the career—especially the expedition to conquer the Persian empire—of Alexander III, king of Macedonia, who became known posthumously and inseparably as “the Great” (b. 356, r. 336–323). The author was a second-century C.E. historian whom we call Arrian but whose given name was Lucius (or Aulus) Flavius Arrianus. Although he was an ethnic Greek from Nicomedia, in Bithynia in northwest Asia Minor, he was also—proudly and successfully—a Roman citizen. Indeed, he achieved the very rare double distinction of attaining the top office of the consulship at Rome and being appointed an archon (a member of the chief board of officials, a purely honorific appointment by this time) at Athens. Both attainments bespeak high imperial favor, and indeed Arrian enjoyed that of the strongly philhellenic emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138 C.E.)—a Roman of Italian descent from colonial Spain and so principally a Latin speaker by upbringing, whereas Arrian was a native Hellenophone for whom Latin was a second language. Like all good high-ranking Romans, Arrian was given three names—a forename, a family name (which he shared with a former imperial dynasty, that of Vespasian and his sons, emperors from 69 to 96 C.E.), and an aftername. However, on top of those three, he seems to have greedily added a fourth—a very personal choice, and by no means an obvious one: Xenophon. This he took in homage to one particular Greek forerunner and adopted role model: Xenophon of Athens (c. 428–c. 354).

§1.2. Why did Arrian choose to make a history of Alexander the Great the object of his principal literary work? We shall never know for sure, since he didn’t write an autobiography or even, despite his philosophical bent, a philosophical reflection in autobiographical form, like the Meditations of his younger contemporary emperor Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 C.E.). But the adopted name Xenophon is a rather heavy clue. Arrian flourished in the midst of a remarkable Hellenic liter-
**CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF EVENTS**

**by Book/Chapter/Section in Arrian’s *Anabasis Alexandrou***

**Book 1: The Campaigns in Europe and Western Asia (I)**

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**NOTE:** Dates in italic type indicate where Arrian’s sequence by book/chapter does not follow chronological sequence.
Key to Maps

Map Configurations

Locator map
Main map
Inset map

Typography

Asia
Boeotia
Athens
Cyropolis
Agrarians
Indus R.
Mt. Orbelos

Continent or major region
Region
Large city
Town, village, or other location
People, tribe
Body of water; island; promontory
Mountain

Cultural Features

Settlements
Temple
Battle site
Road
City walls and fortifications

Natural Features

Mountain range
River
Marsh
Sea or lake
(Stylistic map markers for approx. extent in Classical Period)

Battle Maps

Macedonian army
Opposing forces

Phalanx and other infantry
Cavalry and mounted units
Chariots
Elephants

Troop movements

Pre-battle deployments
Past action and initial movements
Major movements during battle

Water
Land
Elevated terrain

Dates

All dates in this volume and its supporting materials are B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), unless otherwise specified.
BOOK FOUR: THE CAMPAIGN IN BACTRIA AND SOGDIANA
Not many days later, envoys reached Alexander from the Scythians known as the Abii,\textsuperscript{1a} the same tribe whom Homer praised in his poetry, saying they are supremely just.\textsuperscript{1b} The Abii dwell in Asia and retain their independence, mainly as a result of their poverty and upright ways. Envoys also arrived from the European Scythians, the largest tribe in Europe.\textsuperscript{1c} Alexander sent some of the Companions\textsuperscript{2a} back with these men, ostensibly as a deputation to make a pact of friendship, though the escort’s larger purpose was to spy out the nature of the Scythians’ land, the size of their population, their customs, and the equipment they carried into battle.

Alexander intended to found a city near the River Tanais and to name the city after himself. For the place seemed suitable for a city that would rise to greatness; it would also prove advantageous should an invasion of Scythia ever take place, and would serve as a defensive outpost for the country against raids by the barbarians who dwelt beyond the river.\textsuperscript{4} He imagined that the city would become important by virtue of the number of those who would settle there and the brilliance of its name.\textsuperscript{4a}

At that point, the barbarians who dwelt by the river seized and killed the

\textsuperscript{4.1.1–2} Summer 329
Northern Sogdiana
Alexander receives envoys from the Scythians dwelling on either side of the river Arrian calls Tanais.

\textsuperscript{4.1.3–5} Tanais/Iaxartes River
Alexander orders the founding of another Alexandria as an outpost on the river. The local tribes rise in revolt against Macedonian rule and are joined by the Sogdians and some Bactrians.

\textsuperscript{4.1.1a} The Abii (location of territory: Map 4.8, inset) Homer wrote about were a mythic people, but the name became attached, probably first by Alexander himself, to a real tribe dwelling in northern Sogdiana.

\textsuperscript{4.1.1b} Homer talks of “the mare-milking, milk-drinking Abii, most just of men” in \textit{Iliad} 13.4–6.

\textsuperscript{4.1.1c} Scythia: Map 4.8. Arrian here subscribes to the general belief he cites in the previous chapter (see \textit{3.28.8 and n. 3.28.8a, 3.30.7–8 and n. 3.30.7a}) that the river he calls the Tanais, but was more widely known to Greek writers as the Iaxartes (Map 4.8, inset; modern Syr Darya), forms the boundary between Asia and Europe, which he thinks stretches far to the east.

\textsuperscript{4.1.2a} Alexander kept a formal list of his Companions, the intimates who were invited to dine and drink with him, offer their counsel, and fight beside him in the Companion cavalry. See Appendix F, Alexander’s Inner Circle, §4.

\textsuperscript{4.1.4a} The city Alexander would found here would become known as Alexandria Eschatē (“Farthest Alexandria”); see Map 4.8, inset.
Macedonian soldiers garrisoned in their cities. They also took steps to strengthen the cities’ fortifications. Most of the Sogdians, incited by the party that had arrested Bessos, joined in the revolt, and as a result some of the Bactrians also took part in it. It may be that they truly feared Alexander; on the other hand, they may have given as a pretext for their revolt the fact that he had summoned the governors of the country to Zariaspa, the largest city, to a meeting, and that meeting seemingly portended nothing good for them.

When this had been reported to Alexander, he ordered the infantry companies to make ladders—each company was instructed to make a certain number—while he himself, setting out from the camp, advanced against the first city, Gaza, the barbarians of the region were reported to have fled for refuge to seven cities. Alexander sent Krateros to the city known as Cyropolis, the largest of the seven and the place where the greatest number of barbarians had gathered. Krateros had been instructed to camp near the city, surround it with a trench and a palisade, and assemble as many siege engines as he needed, so that the city’s inhabitants, their attention diverted by Krateros and his men, would be unable to aid the other cities.

Alexander himself proceeded against Gaza and upon arrival gave the signal to assault the wall, an earthen structure of no great height, and to place the ladders against it on all sides. As the infantry attacked, his slingers, archers, and javelin men hurled their missiles at the wall’s defenders and fired projectiles from siege engines. The rain of missiles soon cleared the wall of defenders. The ladders were put in place at once, and the Macedonians climbed up onto the wall. Obeying Alexander’s instructions, they killed all the men there and made off with the women, children, and other plunder. Alexander then led his men straight to the second city, captured it in the same manner on the same day, and dealt with the captives in the same way. He then led his men to the third city and captured it the next day on the first attempt.

While he was engaged in these exploits with the infantry, he sent the cavalry to the two nearby cities with orders to keep close watch on those within the walls, lest they learn of the capture of their neighbors’ cities and collaborated with the Macedonians in the arrest of Bessos but then turned against them is unclear.
§1. Perhaps the only thing all scholars of Alexander are agreed on is the brilliance of his generalship and the devastating effectiveness of his army. In his thirteen years as king and commander, he led this army to victories over forces many times its size, overcame a huge range of strategic challenges and perils, marched at astounding rates through rough or unfamiliar terrain, and almost never ran short of supplies (until he met with a set of logistical failures on his last great march, see §14). These phenomenal achievements were only in part the result of Alexander’s own prodigious talents, however. The groundwork for them was laid by his father and predecessor, Philip, who, with a series of profound innovations in the 350s B.C.E., changed the face of organized land warfare forever. Alexander’s brilliance is beyond dispute, but his success was in large part determined by the remarkable inheritance he received from Philip.

§2. Before Philip’s time the Macedonians had always been strong in cavalry, the corps dominated by the horse-owning nobility, but had lacked an effective infantry. On coming to power in 360, Philip quickly built up his infantry by recruiting strong, vigorous youths from the lower classes and equipping them with a new kind of spear, the sarisa, sixteen or more feet in length. The advantage of this long spear in an infantry clash, where two phalanxes jabbed at each other at close range, was obvious; the downside was that, since the fifteen-pound weapon had to be held with both hands, the heavy, arm-mounted shield that protected most Greek infantry soldiers had to be abandoned. Thus Philip’s new infantryman—generally referred to by modern historians as a “phalangite” to distinguish him from the Greek hoplite, with his shorter spear and larger shield—had greatly increased offensive power but almost no defense. He had some kind of protective armor but carried only a small, light shield that could be slung around the neck. The infantry corps as a whole was given (probably by Philip) the collective name “infantry companions” (pezetairoi) as a parallel with the terms used to describe the king’s aristocratic inner circle, the Companions (hetairoi), and the elite cavalry unit in which many served, the Companion cavalry.

§3. It may also have been Philip who created a new corps of infantry soldier, the hypaspists, or shield-bearers, to help cover the phalanx’s flank and keep a connection
ANCIENT SOURCES
Cited in This Edition of Arrian’s *Anabasis Alexandrou*

**Aelian** (c. 170–235 C.E.): Roman author and teacher of rhetoric, author of *Varia Historia*, a collection of anecdotes.

**Aristoboulos** (c. 380–301), a Greek who accompanied Alexander’s campaign as an engineer or technical expert of some kind. It is not clear what became of him after Alexander’s death or what prompted him to write his historical narrative, now lost but regarded by Arrian as one of the two best sources (the other was Ptolemy). Aristoboulos is known to have admired Alexander and to have defended him against criticisms, especially regarding alcohol consumption.

**Aristotle** (384–322), philosopher, pupil of Plato, teacher of Alexander the Great, and founder of the Lyceum (Lykeion) at Athens c. 335. Much of his work survives, on subjects including logic, natural sciences, politics, and poetics.

**Arrian** (c. 85–c. 160 C.E.), a Greek from Bithynia and a Roman citizen who rose to high office in both the Greek and Roman political worlds. His literary output was huge and varied, including principally the *Anabasis Alexandrou*, his sole surviving long work and the subject of this volume. He based his account of Alexander on the writings of Ptolemy and Aristoboulos, with anecdotes selected from other sources.

**Athenaios** (fl. beginning of the third century C.E.), Greek writer from Naukratis, Egypt. His only extant work, *Deipnosophistae* (*Banquet of the Sophists*), a collection of excerpts from some eight hundred ancient authors (many of whose works are now lost) provides information on many aspects of the ancient world.

**Diodorus Siculus** (first century), Greek author of a universal history, of which large sections survive. His Book 17, concerned almost entirely with Alexander, is broken in places but nearly complete. Diodorus based his account of Alexander largely on the writings of Kleitarchos, and so is considered one of the vulgate sources.

**Eratosthenes** (c. 276–195), librarian of Alexandria, geographer, scientist, and literary critic. He was known for debunking mythic accounts of distant travels, including those of the Alexander historians.

**Eumenes** (c. 360–319), a Greek from Kardia, employed by both Philip and Alexander as court secretary, and finally by Alexander as a minor military officer. After Alexander’s death he became a major rival for power in the fragmenting empire. He supposedly wrote most of the *Ephemerides*, or *Royal Journals*, perhaps including the portion Arrian supposedly relied on in his account of Alexander’s final illness (7.25–26). But there is no certainty about whether this document survived Alexander’s death, or if it did, which later authors had access to it.

**Euripides** (c. 485–406), great Athenian tragedian. Eighteen (possibly nineteen) of his plays survive.
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