

DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE BATTLE OF THE GRANICUS

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In memoriam Guy Griffiths

As N. G. L. HAMMOND REMARKS, "historians have found the battle of the Granicus River the most puzzling of Alexander's battles."¹ The main reason for this, put in a nutshell, is that they have seen too much in it. The dogma of "the four great battles of Alexander" (i.e., the Granicus, Issus, Gaugamela, and the Hydaspes) has produced an almost subconscious desire on the part of modern commentators to raise the affair at the Granicus to the world-historical status of Issus or Gaugamela, where the fate of the civilized world *did* hang in the balance in a very immediate sense as the greatest armies and rulers of the day contended for empire. Yet the truth about the Granicus, as indeed perhaps also about the Hydaspes, is that it was a relatively peripheral battle, small in scale and, from a tactical standpoint, simple and straightforward. As a tactical achievement, it should perhaps be classed rather with Alexander's highly commendable but obscure victory at Pelion in 335 B.C.²

1. THE EXTANT SOURCES

Plutarch

Plutarch's account (*Alex.* 16.1–15), though apparently derived to some extent from Aristobulus (16.15), is of virtually no value as a tactical narrative, consisting as it does largely of a conventional *aristeia* for Alexander (16.7–11, 14). The only points of any tactical significance, aside from the

¹*JHS* 100 (1980) 73. The most important discussions are W. Judeich, "Die Schlacht am Granikos," *Klio* 8 (1908) 372–397, and in J. Kromayer and G. Veith, eds., *Schlachtenatlas zur antiken Kriegsgeschichte* (Leipzig 1922) Griech. Abt., cols. 41–42; K. Lehmann, "Die Schlacht am Granikos," *Klio* 11 (1911) 230–244; A. von Domaszewski, *Die Phalangen Alexanders und Caesars Legionen* (Heidelberg 1926) 51–57; J. F. C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great* (London 1958) 147–154; R. Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (London 1973) 119–122; F. Schachermeyr, *Alexander der Grosse* (Vienna 1973) 166–174; P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon* (Harmondsworth 1974) 172–180; 489–512; 564–568; N. T. Nikolitsis, *The Battle of the Granicus* (Stockholm 1974); E. Badian, "The Battle of the Granicus: A New Look," *Ancient Macedonia* 2 (Thessaloniki 1977, Institute for Balkan Studies 155) 271–293; A. B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander* (Oxford 1980) 114–125; and N. G. L. Hammond, "The Battle of the Granicus River," *JHS* 100 (1980) 73–88. These works are cited by author's name below.

²On which, see A. M. Devine, "EMBOAON: A Study in Tactical Terminology," *Phoenix* 37 (1983) 201–217, esp. 213.

reference (16.3) to Alexander advancing across the Granicus with thirteen *ilai* (identifiable with the eight *ilai* of Companions, four of *prodromoi*, and one of Paeonians), relate to topography (16.2, 4–5, 14), and even these appear mainly to enhance Alexander's *aristeia* by stressing (or exaggerating) the physical difficulties confronting him. The account contains no technical tactical terminology whatsoever.

Diodorus

Diodorus' account (17.19.1–21.6) is likewise largely an extended *aristeia* for Alexander (20.2–5, 21.1–2, 4), though various Persian heroes are also celebrated (20.2–21.3), while the role of Parmenion and the Thessalian cavalry under his command is emphasized (19.6, 21.4), but without the support of tactical detail. The two most interesting features of Diodorus' version, however, are (i) the statement that Alexander was able to get his army across the river and deploy it on the far bank before the battle began (19.3), which has led some modern commentators to reject the traditional account of the Macedonian attack as a movement across the Granicus itself,³ and (ii) the partial order-of-battle given at 17.19.4 for the Persian cavalry. The handful of tactical terms that appear are used without precision and throw no light on the movements and manoeuvres of the battle.

Though Diodorus does not give his source here, it has been identified as Cleitarchus.⁴ While this attribution is plausible as regards the sensationalist elements of Diodorus' account, the provenance of the material relating to Parmenion and the Thessalian cavalry, which seems to be part of the reaction to the *damnatio memoriae* suffered by the general in the "official version" of Callisthenes,⁵ and of the Persian order-of-battle, which may well be authentic, is far from established.

Arrian

Arrian's account (1.13.1–16.4) is by far the fullest and most coherent of those that have survived, and no serious attempt can be made to reconstruct the battle on any other basis. Nonetheless, Arrian's narrative is sketchy and abbreviated by comparison with his more detailed accounts of Issus and Gaugamela. This, as we will see, is partly due to the nature of the battle itself: it was apparently a short, sharp action, and there was little to relate.

³For example, Lehmann 230–244; Lane Fox 119–122; Green 494–512.

⁴N. G. L. Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1983) 16–17, 38, 51; cf. my review of this work, *AJP* 107 (1986) 123–125, esp. 124.

⁵Cf. now A. M. Devine, "Grand Tactics at the Battle of Issus," *AncWld* 12 (1985) 39–59, esp. 41–42 and 50–52, "The Battle of Gaugamela: A Tactical and Source-Critical Study," *AncWld* 13 (1986) 87–115, esp. 87–91, 93–94, 106, and 111, and "The Strategies of Alexander the Great and Darius III in the Issus Campaign (333 B.C.)," *AncWld* 12 (1985) 25–38, esp. 28 and 33.

Moreover, the Granicus is the first major battle described in Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* and, for that matter, in the Alexander-histories of Arrian's immediate source, Ptolemy, and the ultimate primary source, Callisthenes.⁶ For this reason, a certain amount of beginner's inexperience in organizing narrative structure and detail can be discerned. Callisthenes in particular, not being a soldier, may well have had trouble deciding what was and what was not important among the facts available. Certainly the tendency to glorify Alexander in terms of a full-blown *aristeia* (1.14.6–7, 15.5–8) is more prominent here in relation to tactical detail than in the later battles. Indeed, this interest in tactically inconsequential heroics extends, as in Diodorus' account, even to the efforts of Alexander's Persian opponents (1.15.7–8).

2. THE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE BATTLEFIELD

The recent study of these aspects by N. G. L. Hammond, based on a personal inspection of the ground in June, 1976, has, I think, resolved most of the outstanding problems.

For a start, Hammond has exploded the almost universally held, but totally unfounded, belief that the course of the Granicus (the modern Kocabaş Çay) has remained substantially unchanged since antiquity. In fact, according to Hammond, the ancient course, of which there is visible evidence (77), was up to about a kilometre east of the present channel below the modern village of Dimetoka, and ran close under the foothills between Çesmealti and Dimetoka (79–80). It is these foothills which are to be identified with the position occupied by the Greek mercenaries, while the cavalry battle would have taken place on the plain immediately below.

Equally striking and significant are Hammond's findings as regards the river itself. At the time of Hammond's visit, which corresponds roughly to the season in which the battle was fought, the actual stream was a modest 4 or 5 metres wide (80), flowing through a channel, 20 to 40 metres wide, of "solid, stoneless alluvium" (77). Hammond in fact observes that "lorries driven across the bed at Dimetoka left only a faint impression of their tyres" (77) and that "when wet it is very slippery for a man wearing smooth-soled shoes, but it gives reasonable footing for a horse or a man's bare foot if he uses his toes" (80). The banks above Dimetoka are as much as 5 or 6 metres high, but are sometimes shelving and, in any case, somewhat lower below the village (77). Thus, though conditions may have been more difficult in 334 B.C., the forbidding descriptions in the sources of the height and rough-

⁶For Ptolemy's dependence on Callisthenes, see now A. M. Devine, *AncWld* 12 (1985) 40–41, *AncWld* 13 (1986) 92–94, and *The Tactical Terminology of Arrian and Diodorus Siculus: Towards a Reappraisal of the Generalship of Alexander the Great and his Successors* (diss., Cambridge 1984) 144–148, 183–184, 298–299, 332–333; with Badian 275–277, esp. 275, n. 16.

ness of the riverbanks (Arr. 1.13.4; Plut. *Alex.* 16.2), the depth of the stream (Arr. 1.14.4; Plut. *Alex.* 16.2), the strength of the current (Plut. *Alex.* 16.4), and the slipperiness of the channel (Plut. *Alex.* 16.5), are not borne out by Hammond's survey and should therefore be viewed, to some extent at least, as part of the original glorification of Alexander's achievement by Callisthenes, Ptolemy, and Aristobulus.

3. THE MACEDONIAN ORDER-OF-BATTLE

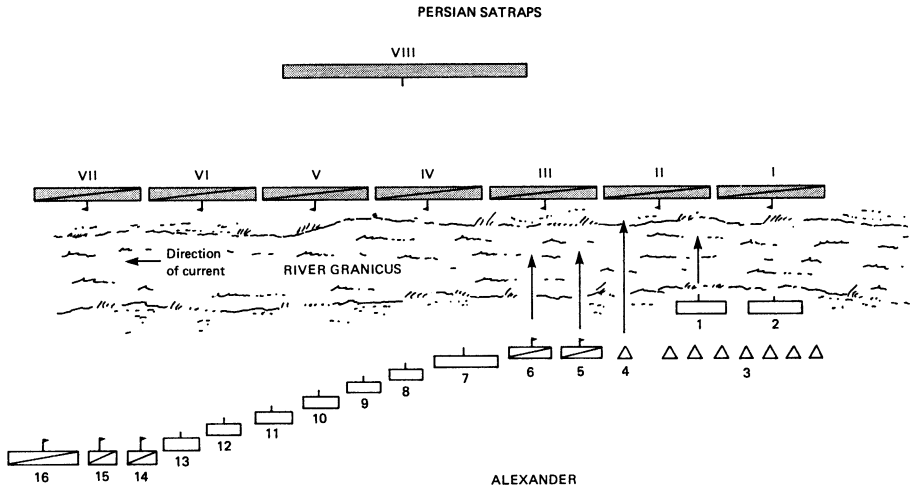
Alexander's order-of-battle is given only by Arrian (1.14.1–3). First on the right, Alexander posted seven of the eight *ilai* of the Companion cavalry [3],⁷ which with the detached *ile* [4] mustered 1,800 horsemen (Diod. 17.17.4), along with the archers [2] and the Agrianian javelin-men [1], together 1,000 strong (*ibid*), under the overall command of Philotas. Since the Agrianians usually functioned as ἄμμιπποι for the Companions,⁸ they (and the archers) were almost certainly located in front of the heavy cavalry to start with (cf. Bosworth 117). Next to these units were posted the detached Companion *ile* of Socrates—the Apollonian [4]—the Paeonian cavalry [5], and the *prodromoi* [6], probably in that order (Hammond 83, n. 35). Next he stationed the phalanx, 12,000 strong (Diod. 17.17.3): drawn up in order from right to left were, first, the hypaspists [7], under Nicanor, then the *pezhetairoi-taxeis* of Perdiccas [8], Coenus [9], Craterus [10],⁹ Amyntas, son of Andromenes [11], Philip [12], and Meleager [13]. Adjacent to them were the Thracian cavalry [14], under Agathon, which together with the Paeonians and the *prodromoi* originally made up a brigade of 900 light horse.¹⁰ Next were the allied Greek cavalry [15], 600 in number, under Philip, and, on the extreme left, the Thessalian cavalry [16], 1,800 strong, commanded by Calas (Diod. 17.17.4). The left-wing cavalry and the *taxeis* of Meleager and Philip came under the overall command of Parmenion, while Alexander retained field-command over the remainder of the army.

⁷Προετάχθησαν at 1.14.1 has the second of the two possible senses of προτάττειν distinguished by G. T. Griffith, "Alexander's Generalship at Gaugamela," *JHS* 67 (1947) 77–89, at 79, n. 1, i.e., "to post on the flank of" (in this case, of the right wing), which is of course "to post in front of" from the point of view of a column-of-march being deployed to the right.

⁸Cf. A. M. Devine, *AncWld* 12 (1985) 50–53, *Phoenix* 29 (1975) 379, and *Phoenix* 37 (1983) 215 and 211–212.

⁹The name of Craterus, like that of Philip, is repeated in Arrian's second list of *pezhetairoi taxeis* at 1.14.3, which runs from left to centre. Since Philip's *taxis* occupied a central position, it could reasonably be mentioned as the last unit in both lists. Craterus, on the other hand, is mentioned in two completely different locations. Bosworth's argument (118) that Craterus' *taxis* has been mistakenly added to the extreme left of the phalanx here owing to a reminiscence of the position which it *did* occupy at Issus (2.8.4) and Gaugamela (3.11.10) is cogent.

¹⁰Diod. 17.17.4, with Hammond 82, n. 34.



THE BATTLE OF THE GRANICUS
THE ORDERS-OF-BATTLE

The Macedonian Army:

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|--|--|
| 1. Agrianian javelin-men.* | 9. – <i>Taxis</i> of Coenus. |
| 2. Archers. | 10. – <i>Taxis</i> of Craterus. |
| 3. Companion cavalry (Philotas). | 11. – <i>Taxis</i> of Amyntas. |
| 4. The <i>ile</i> of Socrates.* | 12. – <i>Taxis</i> of Philip. |
| 5. Paeonian cavalry.* | 13. – <i>Taxis</i> of Meleager. |
| 6. <i>Prodromoi</i> .* | 14. Thracian (Odrysian) cavalry (Agathon). |
| 7. Hypaspists (Nicanor). | 15. Allied Greek cavalry (Philip). |
| 8. <i>Pezhetairoi</i> – <i>Taxis</i> of Perdikkas. | 16. Thessalian cavalry (Calas). |

*Advance-guard (Amyntas).

The Persian Army:

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|---|--|
| I. Cavalry (Memnon and Arsames). | V. Bactrian cavalry (2,000). |
| II. Paphlagonian cavalry (Arsites). | VI. Cavalry (Rheomithres) (2,000). |
| III. Hyrcanian cavalry (Spithridates) | VII. Median cavalry (1,000). |
| IV. Cavalry units of unspecified nationality. | VIII. Greek mercenary infantry (Memnon) (4–5,000). |

Apparently doubtful of the reliability of his Greek allied and mercenary infantry, which were to constitute a reserve phalanx in subsequent battles like Issus and Gaugamela, Alexander had advanced without them (Hammond 81). Thus it is clear, in spite of the eagerness of some modern commentators to invent a second line for them¹¹ or even to squeeze them into the

¹¹For example, Judeich (392–393) and in Kromayer-Veith.

front line with the *pezhetairoi* (Nikolitsis 23), that there was only one line of units in the Macedonian order-of-battle at the Granicus, and that Alexander's available forces amounted to a modest 12,000 heavy infantry, 1,000 light infantry, and 5,100 cavalry—together 18,100 men.

4. THE PERSIAN ORDER-OF-BATTLE

The Persian order-of-battle receives only a bare mention from Arrian (1.14.4), who says merely that the cavalry were drawn up along the river-bank in an extended formation (ἐπὶ φάλαγγα μακράν) with the infantry [VIII] posted in rear of them on higher ground. Arrian gives their numbers as 20,000 cavalry and a little less than 20,000 infantry, the latter all being Greek mercenaries. This general disposition is corroborated by the partial order-of-battle given by Diodorus (17.19.4–5): cavalry [I] under the Greek mercenary commander Memnon of Rhodes and Arsamenes (= Arsames), the satrap of Cilicia (cf. Arr. 1.12.8), formed the extreme left of the Persian front line, followed in turn by Paphlagonian horse [II] under Arsites, the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia (*ibid.*), and the Hyrcanian cavalry [III] under Spithrobates (= Spithridates), the satrap of Ionia and Lydia (*ibid.*). The extreme right was held by 1,000 Medes [VII] and 2,000 cavalry of unspecified nationality [VI] under Rheomithres, together with 2,000 Bactrian horse [V], while the centre was occupied by further contingents of unspecified nationality [IV].

In view of the apparent authenticity of Diodorus' order-of-battle and his modest and entirely plausible figure of 10,000 for the Persian cavalry, it is disappointing that he should give so grossly inflated a number as 100,000 for the Persian infantry, of whose composition he moreover supplies no details. While not as extreme as the overall total of 600,000 given by Justin (11.6.11), Diodorus' figure is a logistical impossibility and belongs to the realm of sensationalist fantasy, rather than even to genuine propaganda.¹² To this latter category, which is obliged to retain some plausibility, belong Arrian's 20,000 Persian cavalry and almost 20,000 Greek mercenaries. For in fact the only other figures we have for Greek mercenaries in Asia Minor at this time are the 5,000 Memnon is said to have received from the Great King at the outbreak of the war (Diod. 17.7.3) and the reduction of this number to 4,000 by Polyaeus (*Strat.* 5.44.4). Thus, if the Persian infantry at the Granicus consisted exclusively of the available Greek mercenaries, it probably did not amount to more than 4–5,000 men (cf. Fuller 147), which, with the 10,000 horse in the front line, would give the army as a whole a strength of only 14–15,000, significantly inferior in numbers (not to mention quality) to Alexander's front line force of 18,100.

¹²It should thus be ascribed to Cleitarchus: Hammond (above, n. 4) 25.

If this inference is correct, then it would help to resolve most of the problems that the battle raises in terms of tactics and the curious sketchiness of even Arrian's account. In the first place, it would explain the unusual nature of the Persian dispositions. While it is clear from Xenophon's account of the battle of the Centrites in 401 B.C. (*Anab.* 4.3.3) that Persian tactical practice did include opposing river-crossings with cavalry, backed up by infantry in reserve, such an arrangement is indicative of tactical inferiority (whether in numbers or quality). Tactical equality permits and tactical superiority encourages free movement and manoeuvre on the field of battle, which is of course impossible in the close defence of a river-line. Secondly, it would explain why Alexander was content to risk a frontal assault on the Persian positions, instead of making a *strategic* manoeuvre around either of the enemy's flanks (as he was later to do, under much more difficult conditions, at the Hydaspes). His intention was evidently not simply to circumvent the immediate Persian opposition, but to seize the opportunity to destroy the only Persian field-force in Asia Minor then and there. To march several miles upstream (or downstream) and then ford a stream only 4–5 metres wide (Hammond 80) would have been no great hardship, but the Persian army could make good its escape once it saw its flank turned. In 1812 Napoleon began his ill-fated Russian campaign by manoeuvring on the rear of both the Russian armies on the Niemen, only to have them bolt and draw him *fortuitously* to destruction.¹³ The situation prior to the Granicus seems, rather, to resemble that before the battle of Friedland in 1807, where Napoleon successfully risked a frontal assault in order to destroy an inferior Russian army defending a river-line (the Alle).¹⁴ In spring, 334 B.C., Alexander's need for a decisive victory was more political than military, but it would still have required a situation something like the one envisaged above to tempt him to accept battle on unfavourable ground. Thirdly, it would account for the brevity and sketchiness of all the surviving narratives of the battle, including that of the usually relatively comprehensive and coherent Arrian. The reason must be that there was in fact little to relate: the tactics were simple and straightforward (aside from Alexander's preliminary attack to draw the Persian cavalry into a false position and throw them into disorder), and the Macedonian success was almost immediate. The action was brief and there were no complex manoeuvres to describe. Hence the concentration on the *aristeia* of Alexander and even of some Persian leaders. Fourthly, if there were only 4–5,000 Greek mercenaries in the Persian reserve line, it would explain why their role in the battle was confined to a hasty attempt to surrender on terms (Plut. *Alex.* 16.13), followed by a precipitate massacre (Arr. 1.16.2). Had there in fact been 20,000 Greek

¹³C. Duffy, *Borodino* (London 1972) 51–62.

¹⁴F. L. Petre, *Napoleon's Campaign in Poland, 1806–7* (London 1901) 311–337.

mercenaries, they would have outnumbered the entire Macedonian army and could simply have formed square¹⁵ and carried out a fighting retreat with a reasonable chance of success. Instead, Arrian represents them as stationary while being surrounded on all sides, which, though certainly feasible in the case of a relatively small tactical square of 4–5,000 hoplites, would be difficult, if not totally impracticable, with one four or five times that size. Finally, it would account for the low number of casualties suffered by the Macedonians in the battle proper and in the largely gratuitous massacre of the mercenaries, as well as for the small number of the latter that fell into their hands. Certainly Arrian's figure of 2,000 Greek mercenaries taken prisoner is by itself suspect, since it implies the slaughter of almost 18,000 other hoplites—a number, we should remember, approximately equal to the total strength of the Macedonian army prior to the battle. A slaughter of 2–3,000 in a completely encircled force of 4–5,000 is quite plausible, though still constituting a spectacular massacre. Likewise significant are the Macedonian casualties as given by Arrian (1.16.4): 25 Companions killed in the first attack, another 60 cavalry and 30 infantry killed subsequently. Even allowing for conventional reductions for the sake of Alexandrine self-glorification and propaganda, such small losses suggest a very easy Macedonian victory, especially in the infantry combat. Four or five thousand mercenaries drawn up in a small tactical square could easily have been peppered by Alexander's archers and prodded with the 15–18 ft. *sarissai* of the Macedonian phalanx and Companion cavalry without being able to reply in kind, owing to the very limited thrust of their own 7–8 ft. hoplite spears.¹⁶

5. THE BATTLE

The battle can be divided into three separate phases. The first is a species of tactical feint, carried out by only one *ile* of Companion cavalry, the *prodromoi*, the Paeonians, and an unidentified unit of infantry. This is repulsed with heavy loss, but succeeds in drawing the Persian cavalry opposite down to the stream in victorious disorder. The second phase takes the form of a general advance by the Macedonian army, leading to a speedy rout of the Persian cavalry as a whole. The final phase is the encirclement and systematic destruction of the Greek mercenary infantry on the higher ground beyond the river.

Arrian's account is revealing in its synthesis of two distinct elements: a factual narrative of the attack of the advance-guard and an attempt to ob-

¹⁵Cf. the retreat of Eumenes' argyraspids at Gabiene (Diod. 19.43.5), on which see A. M. Devine, "Diodorus' Account of the Battle of Gabiene," *AncWld* 12 (1985) 87–96, esp. 93.

¹⁶For a detailed discussion of the relative lengths of the Macedonian cavalry and infantry *sarissai* and the Greek hoplite spear, see M. M. Markle, "The Macedonian Sarissa, Spear, and Related Armor," *AJA* 81 (1977) 323–339, esp. 323–325 and 331–333.

scure Alexander's non-participation in this first phase of the battle by means of epic stage-setting. At 1.14.4 Arrian has the Persians massing their cavalry opposite the point where they could plainly distinguish Alexander by virtue of the splendour of his equipment and the deference of those with him. This is suggestive of part of a quasi-Homeric "*hoplisis*" like that at Plut. *Alex.* 32.8–11, which may well have stood in the text of Arrian's ultimate source Callisthenes¹⁷ at this point. Whether the *hoplisis* at Gaugamela was intended as anything more than a literary *topos*, the one here does seem to accord Alexander a prominence at the start of battle which is not corroborated by known tactical detail. Likewise, a little later at 1.14.6, Arrian has Alexander jump on his horse, exhorting those around him to follow him and prove themselves good men and true. Yet after this obvious build-up, Alexander nonetheless fails to charge, but instead sends forward, first, Socrates' Companion *ile* [4],¹⁸ and then the Paeonians [5] and the *prodromoi* [6], under the overall command of Amyntas, son of Arrhabaeus, together with a "*taxis*" of infantry, most probably the Agrianian javelin-men [1].¹⁹ Despite the carefully contrived impression that Alexander's own charge was all but simultaneous with the first attack—observe that the description of the king's advance at Arr. 1.14.7 in fact anticipates the situation at 1.15.3—it is evident that it followed only after a fairly lengthy and hard-fought combat (Socrates' *ile* alone sustaining a loss of 25 dead) in which the Macedonian advance-guard was repulsed.

This delay, if less than "heroic" and thus unsuitable for incorporation into the original Callisthenic portrait of Alexander,²⁰ is undoubtedly the key to the king's tactical plan (cf. Badian 289–290). The preliminary attack by relatively weak cavalry units and a single formation of light infantry²¹ seems at first glance to have been an error of judgment on the part of Alexander inasmuch as it exposed a small force to certain defeat and possible destruc-

¹⁷In the sequence Callisthenes-Ptolemy/Aristobulus-Arrian: for references, see above nn. 5 and 6.

¹⁸Allegedly under the command of the otherwise unknown Ptolemy, son of Philip (Berve no. 671). For discussion, see now Bosworth 120.

¹⁹Most commentators, e.g., J. G. Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* (Hamburg 1833) 113, Judeich (394), Fuller (151), Nikolitsis (30–31), Badian (289), and Hammond (84), have taken this "*taxis* of infantry" to be a chiliarchy of the hypaspists. A minority view, that it was a *taxis* of *pezhetairoi*, is represented by Domaszewski (56) and C. Bradford Welles, *Alexander and the Hellenistic World* (Toronto 1970) 23. The term, however, can denote any unit of infantry, and the Agrianians would be the natural choice, especially as they were nearest the enemy and would in the normal course of events precede the Companions. Cf. now Bosworth 120.

²⁰Cf. A. M. Devine, "The Location of the Battlefield of Issus," *LCM* 5 (1980) 3–10, at 7–8, and *AncWld* 12 (1985) 27–34, 45, 52–53.

²¹Hammond's very plausible estimates (82–83) for the strengths of these units are: *prodromoi* 600, Paeonians 150, Socrates' *ile* 200, and Agrianians 500, i.e., a total of 950 cavalry and 500 infantry.

tion. However, the function of this advance-guard, like that of similar formations later at Issus and Gaugamela,²² was to draw the Persian left-wing cavalry out of their formations and into a disorderly, if victorious, pursuit down into the riverbed. Once this was achieved, Alexander could launch his main attack and deal with the disorganized Persian cavalry piecemeal, with their previous advantage of position neutralized.

In the event, this is precisely what happened. The Macedonian advance-guard moved to the attack, with the prominence of Socrates' *ile* [4] in the van lending verisimilitude to the deliberately contrived impression that a full-scale attack, involving Alexander himself and the Companion cavalry, was under way. This intended illusion may well have been the only reason for the participation in such a foredoomed manoeuvre of so valuable a cavalry unit. At any rate, the Persian cavalry took the bait and counter-charged, with the inevitable result that the Macedonians were driven back in disorder—a disorder which, moreover, included their pursuers.

With the victorious Persian left-wing cavalry pouring chaotically into the riverbed in pursuit of the retreating advance-guard, Alexander, leading the Macedonian right, advanced with his army in oblique order (1.14.7, 15.3).

Arrian's description of Alexander's oblique-order attack is problematical, and merits some discussion. The crucial passage is 1.14.7: αὐτὸς δὲ ἄγων τὸ δεξιὸν κέρας . . . ἐμβαίνει ἐς τὸν πόρον, λοξὴν αἰεὶ παρατείνων τὴν τάξιν, ἣ παρείλκε τὸ ρεῦμα, ἵνα δὴ μὴ ἐκβαίνοντι αὐτῷ οἱ Πέρσαι κατὰ κέρας προσπίπτουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς ἀνυστὸν τῇ φάλαγγι προσμύξῃ αὐτοῖς. The translation of N. G. L. Hammond is (75): "He himself leading the right . . . entered the channel, continually extending his formation at an angle where the stream was pulling, in order that the Persians should not fall upon him (i.e., his men) when he was in column coming out but he himself should engage them, he being as much as possible in line." This should be read with Polyaeus *Strat.* 4.3.16 Ἀλέξανδρος Γράνικον διαβαίνων Πέρσας ἐξ ὑπερδεξιῶν ἐπιόντας αὐτοὺς αὐτὸς ἐπὶ ὕδωρ τοὺς Μακεδόνας ἀναγαγὼν ὑπερεκέρασεν. "While crossing the Granicus Alexander outflanked the wing of the Persians, as they were about to attack from a commanding position, by himself leading them, the Macedonians, upstream waterward."²³

The purpose of the manoeuvre was, as Hammond observes (75), "to avoid . . . emerging in disorder and in column, and to give Alexander's cavalry as far as possible the same formation as that of the enemy." According to Hammond (75 with n. 8), Alexander "avoided disorder in crossing the river by advancing with oblique angles in the line where troops had to move against a strong current. Thus the sideways movement was upstream to the

²²Cf. A. M. Devine, *AncWld* 12 (1985) 51–52 and 56 (Issus), *Phoenix* 29 (1975) 383–384, and *AncWld* 13 (1986) 108–109 (Gaugamela).

²³Hammond 75, with a cogent discussion of the *variae lectiones*.

right, as . . . in Polyaeus' description." This is a satisfactory explanation as far as it goes, but it really does not go far enough. Λοξή τάξις, as we can see from its use elsewhere (Diod. 17.57.6; 19.29.7) and that of its cognates λοξή φάλαγξ (Arr. *Tact.* 26.3; Ael. *Tact.* 30.3; Asclep. *Tact.* 10.21; Diod. 15.55.2) and λοξή στάσις (Diod. 19.82.4), should refer to an oblique *formation*, and not merely to an oblique *movement*, as Hammond appears to suggest. While an oblique movement upstream by the Macedonian right is in fact required by the evidence of Polyaeus, it is perhaps better to take 1.14.7 as meaning that Alexander continually extended his formation so as to make it oblique in relation to the stream. It should be noted that an evolution into oblique order, i.e., into a sequence of units arranged *en échelon*, would automatically result in a lengthening of the Macedonian formation—as required by 1.14.7—*along its axis*.

At any rate, the advance-guard had evidently done its work successfully, as Alexander's breakthrough (Arr. 1.15.3–16.1) is marked by scenes of heroic chaos, rather than tactically significant movement or manoeuvre on the Persian side. Only the counterattack of Mithridates at the head of a Persian cavalry wedge (1.15.7) shows any tactical initiative on the part of Alexander's immediate opponents.²⁴ The advantage of thrust afforded the Macedonian cavalry by the length of their *sarissai*, together with their sound drill in the most effective use of these weapons, i.e., against the faces of the enemy's horses and horsemen,²⁵ enabled them to do considerable execution amongst the disorganized Persians, who also had to endure the attentions of the light infantry acting as ἄμμιπποι to the Companions, namely the Agrianians and probably the archers.²⁶ At any rate, the collapse of the Persian cavalry was not long delayed (Arr. 1.16.1), and with the flight of their cavalry, the Greek mercenaries on the higher ground in the rear stood alone, exposed to the full wrath of the new Achilles.

At first, they probably did not realize the gravity of their situation, as they apparently made no attempt to retreat. Although Arrian attributes their inertia to consternation (1.16.2), the hope of surrender, or rather a successful transfer to a new employer (i.e., Alexander), may have exerted more influence in the circumstances. They were promptly surrounded by the

²⁴Cf. A. M. Devine, *Phoenix* 37 (1983) 213–214.

²⁵Cf. Arr. 3.28.3; Curt. 4.8.25; 7.4.36–37 for further Alexandrine instances of this procedure; cf. also Plut. *Pomp.* 69.3 and *Caesar* 45.2. For a modern parallel, see C. Duffy, *Austerlitz, 1805* (London 1977) 137, quoting the memoirs of a Napoleonic veteran: “. . . the Russian infantry made the mistake of levelling their bayonets against the horses' chests. The animals were infuriated by the goading and lashed out with their hooves, breaking into the ranks. ‘We would have been beaten, if the Russians had instead aimed their bayonets at the horses' heads, as we did at the battle of the Pyramids (1798). When he is pricked in the head the horse rears up, unseating his rider.’”

²⁶Arr. 1.16.1. Cf. A. M. Devine, *Phoenix* 37 (1983) 212, n. 33; and see above n. 19, with Bosworth 120 and 124; *pace* Badian 285, n. 46.

Macedonian cavalry and the phalanx brought up against them. They now asked Alexander for "pledges," i.e., terms,²⁷ but these were refused, and the work of butchery began. By the time it had finished, only about 2,000 of the mercenaries remained alive, and these had surrendered unconditionally, destined for slave labour in Macedonia.²⁸ Alexander's victory in his first battle on Persian soil was complete and, as far as the Macedonians themselves were concerned, virtually bloodless.

6. THE LOSSES

The Macedonian losses are variously stated. Plutarch (*Alex.* 16.15) claims that Aristobulus gave them as 34 dead, of whom 9 were infantry. Comparison with Arrian's figures (1.16.4), which evidently derive from Callisthenes *via* Ptolemy, suggests that Plutarch has misunderstood his source. For in Arrian the 25 dead cavalymen are the Companions who fell in the preliminary attack, to which are to be added more than 60 dead from the rest of the cavalry units and 30 infantry dead, a total of 115 killed. Justin's statistics (11.6.12) of 9 infantry and 120 cavalry killed suggest a confused conflation of Aristobulus' and Ptolemy's figures, though the 9 infantry casualties can be plausibly identified as resulting from the first attack, and thus as having been sustained by the Agrianians. In view of the evident brevity of the battle, Arrian's casualty figures are, for once, quite credible.

The Persian casualties as stated by our sources are, on the whole, impossibly large. Plutarch's 20,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry killed (*Alex.* 16.15) and Diodorus' more than 10,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry killed, plus 20,000 taken prisoner (17.21.6), along with Arrian's implication that 18,000 Greek mercenaries were slain (1.16.2), belong to the realm of sensationalist fiction. Arrian (1.16.2) does, however, provide two much more credible statistics: 1,000 Persian cavalry killed and 2,000 Greek mercenaries taken prisoner. To these should be added perhaps a further 2–3,000 mercenaries massacred by Alexander, giving us a total Persian loss of about 5–6,000.

7. CONCLUSION

The red marble sarcophagus of Napoleon in Les Invalides is surrounded by twelve female figures, each personifying one of the Emperor's "twelve great victories." Closer inspection reveals that these allegorical figures represent, in fact, a very ill-assorted collection of Napoleonic combats. Some of Napoleon's finest victories, like Dresden, are not represented. Of those that are, some, like Austerlitz or Jena, are indeed indisputably amongst the Emperor's greatest military triumphs. Some are relatively trivial exotica, like

²⁷Plut. *Alex.* 16.13. Cf. Bosworth 124.

²⁸Arr. 1.16.6. Cf. Bosworth 126–127.

the battle of the Pyramids, included more for the sake of their geographical glamour than by reason of any great historical or tactical significance. Some, like Marengo and Borodino, were actually near defeats in which Napoleon displayed little of his accustomed tactical subtlety. But Marengo was Bonaparte's first victory as head of state and, as Hyde de Neuville put it, the baptism of his personal power.²⁹ Thus, though not a free-standing masterpiece like Austerlitz, Marengo demanded canonization as the cornerstone of the foundation-myth of Napoleon's autocracy.

Likewise the Granicus was Alexander's first victory over the Persians. It gave him a secure foothold on the continent of Asia and opened the way into the interior of the Great King's empire, and was thus the foundation stone of Alexander's own world-kingdom. Unlike the victory at Pelion, which was more a matter of Alexander clearing his own back yard, it had to be canonized as a quintessential part of the Alexander-legend and glamorized beyond its merits by its depiction as an Alexandrine *monomachia*.

The case of the Hydaspes is similar. Though likewise a comparatively unimportant battle, the fact that it took place at the outer limits of the *oecumene* endowed it, like Bonaparte's victory under the Pyramids, with an aura of romantic exoticism. Since it, too, was relatively small-scale and tactically comparatively uninteresting,³⁰ it likewise had to be embellished with personal heroics, this time with the noble Porus providing a worthy foil for Alexander.³¹ The formula, as we see, is timeless.

Considered strictly from a tactical standpoint, the Granicus is remarkable for a single stratagem only. This was the "feint" by the Macedonian advance-guard to draw the Persian cavalry into a false position and throw them into (momentarily victorious) disorder. Its main interest lies in the fact that it was the prototype of an entire series of increasingly more sophisticated or varied stratagems of the same kind.³² Here and in its later incarnations the exposure of the tactical Judas-goat and the resultant disorganized advance of the enemy led directly—indeed possibly eventually automatically—to a decisive counterattack by stronger Macedonian forces, usually led by Alexander in person, kept in reserve for this very purpose.

Strategically, the battle highlights one aspect of Alexander's genius—his

²⁹Quoted in F. Markham, *Napoleon* (London 1963) 74. For a discussion of Napoleon's handling of the battle, see D. G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (London 1967) 286–301.

³⁰For a full discussion, see A. M. Devine, *diss. cit.* (above, n. 6) 177–215 and 330–341.

³¹Note the extended *aristeia* for Porus at Arr. 5.18.4–5.19.2 (produced either by Ptolemy or Aristobulus); cf. Curt. 8.14.31–43; Plut. *Alex.* 60.12–14; Diod. 17.88.4–7.

³²To the instances at Issus and Gaugamela may be added Alexander's use of simplified versions of the stratagem against the Scythians at his forcing of the Jaxartes (Arr. 4.4.6–7) and against the detached cavalry force under Porus' son just prior to the battle of the Hydaspes (Arr. 5.15.1–2; Polyaeus *Strat.* 4.3.21). On the latter, see A. M. Devine, *diss. cit.* (above, n. 6) 193–194 and 336–337.

ability to size up a situation quickly and his readiness to deliver a direct *coup de main* when nothing more subtle was required. It was the strategic equivalent of the cutting of the Gordian knot, and it closely parallels Napoleon's direct and impromptu attacks on numerically inferior enemies in strategically dubious positions at Jena and Friedland,³³ both inspired strokes of strategic opportunism. As such, Alexander's generalship at the Granicus clearly deserves our admiration, but the total achievement—and this is what his official propaganda strove to conceal—still falls far short of that of Issus or Gaugamela.³⁴

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³³On the battle of Jena, see F. L. Petre, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia, 1806* (London 1907) 112–148 and 165–180; for Friedland, see above, n. 14.

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