

*Mystery of  
Alexander's Grave*



By  
**Pascal Kamburovski**

# **Mystery of Alexander's Grave**

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Dedicated to my son Evgeni

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## **PREFACE**

A lot has been written about Alexander of Macedonia. But despite the hundreds of books and scientific studies, the hunger for new facts about this brilliant personality is not weakening and still drawing (as it was for ages) the interest of many readers all over the world.

Alexander of Macedonia is, without doubt, one of the most popular figures in the world's history, whose glory, synonymous with the sunlight as a symbol of eternity, continues to exist.

What is the reason that Alexander of Macedonia has been attracting the interest of many people for more than two millennia?

In the first place we have to mention his remarkable deeds performed during his reign. They prove that he was an unrivalled strategist and a great visionary as an emperor and ruler of Macedonia, whose history is an inexhaustible source of fascination for today's world.

It is really astonishing that, despite the numerous works concerning his bright and tumultuous life, science is still powerless to solve the mystery of his grave.

It seems that the scientists gave up trying to solve this problem. All their attempts to cast some light on the mystery always lead them to a cul-de-sac, because they are not in a position to abandon the unfounded idea that the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander of Macedonia is in Alexandria, i.e. that he was buried outside Macedonia. This untrue thesis is the major obstacle that prevents the scientists from making significant efforts to find the golden sarcophagus with the mummified body of the Macedonian emperor Alexander III.

But then at the same time there is a noticeable void in information on this subject in the world's literature.

The aim of this modest book is to stimulate new thoughts and reflections on the funeral of the Macedonian emperor and to

contribute to the discovery of the mummified body of Alexander. I am deeply convinced one day this will happen and the body will be found.

Science was able to reclaim for the modern world the lost cultural heritage of ancient civilizations: the secrets of the Egyptian pyramids (these monuments of the pharaoh's greatness and power) were unraveled; cuneiform used in Mesopotamia was deciphered; the Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Chaldean and Persian cultures were discovered, as well as the cultures of people living in the ancient Balkans area, the Aegean Sea area and the Near East. The ruins and the treasures of Troy, Mycenae, the Minoan palace in Crete, as well as the treasures of the ancient Macedonian necropolis in Vergina (Kutleš, Palatica) were brought to light.

The archaeological research conducted on ethnic Macedonian territories, aimed at finding new evidence of the ancient Macedonian legacy, is worth mentioning as well.

During its continued existence through more than two millennia, Macedonia has created on its soil a civilization that left behind many priceless values.

The research that has been carried out so far has revealed a number of stages in the development of archaeological legacy since prehistoric times to the present day. However, many stages of the development of Macedonian civilization are still unexplored. Only with a massive commitment from many reputable Macedonian and foreign scientific institutions, can various indispensable projects be developed to reveal the entire history of the ancient Macedonians. This should include a project to unravel the mystery of the grave of Macedonian emperor Alexander III. This is imperative.

The creative power of all scientists must be involved in an effort to present to the world the achievements of lost civilizations. Some students of science have gained everlasting fame. Among them are: Flinders Petrie, Champollion, Rossellini, Wilkinson, Howard Carter, Belzoni, Lord Carvarvon, Talbot, Heinrich Schliemann, Arthur Evans and others.

The question is; is there enough enthusiasm and dedication in today's scientific world to dedicate its knowledge to solving the two millennia old mystery of the grave of the greatest emperor in history?

I hope this modest work will contribute to the realization of these expectations.

All my thoughts and opinions on the events concerning the origins of the Macedonian state, the reign of Alexander III of Macedonia, his military expeditions, his death, the struggles for power and the set of events connected with his grave resulted from my thorough and penetrating studies, as well as analyses and comparisons that preoccupied me and matured in my mind for a long time.

Pascal Kamburovski

## MACEDONIANS, THEIR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

It is impossible to think about the mystery connected with the funeral of Alexander III of Macedonia without having in mind the complete picture of the Macedonians, their beliefs and traditions, without penetrating their souls, understanding their extraordinary pride which resulted from their ancient origins.

What was the spiritual power that was uniting the Macedonians, people called by classical historians “goat people”, “oak people”, “beech people” and “conquerors”, people who later, in the reign of Philip II and Alexander III of Macedonia, created a perfectly organized state with a powerful army able to conquer the whole world?

The truth is that the achievements of the Macedonian emperors did not result only from their natural skills and abilities, but also from the genius of the Macedonians as a nation, whose intellect, discipline and courage had no equal in the ancient world.

The world’s greatest expert on ancient Macedonia, Eugene Borza, who wrote about the Macedonians, said they managed to reach the height of historical greatness.\*

Nicolas Hammond, a modern British researcher dealing with the history of the ancient Macedonian state, noted: “Compared to other ancient nations, the Macedonians should be valued exceptionally high”.\*\*

Many scientists made remarkable effort to find answers and to reveal the truth about the Macedonian people’s past and the emergence of their state. Unfortunately, to this day, we have no satisfactory and scientifically proven results.

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\* Borza E.N., *In the Shadow of Olympus – the Emergence of Macedon*, Princeton, New Jersey 1990.

\*\* Hammond N.G.L., *The Macedonian State. The Origins, Institutions and History*, Oxford 1989.

This is largely due to the fact that most modern researchers of ancient Macedonian history are obsessed with some mythical writings of such ancient Greek writers as Hesiod or Thucydides.

According to Hesiod and Thucydides, the Macedonian state was founded by the Temenides who lived in Argos in the Peloponnesus.

They say a prince named Perdiccas came to Macedonia from Argos and founded the Macedonian imperial dynasty. This line of reasoning simply supports the thesis that the Macedonian kings were Greeks who came from Argos, Peloponnesus, even though there were half a dozen other cities named “Argos” at that time.

This subjective thesis is not only contrary to the historical truth but also gives a false and unrealistic picture of the Macedonians and their physical, moral and mental qualities.

The founding of the Macedonian state in the first millennium BC can only be explained if one is familiar with the first Macedonian people’s roots and understands the conditions under which the first Macedonian people lived.

I ask for forgiveness from the famous historians E. N. Borza, N.G.L. Hammond, G.T. Griffith, F.W. Walbank, M.B. Hatzopoulos, E. Badian, R.M. Errington, A.B. Bosworth, O. Abel, A. Weigall, H. Falmearaer and others, who endeavoured to find the truth about the origins of ancient Macedonia, for what I am about to say.

I have no intention of denying their effort and contribution but, even being less competent than any of them, I have my own views and the courage to express them.

In my opinion, based on what has been written as well as my personal knowledge on the founding of the ancient Macedonian state and the creation of the Macedonian identity, there is no doubt that the ancient homeland of the Macedonians is Orestis (Orestida, Orestija) which means “mountain range”.

That is why the Macedonians were named Oresti (‘Ορεστοι’), which translates to “Highlanders”.



Orestis was a separate region rich with resources – high mountains, rivers and streams abundant in water, endless fields, delightful highlands and forests, fertile soil...

The main profession of the population was herding, raising sheep and goats. From the milk they made cottage cheese and the famous Macedonian yellow cheese: kashkaval. From the wool the Macedonian women made clothes, blankets, carpets, and the famous shepherds coats.

The lowlands provided the population with wheat, fruits, vegetables and wine. The wood industry was very important from which farming tools, yokes, carts, wheels, spindles, spinning wheels and windmills were made. Work with skins was perfected. The leather made of skins was used for making clothes, airtight containers for holding milk and wine, roofs for mountain cottages, equipment for horses, etc.

Lake Orestiada (Lake Kostur today) was a beautiful lake with an abundance of life where one could catch tasty fish; a genuine treasure. The crystal clear rivers running down the mountain range Verno (Vičo) provided the lake with fresh mountain water.

Today there is a town called Argos Orestikon (Rupišta), located in the center of Orestis, four kilometres south of Lake Kostur. This is where the capital of Orestis – Argida (‘Αργήδα) was located, a name associated with the term “Goat City” (the word “γίδα” (gida) literally means “goat”).

The Macedonian dynasties were called Argeadi (Argēadi, Argiadi), which means “Goat People”, a word derived from the word “γίδα”.

The goat was their symbol and they were proud of it.

All the Macedonian kings were derived from this blood line, including Alexander IV, the son of Alexander III of Macedonia.

The city Argida, later named Rupišta, was again renamed to ‘Αργος Ορεστικόν’ (Argos Orestikon). The city is situated on a widespread

beautiful field, surrounded by high mountains. Located on its north side is Mount Verno (Vičo). Located on its south side, near the village Dupiak (Δισπιλιον), is an opening, a hole, through which surplus water from the lake flows toward Argida. On the southeast of Argida water flows out of Lake Kostur and merges with the water of the river Haliacmon (Bistritsa), which then delightfully meanders into the Thermaic Gulf.

The city is located in the middle of a triangle whose vertices are the peaks of Mount Verno (Vičo) on the north side, Mount Gramos on the southwest side and the picturesque highland with the peak of Mount Siniačko on the southeastern side.

Situated southwest of Argida are the great and rich Mount Malimadi pastures.

In the beginning the population of Orestis was organized in various tribes. One tribe was the cattle tribe which led a half-nomad life. In the spring the cattle tribe took its cattle to the mountain areas which had rich pastures. Another tribe was the sheep and goat tribe. These tribes moved with their animals. Women and children also traveled together with their herds of sheep and goats, bringing with them necessary appliances and skin containers to store and process the milk. Horses and mules were also used to carry the appliances for milk production, the improvised roofs for the summer cottages, blankets, and so on.

The order of the obligations in the nomad community was strictly determined through the year. In late autumn the movement took place in the reverse direction – the nomads left the mountain range and came back to the warmer places round Argida. The main decision for the movement was made by the tribe leader (čelnik)\*. The čelnik had broad authorities: was responsible for the finances, economic and internal policy, as well as for the woodcutting industry.

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\* Čelnik – according to a greater number of analysts a čelnik was appointed the main shepherd, the leader of the tribe community and later also the administrator of the town.

In the course of time the tribes got together in bigger communities. The bartering increased. Amongst the half-nomad tribes the community spirit was extremely strong. Men, women and children (who lived together, worked together and twice a year moved together) had to count on each other. The man, a nomad, a hunter, a warrior and farmer, was the head of the family. The woman was subordinated to him, but enjoyed great respect. The regime in the family and the tribe was definitely patriarchal.

The growing need for a connected life brought the small tribes together into much bigger communities. This led to the creation of a number of more densely inhabited places. Argida was an epicentre of the gathering communities. The leader of the town was selected for his capabilities, wisdom and bravery; he was the best of all the tribe leaders (čelniks). He had great power and decided on all important economic and social matters, as well as on defense strategies against outside enemies.

The citizens of Orestis, who lived in a territory outside of their influences, very quickly fell under the administration of Argida. In the course of time they united under a single ruler called the emperor (Βασιλειος). It was the beginning of the monarchy rule that came as a natural result of the tribe organization of the half-nomad tribes, small but bonded by close ties. The family leader, the father, transferred his power to the tribe leader. When the tribes merged into one community, which was the case of Orestis, the whole power was transferred to the emperor (Βασιλειος).

The dynamic development of the united Macedonian tribes created the Macedonian state in a very short time. Orestis was developed from a pastoral area into an agricultural area with highly developed craftsmanship, able to provide the army with modern weaponry. Amongst other weapons the famous Macedonian sarissa (spear) was produced. It was 5 to 6 metres long, weighed only 3 to 4 kilos and quickly became the main weapon of the Macedonian phalanx. Sarissas were made of cornel wood (a species of dog wood) that could be easily found in the Macedonian mountains. The sticks were heated up and when they became soft, they were straightened out, peeled and tempered in cool water. The stick was long, thin and

extremely strong. There is an old Macedonian saying: “be strong like a cornel tree”.

According to Herodotus, the citizens of Orestis in the eighth century BC were under the same emperor, had one faith, one language, one territory and had a highly organized cultural and economic life. They were strongly devoted to the emperor and deeply believed that he was the gods’ favourite – which was supposed to guarantee a successful living.

The population of Orestis worshipped the god Zeus (Dzevs, Dia). His son Makedon was accepted as their patron. That was the reason why they called themselves Makedonci (‘Ορέστοι - Μακεδώνες).

The strong feelings of unity and attachment to traditions and customs were manifested through celebrating the biggest holiday: Ksantika\*. There was no difference between a breeder, a farmer, a woodcutter or a hunter in those days. The whole population celebrated Ksantika – the holiday of spring and hopes, the holiday of joy, the holiday of the soul, the holiday which symbolized the domination of the wakening light of spring over the darkness and evil that exists in nature and human beings.

The symbol of the holiday was a red-white string, woven with white and red thread. Today’s folk tradition “martinka” seems to be a remnant of that holiday. The magical red and white braid symbolized a thread that bound all the people taking part in the holiday. The white colour probably drew its roots from the white dolphin that was considered a gift from god and lived exclusively in the Aegean Sea. This is where the term “Belamorska Makedonia” (White Sea Macedonia) comes from. The white colour was

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\* According to an old Macedonian traditional story (noticed by Taško Belčev), the god Makedon, who was the son of the almighty Parthenon god Zeus (Dzevs, Dia), fell in love with the goddess of flowers called Ksantija. But Ksantija was changed into a flower by some evil gods. Since then every spring the poor Makedon searches for his first and unforgettable love through all meadows and fields, all streams and rivers, all flowery gardens in his beloved Macedonia. In honour of this extraordinary and unhappy love of the god Makedon and the exquisite goddess of flowers Ksantija, the Macedonians called the first spring month Ksantik and the spring holiday Ksantika.

considered to be a symbol of purity and honesty, while the red was a symbol of light and love.

Ksantika had its special place in the souls of the Macedonians. The celebration of Ksantika as a holiday of spring, flowers, love and beauty was accompanied with extreme enthusiasm and rapture. The red and white symbols were put on windows, doors and fences. The women and girls made red and white necklaces and hair ribbons. The men put the braids on their waist and belts. The children wore them as bracelets on their wrists. The horses and lambs were also decorated with red and white interwoven strings.

The red and white symbols were put on wooden ploughs, yokes and wooden milking buckets.

The women showed off their dresses (woven and embroidered during the winter period) full of original inspiration, harmonious and delightfully coloured.

The most noticeable were the long and wide dresses worn for dancing, called ajta, as well as the shirts, aprons and scarves decorated in different ways, enriched with colourful forms – real masterpieces of handicraft.

The main distinctive marks of the male clothes were: the sirit (belt), which was considered to be a symbol of a man, the hlamida (cape) and a colourfully embroidered shirt. The men wore white headbands or wide hats, called kausia, on their heads.

Their national dances (oro – singular, ora - plural) were absolutely delightful, especially the dance karpea and telesia, as well as their melodic songs. The magical sounds of drums, bagpipes, trumpets, zurlas (kind of oboe) and kavals (kind of flute) reverberated through the valleys and the mountains. It will not be too much to say that the Macedonian state was born in an atmosphere of love, song and admiration of the gods and the eternal sun – the symbol of life. Ksantika with an astonishing power was uniting the souls of the Macedonians in one primordial and irrepressible desire for a better future.

The excellent organization, unity and loyalty to their emperor were the factors that made the Macedonians search for an opportunity to widen their territories through gathering the local tribes, tribes which had the same faith, language and customs. These tribes were mainly located in the basin of the river Haliacmon (Bistritsa). Step by step the Macedonians from Orestis took control of Tymphaea and Elimea, situated south of Mount Olympus. This happened during the rule of Keraunos (Κεραυνος means thunder) and his followers. During the reign of Perdiccas I, in the second half of the seventh century BC, the Macedonians occupied the highlands of Pieria and reached the Thermaic Gulf.

After spreading their territory outside the borders of Orestis and annexing other territories with ethnically similar populations (Eordea, Lyncestis, Emathia, Pelagonia, Bisaltia and Paeonia) the name Oresti gradually disappeared in favour of the name Macedonian. Consequently the new country received the name Macedonia\*.

Many historians consider the takeover of the Pierian highland and banishing the Thracian tribes from their territory by Perdiccas I to be the beginning of the Macedonian state. And Perdiccas I is considered the first Macedonian emperor.

The Macedonian expansion continued to the north and to the east. Thirty kilometres northwest from the Thermaic Gulf, in the year 413 BC (during the time of the emperor Archelaus I), the new capital of the Macedonian empire, Pella, was founded. The main spiritual sanctuary of the Macedonian emperors was established in Aegae (Ἄγαις – which means holy ground), in the place of the present city Edessa (Voden).

Almost every historian thinks of Aegae as the Macedonian necropolis, even though no traces or signs of graveyards were found in the city or in the vicinity of the city. Also the fact that the ancient Macedonians were buried in burial mounds (tumuli) that rose high above the ground is being neglected. These kinds of tombs were

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\* Thucydides and Pseudo-Scylax claim that all countries annexed by *the Orestis* (in the period from 480 to 360 BC) were automatically called Macedonian land.

found in today's Vergina (Kutleš). This made many scientists "transfer" their thoughts from Aegae to Vergina.

The confusion about Aegae being a necropolis probably originated from the fact that after the demise of Alexander of Macedonia, the Macedonian Assembly gathered in Babylon made a decision to bring the body of the dead emperor to Aegae and to conduct all the necessary burial rituals there. This decision concerned only the burial rituals, not the actual burial. The sarcophagus was to be exposed in the shrine of all deceased Macedonian emperors in Aegae, the shrine where weapons, armour, trophies, medals, the Imperial Diary and the emperor's diadem, made of gold and pine boughs, were kept.

Famous historians such as Flavius, Arrian, Quintus Curtius Rufus and Diodorus claimed that all these treasures (once a year, during the holiday of Ksantika) were displayed in an official parade through the city Pella, which was organized to express special respect to the deceased emperors.

The conclusion is clear: Aegae was not a necropolis, but a holy shrine built in the beautiful surroundings of the city Voden (Vodena), today's Edessa.

In the occupied territories Macedonians lived in communities. Each community was a part of one (or more) bigger groups of people that had already been formed in their homeland. The new communities transformed into rich societies with their own cultivated fields, local taxes, citizenship and the right to administer marriages.

Each of these newly created communities inhabited one city. With the development of the cities the initial tribe's bonds gradually disappeared in favour of the more important citizenship. The Macedonians felt loyal to the city. The Macedonian cities never waged wars against each other. The reason for that could be the strong community spirit or the fact that they were ruled by the same king.

The final union of all tribes – which represented the same genetic code, had the same faith, language and customs, and the forming of

the Macedonian state – happened during the rule of the famous Macedonian emperor – Philip II of Macedonia.

The Macedonian state consisted of: Orestis, Tymphaea, Elimea, Eordea, Emathia, Chalcidice, Bisaltia, Paroraea, Paeonia, Pelagonia, Lyncestis and part of Dardania.

The Macedonian state reached the peak of cultural and material development during the reign of Philip II and Alexander III of Macedonia. A state was created with a whole system of indispensable institutions: nation, cities, army, science, religion, art, philosophy, music, script and dances. The respected doctor Vulić wrote: “Macedonia is the country of the god Macedon. The country from where schools, script, art, architecture, frescoes, heroes and theatre came.”

Cities, shrines, fortresses, impressive palaces, theatres and libraries were built. The standard and military power of the state was raised to a remarkable level.

In the Macedonian empire (according to historical sources, inscriptions and coins) there were a number of cities that reached the peak of material and cultural development. They are as follows: in the basin of the river Haliacmon (Bistritsa): Beroea, Argida, Perivoli, Tympha, Kastro, Ziani, Kulea, Paraua, Bela; along the coast: Heracleion, Pydna, Dion, Methone, Aloros, Halastra, Sindos, Therme, Dikaia, Ainea, Lete, Potidaea, Olynthus, Axanthos, Apilonea, Amphipolis, Philippi, Akanthos; in the interior: Pella (the capital city connected to the Aegean Sea by a canal and the river Ludias), Lebaea, Stageira, Ichnae, Sintike, Xanthi, Neapolis, Vodena (with the emperor’s museum), Megara, Doberos, Kyrros, Gortynia, Idomenae, Atalanta, Europos, Stenae (near Demir Kapija); in the basin of the river Strimon (Struma): Aegilos, Mieza, Bormiskos, Trailos, Bergea, Myrkinos, Siris, Eion, Doberos, Astraeum (Strumica), Negrita, Pautalia (Kustendil); in Eastern Macedonia: Antipatrea (Berovo), Aden (Pehčevo), Tranupara (Kratovo), Astibus (Štip) – the capital of Paeonia; in the upper course of the river Axios (Vardar): Pelagia (Polog), Skupi, Bylazora (Veles) – the biggest city of Paeonia; in the basin of the river Strimon (Tsrna Reka) and in Pelagonia: Alkomenea, Persida,



Heraclea, Styberra, Stobi, Antigonea (Negotino); in the surroundings of Kičevo: Uskana; in Ohrid: Lychnidos; in Prespa: Pellon; in Eordea: Arnissa, Petres, Kellis, Graia.

The English historian N.G.L. Hammond came to the conclusion that each city elected its own executive authorities and the legislature, as well as an assembly of citizens which consisted of elders and experienced citizens.

The citizens of the cities (polites) did not forbid the citizens of other cities to come and live with them, but the rights of the newcomers (called katiki) were limited.

Macedonia had two great institutions - the Macedonian people and the emperor or maybe in reverse order – the emperor and the Macedonian people.

In peace time decisions were made by the Council of Elders and Experienced Citizens and the National Assembly, in war by the National Assembly and the Council of Generals.

The Assembly elected the emperor and had the right to depose him if he was not able to fulfill his duties. In case of war or if the emperor was absent for a long time a regent was elected. All members of the Assembly were equal in their voting rights.

The emperor had to take part in combat and fight shoulder to shoulder with his soldiers (mounted or on foot). He always had his meals together with his comrades.

The closeness that existed between the emperor and his citizens was typical of the Macedonian emperors.

The ancient historian Plutarch in his “Moralia” gives a significant example: “Once upon a time, when the emperor Philip II was going home from the Assembly, an old woman approached him and asked why she had to wait so long to have her case heard. Philip said that she had to be patient because he was very busy. Then the woman, dissatisfied with his answer, burst out and said: ‘If you cannot find time for your citizens, just give up being king’ ...”

This kind of relation between the emperor and his nation was extremely rare at that time and is still quite unique.

According to G.T. Griffith, M.E. Errington and Diodorus, people referred to the emperor by his name, adding if necessary his father's name or making a reference to his ethnic origin. For instance: "Philip the Macedonian", "Philip the son of Amyntas". If it was important to emphasize the status of the emperor he was additionally called "the emperor of Macedonia" or "the emperor of the Macedonians". For instance: "Alexander son of Philip, the emperor of the Macedonians" or "Alexander the emperor of Macedonia and the guardian of the imperial seal".

One of the emperor's duties was to fulfill the function of a supreme judge in case there was an appeal lodged against a decision of a lower court.

The emperor was surrounded with "emperor's friends" or, in other words, advisors (hetairoi).

The advisors enjoyed many privileges, e.g. their children had the right to study at "The Imperial School" that produced the future public service personnel.

N.G.L. Hammond assesses the number of advisors at two hundred. They were all excellently trained soldiers and they all studied the humanities and natural sciences.

Among the graduates of "The Imperial School" were Alexander of Macedonia and his generals: Antipater, Craterus, Seleucus, Attalus, Ariston, Leonnatus, Lysimachus, Parmenion, Philotas, Perdicas, Ptolemy, Hephaestion and Meleager.

The Macedonians were absolutely loyal to the emperor and took incredible care of their traditions and customs.

The classical historian Quintus Curtius Rufus wrote: "It was impossible for a Macedonian to forget his language or the customs of his ancestors. Their language was one of the things that

distinguished them from the citizens of the Hellenic poleis. They were proud of that.”

Alexander of Macedonia did not allow anyone to show disregard for the honour and dignity of the Macedonians.

N.G.L. Hammond in his book “The Macedonian State. The Origins, Institutions and History” wrote that Aristotle, born in Stageira, put the Macedonians among the non-Hellenic nations and their state among non-Hellenic institutions. He stated that the Macedonians considered themselves different from the Greeks and that Alexander of Macedonia treated them according to this conviction.

Although the Macedonians created an impressive empire, their strong bonds with the Orestis and Argida did not disappear. They were proud of their origin. They considered Orestis the cradle from which their ancestors had come. Orestis gave them all their strength, all their determination and heroism. Under the caring wings of Orestia their ancestors united in tribes, the tribes that were the source of their present existence.

The Macedonians had to swear to the emperor that they would be loyal and faithful and that they chose him to represent them between heaven and earth. Many historians quote this significant passage from the oath: “Let the emperor, elected by the Macedonians, maintain the territory ruled by the Argeadi. And let the Macedonians, together with their emperor, offer traditional sacrifices in honour of the Argeadi, i.e. to the gods and emperors of the far past.”

The emperor was obliged to offer sacrifices in the name of the state. It is a well-known fact that Alexander of Macedonia did it every day no matter where he was. According to Arrian, first he offered the sacrifice, then he sat to have his meal.

Once a year in Pella each Macedonian emperor organized a nationwide festival with sport games, in honour of the god Zeus. Also once a year he had to organize a festival in honour of the god Zeus and the nine Muses in the holy Macedonian city of Dion.

Once a year when the spring came, all of Macedonia celebrated the nationwide holiday: Ksantika, with the spontaneous participation of all citizens.

The Macedonians regarded their traditions with great respect and love. The feeling of the common Argeadic origin, common customs, religion and language was so strong that it could be considered a unique Macedonian phenomenon.

It was exceptionally important to stick to the traditions when the soldiers of Alexander of Macedonia were a long way from their homeland, between other nations with different cultures. The soldiers strongly opposed their emperor's every attempt to apply the rules of Asian etiquette, e.g. wear foreign clothes or allow the visitors to give him deep bows. A significant exchange of words was recorded when the Macedonian army was traversing the Hindu Kush mountains at a very low temperature. Craterus, a solid-looking and strong general of the Macedonian phalanx, approached Alexander and complained that his legs were frozen. Alexander said:

‘You should have listened to my advice and put the Persian trousers on. You wouldn’t be cold now.’

‘But, your majesty, it is not our custom,’ said the surprised Craterus, ‘You know that none of your soldiers would exchange our Macedonian trousers for the Persian ones.’

Even when the circumstances demanded it (e.g. during an audience with the emperor), the Macedonian soldiers vigorously opposed any imitation of foreign manners.

The incident with Clitus, one of the heroes of the Macedonian army and the closest companion of the emperor, is a good example of the Macedonian’s profound attachment to their traditions.

Clitus, during a drinking party with plenty of wine, being blind drunk accused the emperor of a serious betrayal of the Macedonian customs and disrespect for his soldiers and their services. He angrily said: ‘You can live with barbarians and slaves, who kneel before your Persian belt and white gown. But remember that I and those

Macedonians you laugh at, by our wounds and our blood, have made you so great now that you disown your father Philip and call yourself the son of Ammon.’ (Plutarch)

Stung by these words that questioned his affection for his father, Alexander threatened Clitus: ‘Do you, bloody bastard, think you are not going to be punished for these words, which you say to make the Macedonians rebel against me?’ (Plutarch) It ended in a disaster: Alexander lost control of himself, grabbed a spear and threw it, killing Clitus. Thus, careless Clitus lost his life in defense of the Macedonian traditions.

Alexander suffered terribly and asked god to make his soldiers understand his behaviour. But it was difficult for them to understand that he wanted all the people from the conquered territories to treat him as their emperor, to whom they had to be loyal and faithful. The Macedonians were irreconcilable and were responsible for many of the emperor’s headaches. There was even an open mutiny against Alexander in 324 BC in the city Opis.

For the Macedonians, Alexander was the emperor of Macedonia and they were not in a position to imagine that there could be anything more glorious than this. They were not happy at all that the Egyptians and then the Persians worshipped him as a god.

To be a Macedonian emperor meant to perform the holiest and most noble duty of being a link between life on earth and the gods in heaven.

The next generations made a big mistake trying to popularize the name Alexander the Great and forgetting that the emperor’s greatness came exclusively from the fact that he was the ruler of Macedonia who managed to transform his homeland into the world’s biggest empire.

The British scientist Nicholas Hammond, who conducted thorough research on the figure of Alexander, in connection with the name Alexander the Great convincingly stated that Ptolemy and

Aristobulus had an absolute right to say that the only true Alexander was Alexander of Macedonia.\*

For his contemporaries the most glorious title was the title of the emperor of Macedonia, with an Argeadic origin from the ancient homeland Orestis.

After this short description of the origins of the Macedonians and their attachment to the traditions, customs, emperor and state, we can imagine how they reacted to the news of the emperor's death and what could be the possible fate of the sarcophagus with the mummified body of Alexander of Macedonia.

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\* Hammond N.G.L., *The Genius of Alexander*, London 1997

## ALEXANDER'S DEATH

To the star to the empire I raised my country.  
The voices of time and nations  
together with my voice  
reverberate in the distance.  
I will never return home.  
The longing for me will be the longing for the whole word.  
From "The Son of the Sun"

By Radovan Pavlovski

Not more than ten and a half years have passed from the moment the emperor of Macedonia, Alexander III, led his army towards Asia. Ten and a half years after that event Alexander of Macedonia, the ruler of the biggest empire in the world's history, decided to wait for the end of the summer heat wave in the magnificent palace of the Persian emperors at Ecbatana, where the climate was bearable. The palace was imposing and built on an artificial rock. According to Karol Bunsch it was 850 metres long and surrounded with walls and beautiful gardens, in which many different plants and flowers grew. All chambers were abundantly ornamented with gold. It was a fabulous place.

Ecbatana, the capital of Media, gave Alexander a splendid welcome. Soon after his arrival about 3,000 performers and artists came to Ecbatana. On Alexander's demand the palace was transformed into a huge cultural centre. Each day theatrical performances, musical contests, games, dances, parties, races and other cultural events were arranged. Alexander seemed to be ecstatic. He was at the height of his glory.

Alexander needed some peace of mind to heal his tired soul and weary body after the ten and a half year-long crusade. He needed most his beloved Roxana who at that time was staying with her parents in Bactria, in the city of Nautaca (Qarshi). Four years before that he had seen her for the first time, in that city, and fell in love.

How could he forget the moment his bodyguards brought before him a man who persistently wanted to see the emperor? Alexander told him to sit, offered food and then asked:

‘Now tell me, what do you want from me?’

‘I am the satrap of Bactria, Oxyartes. I am bringing you my head, for which you have offered a prize.’

Alexander was surprised by the unusual words of the stranger.

‘Well, then tell me, what prize do you expect for your head?’

‘Your majesty, I beg you to save my family, my wife and two daughters, who were captured in the Sogdian Rock.’

Alexander ordered the prisoners to be brought before him. Soon three women with covered faces stood in front of him.

‘Take their veils off!’ commanded Alexander.

The oldest woman, the mother, took the veils off the faces of her daughters and then did the same with her own veil. Alexander saw the face of the Oxyartes’ elder daughter, Roxana, and was stunned by her beauty.

‘How is such beauty possible?’ asked Alexander, while in his heart the flame of love started to burn. He turned to her parents: ‘May I ask for your permission to marry your daughter. The wedding ceremony will take place here, in Nautaca, in accordance with your customs.’

Alexander was so enchanted by the beauty of the young Bactrian that he forgot for a while that he was the greatest ruler ever known and, instead of just ordering them to give him that girl, respectfully asked for her hand. None of his generals had done such a thing up to this moment.

The Macedonian soldiers, as well as the inhabitants of the southeast provinces of the endless Persian Empire (especially the Bactrians),



joyfully welcomed the news of Alexander's marriage to Roxana, who was supposed to be the most beautiful maiden in all of Persia.

The Bactrians felt proud that their highest god, Ormuzd, had appointed their woman to be the wife of the Macedonian emperor Alexander, who was also considered a god. After this marriage they became even more devoted to Alexander and expressed more love for him. They were particularly grateful that he was so gentle and did not touch their woman before the official ceremonies ended.

They remained faithful to Alexander and tried to maintain his order many centuries after his death. Even today in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan and Tajikistan there are tribes calling themselves Macedonians and claiming to be Alexander of Macedonia's ancestors.

All inhabitants of Bactra, the capital of Bactria, and of Nautaca, Roxana's birthplace, assisted in the wedding preparations. 20,000 Macedonian soldiers were invited to Nautaca, where the ceremony took place, and twice as many guests from Bactria and neighbouring Sogdiana.

The wedding ceremony was impressive and sublime, enriched with much oriental charm and beauty. The main celebration took place in a specially prepared amphitheatre in the palace of Horien.

On the left side of a raised platform sat the representatives of the local authorities together with Persian dignitaries, on the right side the representatives of the Macedonian imperial court were placed. In the middle on a magnificent throne sat his majesty, the emperor of Macedonia and Persia, Alexander of Macedonia and the young empress Roxana. Near Roxana sat her father, Oxyartes, and then her mother, Semiramis, brother Itanos and sister Dura. On the other side, near Alexander, sat his generals: Hephaestion, Perdicas, Craterus, Ptolemy, Leonnatus and Ariston.

What a wonderful sight it was: Alexander with the emperor's diadem encrusted with diamonds on his head. He wore a purplish red hlamida (cape) embroidered with imperial insignia, a white, richly decorated shirt, white hemmed sirit (belt), red gown,

gorgeously decorated socks and shoes with red pompoms. Alexander's costume was personally made by his sister Cleopatra.

The generals were dressed in the same style. They wore white headbands, white halides, richly decorated shirts (predominantly red), red sirits, white gowns, colourful socks and shoes with white pompoms. All their clothes were made in Macedonia.

The bride dominated the ceremony with her unattainable attractiveness. She wore a diadem encrusted with valuable diamonds. The diamonds glittered, forming a halo around her head that was very similar to the solar disc.

She was dressed in a purplish-red hlamida, a bit lighter than Alexander's, and a white wedding gown painted and decorated according to the customs of her country.

The Macedonian soldiers in their best costumes looked very impressive as well. They could easily stand up to any comparison made to the Persians guests.

It was a real feast for the eyes to watch the pretty Persian women with slender delicate bodies, dark hair, enchanting eyes and captivating smiles. They all wore long light dresses that only partially covered their breasts. The Macedonian soldiers used to say that they were a real "temptation for the eyes".

The wedding reached its climax when Alexander stood and, according to an ancient Macedonian custom, broke the bread. Seeing it the Persians went into raptures.

The next event was a set of Persian dances performed by the graceful Persian women.

The Macedonian soldiers replied by dancing their own dances. To the accompaniment of the traditional percussion instruments (tapans) and wind instruments (grnetas, burijas, zurlas, šupelkas, gajdas) they performed karpea in two variants: serious (imitating a battle with an enemy) and humourous (imitating a goat or cattle

theft). A great sensation was the performance of telesia, when the charming Persian women joined the dancing Macedonians.

The feast continued through the following days until the end of the honeymoon, which the bride and groom spent in the beautiful mountain castle of Sisimitis. The Macedonian soldiers felt a kind of relief. Everybody noticed that Alexander's unrestrained heart melted and he started to behave more like a real man than like a god. Many hoped that he might order a withdrawal to Macedonia. This hope rose when it became obvious that Roxana was pregnant and that Alexander had informed his mother Olympias of it.

The encounter with Roxana left a lasting trace in Alexander's heart. He would never forget her dark and innocent eyes. When she first saw him instead of fear she felt fascination. She felt her dreams were coming true. It seemed as if she had taken him prisoner, not vice versa. Alexander was wondering if he had had to travel so far, achieve all those victories and triumphs just to find this unique woman, the only one who managed to subdue his heart.

Alexander could not stop thinking about Roxana. Waiting for her to come to Ecbatana he missed her so much that he simply could not believe it. Roxana was the only woman able to make him experience unknown emotions. He tried to escape these emotions – he was afraid of the strong passion that his beloved one ignited in him.

She was the boss but at the same time she was subordinated to him. She stole his heart but at the same time she was humble and absolutely devoted to him.

The moment he realized that he might not go through with all his plans, he started to think about the succession. His dream was to appoint the child Roxana would give him as his heir.

In those days Alexander tried to sort through all his thoughts about his great undertakings. So much had been done for the history of Macedonia and the history of the world in such a short time. He brought to mind the day in the distant 334 BC when he left Pella and marched into Asia.

Before he left Macedonia he visited the holy city of Dion and organized a celebration in honour of the god Zeus. Then he returned to Pella to finalize all the things necessary for the hand over of power.

According to Macedonian customs, each emperor leaving Macedonia had to appoint a regent. Alexander made a small exception to this rule. He appointed the old and experienced general Antipater as a formal regent but also decided that his mother, Olympias, would share power with Antipater.

Antipater was made responsible for internal security and preservation of peace with the neighbouring countries. He should particularly keep an eye on the Hellenic micro-states associated in the “League of Corinth” – an organization designed to preserve and perpetuate a general peace (κοινή ειρήνη).

Antipater was also obliged to send 6,000 well-trained soldiers to Alexander every year. He was responsible for economic growth as well, because Alexander’s crusade had to be constantly supported by all of Macedonia. Each Macedonian was aware of his special role in history.

The Macedonians deeply believed in their emperor and their gods. This strong belief made them feel so certain of their victories. Everybody was involved in the war, one way or another. Macedonian craftsmen, carpenters and engineers developed the siege technique: they produced improved weapons for bombarding high fortresses, catapults hurling spherical metal or stone projectiles, battering rams used for demolishing fortresses, city walls and high towers. The mining industry and metallurgy were of great importance as well, because the quality of arms and armour depended on how they worked. The leather industry produced horse equipment, e.g. special saddles with leg protectors, bridles and leather blankets. The famous airtight leather containers for holding water, wine and food (used also for crossing rivers) are worth mentioning as well. The women sewed and knitted clothes for the soldiers. The shepherds, besides providing people with milk and wool, were responsible for finding cornel (dog wood) sticks suitable for making spears (sarissas) – this first-class weapon of the famous

phalanx. Even the old women had their duties. They gathered medicinal herbs and made drugs for ill soldiers. One of the most important medicines was the balm made from St. John's wort and olive oil and used as an effective remedy against injuries and wounds.

Olympias, Alexander's mother, had some other responsibilities. She was the actual empress. She was responsible for the functioning of the imperial court and the ceremonies conducted in the imperial palace. All religious and state holidays, as well as the official sacrifices, were organized under her surveillance. She was also obliged to provide all necessary products for the functioning of the Macedonian economy.

After he handed over power to Antipater and Olympias, Alexander took part in the final ceremonies of the Ksantika holiday. He deliberately chose that day for the beginning of his historical campaign. Ksantika was a relic of the past. It was celebrated each spring. It was deeply-rooted in the hearts of the Macedonians as a holiday of hope and common aspirations towards a better future. Ksantika was a symbol of their origin, something that distinguished the Macedonians from other nations, especially the nations of the Hellenic micro-states. Ksantika was celebrated in all of Macedonia, but especially in the homeland, Orestis, and its capital Argida – the cradle of the imperial dynasty.

Alexander remembered the celebration of Ksantika in Pella that took place ten and a half years earlier. It was the day of his departure, when thousands and thousands people chanted his name and wished him good luck in conquering the Persian empire.

A great festive parade marched through the main street of Pella. It was very special that year. At the head of the parade were special carriages loaded with arms and armour, war trophies and diadems of all deceased emperors. Behind the vehicles Alexander III of Macedonia rode his horse Bucephalus. The sight was impressive. Alexander was dressed up in a Macedonian army uniform – silver-plated from the helmet to the greaves (armour for legs below the knee) with a purplish red cape and red feathers on the helmet. Illuminated by sunlight he really looked like a god. Bucephalus also

added to the magnificent atmosphere. He constantly shuffled his hooves because he did not like to walk so slowly. He looked absolutely gorgeous – black with frenzied eyes, two white-red pompoms (the symbol of Ksantika) dangling on his head. Together with his master they presented an incredible symbiosis of reality and mysticism. People chanted the emperor's name ecstatically on both sides of the street.

Alexander was followed by his mother Olympias and sister Cleopatra on a royal carriage decorated with the symbols of Ksantika. Their appearance was also warmly greeted by the audience.

Then came Antipater with his sons, Cassander and Iollas. The generals and imperial guards marched at the end of the parade. The citizens of Macedonia, with great love and trust, sent their emperor and soldiers into a war that would make their country famous.

An official farewell was held for the emperor before their final departure. It was arranged in a megaron (main hall in the palace) decorated with national symbols. Many outstanding Macedonians and representatives of other countries took part in the event. Olympias and Antipater stood in front of all.

Alexander entered the palace accompanied by his generals. He was dressed in an army uniform. He did not like such farewells. He would have been happier taking part in a meeting after some great victory. But he knew the moment was special. He realized he was just setting out to conquer the world.

He stood before his mother who looked excited and upset. There was no trace of rigidity or ruthlessness in her behaviour. She could not subdue her motherly emotions. Her heart was full of pain. She looked at her twenty-year-old son and was not in a position to say a word. Just stared at him as if she would never see him again.

Alexander noticed two big pearl-like tears flowing down her cheeks. These tears would leave a lasting trace in Alexander's soul. He would call these tears to mind very often, when he was alone, away

from his mother. Once when reading a letter from Antipater, with a lot of complaints about his mother, he said:

‘Poor Antipater, he does not know that a single mother’s tear is worth more than a whole lot of accusations.’

Alexander, standing in front of his dignitaries, spoke to his mother as a son:

‘Don’t be worried, mother. I shall return as a victor.’

‘And I will pray to the gods each day to bring you back healthy and alive,’ said Olympias and hugged him strongly.

Saying goodbye to Antipater, Alexander reminded him to cooperate closely with Olympias.

He raised his hand and said to the Assembly:

‘Take good care of Macedonia! I shall return!’

Then he turned around and ran up to his horse. Bucephalus seemed to read his mind and know his feelings; he was ready to run out of the palace at a full gallop. The generals tried to catch them but it was impossible. Alexander on his Bucephalus sped like an arrow.

When they arrived at Amphaxitis – the gathering point of the Macedonian army – the trumpets signaled the beginning of the historical campaign.

Alexander set out with 40,000 soldiers. The main forces consisted of 12,000 phalangites, 2,000 shieldbearers (hypaspists), 2,000 mounted troops recruited from the emperor’s friends, 3,000 mounted troops from Paeonia, 2,000 mounted soldiers from Thessaly, 4,000 soldiers from Thrace as well as 7,000 Illyrian, Triballian, Agrianian and Odrisian soldiers. The Macedonian emperor had a special formation, called the Companion Cavalry, under his own command. The Cavalry consisted of 300 elite soldiers. Later on about 7,000 infantry troops and 600 mounted soldiers from the Hellenic states joined him.

After three weeks Alexander went aboard the imperial ship and sailed across the Hellespont. When he was in the middle of the strait he offered a sacrifice to the god Poseidon and, when he reached the opposite shore, he drove a spear into the sand and exclaimed:

‘I take Asia by the will of the gods and I shall conquer it with the help of the spear!’

When Alexander waited for the arrival and deployment of his troops, he got a letter and a package from the great emperor of Persia, Darius. In the package there was a ball. In the letter Darius advised the young emperor to go back to his mother and play with his toys. He wrote that fighting should be left to more experienced people and if he did not understand that, it might cost him his life.

‘What irony!’, thought Alexander resting in the magnificent palace of the Persian emperors, ‘Darius has been dead for such a long time’.

The events from the near past were running through his mind one by one. It all began exactly ten and a half years ago, when he first met the Persian army in the battle of the Granicus River. Darius did not take part in the battle; he sent his generals: Spithridates, Arsames and Arsites. In his first battle against the Persians, Alexander desired an impressive victory – just to prove the overwhelming superiority of the Macedonian army.

Alexander’s initial combat could easily have become his last one. During the battle Spithridates noticed that Alexander was wounded and ran towards him with a raised sword. But Alexander’s guard Clitus was faster. He cut Spithridates’ hand off and saved Alexander’s life. Soon a furious attack of the Macedonian cavalry took place and the Persians were defeated.

According to Arrian the following Persian leaders fell in the battle: Petines, Niphates, Spithridates (viceroy of Lydia), Mithridates (son-in-law of Darius), Pharnaces (son of Artaxerxes and the brother of the wife of Darius) and Omares (commander of the auxiliaries).



The Macedonian casualties were as follows: about twenty-five companions, over sixty cavalrymen and about thirty phalangites. They were buried with great honour and Alexander relieved their parents and children from all taxes.

The Macedonian army achieved its first victory against overwhelming enemy forces, showing perfectly harmonized actions on the battlefield.

Alexander realized that the greatest danger came from the Hellenic mercenaries who fought on Darius' side – 20,000 superbly drilled phalangites. He ordered a massive attack of the cavalry and the phalanx and completely crushed them.

After a certain time he managed to capture Phrygia with its capital Dascylion. Then Lydia with its capital Sardis surrendered. Sardis was considered the pearl in the Persian crown. Then the lightning march to Miletus followed, with a siege from both land and sea that anticipated the action of the Persian fleet.

In the autumn of the same year (334 BC) the siege of Halicarnassus, the capital of Caria, began. Halicarnassus was a perfectly fortified Persian naval base. Its walls were two metres wide and the city was surrounded by a ten metre wide and five metre deep ditch. The city was defended by the Greek mercenary Memnon of Rhodes, one of the best strategists and the commander of the Persian fleet.

The capture of Halicarnassus was of exceptional importance to Alexander. To achieve this aim he had to employ all his tactical knowledge and engage all types of military forces, including the engineering corps. The following Macedonian generals were responsible for the operation: Meleager, Perdikkas, Amyntas, Ptolemy and Craterus.

Alexander, who had never started a battle without a thorough plan, decided to use the upcoming opportunity to prove that he was an infallible strategist. The Persian general Memnon, seeing the battle was lost, ordered the city to be set on fire.

Alexander achieved a brilliant victory. The news of the capture of Halicarnassus caused an eruption of joy in Macedonia.

After this victory Alexander decided to send all his soldiers back to Macedonia who had married shortly before the expedition, so that they could spend the winter with their brides. They were obliged to return to the army the next spring. Ptolemy, the son of Seleucus, was appointed responsible for this task.

In the spring of 333 BC heavy fights raged in central Anatolia. Antalya was conquered. Lycia surrendered. The cities Xanthos and Pinara were captured. Alexander took control of Gordium\*, where he cut the Gordian Knot and thus, according to the prophecy, opened the way to Asia. In the summer of 333 BC, in a short time, he captured Phrygia, Pamphylia, Paphlagonia and the entire Cappadocia. Soon he took control of the city of Tarsus and the whole of Cilicia. Thereby, the military power of the Persian provinces in Asia Minor was definitively destroyed. Alexander enjoyed looking back on those days. In a relatively short time (less than a year and a half) he managed to take Asia Minor.

During his stay in the Pamphylian city Phaselis, Alexander received information that Alexander of Lyncestis, whose brothers Heromenes and Arrhabaeus had taken part in the murder of Philip, was conspiring against him. The origin of this treason was Darius and his helper Atizyes, the viceroy of Phrygia.

The treason was revealed thanks to the vigilant Parmenion. According to Arrian, the treason was heralded by a swallow that flew over Alexander's head loudly twittering, and perched now on this side of his couch and now on that, and did not stop until he was wide awake. His soothsayer, Aristander of Telmessus, told him that it signified a plot formed by one of his friends, a plot that would be revealed.

One more time Alexander's life was in danger during his stay in Tarsus. He took a bath in the river Cydnus and caught pneumonia. His recuperation lasted two months. In his home, Macedonia, the

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\* Gordium is considered to be the capital of the state of King Midas.

celebration of his victories was disturbed by the anxiety about his illness.

The unquestionable victories of Alexander alarmed Darius and he decided to put a definite end to the impertinence of the young emperor who did not want to take his wise advice. He was supposed to pay for his improper conduct in life.

Alexander had a direct clash with Darius near the ancient town of Issus, on both sides of a small river called Pinarus, in November 333 BC. Whether he would proceed with his campaign or end his expedition depended on the result of this battle.

Alexander let Darius choose the battle location. Then he did a thorough analysis of the terrain, the number of enemy soldiers, their armaments and weapons, as well as the ethnicity and morale of the soldiers, the tactical intentions of Darius etc.

He was aware the Persian army outnumbered his forces. Darius had approximately 600,000 soldiers at his command, together with 30,000 Hellenic mercenaries.

To win the battle would mean a total destruction of the Persian military power.

Alexander made a meticulous plan, he did not want to improvise in any situation.

The following generals were designated to be commanders of the phalanx units: Craterus, Meleager, Ptolemy, Amyntas, Perdikkas and Coenus. Chosen to command the Thesalian cavalry was fearless Philotas, son of Parmenion. Parmenion was personally responsible for the left wing of the Macedonian forces. Ariston led the Paeonian cavalry. The chief of the Agrianian units was Attalus and the Thracian units were under the command of Sitalces. Responsible for the safety of the emperor were: Hephaestion, Leonnatus, Clitus, Lysimachus and Polyperchon. What a pléiade of brilliant military commanders! Every army would like to have at least one of them. And they were all members of the Macedonian army prepared to fight in one battle.

Alexander directly commanded the imperial brigade consisting of the Companion Cavalry, the shieldbearers, the Paeonian cavalry and the Agrianian archers. The front line was four kilometres long. The phalangites formed 8 lines facing the enemy troops, 1,500 soldiers each.

Alexander managed to locate Darius' command post. All emperors, before and after Alexander, had their command posts, from where they issued orders, well-guarded. Only Alexander commanded in the field and used to attack the enemy troops first, because he wanted to show his soldiers how to fight and make them follow his example.

Before he gave the order to attack, from behind his troops came a deafening tumult of 40,000 head of cattle chased towards the front line. The cattle kicked up a cloud of dust and this made the enemy think that the Macedonian troops facing them were only a part of the whole army.

The moment the cloud of dust reached the Persians and the tumult was loudest Alexander gave the signal to attack. The Persian army was not able to stop the furious offensive of the Macedonian forces. Their troops were in a state of utter confusion and Darius, in order to save his life, had to flee. He got off his chariot and took off his armour and cloak. He even left his spear in the chariot. He rapidly mounted his horse and fled. His huge army was annihilated.

The battle proved the superiority of the Macedonian army, the tactical maturity of its commanders and the strategic genius of Alexander of Macedonia.

According to Arrian, who goes by Ptolemy, the Persian casualties were about 110,000 soldiers. The Macedonians lost 150 cavalrymen and 360 phalangites. The number of injured soldiers was about 4,500. Alexander was among them – he was wounded in his hip. Of the officers, Ptolemy, the son of Seleucus, and the youngest son of Parmenion were killed.

After the victory a great military parade was organized. All the fallen soldiers were honoured and mourned. Valuable gifts were sent

to their families. The gate to the Persian empire was open. Alexander was convinced that the victory came as a result of the unstoppable attack of his fearless soldiers and of their superiority in hand-to-hand combat. The motivation and valour of the soldiers were most important.

After the battle Alexander ordered redeployment of his troops and then let the soldiers take a rest. He sent Parmenion to Damaskus, where a part of Darius' priceless treasures were kept. There was also his family – a wife, a son and two daughters.

Barsine, the widow of Memnon the commander of the Persian fleet, was among the captives taken in Issus. She was the daughter of Artabazus, an important Persian nobleman. She was pretty. Pretty and intelligent. Alexander married her. She was his first wife and gave him a son named Heracles.

When Darius realized that his family was in Alexander's hands, together with his priceless treasures, he sent him a letter in which he asked for mercy for his family and suggested partition of the Persian Empire.

This is an extract from Alexander's reply: 'Come to me then, and ask for your mother, wife and children, and anything else you wish. You will receive whatever you ask for; and nothing shall be denied to you. But in future, whenever you address me, address me as the king of Asia, and do not address me with your wishes as an equal; but if you are in need of anything, speak to me as the man who is lord of all your territories. If you act otherwise, I shall think of you as an evil-doer; and if you dispute my right to the kingdom, stay and fight another battle for it; but do not run away. For wherever you may be, I intend to march against you.'

Alexander's next aim was the city of Tyre. It was an unusually difficult undertaking. Tyre was situated on a rocky island 800 metres away from the coast. Alexander ordered that a 70 metre wide mole (causeway) should be built, which would connect the coast with the city. The siege began in January 332 BC and lasted until July the same year. Thanks to the total personal dedication of the emperor, who personally went to Halicarnassus and managed to gather 300

battleships, the siege was successful and the city was captured. The defenders of Tyre paid a very high price for their stubbornness and rejection of all Alexander's proposals. They had treated 120 Macedonian prisoners hideously by cutting their heads high on the city walls and throwing their bodies into the sea.

Then came a cruel revenge: 30,000 people were expelled from the city, 6,000 defenders were massacred, 2,000 staunch defenders were crucified. The city was full of blood. What happened to Tyre should be a warning for other cities of what would happen if they were unwilling to accept the suggested conditions of peace.

Nevertheless the following city, the fortress of Gaza, refused to surrender. The city was besieged as well. The Macedonians constructed a mound around the city walls as high as the walls. After a certain time, with a great effort by the attackers, the siege was successfully brought to an end, although Alexander was wounded in his arm.

Alexander looked back on the conquest of Egypt with great delight. When he marched into Heliopolis and Memphis he was welcomed as a liberator. The Egyptians considered him an incarnation of their gods. The title of "Pharaoh of Egypt" was conferred upon him and he was identified with the god Ammun-Ra. In January 331 BC Alexander founded the splendid city Alexandria of Egypt.

Alexander, in very difficult circumstances, managed to visit the temple of Ammun in the oasis of Siva where he was prophesied to be the ruler of Asia. The conquest of Egypt was Alexander's greatest achievement.

After he captured Egypt, Alexander was strongly convinced that he was predestinated to change the world and make it a world of all nations.

Before he left Egypt in the spring of 331 BC, he organized a huge Macedonian festival in Memphis to celebrate the holiday of Ksantika.

Then he continued his unstoppable march eastward. In June 331 BC he crossed the Euphrates and on September 21<sup>st</sup> of the same year he crossed the river Tigris.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 331 BC he had his second clash with Darius at Gaugamela\*. Darius chose the battle location again. And Alexander one more time prepared a detailed plan for the battle.

When Parmenion suggested that he make a night attack on the Persians, Alexander replied self-righteously: ‘It would be mean to steal a victory. Alexander ought to conquer in open daylight, and without any artifice’.

The three days and three nights preceding the battle, the Macedonian army was constantly making misleading movements and pretending to attack in order to put the Persians under stress and subdue their spirits. The battle was to begin at sunrise but Alexander overslept a bit and when he woke up the army was already prepared to fight. The left wing, as usual, was under the command of Parmenion. His son, Philotas, was the commander of the Companion Cavalry. His second son, Nicanor, led the shieldbearers. The phalanx units were under the command of the following generals: Coenus, Perdicas, Meleager, Polyperchon, Simmias and Craterus. Alexander personally commanded the right wing.

He had his loyal friends: Hephaestion, Ptolemy, Leonnatus, Ariston, Lysimachus and Amyntas around him.

Alexander looked back on that moment with pride. In front of him stood the most powerful army in the world. Darius had seemed to learn a lesson from his previous defeats: he went into the battle with a powerful and superbly drilled army.

The main forces of Darius consisted of 40,000 cavalrymen, 460,000 infantry troops and other specialized units – 500,000 elite soldiers altogether. Adding the reserve troops and the auxiliaries we get a total of one million people on Darius’ side.

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\* Gaugamela (today’s Karmal) – an ancient Assyrian town on Bumellus river. Its name means ”camel’s town”.

The Macedonian elite forces numbered 52,000 soldiers. Together with the reserve troops, Alexander could count on no more than 90,000 people.

This is how, according to Arrian, Darius marshaled his army:

On the left wing were posted the Bactrians and the Scythians, together with a hundred scythe-bearing chariots. Behind them were stationed the Bactrian cavalry as well as the Arachotians, Daans and Persians. Then came the Susians and the Cadusians.

In front of the right wing were posted the Armenian and Cappadocian cavalry with fifty scythe-bearing chariots. Then came the Mesopotamian, Median, Parthian, Sacian, Sacesianian, Hyrcanian, Albanian and Coele-Syrian units.

Darius was in the centre, surrounded by the imperial guards. The Greek mercenaries were posted in front of him, right opposite the Macedonian phalanx. The Indians with fifty scythe-bearing chariots, the Carians, the Babylonians and the Uxians were also stationed in the centre.

The Macedonian army had 90,000 soldiers altogether. And the time had come to decide who would be the ruler of the endless Persian Empire. Alexander was aware that, in the case of defeat, none of his men would be able to save his life.

Alexander mounted Bucephalus, bowed to the gods and gave the signal to attack.

In his shining armour (with red feathers on the helmet) and riding the furious Bucephalus he looked like a glaring god of war (A. Weigall). Nobody could withstand his lethal attack. Alexander lunged at the enemy, with the help of Bucephalus who trampled everything in his way. Every Macedonian soldier fought heroically and knew how to make good use of his weapon.

Alexander lost 800 men, 7,500 soldiers were injured. The fearless Nicanor, second son of Parmenion, was among the dead.



Darius had to flee to save his life again.

After this defeat, Persia, the greatest empire in the world, fell into a definite state of decline.

The military triumph of Alexander, in the battle of Gaugamela, was due to his remarkable strategic and tactical abilities. To celebrate this historical event a great victory ceremony was organized in Arbela (today's Irbil).

Then Alexander marched towards Babylon and Susa and took possession of these cities without a fight. The same happened with Persepolis. In January 330 BC he ordered the imperial palace in Persepolis to be burnt down. It was supposed to symbolize the end of Persian rule. Four months later Alexander made his way northwards and captured Ecbatana, the capital of Media, also without a fight. He left Parmenion with a strong garrison there and set off in pursuit of Darius. When he found out that Darius had been assassinated by Bessus, who proclaimed himself the emperor of Persia, Alexander decided to invade, in the autumn of 330 BC, the provinces of Parthia and Ariana and destroy Bessus. At the same time he wanted to capture the northeast provinces, Bactra and Sogdiana. This operation was to be performed in very difficult circumstances. One of the serious difficulties was the crossing of the Hindu Kush.

Many commanders did not support this undertaking and started murmuring about going home. Things came to such a point that another conspiracy against the emperor was revealed in the city of Zarangeia. There were some Macedonian noblemen involved: such as Nicomachus, Demetrius and Philotas, the son of Parmenion and legendary commander of the Macedonian cavalry.

The Macedonian Assembly condemned all twelve traitors and put them to death. The same sentence was imposed on the famous seventy-year-old general Parmenion.

The Macedonian army crossed Hindu Kush through the Khawak pass at the altitude of 3,545 metres.

In the spring of 329 BC Alexander attacked Bactria. In the summer of the same year he found and killed Bessus. Until the end of 329 BC Alexander was engaged in many military operations in Sogdiana. He captured Bukhara, Samarkand and Alexandria Eschate (on the Jaxartes River, at the location of the modern city of Khujand). At the end of 328 BC, after two years fighting in the northeast provinces, he declared that his mission in Persia was completed. He made a great celebration in honour of that event. And when everybody expected to go home, he ordered a raid on India.

In 327 BC in Bactra (today's Basirabat) another conspiracy against Alexander was revealed. The originator of the treason was the Hellenic scholar Callisthenes. The assassination had been prophecied by a Syrian oracle who had warned Alexander about it.

In the spring of 326 BC the Macedonian troops crossed the Pangora River and clashed with the great Assacenic army. The cities Ora, Bazira and Massaga were captured.

In May 326 BC they crossed the Indus and on the Hydaspes\* River fought a battle against the Indian king Porus.

The Macedonians fought against the Indians with their usual unstoppable valour. During one night they made rafts and managed to transport 5,000 cavalryman to the other side of the river. They achieved a total victory. Porus was taken captive.

In his march southward, Alexander had to build a total of 1,800 rafts. In November 326 BC he started his great expedition towards the ocean or, to be precise, towards the mouth of the Indus River. He was involved in constant skirmishes with different Indian tribes.

In the battle with the Mallians, Alexander's life was seriously endangered. He lunged towards a ladder that leaned against a defensive wall. He reached the ladder first but many soldiers after him started to climb up. At one moment the ladder broke. All

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\* Now Hydaspes is called Jhelum River.

soldiers fell to the ground except for Alexander and two of his guards.

Alexander was fighting bravely with the Mallians but they were shooting a great many arrows at him. He was wounded in many parts of his body. Leonnatus tried to cover him with his own body while the Macedonian soldiers climbed up the other ladders and pushed the attackers away. Alexander was quickly transported to the first aid tent. A rumour went around among the soldiers that Alexander was dead, so they took savage revenge on the defenders.

After two months of recuperation Alexander was almost healed. He recovered quickly thanks to the medicinal roots that Roxana had given to him in Nautaca the day they parted.

In July 325 BC he resumed his march southwards. In the meantime part of his army, led by Craterus, continued the march to Carmania. After a month the main forces of the Macedonian army saw “The South Ocean”. They reached Pattala, the last town in their way to the ocean.

In August 325 BC Alexander decided to go back to Babylon. Part of his army, led by Nearchus, was sent by sea.

The passage through the Gedrosian Desert was extremely tough and required superhuman efforts. The army ran short of food and water. Alexander was marching together with his soldiers. He ate and drank as much as they did. Their ordeal came to an end when they arrived in Pura, the capital of Gedrosia. But they had to march another 300 kilometres until they met the forces of Craterus in Carmania.

Nearchus’ fleet managed to anchor near Harmozia in January 324 BC. The whole army rejoined in Susa in 324 BC. After the reunion a great victory ceremony was organized. The celebration lasted many days and reached its climax when Alexander proclaimed that the soldiers could marry their Persian fiancées. He set a good example by marrying Stateira, daughter of Darius, and Parysatis, daughter of Artaxerxes.

While the celebration continued Alexander had a vision of what to do next. Everybody knew they should return to Macedonia. Alexander put forward a proposal before the Macedonian Assembly, a proposal of an immense enterprise: to go home via the Pillars of Hercules and The Mediterranean Sea.

Alexander ordered that 1,000 ships should be built and an army of 1,000,000 soldiers should be prepared. The new great campaign was to be performed in three stages. In the first stage the Arabian Peninsula was to be captured and then the army was to be deployed to Alexandria. In the second, Carthage and the whole northern part of the African Continent (as far as the Pillars of Hercules) was to be conquered. In the third stage the army was to cross the Strait of Gibraltar and conquer Europe.

With this great deed the gods' expectations would be fulfilled and the dream of uniting East and West in a single universal state under the rule of the Macedonian emperor would come true.

Alexander reckoned the whole operation would take six to eight years.

He expected that his final return to Macedonia would be celebrated with unprecedented enthusiasm and ecstasy towards the gods and the eternal sun – the Macedonian cult and the Macedonian cosmic beam.

Construction of ships, widening of river beds and building new harbours was initiated on a full-scale.

In the meantime a recruitment of new soldiers from the occupied provinces began.

Alexander carefully and with visionary genius planned his new campaign for conquering the entire Mediterranean world. He wanted to annex Carthage and Rome most of all. His intellect was working so hectically that every possible kind of magnificent or very strange plan could be formed in his mind. (A. Weigall)

Alexander believed that the gods Zeus and Ammon had entrusted him with a mission to unite the world into a single empire ruled by him.

He believed in a universal union of souls. But he realized that, first of all, a good rapport between the Macedonian and Persian armies should be established. He prayed for this every day. But the gap between him and the Macedonian soldiers became wider and wider. It was impossible to change the attitudes of the Macedonian soldiers – so stubborn and absolutely devoted to their customs. They were revolted by any attempt of the emperor to adopt Persian customs (i.e. wearing oriental clothes or deep bowing). They expected the emperor to respect the old Macedonian customs and be resistant to foreign influences. They could not accept him as a god, which was characteristic of the Egyptians and Persians. For them Alexander was the emperor of Macedonia, the country that was chosen by the gods and that derived its power from the holy Macedonian traditions.

They initiated a mutiny at Opis in the spring of 324 BC. The reason was that the emperor wanted to discharge 10,000 veteran soldiers and recruit 30,000 people from Bactria, Sogdiana, Aria and Parthia and put them under the command of the Bactrian satrap Hystaspes.

Alexander was aware of the unwanted consequences of the mutiny and the feelings of his soldiers. He was deeply hurt with their misunderstanding of his intentions. He realized how important it was to explain accurately all his plans. He also realized that he was the emperor of all his people, including the Macedonians, and his duty was to make them feel that he was their emperor.

Alexander was convinced that everyone should regard him as their king and be loyal to him. It was the only way to consolidate and guard all the conquered territories, as well as the territories that would be conquered in the future, and to ensure peace and harmony among the people.

I am not going to depict the mutiny in Opis and relate how Alexander intended to bring back the trust and love of his soldiers, because these events are already described by many authors.

But I would like to emphasize that all misunderstandings between Alexander and his soldiers resulted from their extremely deep feelings and primordial devotion to their customs and traditions. There was no power in the world, including the emperor's order that could make them change these feelings.

The Macedonian soldiers wanted to feel their ethnicity. This feeling was the source of their superhuman efforts and victories. They wanted to achieve their victories as Macedonians, with Macedonian weapons and with the support of all citizens of Macedonia.

They derived great satisfaction from their devotion to Alexander, the opportunity to fight shoulder to shoulder with him and from the fact that they were a part of the most powerful army in the world.

Alexander, tired of constant fighting, superhuman efforts to reorganize the army and the huge ship building project, decided to go back to Ecbatana, the capital of Media, and spend the autumn with his wife Roxana.

Alexander awaited the meeting impatiently. She was to arrive from her native Bactria. Roxana was given a splendid welcome by the people of Ecbatana. They all went out into the streets, the streets that were all covered in flowers. Alexander welcomed Roxana with great pleasure and joy. He needed her, needed her like never before. His harassed flesh and tormented soul needed rest. And he realized that only Roxana could give it to him. He used to say that only she loved him as Alexander, not as an emperor.

It was obvious that Roxana loved him from the depth of her soul from the moment she realized that he was the saviour of her life and the saviour of her family.

For Roxana, Alexander was not only a great emperor but also an anguished human being with deep physical and mental injuries and hands full of blood. She was convinced she could heal him from his war traumas with her amorous power, her charm and attractiveness and give him back his joyfulness that he absolutely deserved.

Alas, the idyll did not last long. It ended with the death of Hephaestion, one of Alexander's closest friends. Alexander fell into severe depression. He did not want to see or talk to anybody. He not only stopped answering his mother's letters but also stopped reading them. He neglected his wife. He stayed in the garrison with his soldiers all the time.

Unfortunately, it happened that the Cossaeans revolted at that time. Alexander went totally mad and decided to slaughter the rebellious tribes. It was supposed to be a bloody sacrifice in honour of his dead friend.

Alexander personally led the military operations against the Cossaeans in Luristan. But before he set out, he went to Roxana to tell her that he was leaving. He knew he would hurt her.

Roxana calmly accepted his explanation. She probably knew about his intentions. For a moment she shrouded her eyes with her long lashes, as if she wanted to hide the tears, and then said hesitantly:

‘My lord, may I ask you for something?’

‘Ask for whatever you want, but don't try to dissuade me from going.’

When she looked at him, he lowered his eyes.

‘You know that I have never stood in your way. Even when I was pregnant and you said you had to go, I did not try to stop you. But since you decided to leave, please let me go back to my father.’

‘Why?’

‘Because the days and nights drag on endlessly here’, she whispered.

‘I can't escort you to Nautaca, it's a long way from here. Even the way to Babylon is very difficult in winter.’

‘But Nautaca is so peaceful. The air is clear, the stars shine brighter than anywhere else and time passes quickly. It would be much easier to wait for you there. And I am afraid to stay here without you.’

‘What are you afraid of? I don’t know when, if ever, I will be able to visit you up there.’

A humble smile lit up her pale face.

‘If you won’t come to see me, you will come to see your son,’ she whispered.

Alexander stood stunned. Their eyes met for a moment. Alexander approached her and hugged her gently.

‘If you want you may bring all your family here. You may invite the whole Nautaca. And in the spring move to Babylon. I will wait for you there.’

Alexander returned to Babylon in February 323 BC. Babylon was the capital of the civilized world. Emissaries from all countries of the known world, and from all nations that were to be captured, resided there. Alexander received the emissaries from Carthage, Ethiopia and from Sahara. From Western Europe came the emissaries of the Gauls (Gallians) and Iberians. From the North came the emissaries of the Scythians and from Italy emissaries of the Etruscans, Bruttians and Romans.

Then Cassander, the son of the regent Antipater, arrived from Macedonia. We should remember his name because this man will slay all of Alexander’s family and Olympias will accuse him and his brother Iollas of killing Alexander.

From the first day of his stay in Babylon he behaved indecently. During a dinner with the foreign emissaries he made fun of the Persian officials kneeling before the emperor.

Alexander lunged at him, grabbed him by his hair and hit his head against the wall.



‘I will teach you, scoundrel, how to behave in the presence of your emperor. While all these people were fighting and dying for the emperor, you misused the privileges of your father’s position. You have to be sure that if you or your father would be found guilty, under the charges brought against you, you will be punished severely.’

Cassander was so frightened by the threats of Alexander that even many years later, when he became an emperor, he trembled with fear whenever he saw a statue of Alexander.

Alexander was very happy that his plans of the future conquests, that were supposed to amaze the world, were finally completed.

He also felt happy because he loved his beautiful wife, who expected to be a mother soon.

Alexander was often seen in the company of his chief architect, Deinocrates, who designed the urban plan for Alexandria. He always consulted with him about the most important architectural decisions, e.g. building a monumental pyramid of Philip II in Aegae, that was supposed to exceed the Egyptian pyramids; building a magnificent Temple of Zeus in the Macedonian holy city of Dion and another Temple of Zeus at Dodona, a holy place in Molossis, where his mother came from; building a Temple of Athena in Athens and in Troy; building a Temple of Apollo at Delphi and in Delos. Deinocrates, who was a great architectural visionary, also had a daring plan to sculpt a colossal statue of Alexander in the flank of the Holy Mountain (Mount Athos).

When Alexander realized that he already had 100,000 soldiers and 1,000 ships at his disposal, he decided to organize a great celebration in honour of Nearchus, the chief commander and admiral of the Macedonian fleet.

When the feast was over, one of the Companions, Medius of Thessaly, met Alexander and suggested that they continue the celebration with some friends at his residence. Alexander accepted the invitation.

After he came back from Medius, he could not sleep the whole night. He suffered from unbearable pains and shivered intensely. From the moment the acute pain occurred, he could not stop the feeling that his end was near. Had he ever imagined he would die like this, at such a moment? He needed just a little more time to complete his monumental undertaking, to strengthen it and to get an heir. Many complicated thoughts were running through his feverish head: his mother with her passionate hatred of dangerous Antipater; Hellada waiting for the right moment to take revenge for all the defeats and humiliation; strife between the Macedonian and Persian soldiers and between the infantry and the cavalry; Asia with all its provinces and nations that had just been forced to accept the new forms of cohabitation between half-nomad and half-savage tribes and people with an ancient culture.

He needed time, more time. But there was no time.

Who should continue his great enterprise and would not allow everything he had built to be destroyed? Hephaestion was gone, Craterus was on his way home.

Of all the others only Perdiccas was capable of doing it. He was almost equal to Alexander in bravery and cunning, and he belonged, what was very important, to the dynasty of the rulers of Orestis.

The power always goes to the strongest. No one wants to share it. No competitors are allowed. It seemed that Perdiccas was the strongest. Alexander sent for him. When he arrived, Alexander took off the ring with the imperial seal and handed it to him.

‘To whom shall I give it, my lord?’ asked Perdiccas.

‘Kratisto,’ Alexander replied. This word literally means “keep it”. Many writers translate it as “to the strongest” or “to the most powerful”, which is not correct.

‘I’ll take it, my lord, but I wish I could give it back to you as soon as possible.’

‘If not to me you will give it to my son born of Roxana! I want him, if it is a boy, of course, to be named after me. When they are strong enough, take them to Olympias. My mother knows everything about her and I’m sure she will be proud of her and my son. And now, let them carry me to the imperial palace.’

The unexpected news about Alexander’s illness disturbed the hearts of the Macedonian soldiers.

The strategoi anxiously waited for the emperor to appear and proclaim the start of the campaign. The ships were loaded with supplies, the crew was ready to set sail and the army was waiting for orders.

After seven days of waiting, the soldiers, worried about their emperor, revolted and forcibly entered the palace. They wanted to see what was going on with their own eyes.

Perdiccas, who was responsible for order in the palace, warned the soldiers that Alexander was gravely ill and needed peace and quiet. He told them not to disturb the emperor, just to say goodbye tranquilly.

Alexander lay totally exhausted, insensitive to the attacks of his incurable disease.

The experienced and hardened in combat Macedonian soldiers, who came to bid their farewells, could not hide their emotions when they saw the immobile body of Alexander, the man who was a symbol of power and domination. They held his immobile hand and cried trying to embed the memories of him deeply in their souls. Each of the memories could be easily turned into a hymn or an epic poem, a poem that could never be written because it existed only in the hearts of these simple people. These people treasured the recollections of Alexander’s deeds and transformed it into a legend.

The experienced physician Christobulos, who was personally responsible for the health of Alexander and who, so far, had managed to cure every illness, felt helpless. He could not find a way

to fight the fatal disease, whose nature was unknown to him, and finally lost faith in his abilities.

Alexander was carried to the imperial palace in a semiconscious state. Roxana took care of him. She felt disappointed and deathly frightened. She wiped away his sweat and stroked his hair.

‘Why has this happened to us? What shall we do without you?’ whispered Roxana, full of bitterness and despair. Alexander’s face was covered with her tears.

And then Alexander, with a strenuous effort, managed to open his eyes. He could not speak but Roxana read from his eyes that he wanted to appreciate her sincere love and begged her to take care of their unborn child. Roxana took his hand and put it on her belly. The pulse of his unborn child seemed to leave him breathless for a while. He knew that he would not see him, as he was not able to see his first son born of Roxana, who died at the age of four months when he was fighting in India.

Alexander closed his eyelids. He fell into an awful state of mind. He heard noises, rumbles of thousands of hooves, screams, voices, neighs of horses, and all these sounds were forming a deafening madness. Then came the visions of human bodies, trampled bodies, and eyes, open eyes everywhere around, and blood, blood everywhere around. And suddenly he saw the sun and the sunbeams lighting the darkness. The silence fell, the silence that took his life.

Alexander III, the emperor of Macedonia, died on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 323 BC\* in Babylon, a couple of weeks before his 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

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\* By the Babylonian calendar Alexander died on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the month Ayearu, that is the 10<sup>th</sup> of June.

By the Egyptian calendar Alexander died on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the month Pharmuthi, that is 13<sup>th</sup> of June.

According to Plutarch, who quoted the Imperial Diary, Alexander died on the 28<sup>th</sup> of Daisios that also corresponds to the 10<sup>th</sup> of June.

According to Arthur Weigall, who goes by Aristobulus, Alexander died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Daisios (13<sup>th</sup> of June).

The prominent researchers of ancient Macedonia – N. Hammond, E. Borza, T. Griffith, M. Hatzopoulos and others – accepted June 10<sup>th</sup>, 323 BC as the date of Alexander’s death.

Alexander was born on July 23<sup>rd</sup> in Pella.

He was crowned the emperor of Macedonia in October 336 BC.

He inherited the name Keraunid from his father, who belonged to the Argead dynasty from Orestis (Orestia). From his mother's side he was a descendant of the king Neoptolemeus. His mother, Olympias, was an Epirote princess, daughter of Neoptolemeus and granddaughter of Alcetas I.

Alexander was born in the early morning hours when the sun was rising and died in the evening at sunset.

His life was short but he managed to gain everlasting glory, and the legend of him is still shining like an immortal star.

Alexander ruled less than thirteen years and during that period he created an empire that stretched from the Danube to distant India, he united Europe and Asia, East and West.

Alexander deeply believed in the traditional Macedonian gods. Every day – even when he was deathly ill – he offered sacrifices in his name and the name of the Macedonians. He was convinced he was the gods' favourite and was entrusted by the gods to create a universal society in which peace and understanding would dominate. He also believed that he could use all his military power against those who could not be united by the light of reason. He used to persuade people that the whole Earth was their homeland and his army was their army that protected them and made them stronger. Alexander was sure that a final victory was crucial for Macedonia. He and his soldiers were always hungry for glory. He loved the glory above all and expected each of his men to love it as well.

The classical historians, who based their works on writings of eyewitnesses such as Ptolemy and Aristobulus, claim that Alexander was extraordinarily intelligent. He could think of many things at the same time, especially when military issues were concerned. There was no better strategist in the world. His victories came as a result of his extraordinary strategic abilities and had nothing to do with good

luck. They say Alexander was generous. And as he grew stronger, he became more and more generous.

Alexander loved his mother very much. He wrote her letters and sent gifts. He extremely loved Roxana deeply as well. He was a very emotional sort of person. He loved his soldiers and they loved him.

Whether in war or peace, he lived as his soldiers. Let's call to mind his speech to the rebellious soldiers in Opis in 324 BC: "I have appropriated nothing myself, nor can anyone point out my treasures, except these possessions of yours or the things which I am guarding on your behalf. Individually, however, I have no motive to guard them, since I feed on the same fare as you do, and I take only the same amount of sleep. Nay, I do not think that my fare is as good as that of those among you who live in luxury; and I know that I often sit up at night to watch for you, that you may be able to sleep. But who is there of you who knows that he has endured greater toil for me than I have for him? Come now, whoever of you has wounds, let him strip and show them, and I will show mine in turn; for there is no part of my body remaining free from wounds; nor is there any kind of weapon used either for close combat or for hurling at the enemy, the traces of which I do not bear on my person. For I have been wounded with the sword, I have been shot with arrows, and I have been struck with missiles projected from catapults; and many times I have been hit with stones and bolts of wood for the sake of your lives, your glory, and your wealth, I am still leading you as conquerors over all the land and sea, all mountains and rivers." (Arrian)

Thanks to his decisiveness and great spiritual power, Alexander managed to convince the Macedonians to accept his vision of united nations and at the same time to convince the Persians of his best intentions to give them equal rights and include them in his policy of preserving peace and order that had been established by him.

The Roman historians, Pausanias and Polybius, who knew well the autocratic rules of the Roman Emperors, were of the opinion that Alexander's greatest virtues were: his open relations with soldiers and citizens, devotion to the traditions of his ancestors, wise discipline, moderation and high moral standards.

During all his crusades Alexander took special care of the wounded, ill and exhausted. He honoured them, organized funerals, erected monuments, cared about their children. In each battle Alexander rode in the front line of his army. The Macedonians felt a natural respect and loyalty to him.

He expected from his soldiers and the administrators of the occupied countries not only to be brave and skilful in combat but also to have high moral values.

The corrupt administrators were severely punished. They were sentenced for embezzlement and other criminal activities. The most significant was the case of three Macedonian officers who commanded 6,000 soldiers at the battle of Gaugamela. They were found guilty of serious embezzlement in Madia and consequently sentenced to death by the Macedonian Assembly.

The classical historians quote some sayings typical of Alexander:

“I would rather burn out for a short time than fade away for a long time.”

“The commander should concentrate on how to win the battle not on the consequences of the defeat.”

“The future of Macedonia is bound up with the descendants of Keraunos.”

“There is no truth in politics, there are only certain means to an end.”

“Success is the most persuasive argument.”

“You can’t reach glory with somebody else’s hands.”

The campaigns of Alexander contributed to a great economic growth and cultural development of the conquered territories. New settlements were built. The cities were inhabited by Macedonians

who were unable to fight, citizens of the Hellenic states and the local population.

The Macedonians gave new names to the cities and other geographical objects.

The people in the whole empire used the Koine (κοινή) language – a language based on the Pelasgian-Attic dialect that was adapted to the needs of the Macedonian community (Nicholas Hammond). Education in the cities was modeled on the Macedonian educational system. The program of the Macedonian teaching centre in Mieza was applied. The children went to school at the age of fourteen and their education lasted for four years. The following subjects were taught: rhetoric, grammar, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music and there was military training as well.

Significant progress was made in agriculture. The amount of arable soil increased considerably, the rivers were controlled and irrigation dikes were built, the marshlands were drained, the production of crops and vegetables grew.

This unheard of and all-embracing cultural and material progress, that lasted for three centuries (from the rules of Alexander III of Macedonia to the Roman times), now called “Hellenistic”, was actually the Macedonian school of rule and development.\*

All the Asian cities were not modeled on the Hellenic poleis (city-states) but on Macedonian towns that were directly subordinated to the emperor.

There was a widespread conviction, whose traces can be found in the Asian legends, that the Macedonians were not invaders but just rulers.

Among many Eastern and Western nations the memories of the young Macedonian emperor are still alive. In India on both sides of the Hindu Kush mountains there are people who claim to be Alexander’s descendants. In the Indus River delta a dynasty ruled

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\* Hammond N.G.L., *The Genius of Alexander*, London 1997.



that considered itself the inheritor of the Macedonians. In Egypt Alexander was worshipped as the son of the god Ammon-Ra. The Jews consider him the forerunner of the Messiah. He became one of the heroes of Islam.

In the Persian legends Alexander conquers China and reaches The Land of Darkness situated in the Far North. The Babylonians believed Alexander had crossed The Land of Darkness and – at the end of the world, on the shore of the farthest ocean – found the source of life.

Alexander died very young, he was one month shy of attaining 33 years of age.

There is a common conviction that Alexander died of malaria. The facts about the disease and the condition of the patient contained in the Imperial Diary seem to support this thesis. The Diary covers the period from the moment the first symptoms appeared to the decease of Alexander, i.e. from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of the month Daisios. This means that his agony lasted ten days.

The Diary\* says that Alexander suffered from intense shivering and this is supposed to be the main proof that he had malaria. We do not intend to bring into question the accuracy of the description given in the Diary, but we must also keep in mind that only the daily news about the progress of the disease was logged and there was no

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\* It was written a lot about the Imperial Diary (‘Ηπομνήματα) of Alexander III of Macedon.

Stratius of Olynthos, born before 348 BC, maintained that Eumenes of Cardia was the editor of the Diary.

According to Athenaeus the last person responsible for the Ephemerides (‘Εφημεριδες) of Alexander’s Diary was Diodorus.

In the Diary all the relevant information concerning the reign of Alexander was logged: the composition and disposition of the forces, the number of casualties on both sides, the names of the appointed administrators (satraps), the decisions of the emperor, the letters and announcements, facts about celebrations and sacrifices, reports on the campaigns, geographical descriptions, reports on natural resources, financial reports etc.

The general secretary (‘Αρχιγραμματέας) and the secretaries (Γραμματέοι) personally took part in the military campaigns and attended all meetings called by the emperor – and therefore enjoyed the privileges of trustworthy people.

mention of any possible causes. Therefore, we have to take into consideration the later statements of some prominent people as well.

According to Plutarch, Alexander was poisoned with some poison brought to Babylon by Cassander in the hoof of his mule. The poison was handed to Iollas who was responsible for the beverages served in the imperial court.

It is a well-known fact that the empress Olympias accused Cassander and Iollas of killing Alexander. We should not doubt that the information she got about the death of her son was delivered by trustworthy people and that the information could not be included in the Diary because it was closed the day Alexander died.

The death of Alexander put an end to his exciting plans of conquering the Arabian Peninsula, the northern part of Africa, Ethiopia, and his dreams of a triumphant return to Pella and his beloved Macedonia.

## **EVENTS FOLLOWING ALEXANDER'S DEATH**

The news of Alexander's premature and unexpected death quickly spread across the world.

The Mediterranean countries, which Alexander intended to conquer, greeted it with relief.

For the Hellenic states it was a signal to start a general uprising against the Macedonian hegemony. The most famous opponent of Macedonian rule in Athens and a fierce enemy of Philip II and Alexander III of Macedonia was the philosopher Demosthenes. He did not want to lose time and immediately started to urge the Hellenic poleis to unite, dislodge the Macedonian contingent and destroy the Macedonian state.

The news of Alexander's death came as a shock to the Macedonians in their homeland. A general mourning was proclaimed in the city of Pella. Olympias, Alexander's mother, deeply touched by the death of her son, ordered that the mourning ceremonies should be carried out throughout the country.

Antipater, who was responsible for internal security, was in big trouble. He was aware of the danger that might come from the Hellenic poleis. Unfortunately, he had only 13,000 soldiers at his command and could only count on an additional 10,000 veterans, led by Craterus, who were on their way to Macedonia. But he needed to buy time until they arrived.

The death of Alexander terribly surprised the Macedonian generals stationed in Babylon. They were all leading military experts. But were they wise enough to abandon their personal ambitions and choose the best of them, the one who could finish the undertaking of Alexander, i.e. to conquer the other part of the world and come back to Macedonia via the Strait of Gibraltar?

They had 100,000 perfectly trained soldiers. But who was the most talented and the worthiest to take command of the army? Who was the best? Perdikkas, Leonnatus, Ariston, Lysimachus, Peithon,

Peucestas, Ptolemy, Antipater (stationed in Macedonia) or Craterus (on his way to Macedonia)?

It was necessary to implement special measures to calm down the situation.

The same day “The Council of Generals” was called. This council was to work out a package of propositions and submit them to the Macedonian Assembly. It was agreed to appoint the following generals as the supreme commanders: Perdikkas, Leonnatus, Antipater and Craterus.

Leadership over the army was bound up with the succession to the throne. According to the “operative hierarchy”, the half-brother of Alexander, Arridaeus, was considered in first place. But he was mentally deficient and could not perform important administrative or military duties. Nevertheless, he had been Alexander’s close companion and performed some duties connected with organizing feasts and preparing sacrifices.

The son of Alexander and Barsine, Heracles, was taken into serious consideration as well. But he was Alexander’s illegitimate son born of the Persian noblewoman Barsine, who was previously the wife of Mentor and then of Memnon.

So the only fully legitimate successor was the child of Alexander and Roxana. It was also the great desire of Alexander and his soldiers, who absolutely approved of his relationship with Roxana.

If the child had been already born and it had been a son, there would have been no doubt about the succession. Nevertheless, “The Council of Generals” accepted the motion (put forward by Perdikkas) to appoint as Macedonian emperor the unborn child of Roxana. The Council also agreed to appoint the supreme commanders as regents who would rule the Macedonian empire until the emperor completed 18 years of age. If the child was female, probably a choice between Perdikkas and Leonnatus would have to be made. Both of them were prominent representatives of the ancient Argead dynasty from Orestis.

“The Council of the Generals”, instead of calling the Macedonian Assembly, obliged Perdiccas to organize a military parade of the Macedonian cavalry first. During the parade, in which only Macedonian cavalymen took part, the proposition of appointing the four generals (Perdiccas, Leonnatus, Antipater and Craterus) as regents – who would take care of Roxana’s unborn child, who would be proclaimed emperor if it were male – was to be presented.

The members of the imperial cavalry accepted the proposition and swore an oath of loyalty to the four commanders.

The infantry soldiers were outraged by the conduct of the cavalymen. First, because the decisions were made without them. Second, because they did not approve of the decisions. Therefore, they proclaimed Arridaeus emperor (under the name of Philip III) and swore an oath of loyalty to him.

What happened was what Alexander had been most afraid of: the infantry and the cavalry came into conflict.

Two commanders of the phalanx, Meleager and Attalus, members of “The Council of Generals”, were sent to negotiate with the infantrymen. They were to clear out the misunderstandings and calm down the situation. But it happened that Meleager and Attalus accepted the proposition of the infantrymen to make Arridaeus the emperor of Macedonia under the name of Philip III. Things became even worse when an armed infantry unit forcibly entered the palace where the dead body of the deceased emperor lay, guarded by several elite cavalymen. Fortunately, Perdiccas with his authority and composure managed to prevent the clash. He let the infantry soldiers stand guard over the body in place of the cavalymen.

Under these complex conditions the Macedonian Assembly was called. It was supposed to make final decisions, crucial for the fate of Macedonia.

The body of Alexander was brought before the Assembly. It was done in order to express reverence for the emperor and to emphasize the importance of the decisions that would be made by the Assembly.

The Assembly proclaimed both Arridaeus (as Philip III) and the unborn child of Roxana (if it were a son) emperors. They also created a special military unit, consisting of outstanding officers, that was responsible for the security of the unborn child and its mother.

The Assembly rejected the motion to appoint four supreme commanders who would also fulfill the function of regents.

Perdiccas was appointed “the guardian of the imperial family”, for he had been Alexander’s closest comrade. Olympias was particularly satisfied with this decision, because he was the only person she could implicitly trust. Perdiccas was also bestowed the title “supreme commander of the imperial forces”.

The Assembly, in order to prevent any acts of willfulness and disobedience, made the following appointments: Antipater – commander of the military forces in Macedonia and the Hellenic states; Leonnatus – satrap of Phrygia; Lysimachus – strategos of Thrace; Ptolemy – satrap of Egypt; Seleucus – satrap of Babylon; Craterus – emperor’s deputy for religious affairs (very important function), administrator of the imperial property and supreme judge.

All troops swore an oath of loyalty to both emperors and Olympias.

The Assembly voted not to continue the campaign of conquering the rest of the world and disagreed with the plan to return to Macedonia via the Pillars of Hercules (the Strait of Gibraltar), what has to be judged as a very reactionary decision. The Assembly cancelled all decisions and stopped all activities concerned with the planned crusade.

In this moment the genius and uniqueness of Alexander, as an unrivalled strategist and spiritus movens of the Macedonian army, was most visible.

The remains of Alexander were laid on a catafalque (scaffold) placed in the middle of the hall where the Macedonian Assembly gathered. Everybody could clearly see the emaciated dead body of

the just deceased emperor. None of the generals dared to put forward a motion to continue Alexander's great enterprise. No one had the confidence to compare with him. There was no doubt that only Alexander was able to inspire the army, to give it wings and to boost its victorious spirit, so that it could be invincible. We do not know the reason why Nearchus was not present at the Assembly. He was a legendary admiral, appointed by Alexander as the chief commander of the fleet and he was responsible for the passage through the Mediterranean Sea.

The Assembly made a very important decision about the funeral of the deceased emperor. It was to take place (according to tradition) in the imperial sanctuary in Aegae.

On the sixth day after the death of Alexander, when the situation calmed down and the Macedonian soldiers had finished their traditional after-death rituals, his body was mummified by Egyptian and Chaldean priests. In accordance with the Assembly resolution, the body was to be placed in a golden sarcophagus with an engraved sign: "Alexander, the son of Philip, emperor of Macedonia". On the lid there was to be a stylized sun with sixteen rays (the same symbol the Macedonian soldiers had on their shields).

The new proclaimed emperor, Philip Arridaeus, was made responsible for providing a splendid funeral carriage and organizing a funeral procession that would carry the sarcophagus from Babylon to Macedonia. Then in the imperial sanctuary of Aegae (Voden) the main funeral ceremonies were to take place.

Two months later in August 323 BC Roxana bore a son.

The Macedonian Assembly called a special session to celebrate this event. The newborn child was proclaimed emperor of Macedonia under the name of Alexander IV.

Thus all the resolutions of the Assembly called in Babylon might come into force. Though Alexander IV was an infant and Philip Arridaeus was Perdikkas's puppet, the Assembly somehow managed to maintain the unity of the Macedonian world.

We have to emphasize the strong feelings of the Macedonians about the rites concerned with funerals of their emperors. When the emperor was dying, eminent Macedonians and members of the Companions stood guard over his body. The remains were exposed on a catafalque inside the palace. The throne was carried out of the building. The diadem, the Imperial Diary, the gown of the emperor, his ring with the monogram, his weapons and armour were put on the throne. The funeral ceremonies were held in the imperial sanctuary in Aegae after the election of the new emperor, with all the military symbols such as: the funeral carriage, the funeral ceremony, military parade, sacrifices and funeral games.

The Macedonians were satisfied with the decisions of the Assembly about the election of the emperors and organization of the funeral in Macedonia.

The Macedonians desired the sarcophagus with the body of their beloved emperor to be brought to Macedonia as soon as possible, so that they could make the funeral ceremony that he deserved as the greatest emperor, who made the name of Macedonia famous throughout the world.

They also impatiently awaited the arrival of the baby Alexander with his mother. They had heard a lot about them from the soldiers returning home. The empress Olympias was particularly involved in (and preoccupied with) the events that followed the death of Alexander. She was deeply concerned about the safety of the body of her deceased son and the fate of her grandson born of Roxana, whom she knew well from Alexander's letters.

Olympias sent some trustworthy and proven people to all provinces in order to get reliable information about the opinion of the Macedonian generals on the proclamation of the new emperors. She was especially interested in the intentions of the most powerful generals concerning Alexander's sarcophagus. She was aware that the sarcophagus was very valuable for anybody possessing it and could be eagerly used in the fights for succession.

She sent the most trustworthy man to Perdicas. The messenger was to pass on instructions and keep the empress informed about the



current events. She paid tribute to Perdikkas for everything he had done and expressed her satisfaction that he was appointed “the guardian of the imperial family”, in whose hands was the fate of little Alexander and his mother. She also expressed her contentment with the decision of the Assembly to hold the funeral ceremonies in Macedonia.

Perdikkas provided Olympias with detailed information about the security measures implemented by him to protect little Alexander, Roxana and the dead body of Alexander. The body of the emperor was guarded day and night, even when the mummification activities were being performed.

In his message to the empress he pointed out that there was no danger to the lives of Roxana and little Alexander and that with Roxana, in Babylon, lived her mother, brother and younger sister. Their security was also guaranteed by the Persian soldiers stationed in Babylon. The commander of the 30,000 Persian soldiers, recruited mainly from the Northeast provinces (most of them from Bactria – the homeland of Roxana), was the fearless Hystaspes, a Bactrian nominated to this function by Alexander. And Roxana’s father, Oxyartes, was at that time the satrap of Paropamisadae, a province bordering Bactria.

All Persian provinces stood loyal to the Macedonian authorities after the death of Alexander. This was due to Alexander’s visionary policy of appointing Persians as satraps of the Persian provinces, the policy against which the Macedonians had protested so much.

Only one unexpected incident happened in those days. A great garrison of Hellenic mercenaries (consisted of 20,000 infantrymen and 3,000 cavalrymen) left its positions in the Northern provinces and set out for Hellada, which had already declared war against Macedonia. The situation was serious but Perdikkas blocked their way and, with a surprising attack, destroyed them. Only a small group of deserters saved their lives.

The situation in Egypt was similar. The Egyptians accepted Ptolemy as their sovereign with delight.

Seleucus was also willingly accepted as a satrap of Babylon.

Despite most of the satraps in Persia being Macedonian, it could be stated that the policy of cohabitation introduced by Alexander was still functioning. There were no rebellions. Numerous Asian units in Babylon, as well as the warlike troops in the distant satrapies, were absolutely calm. There also was no friction between the Macedonian and Persian soldiers.

The only danger came from the rebellious Hellada, whose forces managed to dislodge the Macedonian garrisons from the cities and in the autumn of 323 BC set out to conquer Macedonia.

Antipater could not sit on his hands. He gathered 13,000 phalangites, 800 Macedonian cavalymen and 2,000 Thessalian cavalymen, marched into Thessaly and proceeded towards the Thermopylae. But when the battle began the Thessalian cavalry went over to the enemy's side and totally destroyed the Macedonian cavalry. Antipater hardly managed to save his life and withdrew the phalanx to a fortress near the city of Lamia. The united Hellenic army started a grueling siege. The Hellenic soldiers felt so indestructible, that they did not notice the moment when the Macedonians made a counter-attack and slew their commander Leosthenes. Antipater could only count on Leonnatus and Craterus who both were in Asia Minor. Leonnatus with a clever maneuver (despite the increased activity of the Hellenic fleet) transferred 20,000 infantrymen and 1,500 cavalymen across the Hellespont and came to the aid of Antipater. But before he reached Lamia, the Macedonian cavalry had already been defeated by the huge Hellenic cavalry. Leonnatus, the faithful friend of Alexander, died in the clash.

Fortunately, the Macedonian phalanx came very close to Antipater. He took advantage of the opportunity and with an irrepressible attack managed to break through the Hellenic forces. Then Antipater and Leonnatus' soldiers went back to Macedonia.

Antipater could not accept his defeat and immediately started to redeploy the Macedonian forces. He prepared for a severe revenge.

For the treason Thessaly was to pay first and then Athens, the perpetual inciter of mutinies and betrayals.

At the end of his long life, totally devoted to his homeland, he wanted to see Macedonia strong and stable and its enemies destroyed, unable to raise their heads.

We could imagine what punishment was prepared for Athens: unconditional surrender and falling into disgrace. Antipater had warned Athens several times that in case of war, nothing, not even the sanctuaries would be spared.

The Athenians and their allies had to pay for killing Leonnatus as well. After a thorough analysis of the situation, Antipater realized that without a powerful fleet, able to suppress the enemy's activities at sea, he would not be in a position to defeat the united Hellenic army.

In the summer of 322 BC, thanks to Perdikkas' help, the Macedonian fleet, numbering 240 ships, was completely renewed. Under the command of the talented Macedonian admiral Clitus the White, the Macedonian fleet destroyed the Hellenic fleet. Craterus took advantage of this opportunity and transferred 7,000 soldiers to Macedonia. In August 322 BC Antipater, with 5,000 cavalymen and 40,000 infantry soldiers, invaded Athens and the Peloponnesus and severely defeated the united Hellenic army.

The Hellenic states began to surrender offering a ceasefire, but Antipater was uncompromising, he demanded unconditional capitulation and acceptance of the rigid measures applied by the Macedonians. They had to pay war reparations and execute the culprits, including Demosthenes (who took his life before it happened).

The victory of the Macedonian forces was due to well-coordinated military actions on land and sea, high morale of the soldiers and extraordinary skills of the officers.

The war with the rebellious Hellenic poleis contributed considerably towards stabilizing the situation in the Asia Minor provinces and stimulated closer cooperation among the Macedonian generals.

Perdiccas helped Antipater to renew the Macedonian fleet. Leonnatus with his army rushed to the aid of Antipater's surrounded phalanx. Craterus, as a commander of 7,000 phalangites and cavalymen, made a direct contribution towards defeating the united Hellenic forces. The credit for the victory over the Hellenic fleet was given to Clitus, who was called "the White" to distinguish him from Clitus "the Black", killed by Alexander.

Some family connections were established as well. Antipater gave his daughter, Phila, in marriage to Craterus. His second daughter, Eurydice, married Ptolemy. His third daughter became Leonnatus' wife and his fourth daughter, Nicaea, married Perdiccas. The empress Olympias also did not waste time. She suggested that Leonnatus marry her daughter Cleopatra, the widow of Alexander, the emperor of Molossis, and become the regent of Macedonia until little Alexander came of age. After the death of Leonnatus, Cleopatra was to marry Perdiccas, who was also of imperial descent.

The second "imperial matchmaker" was Cynane, the half-sister of Alexander of Macedonia and the widow of Amyntas IV. She was determined to marry her daughter Eurydice to Philip Arridaeus.

After the defeat of the Hellenic forces, it seemed that peace and harmony among the generals would be lasting and the order in the empire would be preserved.

The first alarming events took place in Cappadocia (which nobody expected) ruled by Ariarathes. He broke the oath made in Babylon and undertook some dangerous military activities with the aim to cut communication lines to Macedonia.

The experienced strategos Perdiccas, who was responsible for the Macedonian empire, being aware of the danger caused by Ariarathes and the possibility of following his example by other rulers, decided to react very violently and punish Ariarathes severely.

Perdiccas, accompanied by Philip Arridaeus and many noblemen from the imperial court in Babylon, led his army to Cappadocia. In some sources it is stated that Roxana with her one year-old baby, who was already proclaimed emperor of Macedonia, took part in the expedition.

After finishing this very well-planned action, Perdiccas had no other military problems. Most of Ariarathes' soldiers surrendered, so it was a total triumph. Perdiccas, just like Alexander, was merciless and treated the traitors cruelly. After this victory he was called "the man with a hard hand".

Eumenes, the loyal ally of Olympias, was appointed the new administrator of Cappadocia.

The governor of Phrygia, Antigonus Monophthalmus ("the One-eyed", so-called because he lost an eye in the battle of Perinthus as a soldier of Philip's army) refused to take part in the expedition against Ariarathes and he was to be punished for that. Unfortunately, instead of capturing him immediately, he was only summoned to the Assembly to stand trial for his disobedience. A fateful mistake was made, a mistake that would change the course of Macedonian history and cost Perdiccas his life.

It is a well-known fact that Antigonus Monophthalmus had never intended to do this. A few months later he and the governor of Armenia, Neoptolemeus, joined their forces and broke the hegemony of Perdiccas – it was the beginning of a long civil war.

The controversial general Antigonus Monophthalmus entered the historical stage. He had been a second class officer in the times of Alexander, but now he had a tremendous appetite for power and tried to satisfy it using the clashes between the ruling generals. He started his intrigues by sending a message to Antipater and Craterus, in which he informed them that Perdiccas and Cleopatra had a plan to conquer Ptolemy in Egypt and then to invade Macedonia and strike them.

Antipater and Craterus did not think a lot, they did not even try to analyze the situation, but immediately declared war against

Perdiccas. The two generals marched into Asia Minor with a huge army, but it happened that in the first clash with the Cappadocian cavalry (led by Eumenes) Craterus lost his life. Then Antigonus Monophthalmus joined Antipater and personally slew Eumenes.

At that time Perdiccas battled with Ptolemy on the shore of the River Nile. And he was killed in mysterious circumstances by Antigenes and Seleucus, who were sent by Peithon.

Thus, two outstanding generals and close friends of Alexander lost their lives. Craterus was commander of the famous Macedonian phalanx, Perdiccas was commander of the brilliant Macedonian cavalry and, after the death of Alexander, “the guardian of the imperial family”.

After these events only three players remained on the political stage: the experienced Antipater, the resourceful Ptolemy and the hungry for power Antigonus Monophthalmus.

The Macedonian Assembly chose Antipater as the new “guardian of the imperial family”. The first step he took in this role was to move the elected emperors, the royal court and plenty of veterans from Babylon to Macedonia. The journey lasted many months. The last stage of the journey, at the end of 321 BC, went from Ilion to Amphipolis by sea.

Olympias arrived in Amphipolis a couple of days earlier. She awaited the meeting with her grandson Alexander and her daughter-in-law with unconcealed emotion.

When she saw the imperial ship on the horizon, her heart started to pound. Her soul, full of sorrow and pain because of Alexander’s death, suddenly burned with happiness and joy. As the ship was approaching the shore, the crowd of people gathered to welcome Roxana and little Alexander became more and more enthusiastic.

Roxana stood before the others holding little Alexander in her arms. Philip Arridaeus with his bride Eurydice was just behind her. The fanfares sounded introducing the arrival of the emperors.

The empress Olympias, all in white, looked like the sculpture of a goddess. Roxana easily recognized her before the ship was anchored. She whispered to Alexander to wave at his grandmother, as she had taught him, and he duly did so. Olympias was beside herself with joy.

Before they went ashore, Roxana let her son take his first steps on Macedonian land on his own. The delighted crowd greeted him with applause.

In that moment Olympias, forgetting about imperial etiquette, dashed forward, grabbed her grandson and hugged him with an unseen love. Little Alexander was two years and four months old. Roxana reminded him again what he was supposed to do. He gave his grandmother a kiss and cuddled up to her. If Cleopatra had been there to take the little one in her arms and kiss him, who knows how long this scene would have lasted. Olympias approached Roxana, who curtsied and gave her a smile full of gratitude. Roxana had been told not to bow deeply and not to kneel before the empress because those were not Macedonian customs. Olympias looked deeply into the eyes of her daughter-in-law – the eyes that had enchanted her son. She was just like Alexander had portrayed her in his letters. A woman with angelic beauty. She was dressed in Macedonian clothes, the red and white colours were dominant. Olympias hugged her daughter-in-law with maternal love and promised herself that she would never allow anybody to hurt or insult this woman. Olympias realized that this young and beautiful woman had left her pretty Bactria and her beloved family and had chosen a life full of risks just to fulfill the will of Alexander and bring his son up to be a worthy emperor of Macedonia.

All along the way from Amphipolis to Pella thousands of people greeted little Alexander and Roxana with love.

Nearly four months after this event Olympias was shocked by the news that Antipater was seriously ill and he had ordered his son Cassander, commander of the Antigonus Monophthalmus' cavalry, to go back to Pella as soon as possible. There was a high probability that he would be appointed “the guardian of the imperial family” in place of Antipater. Cassander was so hungry for power that he might

do anything to “protect” little Alexander and Roxana. Their lives were in real danger. Olympias decided to take action before it was too late. She went to ask Antipater for permission to move to Molossis, her homeland, with her grandson and daughter-in-law, where she could totally devote herself to little Alexander and Roxana. She hated asking Antipater (her deadly enemy) for a favour but she had no choice. She was even ready to humble her pride – she would give her life for Alexander and Roxana if necessary.

Antipater received Olympias with surprise because she had always been unpredictable. But when he heard her request, he heaved a sigh of relief. He was even glad that he could send his capricious and vindictive foe away from him. As soon as Olympias got the permission from “the guardian of the imperial family”, she moved with her grandson and daughter-in-law to the Epirote region Molossis. There, in the embrace of Molossian nature, the young Macedonian emperor was to grow. Roxana was delighted with the mountainous Molossis, that resembled her Bactria, and also there was the sea which she could not enjoy in Bactria.

Cassander arrived to visit his ill father in the middle of 320 BC. Olympias’ fears came true. The harassed 76 years old Antipater resigned from the function “the guardian of the imperial family”... but not on behalf of Cassander. He intended to pass the title on to Polyperchon and appoint Cassander Polyperchon’s deputy. The Macedonian Assembly accepted Polyperchon as “the guardian of the imperial family”, but rejected the proposition to make Cassander his deputy.

Cassander was furious and threatened he would start a civil war against the allies of Polyperchon. Antigonus Monophthalmus immediately offered him help in overthrowing the legal authority of Macedonia.

Polyperchon, who wanted to prevent bloodshed in Macedonia, asked the Assembly to appoint Olympias the guardian of her grandson. Olympias accepted the proposition but, being afraid of the angry Cassander, decided to stay in Molossis.



At that time the famous envoy of the Athenians, Demades, with his son Demeas, arrived in Pella. They were sent to ask Antipater for mercy and to convince him to reduce the war reparations imposed on the Athenians after the war they waged against Macedonia. Unfortunately Antipater was too ill to receive them and Demades was heard by Cassander.

This event is very well-described in the novel “Olimpias” written by Karol Bunsch. The author perfectly depicted the brutality of Cassander.

‘I’m glad to see you, Demades. As you know my father is ill and many people expect him to die. You are an experienced man, Demades, and you know what the situation will be after his death. I’d like to know if I can count on you when this happens.’

‘You can always count on us, Athenians, as well as we count on your generosity.’

‘Certainly, Demades. I’ve got a letter here that shows how honest you are. You surely recognize it.’

Cassander handed the parchment to Demades, who felt as if he had been given a bar of red-hot iron. It was his letter to Perdiccas, in which he stated that the Macedonian government hung by a thread and he would give his full support to Perdiccas.

‘So, you say the Macedonian government hangs by a thread. I can assure you the thread on which you are going to be hanged will not break, though you have put on weight eating our bread, you fat pig. Take him away!’ Cassander exclaimed angrily.

Demades, scared out of his wits, tried to convince Cassander that he could count on him. He begged him and promised undying gratefulness.

‘To count on you, mercenary. A dog does not bite the hand that feeds it. You are worse than a dog.’

‘But I am an Athenian envoy. You will offend Zeus!’

‘You are a traitor and a spy!’ Cassander interrupted him. ‘You said you counted on my generosity. I’m going to show you my generosity, now.’

Cassander approached Demades and punched him in his face. Then he ordered the guards to cut the throat of his terrified son.

‘Do it to me, the child is innocent!’ exclaimed Demades. ‘You ungodly bastard! Coward! You groveled before Alexander as a stray dog. You won’t see me on my knees.’

When Cassander heard the name “Alexander”, he started to tremble, but then he bit his lips and repeated the order:

‘Cut his throat! And you, watch!’

Demades closed his eyes so as not to see the gruesome sight, but he could not close his ears to avoid hearing the groans and wheezes of his only son. He was no longer concerned about his faith.

Soon after this event the old Antipater, a man of merit for Macedonia, died. The civil war was unavoidable.

The unscrupulous and hungry for power Cassander entered the historical stage.

These were the events that took place three years after the death of Alexander. In these “stormy circumstances” the fate of the mortal remains of the Macedonian emperor Alexander was to be decided. Without a detailed description of the events and thorough analysis of the main figures, their characters and the influence they had, it is impossible to unravel the mystery of the grave of Alexander of Macedonia.

## **MYSTERY SURROUNDING ALEXANDER'S GRAVE**

For the Macedonians living in the times of Alexander there was no mystery connected with the funeral of their emperor. Everybody knew the Macedonian Assembly, which had debated in Babylon just after the death of the Macedonian ruler, had adopted a decision that his body was to be mummified and kept in a golden sarcophagus. And that a splendid funeral carriage was to be built, in which the sarcophagus, Alexander's diadem, his weapons and armour and the Imperial Diary were to be carried to Macedonia, where – in the imperial sanctuary in Aegae – the funeral ceremonies were to take place according to Macedonian customs and tradition, as it had been done with all deceased Macedonian emperors.

The Macedonians showed their special respect towards the deceased emperors once a year during the holiday of Ksantika. That day, arms and armour, the diadem and the Imperial Diary, belonging to each of the deceased emperors, were exposed in a festive parade through the city of Pella.

The funeral of Alexander was to be magnificent and outclass the funerals of the previous emperors. The Macedonians wanted to express their special reverence and their gratitude to the emperor, who made their name famous throughout the world, and who transformed the small Macedonia into the biggest empire in the world.

But the planned funeral of Alexander of Macedonia has never been celebrated.

The modern historians and biographers of Alexander accept the idea that the procession with the sarcophagus of Alexander was met by Ptolemy and directed to Egypt. This is very unlikely for many reasons: Ptolemy was a reasonable man, a great supporter of the monarchic system and one of Alexander's childhood friends. It is impossible to believe that he broke the decision of the Assembly so brutally, exposing himself to the hatred of the Macedonian people and risking attacks (or even wars) from the other generals of the Macedonian army. And last but not least, Ptolemy could not redirect

the procession without a fight. It was escorted by the soldiers of the elite imperial guard, who swore an oath of loyalty to the empress Olympias.

More likely is that Perdiccas played a key role in the events. He was the governor of Asia and “the guardian of the imperial family” directly responsible for the lives of little Alexander and his mother Roxana and for the safety of the sarcophagus with the emperor’s body.

Perdiccas received the envoy of Olympias in the autumn of 323 BC. The man told him about the empress’s fears for the safety of the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander. The sarcophagus was endangered for two reasons: it was believed to have a magical power and it could be used by some generals hungry for power to achieve their sick ambitions. Immediately after hearing the envoy, Perdiccas decided to take appropriate measures.

He was very much concerned about the erratic events in the provinces of Asia Minor and ordered that two identical sarcophagi be made in absolute secrecy.

The first sarcophagus was the official one and the other was to be built under the supervision of Itanos, the brother of Roxana. The sarcophagi were made in six months. The first one was brought to the imperial palace and the mummified body of Alexander was put in it. The second one was inserted into a hamper, the same as those used by the Persians for holding their clothes. The bottom of the second one was reinforced with two wooden beams, whose ends jutted out and could be used for carrying. This sarcophagus was brought to one of Roxana’s rooms. The hamper was kept closed and a rumour was spread that the gifts Alexander had not managed to send to his mother Olympias were stored in it.

The building of the funeral carriage (in which the sarcophagus was to be placed) was personally supervised by one of the emperors: Philip Arrideaus. The work took almost two years. The funeral carriage and the sarcophagus were kept in a special room, unavailable to anybody. The room was guarded day and night by the most trustworthy officers selected personally by Perdiccas.

The exchanging of the sarcophagi was done very cunningly. The action was performed personally by Perdiccas. When the porters came to take the sarcophagus, they were directed to the neighbouring room, in which the “false” sarcophagus filled with honey was placed. And they carried the “false” sarcophagus to the funeral carriage, which was immediately blocked from all sides.

Then, the real sarcophagus was inserted into the wicker hamper, and the hamper was filled with gifts for Olympias. All that was left for Perdiccas to do was to wait for a good moment to send the camouflaged sarcophagus to Olympias.

The chance appeared in the autumn of 322 BC, when Macedonia defeated the rebellious Hellenic states. This victory was due to the great financial aid from Perdiccas, the personal involvement of Leonnatus and Craterus and the brilliant military action of Clitus the White, who totally destroyed the united Hellenic fleet. After these events came a period of non-violence and understanding among the most powerful Macedonian generals.

Perdiccas hid the sarcophagus in one of the last aid convoys sent to Antipater. It was inserted in a chest and placed in a carriage, in which the unsent gifts for Olympias were carried. The carriage was to be delivered to Olympias.

The convoy was escorted to the port of Sidon by a group of elite soldiers, led personally by Perdiccas. Then it was conveyed to the Macedonian port of Amphipolis by admiral Clitus, who used 50 ships to ensure the safety of the valuable cargo.

Perdiccas, after he had sent the aid convoy, prepared 15 ships that were to sail to Pydna, where Olympias was supposed to wait. Five of them had been sent earlier in order to inform Olympias, who was still in Molossis, about everything. Then the rest of the ships, with the sarcophagus on board one of them, set sail. Perdiccas embarked the ship on which the sarcophagus was hidden.

When the ships, after a fortnight’s journey, arrived in Pydna, Olympias with 500 soldiers was already waiting for them. The

meeting of Olympias and Perdiccas took place on board of Perdiccas's ship in absolute secrecy. Perdiccas expressed his content that he could fulfill the wish of the empress and bring the sarcophagus with Alexander's body to her. They also made some strategic plans about the future of the Macedonian state. They made an arrangement that Perdiccas would marry Cleopatra, the daughter of Olympias and sister of Alexander, and so march into Macedonia as a member of the imperial family. He was to keep the title "the guardian of the imperial family" and to be proclaimed the regent of Macedonia until little Alexander came of age. If Perdiccas had come to power the Macedonian empire would have been strengthened after the period of weakness following the death of Alexander. Perdiccas also informed Olympias about her grandson. He said that he had blond hair, a fair complexion and the magical dark eyes of his mother. He told her about the estimable Roxana as well.

The cargo was transferred to Olympias' carriage and the empress set out for Molossis. Perdiccas went back to Sidon and soon was killed near the river Nile.

After the violent events that happened in 322 BC, the armies of Antipater and Antigonus Monophthalmus joined and marched into Babylon.

The Assembly of the Macedonians called in Babylon appointed Antipater "the guardian of the imperial family" and regent of Macedonia. Antigonus Monophthalmus was appointed the governor of Asia. Ptolemy, who also came to Babylon, maintained his control over Egypt. He used the fact that Antipater had decided to transfer to Macedonia the elected emperors, the imperial court and the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander, and asked Antipater for permission to take the sarcophagus to Egypt, so that the Egyptians could honour their deceased emperor. He also informed Antipater that he had the agreement of the empress Olympias for that.\*

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\* Some of the classical writers, as Curtius Rufus and Diodorus, thoroughly described the funeral carriage. According to them it was pulled by 64 mules. It had eight axles, i.e. eight wheels on each side. The hubs and rims of the wheels were painted in purplish red and the spokes were made of gold – they formed a fearful and glittering impression as they turned.

Antipater accepted Ptolemy's request, but demanded that he should send back the sarcophagus to Sidon by sea – whence it was to continue its journey to Macedonia together with the imperial court.

The funeral carriage, besides the sarcophagus, contained the weapons and armour of Alexander and the Imperial Diary, which was enormous – one metre long, a half metre wide and a half metre high.

One month after the funeral procession set out for Egypt, Antipater with the emperors and the imperial court set forth for Macedonia (without the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander).

Ptolemy broke his promise and did not give back the sarcophagus. He justified his decision by stating that the Imperial Diary needed serious restoration and it was to be rewritten by Egyptian specialists. Later on it turned out that Ptolemy used the Diary to write his own book about the life of Alexander and the events connected with his rule.

It is a well-known fact that Aristobulus also wrote his book about the campaigns of Alexander. These books were probably kept in the Library of Alexandria until the third century AD, when the great fire

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The vehicle had a golden canopy with four pillars made of genuine gold. Under the canopy there was the golden sarcophagus with the mummified body of the emperor. By the sarcophagus were placed: the golden diadem, the weapons, the Imperial Diary and many other imperial artefacts.

Between the pillars four great pictures were hung on golden strings. In the first one Alexander was depicted on a chariot accompanied by Macedonian soldiers; in the second one there was the Macedonian cavalry in an attack; in the third – the Macedonian phalanx ready for a fight; in the fourth one there were Macedonian ships sailing.

The sarcophagus was guarded by four golden lions. There were four golden sculptures of the goddess Nike by the pillars.

The canopy was covered with a golden sheet decorated with gems. A purple flag with the sixteen ray sun flew above the carriage. When exposed to sunlight it formed a miraculous halo of sun rays.

The mules and the funeral carriage were decorated with bells, which produced a particular sound effect.

broke out and destroyed the greatest cultural treasure in the world. The fate of the Imperial Diary is unknown.

The classical historians: Diodorus Siculus, Pompeius Trugus, Quintus Curtius, Plutarch and Arrian had the privilege of reading the books of Ptolemy and Aristobulus. They all wrote their studies of the life and deeds of Alexander of Macedonia in the first century AD. The studies became the only sources of information about the fascinating figure of Alexander III of Macedonia for all later generations.

At the end of 321 BC the family of the empress Olympias was gathered in one place. They stayed in the imperial castle in Molossis. Her grandson Alexander, with his mother Roxana, resided there and Cleopatra, who (besides Olympias) took care of them, was also there.

Olympias had no reason to worry about the safety of the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander. Everybody thought it was in Egypt. Nevertheless, she intended to take additional measures in order to secure it from falling into the wrong hands. She considered three places where she could temporarily hide the sarcophagus: Dodona, a holy place in Molossis; the necropolis in Argida, the Macedonian capital, and The Great Paeonian Necropolis near the river Axios (Vardar). But first she had to wait and see what the situation would be after the death of Antipater. If it was favourable to her, she would have all the trumps in her hand – the sarcophagus of the emperor and the infant emperor Alexander. She could use them and present them to the Assembly and the Macedonian public at the right time.

As I wrote above, Antipater wanted Polyperchon, not his son Cassander, to be “the guardian of the imperial family”. The Assembly accepted this choice and the dissatisfied Cassander declared civic disobedience and started to prepare for civil war, urging the Macedonian garrisons to support him.

Cassander was offered support from Antigonus Monophthalmus, who had defeated the fleet of Clitus (Olympias’ ally) several times.



Olympias could count on support from Polyperchon, Ptolemy (who was a long way from Macedonia) and some Hellenic micro-states.

When Cassander set out southward to calm down the situation south of Thermopylae, the young wife of Philip Arridaeus, Eurydice, who was the daughter of Cynane and half-sister of Alexander, made a coup d'état in Pella. She invited Cassander to join her and, in the name of the emperor Philip Arridaeus, ordered Antigonus Monophthalmus and Polyperchon to place their armies under the command of Cassander.

It was an obvious challenge to Olympias. She called her daughter Cleopatra and gave her last instructions – the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander should be ready, and the moment she got a message, it should be transported to the imperial palace in Pella.

In case things went wrong, she was to hide the sarcophagus in one of the three safe locations. In each of the places marble tombs were to be built and their positions were to be determined. If the sarcophagus was to be transported to The Great Paeonian Necropolis, the tomb ought to be dug deeply under the soil surface.

After Olympias gave her daughter Cleopatra all instructions about the temporary burial of her son, she gathered the soldiers of the imperial guard and the soldiers of Polyperchon, marched into Macedonia and defeated the army of Eurydice at Euia. Eurydice, as well as her husband, emperor Philip Arridaeus, were taken captive. The time of the long awaited revenge came. Olympias was furious with everyone who had opposed her attempts to restore Alexander's empire. She was cruel and merciless towards traitors. She used to say: "Macedonia must purify itself from chaff in order to bring back its splendour".

Among the first who were tried for treason were Philip Arridaeus and his young spoiled wife Eurydice. Olympias without hesitation decided to sentence them to death. She also ordered that more than a thousand of Cassander's allies be executed before the gates of the Assembly in Pella. On her order the grave of Iollas was destroyed, because he was suspected (along with his brother Cassander) of taking part in the assassination of Alexander.

Cassander, who stayed at that time in the Peloponnesus, used the fact that Olympias had brutally killed the emperor Philip Arridaeus and his wife Eurydice to, in a flash, transport his army to Thessaly. He easily defeated the army of Olympias, who had to shelter in the fortress of Pydna.

Olympias, driven by a desire to take revenge, did not consider that she had no serious military power behind her. Being supported only by Polyperchon, she lost the war before it started. She was surrounded by Cassander's elite troops from land and sea and, although she counted on help from Molossis and some Hellenic micro-states, had no chance of winning.

The other part of her army, under the command of the famous general Ariston, defended itself in the fortress of Amphipolis.

Olympias made a big mistake taking little Alexander and Roxana to Pella. They immediately became Cassander's hostages.

The position of Olympias could not be worse. The siege approached an end. Ariston was not in a position to help her by sending food and weapons anymore. The enemy that could not be fought – hunger – entered the fortress. There was no food, even for the ill and wounded soldiers. Only the soldiers fighting in the first line got a tiny amount of food. The noose around her neck was tightening.

She hoped for help from Thrace but it did not come. Lysimachus, the ruler of Thrace and a close friend of Alexander, had a strong army stationed near Macedonia. He was the only one who could compare to Ptolemy, Antigonus Monophthalmus or Seleucus and the only one who could come to the aid of Olympias and help her escape from the claws of Cassander.

She was in a cul-de-sac and was forced to accept Cassander's offer. He wanted her to surrender the fortress of Amphipolis and promised in return to bring little Alexander and Roxana to Pydna and allow them (together with Olympias) to go to Molossis.

The lust for power, that was the spiritus movens of her whole life, began to vanish from her soul. But she desired the power for little Alexander, who was filling the emptiness in her heart. Just a few years and he (as his father after the death of Philip II) would be able to smite his enemies and finish conquering the world.

‘I want to live to see that day,’ Olympias used to think.

And now she knew that it would not happen.

‘There will be hope in me as long as little Alexander is alive. I made a mistake taking him to Pella with me. We should have strengthened in Molossis first. He should have matured. How am I supposed to get out of this trap?’ she complained to her maid. ‘What am I supposed to do to save little Alexander from the hands of the damned Cassander?’ she said, ‘I think about it night and day. Pella is not so far away. Roxana and Alexander should already be here. Cassander urged me to accept the agreement and now he is not in a hurry. He plots something. My grandson should have been brought to me immediately. I’ll not calm until I see him. I’m afraid he won’t keep his promise and he’ll slay Ariston as soon as he enters Amphipolis. Ariston, the only man on whom I may count in Macedonia, the only man who can pit himself against Cassander. I’m afraid even to think about what will happen to little Alexander if I die. Roxana is a stranger, she is helpless, nobody supports her. I had a bad dream,’ she confessed, ‘A crowd of angry people was damaging the statue of Alexander with stones. And blood trickled down from the statue.’

Olympias surely had in mind the colossal statue that was to be sculpted to honour her son, emperor of Macedonia and master of the whole world. She felt deep pain, a pain that ate away at her body and her soul, and a great sorrow for her unfulfilled wishes.

Cassander took Amphipolis, executed Ariston and became an unquestionable ruler of Macedonia, and not only Macedonia. He called the Assembly in Pella and presented his demands. He expected Olympias to be sentenced to death for killing Philip Arridaeus and his wife Eurydice and wanted to be appointed “the guardian of the imperial family” and regent of Macedonia.

The Assembly accepted his propositions.

At that time Cleopatra had come to Pella (although her mother forbade her to do it) and endeavoured to get permission to take Alexander and Roxana back to Molossis, but to no avail.

Cassander was unmoved.

‘I am the one who is responsible for the safety of the infant emperor. And I have decided to transport him, and his mother, to the fortress of Amphipolis. They will have good care and will be absolutely safe there.’

Cleopatra knew they would be under house arrest and their lives would depend only on Cassander, but she was not in a position to do anything about it, so she decided to return to Molossis and attend to the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander.

All that was left for Cassander to do was to carry out the execution of Olympias. She had been judged in absentia and without the right to defend herself.

Cassander gathered 200 of his most disciplined soldiers, as well as forty tramps (to whom he gave money), and together with his sister Alcestis set out for Pydna.

Olympias was left alone with her thoughts.

Her contemplation was interrupted by an uproar at the front gate and the fast footsteps of Agesilaus, the commander of the fortress. He approached Olympias and said anxiously:

‘They came to take you away, empress. The soldiers refused to obey orders.’ He got out his sword and stood at the door. Olympias calmed him down.

‘I free you from the oath! Now you can go.’

‘But do you know what they are going to do? They have sentenced you to death!’

‘Death only comes once and is always alone. I’m brave enough to look into its eyes.’

Then Olympias put on the imperial diadem, threw on a purple cape and went to meet her death.

Olympias stopped in the middle of the square formed of soldiers, who stood on three sides of the square, and a furious mob (consisting mainly of homeless tramps) closing the fourth side.

Cassander and his sister Alcestis stood on a platform. Beside the platform there was a heap of stones.

Cassander raised his hand to silence the excited crowd.

‘For murder of the emperor Philip Arridaeus and his wife Eurydice, as well as for the assassination of hundreds of noble Macedonians, the odious empress Olympias is being sentenced to death. The penalty is to be executed according to our ancient custom. Traitors and murderers of emperors are being stoned.’

Then he turned to his soldiers pointing to the heap of stones:

‘Now, do your work!’

Silence fell. The soldiers kept still as a rock. Cassander was surprised. And he became terrified when he heard Olympias’ voice:

‘I gave birth to your greatest emperor, who is now being betrayed by you. Come on, finish this wicked deed, kill your empress. But you have to know that the sentence is unlawful. If it was just, Cassander should be in my place. Cassander, the man who poisoned your emperor and now makes an attempt on his mother’s life.’

Anxiety grew among the soldiers. They were on the brink of rebellion.

And then Alcestis took things into her hands:

‘Cowards! You are afraid of the magic of this demon, who brought more disasters to our country than all plagues and earthquakes. Now the witch can’t bite, so she spits out venom that numbs your brains! Look at me, I’m a woman and I’m not afraid.’

Alcestis ran up to the heap of stones, took one and threw it. Olympias was hit in her leg. She bent and crouched down. Then the mad mob started to shower stones on her... after a while her body was buried.

The soldiers watched the atrocious scene in silence. No one joined the raging mob. They silently left the spot of the crime.

It was the spring of 316 BC. Olympias had just turned sixty.

In later times the people living in Pydna and its environs erected an obelisk at the grave of the empress Olympias, on which an epitaph was engraved: “Bow down, wanderer! Here lies Olympias, mother of Alexander the greatest Macedonian emperor”.

Cassander satisfied his hunger for power and became an unquestionable ruler of Macedonia. He took another important political step: married the daughter of Philip II, Thessalonike. Thus, besides being “the guardian of the imperial family” and regent of Macedonia, he became a member of the imperial family.

The news coming from Macedonia about the way Cassander took power moved Ptolemy (the only man who deserved to be the successor of Alexander of Macedonia) and surprised Antigonus Monophthalmus, the recent ally of Cassander. Antigonus did not want to be worse than Cassander. He formed an alliance with Polyperchon, who fought on Olympias’ side, and after a short time called the Assembly of the Macedonians in Tyre. Commanders, veterans and imperial dignitaries from the surrounding provinces were invited to the Assembly. And they found Cassander guilty of murdering empress Olympias and accused him of kidnapping the infant emperor Alexander and his mother Roxana, as well as of forcing Thessalonike to marry him.

The Assembly accepted the indictment against Cassander by acclamation.

The following two years Cleopatra completely devoted herself to fulfilling the last will of her mother. She cared for the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander and did her best to protect it from Cassander.

Her intention, as well as the intention of her deceased mother, the empress Olympias, was to keep the sarcophagus until the day Alexander IV was crowned. Then the sarcophagus would be brought to Pella, so that the young emperor could swear an oath before the sarcophagus and the Assembly that he would protect the unity of the Macedonian empire and would continue the unfinished enterprise of his father, who aimed to create a world of united nations under the rule of the Macedonian emperor.

We do not know exactly which of the three locations was chosen by Cleopatra. But having in mind that the preparations lasted two years, we can assume that some very complex activities were carried out and some serious operations connected with the protection of the sarcophagus were conducted.

It is very likely that she choose The Great Paeonian Necropolis, because it was close to Pella and continuous construction work was carried out there, which could have been used as a camouflage for preparing the tomb of Alexander. We can presume that The Great Paeonian Necropolis was situated on the left side of the river Axios (Vardar) near the cities Idomenae and Gortynia.

We also have to take into consideration the city of Atlanta, located on the right side of Axios and, particularly, the necropolis in the Suva Reka area which was closest to Pella.

Thorough analyses of the political situation in the post-Alexandrian empire and relations between the most influential figures lead to conclusion that Paeonia was the best place for building the temporary tomb, in which the sarcophagus with the mummified body of Alexander could have been kept.

We have to keep in mind that the imperial cavalry (the major striking power of Alexander's army) consisted exclusively of Paeonians. The legendary Paeonian cavalry is mentioned in Homer's "Iliad".

The Paeonian cavalry, led by Ariston (a brave man and one of Alexander's closest friends), did not take part in any intrigues and fights for power after the death of their favourite emperor. They returned to Macedonia and helped empress Olympias defend the Macedonian empire.

Ariston was appointed commander of Amphipolis, the most important strategic place in Macedonia. Without Amphipolis none of those who wanted to control Macedonia could feel safe. Cassander knew about it very well and this is why he offered to release Olympias, Roxana and little Alexander in return for surrendering the city.

As we know, the devious Cassander broke his promise and immediately after the surrender of Amphipolis had Ariston and his family killed.

Karol Bunsch gives us a horrifying description of what happened there. In answer to the claims of Olympias, Cassander ordered that the head of Ariston should be cut off and sent to Olympias.

The bodies of Ariston and the members of his family were transported to Paeonia and buried with great honour in The Great Paeonian Necropolis.

There is another event connected with Paeonia that has not been sufficiently researched by scientists. Namely, after the official farewell in Pella, where the plans of conquering Persia were presented, Alexander did not go directly to Amphaxitis (the gathering point of the Macedonian army), but turned northbound and, accompanied by his generals, visited Europos, Atalanta, Gortynia and stopped off at Idomenae. This fact is so important, that some historians used it to claim that Alexander commenced his historical campaign just in Idomenae.



The scientific world (primarily archaeologists) has to give the final answer to the questions about the tomb of Alexander of Macedonia.

The second possibility, that the tomb is located in Orestis, should not be neglected as well. Orestis is relatively close to Molossis and it was quite safe then, so Cleopatra personally could have supervised the works. She used to go to the capital of Orestis Argida in order to offer sacrifices to the gods.

The best location might be the ancient municipal necropolis situated four kilometres southwest of Argida near the village Staričeni (Λακόμματα). There is a monumental tumulus-like mound, 20 metres high and 100 metres in diameter that deserves attention. Similar constructions, called by the local population Old Graves (Stari Mogili), could be found in Soicki Trap area. The mounds were made of white stone dug from the slopes of Golema Stena (Big Rock) and red soil from Kaščište.

There is another place, sixteen kilometres north of Argida, where interesting tumuli can be found. Near the village Kondorobi (Κοντορόπη) on Lake Kostur there are tumuli in which, we can presume, Orestian emperors and dignitaries from the times preceding the reign of Perdiccas I (i.e. 650 BC) are laid.

There is an artificial mound close to the village that has been preserved in good condition until today. It is situated south of the village and is 200 metres long, 40 metres high, 80 metres wide on the ground and 15 metres wide on top. In the middle of the upper part we can find a great plate with an engraved image of a horseshoe. The villagers believe that it is a print of the horseshoe of the horse of Prince Marko (Krale Marko). They call the tumulus Dolna Gorica (Lower Mound). It is known from the fact that nothing but grass grows on it. The surface of the mound is even and rises symmetrically from each side. It is made, most probably, of white crushed stone blended with red soil. The white stone was dug from the hill situated west of the village, called Bel Kamen (White Stone) and the red soil from the eastern part of the village, called Crvena Ploča (Red Plate).

Alexander's tomb may also be located in a mound (150 m long, 30 m high, 60 m wide on the ground and 10 m wide on the top) situated southeast of the village, very close to the lake. In the middle of the top surface there is a stone construction with no Christian symbols. The villagers call it "Sotir" and believe it protects them from evil.

The third location chosen by Olympias to hide Alexander's sarcophagus was Dodona, a holy place in Molossis\*. This option may be really surprising, so we have to study it carefully.

After she had finished all the preparations connected with the temporary burial of Alexander, Cleopatra totally devoted herself to the struggle for freeing Roxana and Alexander. She had not seen them for almost 6 years. She felt pity for Roxana who was left alone among strangers.

Cleopatra considered visiting Lysimachus in Thrace. She had a plan to offer him marriage and then march into Macedonia, with him and his powerful army, in order to overthrow Cassander.

But finally she decided that it would be better to ask Antigonus or Ptolemy for help. Antigonus had just rebelled against Cassander. Ptolemy was the one, who would be best accepted by the Macedonians.

To put her plans into effect Cleopatra left for Asia Minor in 310 BC. The first phase of the negotiations was unsuccessful because Antigonus (more than satisfied with the great power he had as the ruler of the Persian Empire and the great profits he got from the Persian provinces) seemed to not be interested in undertaking military action against the harmless Cassander.

Ptolemy was Cleopatra's last hope.

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\* One year after the first edition of this book The Greek Academy of Sciences issued the following statement:

"Near the ancient city of Dodona, close to an ancient road, ruins of a construction having imperial symbols have been found. A magnificent marble tomb was unearthed there, that turned out to be empty."

She met him in 309 BC in Sardis and they managed to make an arrangement for future cooperation.

They agreed that Ptolemy would land with his army in the Peloponnesus, where Cleopatra would wait for him, they would marry and set out for Macedonia together to free Roxana and Alexander. After this Ptolemy would be proclaimed the sole strategos of the Macedonian empire and would request the title of “the guardian of the imperial family” and regent of Macedonia until the young Alexander came of age.

It was the last chance to save the Macedonian empire and to assure the imperial crown to Alexander IV, son of Alexander III of Macedonia. Cleopatra hoped she would live to see the crowning of young Alexander. Thus the wish of Olympias would be fulfilled – her grandson would be crowned the emperor of Macedonia and he would swear before the sarcophagus of his father that he would continue his enterprise and conquer the rest of the world.

Ptolemy kept his promise and landed with his powerful army in the Peloponnesus.

But Antigonus, who “nosed out” the intentions of Cleopatra and Ptolemy, decided to thwart their plan – exactly as he had done the previous time with the plan of Cleopatra and Perdiccas.

He was aware that Ptolemy was not Cassander and was able to unite the whole Macedonian empire and introduce order and discipline with his strong hand. Moreover, Ptolemy was the only general from the army of Alexander of Macedonia and Alexander’s intimate friend, and he was very popular among the Macedonians.

For Antigonus (who ruled Persia and controlled its treasures) the idea of uniting the Macedonian empire was unacceptable and he simply distanced himself from the problems of his homeland.

He did two things in order to thwart the plan of Cleopatra and Ptolemy. First, he informed Cassander about the plan. Second, when Cleopatra was ready to set out for the Peloponnesus, he paid three women to assassinate her.

Antigonus was afraid of the revenge of the Macedonians and tried to hide his crime. He ordered that the three assassins be executed and gave the empress the funeral she deserved.

Ptolemy, disappointed with this turn of affairs, took his army back to Egypt.

Cassander, immediately after he got the message from Antigonus, ordered that Alexander and Roxana should be killed. He did not hesitate about it at all.

Glaucias, the commander of the imperial guard, was selected to execute the hideous crime. He decided to use poison. They wanted to convince the Macedonian people that their young emperor and his mother died of natural causes and this method of murder seemed to them most suitable for this purpose.

Roxana had spent six years in the fortress. Her life was full of sorrow. She was filled with nostalgia for her beloved Bactria, the family warmth and endless freedom. Her life there was unbearable – she was closed in a fortress, she was constantly watched and had no one to talk to about her misery.

The only thing that gave her strength and the will to survive was her son. Her youth was dedicated to the desire of bringing up her child properly. She wanted him to be healthy, strong and successfully follow in his father's footsteps.

Roxana was proud to be Bactrian and happy that she had enabled her country people to feel fraternized with the famous Macedonians. And above all she was proud that after the crowning of little Alexander, the Macedonians would be full of faith and love towards their emperor again and their souls would be filled with new hopes, hopes as big as the deeds of their emperor Alexander of Macedonia.

From the moment Cassander shut her and her son up in the fortress of Amphipolis, Roxana was very careful about the things they ate because she was afraid of poisoning. There was a person responsible for controlling the food, but even so she tasted all food before her

son Alexander consumed it. She did not forget to do it that summer month in 309 BC – one month before Alexander’s fourteenth birthday.

Her fears were more than justified. She was aware their lives were in danger. Could there be any other explanation for the fact that she and the future emperor were not allowed to leave the fortress, travel through Macedonia or have contact with the public?

We do not know how exactly the hideous crime was committed. But we know that in the summer of 309 BC the uncrowned emperor of Macedonia, fourteen year-old Alexander and his mother Roxana, from distant Bactria (today on the territories of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan), the legitimate wife of Alexander of Macedonia, were murdered.

We also know that the truth about the execution of Alexander and Roxana was hidden from the Macedonian public until 306 BC. The following year Alexander would have come of age and the crowning ceremonies would have taken place.

The same fate met Barsine, the first wife of Alexander, and her son Heracles who, by unknown means, came to Polyperchon stationed with his army in Western Macedonia. Heracles had just completed eighteen years and he could aspire to the throne.

Polyperchon let Cassander know about the intentions of Barsine and Cassander instructed him to execute them. In return Cassander offered him great financial aid and a non-aggression guarantee.

Polyperchon accepted the advice (and promised aid) and ordered that Barsine and Heracles be executed.

Cassander did not make his name as a Macedonian emperor, but he went down in history as the man who exterminated the family of Alexander III of Macedonia.

The young Alexander and his mother Roxana went to the afterlife silently and in complete loneliness, without honours and funeral ceremonies.

Alexander IV was the last legitimately chosen Macedonian emperor. He was descended from the Argeadic dynasty that ruled in Macedonia for three and a half centuries – its first ruler was Keraunos (Thunder).

After the death of Alexander IV, who was too young to ascend to the throne, all hopes for restoring the Macedonian empire vanished. The wishes of his grandmother Olympias remained unfulfilled. She fought to her last breath for the opportunity to see her grandson on the throne of Macedonia, capable of continuing the great deed of his famous father.

When the news of the death of Alexander IV spread outside Macedonia (what had happened in 305 BC), the rulers accepted it coolly and immediately started to proclaim themselves the emperors of their own states.

So, Ptolemy proclaimed himself the emperor of Egypt, Seleucus the emperor of Syria and Israel, Antigonus Monophthalmus the emperor of Asia Minor and Persia, Lysimachus the emperor of Thrace and Cassander the emperor of Macedonia.

In all newly created states the Macedonian way of rule was introduced – with an emperor, imperial court, national assembly, army and cities that had special privileges in the multiethnic empire.

It would seem that the creation of the new states would calm the situation, ease the tensions and restore the confidence between the newly proclaimed emperors. Unfortunately that did not happen. Intrigues and fratricidal wars continued with increased intensity. There was no ideological reason for the fights, they were caused solely by the Macedonian strategoi and their armies.

In 301 BC near Ipsus in Phrygia, the joined armies of Ptolemy, Seleucus and Lysimachus clashed with the army of Antigonus Monophthalmus and his son Demetrius. The 80 year-old Antigonus Monophthalmus was killed in this fratricidal civil war that was instigated largely by himself.

Demetrius retired from the battle and with a huge fleet, numbering 300 ships, captured Athens.

Cassander, who was the main culprit for the disintegration of the Macedonian empire, died of an unknown disease in 297 BC. His eldest son Philip IV met the same fate four months later.

The Macedonian throne was inherited by Cassander's two other sons: Antipater I and Alexander V. Their mother Thessalonike, who was an illegitimate daughter of Philip II, was appointed as their guardian. Thessalonike completely devoted herself to bringing up her sons but she had big problems with the elder son Antipater I, who was inclined to despotism and harshness like his father. Alexander V, two years younger, resembled his grandfather Philip – he was composed, reasonable and generous.

The fears of Thessalonike proved to be well-grounded when Antipater I came of age and was chosen the emperor of Macedonia. His first decision was to execute his mother and banish his brother Alexander V from Macedonia.

The Macedonians were revolted by the brutality of the young emperor and deposed him the same year, 294 BC. Demetrius, who in the meantime married Phila, the sister of Cassander, took his place.

Lysimachus was indignant about that choice. He thought it was unjust to let Demetrius rule Macedonia because he had been Antigonus Monophthalmus' son and closest ally.

In 287 BC Lysimachus entered Macedonia with a strong army and was very well accepted by the inhabitants, who remembered that he had been the closest and most loyal friend of Alexander. We have to emphasize that he was the last one who minted coins with the image of Alexander on them. The Macedonians placed their hopes on him, especially from the moment that he decided to bring back to Macedonia the sarcophagus with the body of Alexander, that was believed to be in Ptolemy's hands. In connection with this undertaking, a large tumulus-like tomb (12 m high and 110 m in diameter) started to be built in Vergina. This tomb survived until

present day and was discovered by Manolis Andronikos in 1977. Andronikos claims he has strong evidence that the tomb was built between 285 and 281 BC, i.e. in the times of Lysimachus' rule. The tomb was found empty and unfinished. We do not know for whom it was made.

But we can get close to the answer if we make a detailed analysis of the events that happened at that time.

Ptolemy, who lived his last days, as well as Lysimachus, wanted to pay his debt to Alexander. He had known Alexander since childhood and had assisted him as a guard in all campaigns. Now, like never before, he visualized pictures of fame and glory of the Macedonian empire, scenes of heroic feats of the Macedonian soldiers, he saw himself capable of superhuman efforts, fighting shoulder to shoulder with Alexander.

In the last period of his life Ptolemy worked intensively on a book about the history and great deeds of Alexander. He wanted to hand down the legend of the famous Macedonian emperor Alexander of Macedonia to future generations.

Practically all researchers of ancient Macedonian history agree that Ptolemy used the Imperial Diary (that was in his hands) to write his book. He probably took all information about the rule of Alexander just from there.

We do not intend to deny that he had the Imperial Diary but we also must have in mind that Ptolemy was an educated man and a high general of Alexander's army, who personally took part in all events. So it seems obvious that he gathered his own information as well (he probably made notes about the most important events).

Aristobulus of Cassandreia was another person writing a book about Alexander of Macedonia at that time. He was Alexander's companion, who took part in all campaigns. He was 84 years old.

The works of Ptolemy and Aristobulus were the only sources of information for later historians, who handed down the legend of



Alexander and the Macedonian empire from generation to generation until present day.

There are only 5 works preserved that are considered “authentic”. They were all written in the first century AD. Their authors are: Arrian, Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, Diodorus and Justin.

It is symptomatic that the grave of Alexander of Macedonia is not mentioned in any of the works. We cannot avoid asking the question: How is it possible that the people who stayed in Alexandria and read the books of Ptolemy and Aristobulus did not write a single word about the grave of Alexander? The question becomes even more mysterious if we take into account the numerous works of Roman historians, who gave a detailed description of all events connected with the rule of Cleopatra, the stay of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony in Egypt and the subsequent Roman rule.

There is not a single record concerning the grave of Alexander anywhere.

So we must ask: What happened to the grave of the greatest emperor of all times, Alexander III of Macedonia? Who destroyed or plundered it? The Macedonians, the Romans, or the Arabs?

Only one simple answer comes to mind: there is no grave of Alexander of Macedonia in Alexandria.

The secret of the Alexandrian grave of Alexander was revealed by Ptolemy just before he died.

Ptolemy accepted the request of Lysimachus to send Alexander’s sarcophagus to Macedonia, where the funeral ceremonies were to take place. We can even say he was glad about it. Finally the wish of the Macedonian people, who wanted their emperor to be buried in his native soil and according to Macedonian traditions, was to be fulfilled.

Old Ptolemy was not able to help feeling that before he died he had to bid farewell to his emperor and see his face once again, so that he

could take his image into the afterworld. He entered the tomb with the sarcophagus of Alexander accompanied by his two sons, Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II, who were to help him. When they opened the lid of the sarcophagus the intensely excited Ptolemy, who expected to see the face of Alexander, became speechless – the body of Alexander was not there and the sarcophagus was filled with honey. The shocked Ptolemy managed to utter only one word: “Perdiccas” and died. He was 84 years old.

When Lysimachus learned the truth about the contents of the sarcophagus, he stopped the construction on the tumulus-like tomb and demanded that the sarcophagus and the marble tomb with the trophies of Alexander (the golden diadem, the weapons and armour, the imperial decorations and the Imperial Diary) be sent to Macedonia. He wanted to place them in the imperial museum in Aegae, where the trophies of all deceased Macedonian emperors were held.

Almost a year after this event Lysimachus, with a large army, arrived in Sardis in order to intercept the sarcophagus and the tomb.

The intentions of Ptolemy and Lysimachus were carefully watched by Seleucus, who had his own plans. He also arrived in Sardis with his army, and so the clash was unavoidable. In the fratricidal clash that took place near Sardis in the spring of 281 BC, Lysimachus lost his life.

Seleucus was the only one of Alexander’s generals who remained alive. All the others were killed in mutual fights.

Seleucus had no time to waste – he immediately set out for Thrace by land. He wanted to be crowned emperor and take the helm in his hands.

In the autumn of the same year Seleucus sailed across the Hellespont and arrived in Lysimachia, the capital of Thrace. It seems that Seleucus was not well informed about the attitudes of the Thracians and Macedonians towards him. He obviously forgot that he had killed their emperor.

On the day of his arrival in Lysimachia he was assassinated by Ptolemy Keraunos (Ptolemy the Thunder), who was a descendant of the Egyptian Ptolemies.

Seleucus was killed and his army was placed under the command of Ptolemy Keraunos, who was proclaimed emperor of Thrace.

Such was the infamous end of the last general of Alexander's army.

For many centuries the fate of the marble tomb and the golden sarcophagus from Alexandria was unknown.

The marble tomb was found by the Turkish authorities in 1887 in an underground imperial necropolis in Sidon. It was established that Abdalonymus, the emperor of Sidon, had been its possessor.

Now it is exhibited in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul and is considered to be one of the most important discoveries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The tomb is made of marble. It is 3.18 m long, 1.95 m wide and 1.67 m high. On the four sides of the tomb scenes and motifs from Alexander's campaigns are carved. Some of them show Alexander in the heat of battle.

The fate of the Alexandrian sarcophagus was sealed by an emperor of Egypt, called Ptolemy XI, who ruled twice, from 116 BC to 107 BC and from 87 BC to 81 BC.

The golden sarcophagus without the body of Alexander seemed worthless to him. Therefore he ordered that the sarcophagus be melted down. But to preserve a trace of the sarcophagus, that would show the grandness of the original masterwork, he replaced it with a copy made of gilded alabaster.

The Italian archaeologist, professor Achille Adriani, who was for many years the director of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, probably found that copy during his excavations. Prof. Adriani for many years conducted systematic research aimed at discovering Alexander's grave.

After his death in 1982, his assistant Nicola Bonacasa analyzed Adriani's notes and lectures and came to the conclusion that the plaster sarcophagus found in the Latin cemetery in Alexandria was indeed the tomb of Alexander of Macedonia.

It is really difficult to understand why the scientists' efforts for unraveling the many centuries old enigma connected with the place where the grave of Alexander of Macedonia is situated are so wrongly directed.

All research that has been done so far was evidently fruitless.

Is it something from above that protects the body of Alexander from the uneasiness of the world for the majestic and fateful meeting with the man identified with God, the man whose intellect and cosmopolitanism have survived the ages and who still remains unrivalled?

Who knows what would have happened to the grave of Alexander of Macedonia if it had been discovered in the past, when people waged devastating wars and mercilessly plundered or destroyed the invaluable treasures of former civilizations? We have to keep in mind how many material and spiritual treasures of Alexander's homeland, Macedonia, were taken away and destroyed!

After the Roman victory in 168 BC, Macedonia was in a horrible state.

The Romans committed dreadful atrocities against the defeated Macedonian soldiers and ravaged Macedonia with a rarely seen fury. According to the Roman historians: Polybius, Pausanias and Livius, rape and pillaging lasted 15 whole months. Macedonia became a desolate land. The Romans destroyed all cities and the entire watering system. More than 150,000 outstanding Macedonians were executed and another 150,000 were forcibly interned in Rome. More than 300,000 people had to escape from Macedonia and seek refuge in Asia Minor, Syria, or Egypt.

The Roman empire and the Roman soldiers became rich from the stolen treasures made by the hands of the Macedonians.

Not only priceless sculptures, statues, pictures, things made of gold and silver, but also furniture, household equipment and even livestock were sent to Rome every day.

The defeated Macedonian emperor, Perseus, suffered a dreadful fate. He was transferred to Rome, together with his wife, three children and the teachers of his children, they were all exposed to the Roman public and then brutally killed.

The plunder of Macedonian goods continued through the next two millennia.

No statues or monuments of Alexander of Macedonia have been preserved until today, although we know that only one talented sculptor, Lysippos of Sicyon (active from 372 to 316 BC) made more than 1,500 invaluable carvings depicting Alexander of Macedonia.

The mystery connected with his funeral and the place where he lies becomes more and more complicated. It seems that it will never be unraveled.

The cruel time draws the curtain of oblivion across all traces that lead to his eternal residence.

However, we have a strong faith that his native land, Macedonia, protects under her caring wings the mummified body of her son, who created in his young soul a vision of nations with different religions, cultures and languages living united in one global state in peace and harmony.

We should hope that the time, full of positive cosmic influences on the human intellect, will come and it will urge the scientific and cultural world to make extraordinary efforts in order to meet the great challenge of mankind: “To bring Alexander back to us – the immortal Macedonian emperor, who founded the basis of a world with equal opportunities for everybody.”

Let us believe that the day when we can pay tribute to him and bow before his grave is close.