
Prologue

I. The legacy of Philip

The period 336–323 B.C. is inevitably designated the age of Alexander. It marked a huge expansion of the imperial boundaries of Macedon, a virtually unparalleled outpouring of resources, material and human. *Imperium terris, animos aequabit Olympo*. The prophecy made for Romulus' foundation applies even more appositely to the milieu of Alexander. His empire was in any sense world-wide, his concept of his person and achievements super-human. From the time of his death his name has been an evocative symbol of worldly glory, alternately eulogised and excoriated as the type of the magnanimous conqueror or the intemperate tyrant; and the history of his reign has all too often been a thinly disguised biography, distorted by the personality and values of its author.¹ This book is an attempt to analyse Alexander's impact on his world without any preconceived model of his personality or motives. *Sine ira et studio* is perhaps an impossible ideal, given the controversial and highly emotive nature of some of the subject matter, but one should at least attempt to base one's interpretation upon the extant sources.² Even there we may find prejudice enough, but we have some prospect of identifying and discounting bias, both apologetic and vituperative. Our history of the period can only be fragmentary, based on episodes randomly highlighted in the literary tradition or the scattering of documentary evidence preserved by chance. We may not go beyond the material at our disposal. Alexander the man will always elude us, thanks to the distorting filter of ancient (and modern) judgements and our grossly inefficient documentation, but the events of his reign can be discussed in context and the focus is occasionally clear. That is a sufficiently important theme. The face of the world was changed within a decade, and the events and the forces at work are worth exposition and discussion, even if the personalities of the main actors are irretrievable.

With equal justice the period might be termed the age of Philip. The

¹ Interesting digests of modern views of Alexander are given by Schachermeyr 1973, 609–57 and Badian 1976a. See also (on the German scene) Demandt 1972.

² See the Bibliography (pp. 295ff.) for a brief review of the source tradition.

Macedon that Alexander inherited was the creation of his father. The army he led was forged by Philip. The material resources of the Macedonian throne were acquired by Philip. The system of alliances which turned the Balkans into a virtual annexe of Macedon was Philip's development, and the war against Persia was launched at the end of Philip's reign. In his first years, at least, Alexander was continuing a process begun by his father, and his reign cannot be understood without constant reference to his predecessor. What follows is in no sense a history of Philip, rather a contextual stage setting to introduce the accession of Alexander.

As is well known, Philip came to power in 359 B.C., when Macedon was threatened with dissolution, debilitated by a decade of dynastic feuding and crippled by military defeat at the hands of the Illyrians. During the next twenty-three years he made a world power out of that ruined inheritance, creating a political, military and financial basis for empire. On the political front Macedon was welded into a unity, focused on the person of the king. That came about partly by coercion. After his decisive early victory over the Illyrians (358) Philip was able to dominate the turbulent principalities of Upper Macedonia (Lyncestis, Orestis, Elimiotis and Tymphaea) which straddled the Pindus range between the upper Haliacmon and Epirus and had traditionally maintained their independence of the monarchy of Macedon proper, based on the lower plains. For the first time they became integral parts of the greater kingdom. Their nobility was absorbed into the court at Pella and achieved distinction under both Philip and Alexander.³ At the same time they offered a fertile recruiting ground for both infantry and cavalry; no less than three of the original six phalanx battalions of Alexander came from the upper principalities.⁴

The political union was cemented by marriage. Unashamedly polygamous, Philip contracted a sequence of unions, particularly in the early years of his reign. One of his first wives came from Elimiotis (Phila, the sister of Derdas and Machatus), and there is little doubt that the marriage was designed to help the process of annexation. Other wives came from peripheral non-Macedonian areas: Audata from Illyria, Philinna and Nicesipolis from Thessaly and Meda from the Getic North.⁵ The most important was the formidable Olympias who came from the royal house of Molossia and was taken to Philip's bed by 357 at latest. This marriage linked together the two dynasties on either side of the Pindus and gave Philip direct influence on the Molossian throne. When he ultimately intervened in Epirus, the reigning king Arybbas was deposed in favour of his nephew, Alexander, the brother of Olympias.⁶ These marriages were the linchpins of the great nexus of guest-friends which was to support

³ Note the list of trierarchs in Arr. *Ind.* 18.5-6 and the list of domiciles in Berve 1926, 2.445. The most brilliant, Perdicas and Craterus, were from Orestis.

⁴ See below, p. 259, with the literature there cited.

⁵ On Philip's marriages the prime evidence is a famous fragment of Satyrus the Peripatetic (Athen. 557B-E). On the many problems it presents see Martin 1982, 66-70 and Tronson 1984.

⁶ Cf. Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.504-9; *contra* Errington 1975b.

Philip's interests through the Balkans. At the same time the risk of dynastic conflict which they posed was obviated by the clear superiority that Olympias enjoyed over her fellow consorts.

As the king's network of alliances expanded, the influence of his nobility contracted. Philip increased the élite body of royal Companions (*hetairoi*), attracting immigrants from the wider Greek world. Men who would accept his patronage were given lavish donations of land and status at court. Of Alexander's close circle of boyhood friends three (Nearchus of Crete; Erigyius and Laomedon of Mytilene) were non-Macedonian. Other prominent figures, notably the chief secretary, Eumenes of Cardia, came from abroad. Their loyalty was to the king alone. However intimate and important their functions, they stood apart from the rest of the Macedonian hierarchy, never fully accepted and often resented.⁷ Even after Alexander's death Eumenes' foreign extraction was a liability when he commanded troops, and his own Macedonians were finally to turn against him with the bitter gibe, 'plague from the Chersonese' (Plut. *Eum.* 18.1).

Philip's lavishness to his new men was matched by benefactions to the old nobility. The new acquisitions of land in Chalcidice and Thrace were parcelled out to new and old alike. Polemocrates, father of the great marshal Coenus, obtained estates in the hinterland of Olynthus.⁸ His primary holdings were in Elimiotis, in Upper Macedonia, and he now had interests, directly conferred by the king, in the new territories. Philip was sharing the advantages of conquest while diversifying the power base of his nobility. He also, it seems, founded the institution of the Pages:⁹ the sons of prominent nobles received an education at court in the immediate entourage of the king, developing a personal attachment to him while necessarily serving as hostages for the good behaviour of their families. As a result the nobility was simultaneously coerced and rewarded, diluted and diversified. As the frontiers of the kingdom expanded, loyalty to the crown brought tangible rewards, and those rewards involved financial interests and military obligations outside the old baronial centres of power. In the climate of success and expansion there was less incentive to challenge the supremacy of the king at Pella, and even the influx of favoured Companions from beyond the borders was tolerable.

Philip reigned as an autocrat. The political institutions of Macedon were informal and rudimentary, and there were few practical constraints on a strong king. Like his son, Philip presumably consulted an inner council of intimates on major issues of state,¹⁰ but nothing suggests that the council was anything other than advisory. Again, it might be prudent to consult the

⁷ On the general antipathy between Greeks and Macedonians see Badian 1982, particularly 39-43.

⁸ *SIG*³ 332. On the location see Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.338.

⁹ Arr. iv.13.1: cf. Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.401; cf. 167-8 (though there is no evidence of the institution before Philip; nothing indicates that the assassins of Archelaus were Pages).

¹⁰ Cf. Arr. 1.25-4; Curt. vi.8.1-15, 11.9-10. See further Berve 1926, 1.33-4; Bosworth 1980a, 161-2.

opinions of the army on various occasions but there was nothing incumbent on the king to hold regular assemblies and he was in no sense bound by popular opinion.¹¹ It is suggested that by tradition the army exercised capital jurisdiction,¹² but that is a strictly limited area. Even there procedure was apparently fluid and informal, and there was certainly no body of Macedonian statute law. The king operated in a framework of precedent and tradition but, provided that he had the resources and the personality to assert his will, he could do what he liked with the minimum of consultation. That is the constant lament of Demosthenes, that the Greek *poleis* which had public processes of decision-making could not compete with an immensely shrewd autocrat who concealed his actions and policies.¹³ For most effective purposes Philip was Macedon. He concluded treaties in his own name with sovereign states, sent his own ambassadors to the Amphictyonic Council, and (like his predecessors) struck coins in his own name. Perhaps the best illustration of the advantages of his position is the fate of the hapless Athenian embassy which travelled to Macedon in the summer of 346 to ratify the Peace of Philocrates. Ratification meant the physical presence of Philip, and the ambassadors were forced to wait impatiently at Pella while the king completed his campaigns in Thrace, increasing the territorial possessions which would be confirmed by the peace. The peace was finally accepted at Pherae, on the eve of his attack on Thermopylae, when it was too late for the Athenians to take effective counter-action.¹⁴ Given that he was the only contractual party on the Macedonian side, his initiative was unlimited.

This considerable freedom of action was underpinned by the huge financial resources of Macedon. The mineral reserves of the kingdom, previously centred in the territory east of the River Axios,¹⁵ were vastly expanded when Philip occupied the site of Crenides in 356 and exploited the rich veins of gold and silver in the neighbouring mines of Mt Pangaeum. According to Diodorus (xvi.8.6) this area alone supplied revenues of more than 1,000 talents and Philip extended his mining operations to Chalcidice, exploiting the deposits in the mountainous terrain north of Olynthus. What is more, as the boundaries of the kingdom expanded, so did its fiscal basis: dues upon landed property and extraordinary levies (*eisphorae*),¹⁶ Philip's financial power was comparatively unmatched, except by the Great King, and it gave him invaluable advantages. Diodorus mentions his capacity to keep a formidable mercenary force and to bribe collaborators in the Greek world. Though emotively expressed, the statement is true and important. Philip did attract a large and

¹¹ See now Lock 1977a; Errington 1978.

¹² Curt. vi.8.25; cf. Errington 1978, 86–90. On the most famous instance, the capital trial of Philotas (330 B.C.), see below, pp. 101ff.

¹³ Dem. xviii.235; cf. i.4, viii.11.

¹⁴ Note the classic description of Demosthenes xix.155–61 (cf. xviii.32). On the details see Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.341–5.

¹⁵ See Borza 1982, 8–12; Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.69–73.

¹⁶ Arr. i.16.5, on which see Bosworth 1980a, 126.

versatile body of mercenaries which he could use in the most remote theatres of operation and deploy independently of the Macedonian native levy. In 342/1, when the main army was fully engaged in the Thracian hinterland, he was able to send out two separate mercenary forces, under Eurylochus and Parmenion, to intervene in the affairs of Eretria far to the south.¹⁷ His financial reserves ensured that he never suffered the embarrassment of Athenian generals serving in the north Aegean, who were often forced to maintain their mercenaries by subsidiary campaigning for other paymasters or by simple extortion, euphemistically termed 'good will' payments (Dem. viii.25). His men could be guaranteed continuity of employment and regular payment.

The diplomatic intrigue Diodorus speaks of is equally important. Philip attracted the most prominent figures of the Greek world to Pella, where he entertained lavishly and dispersed huge sums as gifts, in traditional Homeric hospitality. Bribery or guest-friendship, it depended on one's perspective. Philip could buy good-will, encourage political co-operation or even finance dissidents to seize power in their home city. At its starkest the power of money was seen in the Olynthian campaign of 349/8, when Torone, Micyberna and perhaps Olynthus itself fell through internal treachery and (if we may believe Demosthenes) the Olynthian cavalry was betrayed by its commanders.¹⁸ Not everyone who received Philip's money was disloyal,¹⁹ but few can have been unaffected. Every individual and every community which had the money to do so used it for diplomatic advantage; and the system of *proxenia* ensured that nationals of one city were in honour obliged to promote the interests of another. In this sense Philip's activity was almost orthodox. What was unusual was its scale and complexity. Few Greek cities can have been without citizens who had benefited directly from his largesse, and far more than Greeks were affected. Philip had inaugurated his reign with diplomatic payments to his neighbour, the Paconian king (Diod. xvi.3.4), and he will have acquired allies in the north by payment as much as by conquest. Even relations with Persia might be affected. Refugees from the court of the Great King, men like Amminapes or even Artabazus, were entertained at Pella,²⁰ incurring obligations which might be repaid after their rehabilitation. The advantages were great, the expenses colossal. Philip did not merely spend money, alleges the contemporary critic, Theopompus (*FGrH* 115 F 224): he threw it away. His treasury was never flush with excess funds, and Alexander himself is alleged to have been severely embarrassed for ready money on the eve of his invasion of Asia.²¹ That is a measure of the expendi-

¹⁷ Dem. ix.58 (somewhat earlier a force of 1,000 mercenaries had dismantled the fortifications at Porthmus). For other evidence of Philip's use of mercenaries see Parke 1933, 162–4.

¹⁸ Dem. xix.265–7; cf. Diod. xvi.53.2 with Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.322–4.

¹⁹ For the situation at Athens see below, pp. 211–13.

²⁰ For Amminapes (Berve 1926, 2 no. 55) see Curt. vi.4.25; for Artabazus (Berve 1926, 2 no. 152) see Diod. xvi.52.3; Curt. v.9.1, vi.5.2.

²¹ Plut. *Al.* 15.2; cf. Arr. vii.9.6; Curt. x.2.24 with Hamilton 1969, 36–7 *contra* Bellinger 1963, 36ff.

ture. What is not in doubt is the magnitude of the royal revenues and the financial power of Macedon.

The greatest resource of Macedonia was probably its population. After his incorporation of Upper Macedonia Philip was master of a territory some 20,000 square kilometres in area, comprising some of the richest agricultural land in the Balkans.²² Its population was necessarily large and was certainly augmented by the internal peace that prevailed in his reign. As always, there are no statistics and no basis for quantification. But for the male population of military age there are some interesting figures. The Macedonian infantry under arms in 334 B.C. numbered 27,000, and there were ample reserves that could be mustered in subsequent years.²³ The cavalry also was numerous and of high calibre – something over 3,000 at the time of Philip's death. These numbers are formidable, and they comprise only the nucleus of Philip's military resources: his native Macedonian forces. With the allied contingents that would normally take the field with him they amounted to an army without parallel in Greek history. Indeed it can be argued that Philip never needed to mobilise more than a fraction of the forces at his disposal. At the climactic battle of Chaeronea his army is estimated at 30,000 foot and 2,000 horse – and that was an army augmented by numerous allies (Diod. xvi.85.5). His campaigns, numerous though they were, never fully exploited his reserves of manpower, and his military strength, it is safe to say, rose steadily throughout his reign.

Mere numbers are only part of the story. Macedon was populous before Philip, but its infantry was a primitive rabble.²⁴ The mobilisation of the foot soldiers as a political as well as a military force may predate his reign,²⁵ but it is highly probable that the introduction of the 12-cubit *sarisa* as the fundamental offensive weapon was his innovation.²⁶ From the beginning of the reign he imposed systematic training, to produce a cohesive and immensely strong formation that could surpass the depth and compactness of the Theban phalanx. This primary striking force was supplemented by light-armed auxiliaries, archers and, in due course, a siege train manned by the finest contemporary military engineers (retained by Philip's gold). The Macedonian cavalry was, as always, superb, and its discipline was sharpened by regular training which evolved the classic tactic of attack in wedge formation. For most of the reign the national army was used on the marches of the kingdom, in relatively brief campaigns against Illyrian or Thracian adversaries. It made few forays into the Greek world proper – to crush the Phocian mercenaries at

²² See Borza 1982, esp. 12–20, suggesting that the coastal lowlands were malarial (cf. Borza 1979).

²³ See below pp. 266ff. and, for more documentation, Bosworth 1986.

²⁴ Thuc. iv.124.1; see also (an illuminating passage) ii.100.5.

²⁵ This depends on the very vexed interpretation of Anaximenes, *FGrH* 72 F 4; for recent and different approaches to the problem see Brunt 1976, Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.705–9, Develin 1985.

²⁶ Implied by Diod. xvi.3.1–2. See Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.421 and, for a different view, Markle 1978.

the Crocus Field (352) and perhaps to finish off the Olynthian campaign. By and large the military profile was as Demosthenes describes it in his *Third Philippic* (ix.49–50): brief opportunistic raids with flexible composite forces of mercenaries, cavalry and light-armed, rather than any large body of heavy infantry. It was generally considered, he says, that Philip could not be compared with Sparta at her prime. Those delusions were rudely shattered by Chaeronea, and even Chaeronea gave an imperfect picture of the true strength of Macedon.

We should also consider the outlying territories, particularly Thessaly and Thrace, which Philip turned into virtual annexes of Macedon. From the beginning of his reign he was involved in the affairs of Thessaly, taking one of his first wives (Philinna) from Larisa, the city traditionally most involved in Macedonian politics.²⁷ Later, in 353, he intervened in the internecine struggle between the tyrant house of Pherae and the Thessalian League, centred around the old capitals of Pharsalus and Larisa. After his crushing defeat of Pherae in 352 he was elected *archon* of an expanded league which now included all Thessaly. What exactly was meant by this is uncertain, but it did apparently give Philip some revenue from imposts on Thessalian trade and control of the joint military forces of Thessaly.²⁸ He could and did intervene in conflict between cities; garrisons were imposed, notably at Pherae, and, more drastically, there were mass exiles from the north-western cities of Pharcadon and Tricca (Diod. xviii.56.5). Inevitably his partisans acquired key positions and he re-established the tetrarchies, the old regional divisions of Thessaly, imposing one of his own men upon each of them as controller.²⁹ Two of those tetrarchs (Daochus and Thrasydaeus) came from Pharsalus and are named by Demosthenes (xviii.295) as quislings. Indeed Pharsalus occupied a dominant position in Philip's Thessaly. It provided the representatives to the Amphictyonic Council as well as a cavalry élite which formed a counterpart to the Macedonian royal squadron (see below, p. 264). The other cities were relatively depressed, but the relatives of Philip's two wives must have exercised power and influence in and beyond Larisa and Pherae. It proved a stable settlement. Both Philip and Alexander worked with the existing aristocracy of Thessaly (Medeios of Larisa enjoyed high favour as a Companion)³⁰ and used the traditional cavalry strength of the territory. There was no attempt to mobilise the depressed peasantry into an effective infantry on the Macedonian model. Thessaly remained comparatively weak under its traditional governing circle, now absorbed to some degree in the Macedonian

²⁷ The chronology is vexed, but the marriage must be early. Cf. Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.225; Martin 1982.

²⁸ For the complex evidence see Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.285–95.

²⁹ Theopompus, *FGrH* 115 F 208–9; *SIG*³ 274 viii. Cf. Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.533–8; Martin 1985, 104–10; Errington 1986, 55–7. It has often been argued that Philip also organised a coup at Larisa, exiled his former supporters there and imposed a garrison. This theory rests on highly questionable evidence and should be discarded (Martin 1985, 102–4; 255–60).

³⁰ Berve 1926, 2 no. 521 (see below, p. 171). He was presumably a grandson of Medeios, dynast of Pharsalus in 395 (Diod. xiv.82.5).

court. It could be mobilised with Macedon but never deployed against the monarchy – as long as Philip's partisans remained stable in power.

His policy in Thrace was not dissimilar. A potential threat if united under a single king, the Thracian lands were renowned in the fifth century for their large population and financial strength.³¹ From Philip's accession what had been a single kingdom under the redoubtable Odrysian Cotys was divided among his three sons, who were unable or disinclined to form a common front against him. The two western kingdoms were forced into vassal status, probably by 352, and in his great Thracian campaign of 342/1 he attacked and conquered the Odrysian heartland in the Hebrus valley, deep in modern Bulgaria. As a result the reigning kings, Teres and Cersebleptes, were deposed,³² and Thrace as a whole came under the control of a Macedonian general. Regional control points were established in the form of new cities, the most important Philippopolis (Plovdiv) and Cabyle, where the motley collection of new settlers formed alien enclaves, necessarily dependent on the favour of the Macedonian king (see below, p. 246). But it was more than mere military occupation. Native princes continued to exercise power locally, and by the end of Alexander's reign the Odrysian Seuthes (Berve 1926, 2 no. 702) had virtually re-established a kingdom – under Macedonian suzerainty. Other princes were attracted to the Macedonian court and later led contingents of their nationals in Alexander's army (the most notorious was Sitalces, who led a unit of javelin-men at Issus and Gaugamela).³³ Like Thessaly, Thrace was neutralised as a potential danger, its peoples ruled by compliant natives under Macedonian patronage and providing auxiliary forces, both cavalry and light infantry. Other peoples in the north enjoyed similar relations with the Macedonian throne. From early in the reign the Paeonians and Agrianians of the upper Strymon valley were subjects of the Macedonian king, their rulers holding power by grace of Philip and their troops swelling the army of Macedon.

By the end of the 340s B.C. Macedon had become a superpower. Few realised it, certainly not the citizens of the Greek city states which might have been considered Philip's chief rivals. But in fact there was no real challenge. As early as 346 the Athenian orator Isocrates wrote an open letter to the Macedonian king, urging him to unite the four principal powers of Greece (Athens, Argos, Sparta and Thebes) and lead them in a crusade against Persia. These cities, he said in a memorable phrase, were reduced to a common level of disaster (Isocr. v.40). The statement is overstressed for rhetorical purposes, but there is an element of truth in it. No single city state (or even coalition) was a match for Philip. Indeed two of Isocrates' four major powers could be considered anachronisms even in his own day. Argos can never have been considered a significant military power since its catastrophic

³¹ Hdt. v.3; Thuc. II.97.5.

³² [Dem.] XII.8; Diod. XVI.71.2. See in general Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.554–9.

³³ Justin XI.5.1; Frontin. *Strat.* II.11.3. On Sitalces see Berve 1926, 2 no. 712.

defeat at the hands of Cleomenes of Sparta in 494 B.C., and in more recent years (370) it had been visited by one of the most atrocious examples of Greek political violence, in which a purge of property owners had been followed by reprisals against the democratic leaders (Diod. xv.57.3–58.4). Argos was relatively impotent, of little value for or against Philip.

Much the same could be said of Sparta. The defeat at Leuctra (371) and still more the liberation of Messenia (370/69) had contracted Spartan ambitions and Spartan resources. The male citizen population now dipped below 1,000, and there was no thought of rectifying the situation by enfranchising the subject classes. Spartan society remained in its rigid hierarchical straitjacket, but its territories were confined to old Laconia and Cythera. The erstwhile helots of Messenia now formed a separate and antipathetic state, its capital on Mt Ithome a formidable fortress. Another fortress, Megalopolis, blocked access to Messenia by the north. It had been founded on Theban initiative in the 360s B.C. and united the scattered populations of south-west Arcadia into a single great defensive complex. The Spartan leadership was totally recalcitrant, totally incapable of renouncing its traditional claims to hegemony over the Greek world. That hegemony could only be achieved by first destroying and resettling Megalopolis and then attacking Messenia. Only the first step in the programme was ever attempted; Megalopolis was attacked (abortively) in 353/2 and 331/0. Given the scanty military population of Sparta, her political ambitions could only be supported by mercenaries, and the mercenaries could only be retained by campaigning outside Laconia. Spartan kings by necessity became glorified *condottieri*, the great Agesilaus ending his life in the service of Egypt and his son, Archidamus, dying in battle against the Lucanians of southern Italy. That meant that in practice Spartan forces could rarely be deployed in the field, and Sparta was neutral in the great crisis of 338, reserving her forces for the higher end of the conquest of Messenia.

For Philip this attitude was a godsend. It allowed him to befriend and support the leading families of Argos and Messenia, not to mention Megalopolis. His sympathisers were stigmatised as traitors by Demosthenes, but two centuries later the Megalopolitan historian, Polybius, gave a spirited defence: their wooing of Philip ensured local autonomy and security from Sparta.³⁴ That was justified. Sparta's intentions were naked and threatening, Philip's less so. The Macedonian king supported his partisans financially, militarily and morally, and in 338 the final reward was the partitioning of Spartan borderland to his allies in Messenia, Arcadia and Argos (see below, p. 198). Spartan ambitions were a considerable asset for Philip, who could expand his sphere of influence by espousing the cause of the states directly threatened.

The Thebans were in a similar position. Their period of glory in the 360s was short-lived, abruptly terminated by the unpleasant and ruinously expensive Sacred War with Phocis. Theban hegemonial ambitions had driven the

³⁴ Polyb. XVIII.14.2–15, *contra* Dem. XVIII.295.

Phocian leaders to occupy the sanctuary at Delphi (356), and the financial resources of the city and its confederation were simply insufficient to match the mercenary armies which Phocis paid from the treasures of Apollo. Like the Spartans, the Thebans sent their hoplite forces to fight for causes overseas. In 353, at the height of the Sacred War, they sent the cream of their army under their premier general, Pammenes, to support the revolt of the Persian satrap Artabazus. A decade later Lacrates with a thousand hoplites formed the spearhead of the Persian invasion of Egypt.³⁵ The Theban hoplite army still had the greatest military reputation in the Greek world, but numbers were relatively small. Field armies serving outside Boeotia contained no more than 8,000 hoplites from the confederation. At the same time there were bitter international hostilities. The Spartans, the Phocians and the tyrants of Pherae had been inveterate enemies. At Athens the attitude towards Thebes was rarely anything other than chilly; and the drastic fate meted out to dissidents within the confederacy (Plataea, Thespieae and Orchomenus, all destroyed) ensured a plentiful supply of exiles to whom the name of Thebes was anathema. After the Sacred War Thebes was in no position to dominate. Indeed her interests had been eminently served by Philip, who in 346 crushed the power of Phocis in central Greece and confirmed Thebes as mistress of the Boeotian confederacy.

Athens was the most complex of the states of Greece. Firmly democratic since 403 B.C., the city had to some degree recovered the power it had lost in the Peloponnesian War. The Athenian navy, on paper at least, was supreme in the contemporary world. Many of the ships in the dockyards were unseaworthy, but navies of over a hundred ships could put out to sea in a crisis.³⁶ The Second Athenian Confederacy, it is true, had been all but destroyed by the calamitous Social War (357–355). Only a rump of militarily insignificant allies stayed loyal to the city. Fortunately during the naval ascendancy of the 360s the Athenians were able to establish a number of cleruchies (settlements of Athenian citizens overseas). Samos had been occupied in 365; the Chersonese was ceded to Athens in its entirety in 353/2 by the Thracian king Cersebleptes. In the northern Aegean the islands of Imbros, Lemnos and Seyros had become annexes of the Athenian state and (like Samos) received regular officials from the capital. The Athenians were fiercely retentive of these exclaves, which guaranteed a modest competence to citizens who would otherwise have been indigent. Poteidaea, which harboured Athenian cleruchs for a mere five years (361–356), was stubbornly claimed as an Athenian possession, its occupation by Philip denounced as an outrage a decade and more after the event ([Dem.] VII.9–10).

At the same time the domestic revenues of the city increased, from a nadir of

³⁵ Cf. Diod. xvi.34.1; Dem. xxiii.138, with Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.264–7 (Pammenes); Diod. xvi.44.2, 47.1, 49.1–6.

³⁶ In 357/6 the number of ships in the dockyards is listed as 283 (*JG* II².1611, line 9); the ships effectively in action at that time are estimated at 120 (Diod. xvi.21.1).

130 talents to some 400 talents by the mid-340s B.C.³⁷ This development went hand in hand with a fundamental change in economic administration. The theoric fund, once responsible only for occasional disbursements at festival time, became the receptacle of all public monies remaining after basic administrative expenses were met. Except in time of war, when Attica was directly threatened, the commissioners of the fund disbursed the proceeds as they thought fit, on public works and direct cash grants to the people.³⁸ As Demosthenes repeatedly complains, the existence of the fund was a disincentive to rash declarations of war. The *demos*, which profited as a whole from the theoric administration, was generally reluctant to vote for elaborate military adventures. When Athenian interests were conceived as threatened, as in 352/1 when Philip attempted to force Themopylae and then made a push to the shores of the Propontis, the *demos* might respond vigorously and promptly, but by and large there was little that could be called offensive initiative. Generals (at this period professional generals like Chares and Phocion, who were elected year after year) were assigned to areas of special importance, the Hellespont and Samos, and were expected to retain and maintain mercenaries from local resources.

It did not make for effective military resistance to Philip. Indeed it was only at critical moments, such as the fall of Olynthus, that Philip was conceived as a serious threat to Athenian interests. Even Demosthenes was far from consistent in his crusading fervour and was prepared to countenance peace and alliance between 348 and early 346. There was little sympathy for the Macedonian king. Few Athenians will have forgotten his opportunistic annexation of Amphipolis, Pydna and Methone, not to mention Poteidaea; and the end of the Sacred War in 346 was widely – and rightly – seen as a diplomatic humiliation not to be tolerated. Philip, to his intense annoyance, suffered intense diplomatic pressure from Athens to restore what the *demos* saw as its proper possessions, and his settlement of Phocis was only accepted grudgingly and under coercion. On the other hand the warnings of Demosthenes in the late 340s fell on deaf ears. Few Athenians seriously believed that they would see a Macedonian army in Attica. They would vote for limited campaigns against Macedonian-backed regimes in Euboea or even military assistance to the threatened area of Acarnania, but full-scale war against Macedon was not seriously envisaged.

Philip's intentions towards Athens are more difficult to assess, given the systematic ambiguity of his actions. It seems unlikely that he would ever have countenanced an ultimate settlement that left the city free of constraints. Athens had played a mischievous role in Macedonian politics at the time of his accession. It had continuously supported the Phocian regime against him. The demands for territory once allegedly Athenian but now his were unremitting and outrageous. If he needed proof of Athenian intransigence, it

³⁷ Dem. x.37–80; Theopompus, *FGrH* 115 F 166.

³⁸ For a convenient digest of the evidence and recent literature see Rhodes 1981, 514–17.

was amply given in 341, when he was fully engaged in Thrace. Then the Athenian general Diopceithes took advantage of his absence to attack one of his allies, Cardia, and carried hostilities into his Thracian territories. When he complained, his ambassador was arrested by Diopceithes and at Athens Demosthenes successfully argued against the recall of the delinquent general.³⁹ Ultimately there was little alternative to a military confrontation. It came late in 340 when Philip attacked Byzantium and in the course of the siege captured the entire grain fleet on its way to Athens. This was an intensely hostile act, striking at the very lifeline of Athens, which was notoriously dependent on imported grain. The declaration of war that followed reflected the gravity of the action. Faced with a threat to the grain supply, the *demos* unhesitatingly diverted the administrative surplus from the theoric fund to finance the hostilities.

The final campaign was a little delayed but, once launched, was rapid and decisive. Philip did not seriously contemplate tackling the Athenian fleets in the Propontis, for his own fleet was vestigial and inexperienced. Instead he spent the campaigning year of 339 securing his northern frontiers. Late in the year he moved south, leading yet another Amphictyonic force, in theory to attack Locris. This immediately brought him into conflict with the Thebans, who had come to resent his domination of Central Greece and took advantage of his absence in the north to expel a Macedonian garrison from the mouth of Thermopylae. In the face of the common threat, Athens and Thebes allied themselves and, despite overtures by Philip and his allies, the alliance remained firm. In August 338 came the dénouement. Philip's army, a fraction of his total strength, faced a coalition of roughly equivalent numbers: the Theban and Athenian levies together with a few allied contingents, the most notable from Achaea. It was not an impressive array. The two principals had precious little support from the other Greek states, which were content to wait upon (and profit from) the result.

It was catastrophic. In the plain of Chaeronea the Macedonian phalanx proved its superiority over traditional hoplite forces. The Athenians alone lost 1,000 dead and 2,000 prisoners, and the Boeotians suffered heavy casualties, including the entire Sacred Band. The end of the day saw Philip supreme in Greece. For Thebes it meant the end of her hegemony in Boeotia and the replacement of her moderate democracy by a strictly limited oligarchic junta, comprised mainly of returned exiles.⁴⁰ Athens by contrast suffered only the loss of her remaining allies (but not her cleruchies, with the possible exception of the Chersonese) and was compensated by the acquisition of Oropus, territory which since 366 had been part of Boeotia. The price was formal alliance with Macedon. The same applied to the other states of southern Greece which, if they had not done so before, concluded treaties of alliance.

³⁹ In his speech *On the Chersonese* (Dem. viii). On the background see Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.563-6.

⁴⁰ See now the detailed survey by Gullath 1982, 7-19.

The Spartans stood alone. They refused submission in any form, suffered invasion and lost border territories to their embittered neighbours (see below, p. 198). Elsewhere Macedonian garrisons occupied key citadels. They are attested at Thebes, Corinth and Ambracia, and there may have been others. There was also a degree of political subversion, as Philip ensured that his partisans were established in government. In 337 a constitutive meeting of allies was convened at Corinth, and the political system Philip had created was confirmed by a common peace.⁴¹ Its pillars were the freedom and autonomy of all parties (under Macedonian hegemony) and the interdiction of political change and social revolution. It was administered by a *synedrion* of delegates from all allied states and the executive officer was Philip himself. The propaganda was abolition of war and *stasis* under the benign presidency of Macedon; the reality all too often was the preservation of sycophantic and oppressive regimes by the threat of military action. Whatever ideological perspective one takes, the result of the common peace is the same. It entrenched a network of governments largely sympathetic to Philip and guaranteed them stability.

The forum of allies at Corinth also declared war on Persia. This was the climactic act of the reign and was carefully prepared. From the early years of the century the Persian empire had been ripe for attack. Plagued by succession disputes in the royal house and endemic revolts in the satrapies, its whole fabric had been at times threatened with dissolution. In the late 360s practically the entire empire west of the Euphrates was alienated from the Great King at Susa. The Egyptians had asserted their independence as early as 404 and under a series of native pharaohs repelled successive Persian invasions. More seriously, since the impressive display given by Cyrus' mercenaries at Cunaxa, the nucleus of royal armies had regularly been recruited from Greece, and the Great King's interventions in the politics of the Balkans had often been designed to secure a supply of prime troops for his campaigns or to deny them to his antagonists. The most aggressive and successful monarch during the fourth century was Artaxerxes III Ochus (358-338). He was able to crush revolt in Asia Minor after his accession. In Phoenicia he forced Sidon to submission with fire and slaughter and finally (in 343 or 342) he reconquered Egypt and placed the land under a native satrap. This record of achievement is illusory. Sidon had long maintained its independence and only fell through treachery (by the Greek mercenary commander, Mentor of Rhodes). Similarly the conquest of Egypt had been preceded by disastrous failure a decade earlier.⁴² The successful invasion was spearheaded by Greek troops with Greek commanders, and on both sides it was the mercenaries who did the effective fighting. They apparently made private treaties with each other and on one occasion Lacrates of Thebes turned

⁴¹ For the details see below, pp. 187ff.

⁴² Cf. Diod. xvi.48.1, attributing the Egyptian success to their Greek generals, the Athenian Diophantus and the Spartiate Lamius.

against his Persian allies in the interests of the Greek defenders of Pelusium (Diod. xvi.49.4-6). The Persian success depended on the Great King's ability to pay and keep mercenaries. That had long been evident, and the military weakness of the Persian empire was a commonplace by Philip's accession. Isocrates had repeatedly urged a crusade against Persia and the settlement of Greek refugees in the King's lands. On a more practical level the Spartan king, Agesilaus, apparently envisaged the annexation of Asia Minor east of Cilicia, and the Thessalian dynast, Iason of Pherae, also had designs on Persian possessions.⁴³ The satrapies of Asia Minor were undeniably a natural and lucrative target for aggression.

We cannot date the origins of Philip's ambitions against Persia. There is no literary evidence for them until the latter part of his reign. As late as his *Fourth Philippic* (341) Demosthenes can only argue on circumstantial evidence that Philip planned to attack the Persian king (Dem. x.31-3).⁴⁴ In fact Artaxerxes Ochus rejected Athenian overtures at that juncture and refused subsidies to support operations against Philip (Aesch. iii.238). The only Persian involvement against Philip was when Ochus felt his territory threatened by the siege of Perinthus (340) and instructed his generals to co-operate with the defenders (Diod. xvi.75.1). Once the presumed threat to the Propontis receded, his interest in containing Philip also ebbed. Philip, as always, had kept his ultimate intentions secret, deferring them (as was inevitable) until he had imposed a stable and permanent settlement on southern Greece. After Chaeronea the time for a declaration of hostilities was propitious. Shortly before the battle Ochus was assassinated by his vizier, the sinister Bagoas, who then eliminated the immediate family of the deceased king, leaving his youngest son, Arsēs, to reign as his puppet. The dynastic convulsion provoked revolution in Egypt and Babylon (see below, p. 34), and the weakness of the empire was patent to all observers. Accordingly Philip had his allies declare war on Persia, with the avowed intention of avenging the sacrilege of Xerxes and liberating the Greek cities of Asia Minor (see below, p. 189). It was an explicit renewal of the aims of the Delian League, and the Macedonian king was assuming the mantle of Aristeides. He would expand his realm by retaliating for past offences against the Hellenes, and, far from promoting his private interests, he was acting for the entire Greek world. His

⁴³ *Hell. Ox.* 22.4; *Xen. Hell.* iv.1.41 (Agesilaus); *Isocr.* v.119-20; *Xen. Hell.* vi.1.12 (Iason).

⁴⁴ Much has been made of the supposed connection between Philip and Hermeias, the dynast of Atarneus in Asia Minor, who died in Persian custody in 341 (for a conservative exposition of the problem see Hammond and Griffith 1979, 2.518-22). The theory is based on modern speculation and the conviction of the ancient commentators that Hermeias was the agent of Philip obliquely mentioned by Demosthenes (x.32). Even if the identification is correct, Demosthenes is dealing in rumour and innuendo, without knowledge of Philip's intentions. Indeed the tradition on Hermeias has only one explicit statement that he collaborated. Callisthenes (cited by Didymus in *Dem.* col. 6, lines 55-7) says that he died without revealing anything of his agreements with Philip. The context is problematic. Hermeias' death was reported in very different ways and the circumstances were obviously not widely known. Callisthenes at all events spoke of collusion between him and Philip, but what that collusion can have been is a complete mystery.

allies endorsed the declaration of war, fixed the military contributions of each state and passed resolutions forbidding any Hellene to fight on the Persian side. The supreme commander of the combined forces was Philip, at once *hegemon* of the common peace and general in the war of revenge. In the spring of 336 campaigning began in earnest, when a Macedonian expeditionary force of 10,000 strong crossed the Hellespont and began the work of liberation (and subjugation) on the coast of Asia Minor. Philip was never able to assume leadership. He was cut down by assassination in the autumn of that same year, and command devolved upon his successor – with fatal results.

II The young Alexander

That successor was Alexander. Perhaps the eldest of Philip's sons, he was born in the summer of 356.⁴⁵ Only one other son, the mentally afflicted Arrhidaeus, is reliably attested in the ancient tradition, and from the beginning, it seems, Alexander was marked out as crown prince.⁴⁶ As the son of Olympias, the blood of the royal house of Epirus flowed in his veins, and he referred his lineage to Andromache and Achilles on his mother's side, to Heracles on his father's. His pedigree for him was no genealogical fiction, and in later years he behaved explicitly as the lineal descendant of both Heracles and Achilles and consciously fostered character traits appropriate to both (see below, pp. 281ff.). From the outset heroic emulation was an abiding spur to action.

His physical appearance is elusive. In later years the court sculptor, Lysippus, was thought to have given the best plastic representation, catching the characteristic leftward inclination of the neck and the peculiar expression of the eyes – an inner brilliance overlaid by a film of moisture.⁴⁷ These soft, almost erotic, features were offset by a general fierceness of expression (illustrated in some of the early coin portraits) and a harsh, loud voice.⁴⁸ So far the characteristics are well attested, and they were imitated *ad nauseam* by Alexander's successors. Other traits are less clear. Plutarch (*Al.* 4.3) reports that his complexion was fair, with a tendency to redness around the chest and face – the Alexander sarcophagus of Sidon depicts him with a perceptible flush.⁴⁹ His hair, clustered in ringlets, was thrown back from the forehead in a

⁴⁵ *Plut. Al.* 3.5, giving the precise date 6 Hecatombaeon (c. 20 July); cf. Badian 1982, 48. Aristobulus (*ap. Arr.* vii.28.1) suggests that he was born in October.

⁴⁶ Justin xi.2.1 mentions another half-brother, Caranus, who was killed after Alexander's accession. The statement has been accepted at face value (Berve 1926, 2 no. 411; Unz 1985), but the absence of any other attestation is most suspicious (the *fratres* mentioned by Justin xi.6.14 are probably brothers of Cleopatra). Given Justin's record elsewhere, it is highly likely that he has distorted his original. Cf. Heckel 1979.

⁴⁷ See particularly *Plut. Al.* 4.1-3; *de Alf.* ii.2 (335B). For commentary on the ὑπόστις of Alexander's eyes see the physiognomist Polemon (in J. Cramer, *Anecdota Graeca* iv.255, lines 16-17). See also Schwarzenberg 1967, 70-1.

⁴⁸ For the eroticism see particularly Dio Chrys. iv.112; Luc. xliii (*Im.*) 6. For the harshness of voice (and its later vogue) see *Plut. Pyrrh.* 8.2; *Mor.* 53c.

⁴⁹ Schefold 1968, plates 52 and 58.

central parting (the famous *anastole*). The nose rose straight to the forehead which, judging from the coin portraits, bulged slightly above the eyes.⁵⁰

How these features combined in the life it is perhaps impossible to say. All the extant portraits are to some degree idealised, based on originals which emphasised the majesty and godlike attributes of their subject, whether it was Lysippus evoking the parallel with Achilles or Apelles unashamedly assimilating the king to Zeus.⁵¹ But the portraits must have been based upon recognisable features and their likeness was reasonably close. This is clearly implied by the famous story of Cassander's trembling fit at the very sight of a statue of Alexander at Olympia (Plut. *Al.* 74.6). At all events the early portrait on the Alexander sarcophagus (perhaps contemporary) strongly resembles the coins from the Babylon mint which were issued in the last years of the reign.⁵² Both have the rounded chin, the straight nose and the slight bulge of the forehead. They may well reflect a common model which assimilated the king to Heracles, but the peculiarities of feature (which recur in the commemorative issues of Ptolemy I and Lysimachus) appear authentic.

Alexander was by no means imposing in stature but extraordinarily well co-ordinated physically, blessed with speed and outstanding stamina. By all accounts his emotional disposition was passionate in the extreme, ranging from outbursts of spontaneous affection and generosity to paroxysms of uncontrollable anger. From the early years the sources stress the awe and respect he inspired in his entourage (cf. Arr. 1.14.4). There is little doubt that from the outset he considered it his royal prerogative to impose his will on others, and the worst sin was to flout his authority or to reject his benefactions. Not surprisingly he became a stereotype of inflated arrogance for philosophers and rhetoricians of later ages. This temperament was reinforced and encouraged in the autocracy of Philip's court. It was, it seems, subjected to a fairly rigorous physical discipline by his chief tutor, his mother's kinsman Leonidas, which must have contributed to his capacity for hardship and physical exertion, so amply attested in the later campaigns.

His intellect was sharp. From his earliest years he was enthused by poetry, particularly (and predictably) the Homeric epics but also a wide span of lyric and drama. He is said to have known Euripides by heart (Nicobule, *FGrH* 127 F 2) and (fatefully for Cleitus) he was well aware of the context of quotations. If we may believe Plutarch (*Al.* 8.3), his range of reading included the historian Philistus and the dithyrambs of Telestus and Philoxenus. At the age of fourteen his education was expanded when Philip invited Aristotle to court as his academic supervisor. A miniature Academy was established in the precinct of the Nymphs near Mieza (on the slopes of Mt Vermion, near modern Naoussa). The classic meeting of minds has always been the inspiration for speculation and myth, and it is difficult even to outline what

⁵⁰ Plut. *Pomp.* 2.1; Aelian, *VH* XII.14. Cf. Bieber 1964, 50-5 with plates XXI-XXII.

⁵¹ Schwarzenberg 1967, 1976.

⁵² Bieber 1964, 50-1. For the Babylon issues see Dürr, in Schwarzenberg 1976, 274.

Aristotle might have taught. But two decades earlier the Academician philosopher, Euphraeus of Oreus, had apparently treated the court of Perdiccas III to the full rigours of geometry and dialectic (Athen. 508E). Alexander probably experienced Aristotle's regular curriculum.⁵³ Plutarch speaks of ethical and political instruction, and it is extremely likely that he received a basic training in eristics. It cannot be said that it left him with a deep and lasting sympathy for philosophy, but he encouraged formal debate and kept a retinue of intellectuals who included the philosopher Anaxarchus of Abdera. His enormous curiosity about the geographical limits of the world, already apparent in his boyhood (Plut. *Al.* 5.1), may well have been encouraged by Aristotle, but there is no evidence that he was profoundly affected by any detailed instruction in that field.

The period at Mieza probably ended in 340. In that year Alexander acted as regent in Macedonia while his father was active in the Propontis. He had disposal of the royal seal and clearly transacted the day-to-day business of the monarchy. His energies were further occupied in a successful campaign against the Maedi of the upper Strymon (see below, pp. 245-6). His military career continued with his father, first in the northern campaigns of 339 (cf. Justin IX.1.8) and then at the battle of Chaeronea, where he commanded the Macedonian left and allegedly broke the Theban line. Subsequently he served with Antipater, Philip's senior diplomat, in conducting peace negotiations with Athens. He maintained a high public profile and his position as crown prince was apparently unchallenged.

That situation changed abruptly in 337, when Philip decided on another dynastic marriage, this time to a lady of Macedon proper: Cleopatra, the sister of Hippostratus and niece of Attalus. Cleopatra's origins are unknown, but there is no doubt that she belonged to the traditional nobility of Macedon. She was also (it is alleged) married for love, not for political reasons (as was the Elymiote princess Phila, the only other wife of Philip who could be said to be of Macedonian extraction). That alienated Olympias, and a deep rift developed in the royal house.⁵⁴ The new queen's uncle, Attalus, was hostile and abrasive, and at the marriage feast he openly prayed for the advent of legitimate sons for Philip (Athen. 557D; Plut. *Al.* 9.7). It was an insult direct, aimed at Olympias' marital fidelity and also her non-Macedonian origins. A celebrated brawl resulted, Philip drawing his sword against his son, and in the aftermath Olympias took residence in her native Epirus. Alexander more ominously went to one of the Illyrian peoples (which, we cannot say). This marked the climax of the alienation. There had probably been an earlier quarrel in the

⁵³ Plut. *Al.* 7.5. The training in eristics is postulated (on the basis of Isocr. *Ep.* 5) by Merlan 1954. See further Hamilton 1969, 17-20; Schachermeyr 1973, 81-93 (visionary); Badian 1982, 38-9 (sceptical).

⁵⁴ Explicit in Satyrus (Athen. 557D); Plut. *Al.* 9.6; Justin IX.7.2.3; Arr. III.6.5. The crisis cannot be minimised.

prelude to the marriage,⁵⁵ when Alexander had allegedly been worried by the request of the Carian satrap, Pixodarus, to marry his daughter to Arrhidaeus, Alexander's mentally deficient half-brother. Alexander made overtures to the Carian on his own account and effectively sabotaged the marriage. His action provoked a violent response from Philip, who upbraided him in the strongest terms and exiled at least five of his friends, including Harpalus, Ptolemy and Nearchus. This is an obscure episode and some of the details recorded by Plutarch may be unhistorical. But the exile of Alexander's friends is fact, confirmed by Arrian (III.6.5), who dates the incident around the time of Philip's marriage to Cleopatra. It suggests an atmosphere of distrust and insecurity, in which Alexander increasingly felt his position undermined by the rising faction of Attalus.

The rift had to be closed, ostensibly at least. While Alexander was alienated from his father and supported by the Illyrians, there was a real danger of his being promoted as a pretender to the Macedonian throne, as had happened many times in the past with disaffected members of the Argead house. Accordingly he was persuaded to return to court through the good offices of a respected guest-friend, Demaratus of Corinth (Plut. *Al.* 9.12-14). By the time he reappeared at Pella, Attalus had probably left for Asia Minor as one of the three commanders of the expeditionary force (spring 336). One source of friction was obviated. A second diplomatic offensive was aimed at Epirus. The Molossian king, Alexander (the brother of Olympias), was invited to marry his own niece, Cleopatra. Even though Olympias remained intransigent, there was now no threat of a rupture between the two monarchies. The year passed in preparations for what was to be a brilliant state wedding. The venue was the old capital of Aegae, where a prodigious number of guests were assembled from the whole of the Greek world. The marriage was duly contracted and celebrated by a formal symposium. For the following day games were scheduled at the theatre. Philip made his entrance between the two Alexanders, his son and son-in-law. The new concord was on full display, and to mark his confidence Philip walked at a distance from his bodyguard. At that moment he was fatally stabbed by a disgruntled young noble, Pausanias of Orestis, who had a personal grievance against Attalus and indirectly against Philip, who had refused to give him redress. The truth must be more complicated, for others are explicitly stated to have been involved in the

⁵⁵ Plutarch (*Al.* 10.1-4) is the only source. He records the incident *after* Alexander's return from his sojourn with the Illyrians. There is hardly time in 336 for the negotiations described, and the veracity of the entire story has been challenged (Ellis 1981, 135-6; Hatzopoulos 1982b). But Plutarch gives no positive indication of chronology (ἀθίς at 10.1 (cf. 9.5) I take to be a thematic connective without temporal force), and his *Life of Alexander* often distorts the sequence of events for narrative convenience. I note that Plutarch's story presupposes Olympias' presence at court (10.1), before her withdrawal to Epirus. Pixodarus' overtures could have come in the spring or summer of 337, when Philip's invasion plans were declared and the Persian empire was in chaos. The fact that he dated an official document by the first regnal year of Arses (below, p. 230) means nothing. If he was planning defection, he would not advertise the fact.

conspiracy (see below, pp. 25-6), and there were clearly complex political forces at work. It is probably too simple to argue that because Olympias and Alexander benefited from the assassination either or both instigated it. There must have been many political sub-currents at the Macedonian court, particularly in the turbulent finale of Philip's reign, and we cannot hope to reconstruct them. All that can be said is that the murder on that October day of 336⁵⁶ precipitated a crisis. Alexander's position was strong but far from unassailable. The events of the last year had guaranteed a lively opposition to his accession and there were others who had some claim to the throne. Dynastic competition had been the bane of the monarchy in the past and there was every chance that it would be renewed. At worst the very integrity of the kingdom was in question.

⁵⁶ For the date see Bosworth 1980a, 45-6; Hatzopoulos 1982a.