

A Step-Wise Analysis: Alexander's Conquest throughout Current Pakistan

1. Dr. Maseeh Ullah	2. Dr. Junaid Bashir
Post Doctorate Research Fellowships IRI, IIU Islamabad	Assistant Pro. Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Foundation University and Technology Islamabad
Email: maseehullah84@gmail.com	Email: drjunaid.bashir@fui.edu.pk
3. Ms Amina Tariq Email: amina.tariq@fui.edu.pk _ Lecturer, Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Foundation University School of Science and Technology Islamabad	

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Dr. Maseeh Ullah , Dr. Junaid Bashir , Ms Amina Tariq

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Abstract

The memory of a man who conquered land more than any ruler, tyrant, or emperor still lives in the modern age of today. Although it was tough for him and caused him to sustain injuries and a problematic situation, it would be safe to say that the toughest time for Alexander was in the Sub-continent (Pakistan). He entered Pakistan through the Afghanistan region and crossed the Indus to India and back into the Arabian Sea, marching back to his homeland. He fought many battles in and around Sindh, faced competent foes and even his own army rebelled against him. Many adversaries such as Taxiles and other chieftains of tribes submitted to him with lavish gifts, while some he had to crush and take over with his strategic brute strength. Many unlikely events occurred in places such as Massaga where 200 of his men met their bane while he himself got injured in the ankle or how he faced even severe injuries when the arrow broke through his armor and impaled his chest not only badly wounding him but also poisoning him severely. Despite all those problematic events, he still managed to succeed even in this area by his wits and the brute force in his numbers. Alexander won rule over many areas, most prominent of which are the Indus, Multan, Massaga, Aornos, Bazira, Ora, Karachi, and deserts of Makran, etc. Proceeding ahead of Multan, Alexander did not take the river route and instead went through the desert while his comrades followed him along the river in the same direction. Crossing the desert Makran, Alexander entered the present city of Karachi from the North-West direction. The great emperor did not meet his end with an army or another king. Alexander's cause of death is thought to be Typhoid at the age of 32. The Greek ways could not completely be adapted to the norms of these people and quickly vanished after the death of Alexander, leaving behind only faint traces.

Keywords: Alexander Invasion, Alexander Battle Techniques, Sind Captured, Alexander and Macedonian.

Introduction

The life of Alexander was recorded by many, but the greatest record was made by Flavius Arrianus Xenophon, a Greek born in Nicomedia. He described Alexander keeping facts and reality at hand. Unlike most who would only try to please their kings to get rewarded or to gain protection, this Arrian knew his risks when writing about Alexander.¹

He mentioned that, Alexander, the man who accomplished the feat of conquering a huge part of the land; more than any emperor ever did. With his combat and commanding prowess, he also held his religious views in mind. His extraordinary view and judgment were commendable and he had recognized that as well. Alexander believed himself to be the son of Ammon-Zeus, as his ancestor Hercules being the son of Zeus is quite probable, although obviously, this is no acceptable proof. He was also a man eager to learn about this world and moreover, about himself; as he once set out for Siwah to learn more about himself, there are also conspiracies that he may very well be a peoples-pleaser and left on the journey to show that he has supposedly learned.²

Alexander without a doubt was a master strategist. His planning was complex and effective. When he left to conquer Macedonia in the spring of 334, he left 12,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry to defend his homeland and to keep watch on surrounding Greek states. He possessed an enormous army as it is variously reported that he

¹ . Tarn, *Alexander the Great I Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, W. W. (1948) UK.

² . Grote, George. *A History of Greece*, (1849), W. L. Allison. New York.

Dar, S. R. (1973), *Hellenistic elements in the architecture of Taxila (In Greek)*, Salonica.

crossed Hellespont with an army of 32,000 infantries and 5,100 cavalries with a small group of mercenary infantry troops around the bridgehead at Abydos.³

Alexander's March to Pakistan Region:

Towards the end of spring, Alexander began his march for India (then Pakistan). He left Amyntas in Bactria with a force of 3,500 mounted troops and 10,000 infantries. He crossed the Indian Caucasus, and in ten days reached Alexandria, the town he founded in the territory of Parapamisadae during his first expedition into Bactria, before entering India. He rendered the standing governor incompetent and brought up one of his own named; Tyriaspes as one in charge of Parapamisadae and the rest of the country along the river Cophen. Alexander's campaign in this region started from Nicaea (Victorious city) near present Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan.⁴

Division of Army:

As a tactical approach, he divided his army into two groups which one was led by two of his generals, Hephaestion and Perdicas who were ordered to follow the shortest route to the Indus River and meet with him on the other side. This division reached its goal without any serious problems.

Alexander took the other group under his own command. This group took the more difficult route which was rough and hilly alongside the present river Kunar.⁵

Arigaeum/Nawagai

From the hilly Kunar valley, Alexander had to cross a mountain to reach Arigaeum which is not far from Nawa Pass. It is the only important route that connects Kunar to Bajaur .⁶Arigaeum is also known as Nawagai. Nawagai is a place that consists of many ancient sites on hill slopes, the locals call a hill slope "Uth". Nawagai is locally known as Alinagar or Arinagar, We can see a close resemblance between Alinagar and Arigaeum, the difference being that of a dialect Here Alexander had two options;

. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/ancient-medieval/alexander-the-great/a/alexander-the-great>.

⁴ . Liebert, *Alexander the Great and the History of Globalization*, The Review of Politics, H. (2011), Vol. 73. No. 4. Cambridge University Press.

⁵ . https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_campaign_of_Alexander_the_Great.

Alexander, Cunningham. *The Ancient Geography of India* (1871), Trubner and Co. London.

. (Alexander, 1871).⁶

He could either go South through the present Mohmand Agency and reach Peshawar by Ghalanai Shabqadar Road (ibid). Or he could turn east and take a longer but well-frequented route through the fertile valleys of Panjkora and Swat. Most scholars believed that Alexander took the Southern route.⁷

Timergara:

Reaching Bajaur, Alexander, and his army turned east and across Panjkhora (Timergara) and towards the rich and fertile valley of the river Swat. Alexander reduced the hill fortresses of Arigaeum, Massaga, Bazira, and Ora before he descended into the Peshawar valley.

Massaga:

Alexander proceeded to Massaga which was the largest town in the neighborhood. The Massaga people were confident and decided to stand their ground with 7,000 mercenaries. The fight continued for a short while before Alexander drew back with his army. Nearly 200 men were killed, with Alexander himself injured in the ankle. They tried four days consecutively with the result of failure until a missile from his catapult hit the Indian chief of Massaga.⁸ This brought about chaos and confusion which made it easier for Alexander to invade and conquer.

Bazira and Ora

After this Alexander sent Coenus to Bazira, on the supposition that the people of that town would surrender after learning the fate of Massaga. At the same time Attalus, Alcetas, and Demetrius were dispatched to Ora. The residents of Ora showed resistance but were repulsed without difficulty. Bazira on the other hand showed no signs of surrender but later fled to the rock of Aornos upon the arrival of Alexander himself.⁹

Aornos

The splendid description of Aornos (where the escapees from Ora had fled) intrigued Alexander to capture it. On his march to Aornos, Alexander started in the direction of the Indus towards the town of Peucelaotis, which he took over by surrender. Several

⁷ . https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.279061/2015.279061.The-Imperial_djvu.txt.

Abbott, Jacob. *Makers of History Alexander the Great*, (1857), UK

. (http://journals.uop.edu.pk/papers/AP_v19_49to54.pdf)⁸

⁹ . <https://www.britannica.com/event/Siege-of-Aornos>

other small places around the river also fell into his hands. When he arrived at a town close to Aornos called Embolima, he detached a portion of his forces to weaken the grip of the natives on their land. After that, he continued towards the Legendary Rock of Aornos. He attacked head-on with his forces on the first day which led to their retreat. The coming dawn they started construction of a tall structure made up of wooden stakes which overwhelmed the natives. Once they lost their sense of morale, it was easy for Alexander to occupy the rock. Many were killed when they tried to flee. And thus, the rock of Aornos was finally conquered by Alexander. ¹⁰

Swabi

The two Armies reunited at Hund (Swabi) which was the 3rd Capital of Gandhara. Now, from there their march towards Taxila began.

Taxila

The Greeks are thought to have stayed in Bhir Mound, according to the remains. This was the first historic city of Taxila having led by the Persians and occupied till the 2nd century BCE. As they approached Raja Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila welcomed Alexander with gifts and aid as a surrender. His aid included 500 elephants to the Greeks and support to invade Jehlum which was ruled by Raja Porus. ¹¹

Before his march to Jehlum, Alexanders had already sent instructions to Taxiles for the people living west of Indus to meet him at whatever time they found convenient (Allchin, 1982). Taxiles who was the ruler of the city of Taxila and North-west Rawalpindi along with the other chiefs obeyed the summons from Alexander, bringing him short presents of things considered most valuable in their country and also offered to give Alexander the twenty-five Elephants they brought with them. ¹²

Arrival at Indus:

Upon Alexander's arrival at Indus, he found that Hephaestion had already begun working there. He had bridged the river for better transport with several small boats and several galleys.

¹⁰ . (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Siege-of-Aornos>)

¹¹ . Allchin, *The Rize of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, B. 1982, New York: University of Cambridge.

. <http://lukeuedasarson.com/Al-Ele.html>) Allchin, B. (1982), *A guide to Taxila*, Cambridge¹²

It is said that upon entering the Indus, Alexander ordered to building of a city at the meeting point of the Chenab River. However, no evidence has been found of its existence except for some ancient cities or signs of cities that are present away from the junction. Scholars believe that this city had been built but was destroyed by the river floods .¹³

Down the Indus (Sindh)

Alexander conquered the following lands as he travelled down along the Indus:

Sogdia and Arol

As Alexander moved towards Sogdia, (presently known as Soga Raja) from Multan, his conquest of present Sindh took began. He built a fortified city between Rahimyar Khan and Sukkur where he stayed for a few days and repaired his boats. The traces of this city have been found from Patan Minara which is an ancient tower. Speculations state that the lost city Alexander built at the confluence of Chenab and the fortified city between Rahimyar Khan and Sukkur, along with a lost River Dock may be found here near Patan Minar.¹⁴

During the British period in the subcontinent, excavation at this site revealed a tablet with Sanskrit inscriptions. However, this tablet was later lost.

According to Arrian, the Ruler of Aror or Arol named Mosekanos came to Soga Raja to welcome Alexander with gifts as a surrender as well. Alexander, later on, visited and stayed a few days in Arol.

Shikarpur:

After staying a few days at Arol, Alexander took a liking to this city because of its greenery, fountains, and pleasant environment and later he handed over the city to Mosekanos and proceeded further on the western bank of the Indus and pass the present Shikarpur. The Greek Army led by Alexander then reached the present Larkana and defeated their ruler, Oxicanos. Mahota is another city said to have been captured by Alexander. All rulers of those cities in Alexander's way accepted him

¹³ . Marshall, John. *A guide to Taxila*, Superintendent Government Printing, (1918), India.

. <https://www.hellenistichistory.com/2022/12/20/the-sogdian-revolt-against-alexander-the-great/>.

without any resistance except for Sambhos. This includes the cities like Rorhi, on the eastern side of the Indus River as well. ¹⁵

Patla/Hyderabad

As Alexander reached and took over Patla (present Hyderabad), he announced the safe return of the inhabitants of the city. It was from here that Alexander decided to return to Greece. In September 325 BCE, he divided his army into two major groups once again. One of the groups was commanded by Niarcus, another one of his generals, and the other was led by himself (Dar, 1973).

Niarcus along with his group returned to Greece by sea. On the other hand, Alexander and his group proceeded further towards Makran via Lasbela, Turbat until they reached Patni village located on the bank of the sea after an exhausting journey of 60 days. ¹⁶

Down the Indus (Sindh):

After Oxydacrae, Alexander proceeded to Patalla (current Hyderabad or Bahmanabad) and instructed his companions to deal with the fortified regions and to keep watch on the neighborhood before joining him. On the third day of Alexander's journey to Patalla, he was informed that the chief of that place has departed along with all his people, leaving Patalla empty and ready to be occupied. He brought back the fugitives through friendly communication and helped them prosper by digging wells and supporting them in other ways through his companions as well. Because Patalla was relatively nearer to the ocean and was the best place for trading. It made sense to help this land prosper as it was economically beneficial. This also made his approach easier for other places to conquer. ¹⁷

Alexander's End

After conquering all those places, he returned to his country where he fell ill. Suffering from Malaria the tale of Alexander the Great came to an end.

. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Larkana.¹⁵

. <https://pakistanalmanac.com/balochistan-lasbela/>.¹⁶

¹⁷ . Rahman, A, *The Cambridge History of India*, (ed), 1998, Delhi: S. CHAND & CO., Fountain.

Conclusion

Although Alexander was quite successful in his campaign in the Sub-continent, especially the areas now under Pakistan, it was not smooth sailing. Alexander faced grave opposition from some of the areas he went to conquer and did so in multiple attempts. Only a few of them surrendered without resorting to violence.

It can only count as a partial success because of the many unfavorable events that occurred during his conquest of Pakistan, such as the mutinous behavior of his own troops, insubordination of some frontier tribes, or rebellion of his own army at Beas. And as a result of this rebellion he never actually obtained the majority's affection or recognition, instead, he was only tolerated. Hence, the Greek ways could not completely be adapted to the norms of these people and quickly vanished after the death of Alexander, leaving behind only faint traces.

After conquering all those places, he returned to his country where he fell ill. His conquests covered the entire known world at the time, and he was responsible for the spread of Greek culture throughout the ancient world. In Babylon in 323 BC, Alexander died when he was nearly 33 years old. Possible explanations for his death have included alcoholic liver disease and strychnine poisoning, but little data support either condition as the cause of his death. Alexander most likely died from malaria or typhoid fever, which were rampant in ancient Babylon and Athens. The description of his final illness from the royal diaries is consistent with typhoid fever or malaria but is most characteristic of typhoid fever.

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