Fresh Evidence: Reevaluating Alexander’s
Battle at the Granicus

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Introduction

In May 334 BCE, at a river valley in northwestern Anatolia called the Granicus, Alexander the Great defeated a Persian army for the first time.¹ For more than two thousand years afterwards, the details of how, when, and why that battle unfolded have remained heavily debated by ancient and modern scholars alike, with profound consequences for how we understand Alexander and his Asiatic campaign.²

Modern scholars recognize two conflicting versions of Alexander’s battle at the Granicus River.³ In one version, attested in the ancient accounts of Arrian and Plutarch, Alexander fought the Persians as soon as he arrived in the Granicus Valley, where the defenders had lined up on the steep riverbanks. He and his army crossed under heavy fire from javelins and arrows, then routed the Persians after a chaotic melee. The second version, attested in the account of Diodorus, featured a more patient Alexander who crossed the river secretly at dawn. He and his army then fought a standard battle in the plains of the valley, likewise routing the Persians after a melee. This basic and irreconcilable disagreement - whether or not Alexander crossed the river during a chaotic battle or before a more standard engagement - has seen every possible literary interpretation and driven at least seven scholars from 1877 onward to conduct autopsies (extensive landscape observations) at the physical site itself, the modern Biga valley.⁴ All seven, too, came away from their autopsies with different views of the battle. Even the modern landscape was not enough to quell the disagreement.

¹ Major ancient sources will be abbreviated according to the Liddell-Scott-Jones (LSJ) lexicon: Arrian, Anabasis of Alexander = Arr. An.; Plutarch, Life of Alexander = Plu. Alex.; Diodorus Siculus, Library of World History = D.S. Lib.
³ The earliest treatment of the Granicus which I could find is in Droysen, 1833. He prefers Arrian supplemented by Diodorus.
⁴ The earliest English treatment I could find: Tarn, 1948.
Fresh Evidence

By 2013, scholar Peter Green admitted defeat. Well aware of the extensive literature and autopsies surrounding the battle, he had himself attempted an interpretation of the river crossing issue which earned him relentless criticism for over two decades. In his final remarks on the matter, he declared the debate dead: “In default of fresh evidence,” he said, “or more compelling arguments - neither forthcoming in recent years - the mystery surrounding the battle of the Granicus must, as E.W. Davis long ago argued, remain a mystery still, to which we simply do not have an answer.”

But just a few years before Green wrote his final remarks on the Granicus, a team of archaeologists headed by Dr. Reyhan Körpe and Dr. Brian Rose were hard at work. From 2004 to 2006, they completed, compiled, and published a landmark survey simply titled the Granicus River Valley Archaeological Survey Project (hereby referred to as the GRVASP). Although their work was published in three major reports from 2005 through 2007, the survey remained buried under the many other articles published in the Arkeoloji Arastirma Sonuclari Toplantisi (“Archeology Research Results Meeting”) conference papers. The reports were only made easily accessible in 2018, when Reyhan Körpe himself uploaded them to academia.edu, but the website records zero citations thus far. Moreover, the Penn Museum website, apparently last updated on May 24, 2021, records the existence of the survey project but states that its results have not been published at all. The full repercussions of the findings in the GRVASP, then, have not yet been explored.

5 Green, 2013, 14.
6 Given its importance, the three major GRVASP articles will be abbreviated as follows: Körpe and Rose, "GRVASP 2004."); Körpe and Rose, "GRVASP 2005."); Körpe and Rose, "GRVASP 2006."
7 I have only been able to find two citations for the GRVASP: Fred Naiden in 2015 cites the first of the three reports from the Arkeoloji Arastirma Sonuclari Toplantisi covering their work in 2004, but only to make the point that Persian estates existed in the region: Naiden, 2015. Kathleen Toohey in 2018 cites a secondary summary published in Studia Troia in 2007 and acknowledges that its findings upend her entire argument regarding the Granicus battle, but then states: “Rather than hold the current project up, I shall here just leave the text largely as it was with only an occasional comment. Revisions can follow later.” Toohey, 2018.
8 Penn Museum, 2021.
The GRVASP had two major goals: first, to survey, map, and preserve the numerous settlements and tumuli of the eastern Troad region (in and around the Granicus and Aesepos river valleys), especially in response to major looting; second, to “clarify the position of the opposing armies at the Granicus battle,” especially in relation to the ancient course of the river in the early Hellenistic period. In addition to being the first of its kind in the region, the project utilized relatively novel tools in the form of remote sensing (magnetometry and rader) and core drilling carried out by Dr. İlhan Kayan. The result of these efforts was astounding. As the researchers soon found, the Granicus Valley was in fact “one of the most important late Archaic and Classical aristocratic burial grounds in northwestern Turkey.” It had also been subject to numerous topographical changes over the last two millennia, particularly a massive change in the northern course of the river, the draining of a seasonal lake on the valley’s western edge, and the disappearance of a marsh just east of the river’s lower (northern) course. As Chapter 2 of this thesis shows, all of these findings combine to completely upend the previous scholarly understanding of Alexander’s battle at the Granicus.

But the GRVASP is not the only fresh evidence available for this project. As stated above, Reyhan Körpe went on to publish numerous articles and studies based on aspects of his findings, particularly focused on the demography and administrative system of the Achaemenid Troad, the site of the battle at the Granicus, the agricultural products of the ancient Troad, the settlements of the Granicus basin, and the location of the Persian army’s headquarters at Zeleia, respectively. Körpe’s analyses and interpretations of his own archaeological study remain just as crucial as the study itself. More under-utilized “fresh evidence” has been published over the past two decades as well, such as a 2002 geological survey of Turkey (including the Granicus Valley) by the Mineral Research and Exploration General Directorate, Damaris Corrigan’s 2004 dissertation Riders on High, focused on off-neglected

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Fresh evidence compels, too, the use of new methods of analysis. This thesis will focus extensively on the ancient landscape of the Granicus valley, accounting for its differences and similarities with its modern counterpart to facilitate the identification of features described by the ancient historians. Map-making software such as ArcGIS Pro provides a solid tool for landscape analysis via 3D simulation of the ancient landscape, allowing scholars to identify the Persian defense and, thus, the likely location of the battle itself. The location is crucial, in turn, to dissect the historiographical mess of a battle presented by the ancient historians.

\[\text{\footnotesize The 2011 Landmark edition of Arrian’s Anabasis was also invaluable to my research, particularly its many Appendices.}\]
The Ancient Historians

Three ancient historians provided the major extant accounts of the battle at the Granicus: Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus. Of the three, Arrian persists as the favorite among modern scholars; though he and Plutarch agree on the river crossing issue, the critical debate is often framed by scholars as Arrian against Diodorus. I will show that Diodorus, however, is the most compatible with the fresh evidence. These three did not work in a vacuum. Diodorus, our earliest major source, wrote some 250 years after Alexander’s lifetime; all three utilized earlier sources which are now lost.

Diodorus Siculus is the earliest of our three major extant sources. He wrote that he was born in Agyrium in Sicily, perhaps around 90 BCE. He likely visited Alexandria in Egypt at some point before 59 BCE, but his claim that he visited all the most important regions of Europe and Asia was likely exaggerated. It was also around this time that Diodorus began his greatest work: the *Library of History* (Βιβλιοθήκη Ἱστορική), a 40-book long universal history of which book 17 dealt with the life of Alexander the Great. He toiled for thirty years and completed it by 36 BCE at earliest.

Modern scholars generally consider Diodorus to be the least reliable of the extant Alexander historians. Undoubtedly his work contains some outright mistakes, and his interest in writing a universal world-spanning history led him to omit many details included in other Alexander histories. As C.H. Oldfather states, however, Diodorus’ attention to detail was in fact generally of high quality, and “when he errs… the fault is not so much his as that of his source.” In his work on Alexander, Diodorus is considered among the “Vulgate” sources along with Curtius Rufus, utilizing primarily the now lost

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12 D.S. Lib., 1.4.4
13 D.S. Lib., 1.83.8-9, where he witnessed a group of Egyptians lynch a Roman who killed a holy cat “before king Ptolemy XII Auletes had been given the appellation of ‘friend’ by the Romans.” He certainly didn’t visit either Mesopotamia or the Hellespont, placing Nineveh on the Euphrates (2.3.2) and Chalkidike near the Hellespont (16.53.2).
14 Thirty years: D.S. Lib., 1.4.1. D.S. Lib., 16.7.1 gives a terminus post quem, mentioning Octavian establishing a colony at Tauromenium.
15 Oldfather, 1933, xxiii.
account of Kleitarchos. His focus was on the Stoic utility of history rather than entertainment, glory, or biography, and he was by far the least creative of the ancient historians, inserting no long speeches and few original thoughts. Though sometimes confused, he was, above all, a compiler and reporter.

Arrian was born in Nicomedia (modern Izmit) around CE 85. His family was part of the Greek provincial aristocracy. Around CE 108, in his early twenties, Arrian traveled to mainland Greece to learn from the prominent philosopher Epictetus. Contrary to many modern scholars, A.B. Bosworth argues that Arrian began his literary pursuits then, in his early adulthood in Greece. Between CE 115 and 120, Arrian finished his most relevant work for this project, the *Anabasis of Alexander* (Ἀλεξάνδρου Ἀνάβασις). His literary achievements earned him the attention and friendship of the emperor Hadrian, who appointed him to the senate in Rome soon afterwards. Arrian devoted his senatorial career to the military and to administration. He moved up the *cursus honorum* and in CE 132 Hadrian promoted him to the governorship of Cappadocia, where Arrian demonstrated his military capabilities by fending off an Alani invasion. After a successful career, he retired in Athens. It was in Athens, counter to Bosworth’s claims, that conventional scholarship holds Arrian began his historical writing.

Arrian practiced philosophy in addition to his historical writing, and it was for the former that he was later remembered in both Photius and the *Suda*. He was keenly aware of the historiographical mess presented to him; his *Anabasis* opens not with an argument on the importance of history, but with a seemingly straightforward statement that his primary sources were Ptolemy son of Lagos and

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17 Bosworth 1972, 163–85.
18 Bosworth 1972, 185.
19 Where he was granted the role of archon around CE 145.
20 Cf. Bosworth: “[Arrian] was not primarily a soldier… who turned to literature only after retirement. On the contrary, his reputation in antiquity was primarily as a man of letters, and it was his literary merit which secured him Hadrian’s favour and senatorial rank.” Bosworth 1972, 185.
21 As "ὁ φιλόσοφος." Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 58; *Suda* s.v. 'Arrianos, al.3868.
Aristobulus. Later, however, he makes the far more suspect claim that he is to the hero Alexander as Homer is to Achilles. His supposed military experience when writing the *Anabasis* has dramatically colored the scholarly view of his reliability on military matters. Yet although recent scholarship such as Bosworth’s critical 1980 commentary has challenged his previous universal authority, Arrian certainly remains the most detailed and informative of any single ancient work on Alexander’s campaigns. He was, above all, a brilliant storyteller.

Plutarch was born in Chaeronea mid-1st century CE, perhaps around CE 45-47. He began studying at Athens under the philosopher Ammonius in CE 66, and evidently stayed long enough to be made an Athenian citizen. But he spent the vast majority of his life in his hometown and at nearby Delphi, at the latter of which he served as a priest of Apollo. Throughout his entire life he was an extraordinarily prolific writer, with perhaps 227 works as listed by Lamprias. His writings naturally encompassed a plethora of genres, from philosophy, polemic, theology (particularly regarding Delphi), ethics, and most relevant to this project, biography. His twenty-three *Parallel Lives* consist of two biographies each, arranged in pairs to illustrate moral truths. He paired his *Life of Alexander* with the *Life of Julius Caesar*. He also wrote a secondary moral work, *On the Fortune of Alexander*. Yet despite his biographical intention and his often philosophical and theological inclinations, Plutarch is extremely valuable as a historian; he was forthcoming with his sources, often stating outright who gives certain numbers or details, and he evidently had access to both the “Vulgate” tradition of Kleitarchos and the two sources most espoused by Arrian (Ptolemy and Aristobulus). Eusebius’ *Chronicle* reports

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23 In the so-called second preface. Arrian in fact simultaneously claims to be Homer AND Xenophon (for whom the *Anabasis* is named) in the same paragraph. *Arr. An.*, 1.12.2-5.
24 Russell, 1973, 18-19
25 In the former he states outright his literary goal: “I am not writing histories, but lives, and it is not always in the most spectacular actions that virtue or vice is illustrated... a brief act or word or even a jest is often more revealing of character than battles in which thousands fall.” Plu. *Alex.*, 1.
that Plutarch was appointed as procurator of Achaea by the emperor Hadrian in CE 119. He was a biographer, a philosopher, and a priest.

Two other ancient historians round out what modern scholars consider the five major extant Alexander histories. Curtius Rufus, writing in (most likely) the 1st century CE, followed the same Vulgate tradition as Diodorus; sadly, his account of the Granicus is lost. Justin, writing in (most likely) the 3rd century CE, included an account of Alexander’s exploits in his epitome of Pompeius Trogus’ universal history; sadly, he epitomizes to the point that his account of the Granicus is exactly seven lines long. Other ancient historians provide useful auxiliary information.

Our three major extant sources on the Granicus all utilized early accounts that are now lost. These lost accounts of Alexander may be broadly divided into three groups: accounts spawned by Alexander’s retinue and immediate successors, the “Vulgate” accounts, and tales. Of the first, Kallisthenes is the earliest narrator of deeds. Born about 370 BCE, he traveled with and wrote about Alexander during his campaigns for a Greek audience. His work is seemingly present in all extant sources to a small degree. More imposing are Aristobulus and Ptolemy. The former was a scientific advisor, often assumed to be Alexander’s chief engineer, who wrote an account of the campaigns in his later years after Alexander’s death. Ptolemy I Soter was a soldier and general during Alexander’s campaigns who later founded and ruled the Ptolemaic successor kingdom in Egypt, penning his history around 280 BCE. Three other accounts - Nearchus, Onesicritus, and Chares - persist in select extant histories, though they are less relevant to the battle at the Granicus.

27 Strabo (1st century BCE - 1st century CE) included a relatively contemporary description of the ancient Troad region in his massive geography. Polyaeus (2nd century CE) dedicated the fourth book of his *Strategems* (Στρατηγήματα) to the battle maneuvers of Philip and Alexander; though not definitive, their reports demonstrate general plausibility of some battlefield tactics.
28 The exact composition of the so-called “Lost Histories” has been dealt with in far more detail than is necessary or possible here. See in particular: Pearson, 1960. For a shorter but solid summary: Nikolitsis, 1974.
29 To call him a historian may be a step too far. Arr. An., 4.10.1-2.
The Vulgate refers to the work of Kleitarchos and his historiographical successors. Kleitarchos was a narrator-historian (similar to Kallisthenes) writing around ten years after Alexander’s death for the court of Ptolemy I Soter. His work seems to have been extremely popular in antiquity and so spawned successors. Kleitarchos and these successors together formed the backbone of our three extant Vulgate sources, Diodorus Siculus, Curtius Rufus, and Justin’s epitome of Pompeius Trogus.

The final category may be variously called stories, romance, myths, legends, propaganda, or, as chosen here, tales. These were tales about Alexander’s exploits which were passed down and subjected to heavy exaggeration and embellishment by anyone and everyone - historians, politicians, kings, priests, common folk. One such tale, for example, was that of the historian Anaximenes of Lampsakos saving his hometown through a clever rhetorical trick. More famous tales, such as Alexander’s cutting of the Gordian knot, also qualify. Tales by necessity contained some kernel of truth; Alexander did pass by Lampsakos without burning it, and he did untie the Gordian Knot one way or the other. The lost historians undoubtedly included such tales in their histories, often (but not always) dubbed by modern scholars the overburdened but not entirely incorrect name of propaganda.

Within all three groups of lost accounts, larger events may be divided into individual threads. The tale of the Gordian Knot is one thread. The history of the battle at the Granicus contains many: the thread describing Alexander’s conversation with his generals before the battle, the thread of the river crossing, the thread for the beginning of the battle, a thread for the treatment of mercenaries at the end of the battle. Threads can have multiple versions, such as with the river crossing. It was the ancient historian’s task to choose and weave these threads into cohesive narratives of the battle, and to weave those narratives into larger histories. The lost accounts wove threads from personal experiences and

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See Chapter 1. Reported in Pausanias, Description of Greece, 6.18.3-4.
court documents; the extant histories picked from the threads available to them in those lost accounts and wove their own.31

Out of the weaving of those threads, both extant and lost ancient historians immediately found common themes they wished to exaggerate. Four in particular stand out regarding the battle at the Granicus, forming two pairs. The former pair applies particularly to the threads leading up to the battle, whilst the latter pair regards the melee itself. The first theme, Alexander against his advisors (especially Parmenio), was borne out of a continual and legitimate struggle before and throughout the Asiatic campaign; the second theme, Parmenio and Memnon as the wise but ignored elders, is particular to events surrounding the Granicus and its aftermath.32 The third theme, Alexander’s Homeric bravery and prowess, also continues throughout his histories, but is especially pronounced at the Granicus, beginning with his visit to Troy and culminating in an epic quasi-Homeric aristeía (ἀριστεία) in the battle; the fourth theme, that of the “Four Great Battles” of Alexander’s “Asiatic” campaign, permeates nearly every thread of the Granicus and all of Alexander’s subsequent battles.33 All four themes appear in all of the ancient historians, but each writer exaggerated, emphasized, or diminished particular threads within the themes to suit their own interests.

The lost historians, particularly Kleitarchos and Kallisthenes, are often blamed by modern scholars for the many exaggerations and aberrations present from these themes. But each of these four themes, as well as many others, soon exerted a force of their own. The collective influence of particular themes or threads may be called a mythos. “Mythos” is used here in a modern sense as a traditional or recurrent theme, set of beliefs, or assumptions that combine to influence future accounts.34 A.M. Devine

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31 As Lionel Pearson says, “the evidence has not been destroyed, but it has been tampered with, selected, excerpted, summarized, and even brought up to date by Greek philosophers and moralists.” Pearson, 1960, v.

32 Alexander against advisors/Parmenio: Chapter 1 and 3. Parmenio and Memnon: Chapter 1 and 3.

33 Troy: Chapter 1. Aristeia: Chapter 3. Four Great Battles: Chapter 3 and see below.

34 The Greek μῦθος is more often translated as “legend” or “myth” denoting particularly divine subjects, which is true for many but not all of the Alexander mythoi.
notes one such mythos regarding the “Four Great Battles” theme, though he calls it “the dogma of the four great battles of Alexander” (i.e., the Granicus, Issus, Gaugamela, and the Hydaspes). The Four Great Battles theme, established by early writers such as Kleitarchos, arose out of “an almost subconscious desire” to raise the Granicus (and the later Hydaspes) to the same level as world-defining events at Issus and Gaugamela. As Alexander’s first battle on “Asian” soil, the Granicus was subjected to greater exaggerations and literary-rhetorical contortion than his supposedly less important battles in the Balkans, obscuring the fact that the Granicus was in fact far more tactically similar to his battles at the Danube or Pelion. The theme became a mythos when it began to affect, consciously or subconsciously, the writings of subsequent ancient authors and historians. The battle at the Granicus was in many ways the birth of many Alexander mythoi, and both ancient and modern accounts of the battle have been affected in turn.

35 Devine, 1986, 265.
36 Though Devine limits this “dogma” to solely modern commentators rather than understanding it as an active force affecting the writings of the ancient extant historians. Devine, 1986, 265.
37 As Naiden notes, “Asia” didn’t really exist in the mind of the Persians or any “Asians.” “To the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians, there was no such place.” Naiden, 2019, 52. The existence of a cohesive Asia is itself a mythos present in and affecting ancient and modern historiography.
Untangling the Threads

From this historiographical mess, modern scholars have been left to sift through and obtain some semblance of order. Modern scholarship may be roughly divided into three groups: the German scholars of the late 19th and early 20th century, the British and American scholars from the late 1940s on, and seven autopsies.\textsuperscript{38} For nearly a century, autopsy has been the revered method to discover more useful evidence in unraveling the Granicus mystery, upon which both the German and English scholarship rests. Almost universally, scholars utilizing autopsy of the modern landscape have chosen Arrian’s account of the river crossing. But fresh evidence provided by the GRVASP demonstrates that the landscape has changed significantly since ancient times, proving these autopsies obsolete and delusional.\textsuperscript{39} Archeology and core drilling can more than make up for the deficiencies of modern autopsy, however; from the superior physical evidence of the GRVASP, we know the precise locations of a large marsh, a bay, a lake, and numerous towns and estates within the valley, all of which are clarified and elucidated through a 3D recreation of the ancient landscape.

Utilizing fresh evidence and clarifying through the 3D recreation, we may attempt to construct a new outlook. A few consequences are immediately evident. The battle at the Granicus was in fact far less complicated and far more logical than both ancient historians and modern scholars often believe, both in regards to the choice of the valley itself; the choice of the Persian defense, and the exact events of the battle. Chapter 1 argues that, as soon as Alexander crossed the Hellespont, a battle in the Granicus Valley was all but inevitable (or, at least, the most logical choice for both sides); the valley was in fact not poorly chosen but optimal for the Persian defense given their economic and social positions. Chapter 2 argues that the defense site itself was also optimally chosen for a Persian defense. Fresh


\textsuperscript{39} Anticipated by Harl’s 1997 and Naiden’s 2013 autopsies, which both pointed out extensive modern irrigation. Also anticipated in Hammond 1980, but with radically different results.
evidence suggests the site was in fact upstream near the Höyük Bayırı Tepe, validating a Diodoran account of the river crossing. The validation of the Diodoran river crossing in turn compels a complete reevaluation of our three major ancient accounts of the battle. Chapter 3 analyzes the three accounts, comparing individual threads and deconstructing the multitude of mythoi which influenced their inclusions or omissions. More often than not, the accounts of Diodorus, Arrian, and Plutarch compliment rather than contradict; they exaggerate, but never outright fabricate. All succumb to the misleading mythoi in various ways, but combining their accounts with the fresh archaeological evidence provides a satisfying (though still incomplete) account of the battle at the Granicus River.
Chapter 1: The March Up-Country

Figure 1.1: The Troad in 334 BCE.

This chapter will establish the stakes of the battle at the Granicus, retrace the steps of both the Persians and Alexander, and examine new evidence regarding their motivations for the battle and its placement in the Granicus River Valley. Both the Persians and Alexander needed a battle to occur, and needed it to occur somewhere within the Troad region. Alexander crossed the Hellespont with little personal knowledge of its terrain, few resources, and teetering prestige. I will argue he made up for the latter deficiency with an overtly Homeric attitude which would later influence many tales surrounding his Anatolian exploits. The combination of these three factors required him to head straight for Daskyleion,
the seat of Persian government in the Troad, in order to force a battle. If he could not overcome those deficiencies, his initial foray - and therefore, his entire Asiatic campaign - would be cut short. The Persians, meanwhile, were indeed forced to engage. Contrary to both modern and ancient historians’ favorable outlook on the military feasibility of the Greek mercenary-general Memnon’s scorched-earth plan, new evidence suggests that his plan was untenable. The Granicus Valley and its surrounding regions was the site of numerous wealthy Persian estates - many of which belonged to the local generals in the satrap’s army. A battle in the Troad was inevitable.

Part one of this chapter will establish Alexander’s motivations at the outset of his Asiatic expedition. It will then retrace Alexander’s route, arguing that the three competing factors stated above will lead him to adopt a Homeric attitude, particularly related first to his sojourn in Troy and second to his choice of Daskyleion as his initial target; this attitude would influence the quasi-Homeric mythos which influenced our surviving ancient histories. Part two will analyze the world of the local Persians, introducing new evidence to cast light on Memnon’s ultimately unfeasible scorched-earth proposal. Part three will explain how, out of their three options - the satrapal capital at Daskyleion, the hill forts surrounding the Aesepos River, and the wide Granicus Valley - the Persians’ choice for their site of defense was clear.

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40 Satrap: a Persian regional governor.
The Macedonians: Alexander’s Route Through the Troad

Twenty days after setting out from the Macedonian capital, the army of Alexander arrived in Sestos, a port on the Gallipoli Peninsula (see Figure 1.1). Crossing from Europe to Asia, Alexander knew he suffered from three key deficiencies. First, he lacked the resources to fund a protracted campaign spanning all of Asia; according to Plutarch, Alexander’s chief engineer Aristobulus reported that he only had seventy talents upon crossing the Hellespont, whilst the post-Alexander Duris of Samos said he had provisions for thirty days.\(^1\) Alexander could solve his resource issues by conquering one of the provincial capitals, but to do so, he would first need to win a battle. To win a battle, he needed to overcome his second deficiency: his lack of personal experience in Asia. He could overcome his lack of knowledge using his Scouts and reconnaissance men, but only partially. His second-in-command, Parmenio, had fought and lost a preliminary campaign in the region just the year prior, and thus possessed some knowledge of the landscape, mostly limited to the coastal Greek cities such as Pitane and Cyzicus.

But Alexander did not want to rely too much on Parmenio due to his third deficiency: prestige among his officers. His most important generals, including Parmenio, all served under his father Philip II, and they frequently disagreed with Alexander over policy and strategy. These disagreements will become a staple of the Alexander-vs-Parmenio theme.\(^2\) Although he had successfully established his own military record in the Balkans and against Thebes, he was as-yet untested in Asia; Parmenio himself had advised Alexander not to undertake the campaign at all until he had produced an heir.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) "And the great and glorious war-chest which Fortune had ready for him was only seventy talents, as Aristobulus says, although Duris says it was provision for only thirty days." Plutarch, *Fortune of Alexander* 1.3

\(^2\) See Introduction for a detailed breakdown of the themes, and Chapter 3 for Alexander-vs-Parmenio in particular.

\(^3\) D.S. *Lib.*, Book 17.16
Emphasizing his Homeric connections was one way in which Alexander could overcome his lack of prestige, and through this, his two other deficiencies. Beyond his generals, Alexander also needed to prove to the coastal Greek cities that surrender was their most beneficial option – if he were not victorious, they would surely face punishment by the Persians. Yet he simultaneously needed their support in order to win, both in regard to resources (his first deficiency) and in order to pass undeterred.

Although modern scholars continue to debate Alexander’s exact goals at the outset of his expedition, we need not concern ourselves here.\(^{44}\) In his present moment at the Hellespont, a Homeric attitude neither necessitated world conquest nor conflicted with it; it only required that Alexander perform heroic deeds aligned with his ancestors. At the Granicus, it would take the form of a bizarre single-combat aristeia (ἀριστεία) which even further muddies already unclear accounts.\(^{45}\)

By the time Alexander arrived at the Hellespont (modern Dardanelles), his second-in-command Parmenio had already established a beachhead across the strait at the port town of Abydos (see Figure 1.1).\(^{46}\) It was left in Parmenio’s capable hands to transport the cavalry and most of the infantry across the straits in 160 triremes; Alexander, meanwhile, went further south to Elaious, at the tip of the peninsula.\(^{47}\)

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\(^{44}\) The source of this debate is, as always, due to the ambiguity of the ancient historians. A general overview as follows. Alexander’s goal at the outset:
To seize the Persian empire by hook or crook: Naiden, 2019, 52.
To seize only up to the Cilician Gates (a limited view): Atkinson and Yardley, 2009, 134.

\(^{45}\) The aristeia will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

\(^{46}\) Arr. An., 1.11.3-6. Arrian is the sole source for each location visit unless otherwise noted.

\(^{47}\) Unless otherwise noted, refer to Figure 1.1 for all locations mentioned in this chapter.
At Elaious, Alexander’s Homeric attitude necessitated that he find the grave of Protesilaos, the first of the Greeks to touch the shores of Troy in Homer’s *Iliad*.\(^{48}\) He made the first of many sacrifices honoring the Homeric heroes there. Today Elaious is buried under the modern Gallipoli National Historical Park, whose imposing arch looks out over the Aegean Sea and the Hellespont. From the monument, one can easily see the present site of Troy across the strait, as Alexander likely did (see Figure 1.2).

From Elaious, Alexander sailed across the strait and landed in the “Achaean harbor” (Ἀχαιῶν λιμένα), just northwest of Troy itself.\(^{49}\) The bay had once stretched far deeper and wider; in the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, it extended along the lower valley of the Scamander river, and by the

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\(^{48}\) Strabo confirms the existence of this monument, the “Protosilaion”: Strabo, *Geography*, 7.21a.

\(^{49}\) Arr. *An.*, 1.11.6
Bronze Age the bay stopped just at the shores of Troy itself. By 334 BCE, the harbor was shallow and marshy, its shoreline extending roughly from the ancient site of Sigeion to the present-day village of Kumkale (see Figure 1.3). By Alexander’s time, the ancients were keenly aware of the sedimentation, leading to Strabo’s infamously incorrect assessment of Ilion (Troy) as a fake. Today, due to continued sedimentation and lowered sea-levels, there is no bay whatsoever.

Modern historians also dispute Alexander’s exact goals for this initial sojourn. Abydos was not the optimal point of departure for his troops, nor was Alexander’s week-long pilgrimage conducive to his long-term objective of total Persian conquest considering his low resources. Alexander undoubtedly used the trip to strengthen his Homeric prestige; according to both Arrian and Diodorus, upon landing onshore he leapt from his ship and threw the first spear onto the Asian soil, followed by erecting altars to Zeus, Athena, and Heracles.

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50 Kayan, 2014.
51 Strabo, Geography, 13.25-27
52 Naiden, 2015, 217.
53 Arr. An., 1.11.7; D.S. Lib., 17.17.2
The resource deficiency remained unsolved, and so Alexander had three options from Troy. He could go south along the Anatolian coast towards Halicarnassus and the rich Ionian cities; this, however, would leave an enemy at his back, and pilfering fellow Greeks was hardly heroic. His second and most potentially lucrative option was southeast towards Sardis, the capital of the Anatolian satrapy and former capital of the rich Lydian kingdom; he could then camp at Sardis until the Persian army came to dislodge him, and thus gain a battle on slightly slower but safer terms. But Sardis could require a siege, and Alexander’s main target, Darius, was far from Anatolia. He would gain no Homeric glory from holing up in a Persian city, waiting for his enemy to approach. Only one option gave him both spear-won Homeric prestige and temporary resources: Alexander would have to continue east from Troy towards
the local satrapal capital of Daskyleion, the base of the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia, who had summoned an army at a city just to its west.

So Alexander set off toward Daskyleion. Unfortunately, neither Diodorus nor Plutarch are particularly useful in tracking Alexander’s steps from Troy to the Granicus River. Only Arrian includes details between the two major events. According to Arrian, Alexander’s first stop after Troy was Arisbe, just north of the port at Abydos. There he met up with his encamped army led by Parmenio. One day’s march from Arisbe brought them to Perkote, and another day took them past Lampsakos (modern Lapseki) to encamp near a river named Praktios, which Arrian erroneously described as flowing from the famous Mount Ida much further south. The Praktios is as-yet unidentified, but may be the modern Bayram stream near the village of Adatepe (see Figure 1.1).

Lampsakos was a wealthy port town; though it belonged to Persia in 334, it paid one of the highest possible numbers of annual talents (twelve) at the height of the Delian League one hundred years earlier. It was, in Strabo’s words, “a city on the sea, with a good harbor and which is notable and continues to be attractive.” Arrian gave no indication as to whether or not the city formally surrendered; he simply stated that Alexander encamped at the river Praktios “having passed Lampsakos” (Λάμψακον παραμείψας). Perhaps the citizens of the city wished to resist, given its extensive time ruled by the Persian-allied Memnon. Pausanias in his Description of Greece says outright that the city “favoured the cause of the Persian king,” and then gives an apocryphal tale of Alexander’s choice to spare the city: the historian Anaximenes of Lampsakos, he says, tricked

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54 Location attested in Strabo, Geography, 13.1.21.
55 Arr. An., 1.12.6
56 Arr. An., 1.12.6; see Figure 1.1. Perkote and the river Praktios are both attested in Strabo, Geography, 13.1.20-21, though Strabo notes that Praktios was specifically not the site of a city, implying confusion over the location even in his own time.
57 Hasluck, 1909, 166.
58 Strabo, Geography, 13.1.18.
59 Arr. An., 1.12.6
60 See below. Ellis-Evans, 2018, 33–69.
Alexander into swearing to do the opposite of whatever Anaximenes asked, only for him to request that he burn the city down.\textsuperscript{61} Though this account is a prime example of an anachronistic supplication tale, it nonetheless indicates that Alexander was more focused on heading straight towards Daskyleion – and thus forcing a battle – rather than pausing to extract as much wealth as possible from every location he encountered.

Arrian reported that from the river Praktios, the Macedonians veered inland, passed the city of Kolonai, and stopped again in Hermoton; before leaving Hermoton, Alexander sent out reconnaissance men under Amyntas, son of Arrabaios, along with Companions and Scouts. According to Arrian, Amyntas in turn sent out a detachment under Panegoros, son of Lycagoros, to receive the surrender of the city Priapos by its inhabitants.\textsuperscript{62} Priapos (modern Karabiga) was located on the coast of the Granicus River Valley, a fertile, rich, but otherwise unremarkable tract of land which Parmenio undoubtedly passed through in his abortive campaign the year prior. It was in this unremarkable valley that a subordinate of a subordinate was the first to learn of the Persian’s presence across the river.

\textsuperscript{61} Pausanias, \textit{Description of Greece}, 6.18.3-4.
\textsuperscript{62} Arr. \textit{An.}, 1.12.7
The Persians: Economic Importance of the Region

As Alexander was playing hero in Troy and passing through the various towns of the western Troad, the Greek mercenary-general Memnon marshalled the Persian troops at Zeleia, just a few miles west of the satrapal capital at Daskyleion. Along with his brother, Mentor, Memnon of Rhodes had ruled parts of the Troad on behalf of the Persian satrap Artabazos for a collective two decades: first from 363-353 BCE, then again from 342 until Alexander’s invasion in 334. Their influence over local implementation of Persian rule may be seen in the coins of the period: their designs feature heads of Apollo, Athena, Helios, and other distinctly Greek features. Despite his ten-year absence from 352-342—the result of Artabazos’ failed rebellion against Artaxerxes II—he and his brother, who had died at some point between 342 and 334, retained a strong connection to the Troad. Memnon had extensive experience and detailed knowledge of the whole of western Anatolia, from his birthplace in Rhodes (just off the southwestern coast) to Lampsakos, the location at which he likely minted his coins. He also boasted a strong military record; it was he who inflicted the devastating victory against Parmenio near Magnesia the year prior.

It undoubtedly came as a shock, then, when Memnon advised the satrap Arsites’ council to burn the entire region to the ground. The incident was reported in both Arrian and Diodorus with few notable differences: Arrian reported that Memnon “advised them not to take a chance against the Macedonians… [and] to march ahead, destroying the grazing land by trampling it with cavalry, and burn the standing harvest, not even sparing the cities themselves; Alexander would not remain in the country, he said, if provisions were scarce.” Diodorus concurred: Memnon “advocated a policy of not fighting a pitched battle, but of stripping the countryside and through the shortage of supplies preventing the

\[^{63}\text{A. Ellis-Evans, 2018, 33–69.}\]
\[^{64}\text{Arr. An., 1.12.9}\]
Macedonians from advancing further,” but Diodorus uncharacteristically added more detail to
Memnon’s proposal, that “at the same time they sent naval and land forces across to Macedon, and
transferred the impact of war to Europe.”

Both Greek historians treated Memnon’s proposal as undoubtedly the best option the Persians
could have taken, though they gave different reasons why the other commanders rejected it. Arrian
claimed that they rejected the proposal out of vague suspicion that Memnon was “intentionally delaying
the war on account of honor from the King,” though it is not clear what honor he would have gained
from the delay. Diodorus, by contrast, concluded that his advice was simply deemed “beneath the
dignity of the Persians.” In any case, both imply that the Persians would have nipped Alexander’s
entire conquest in the bud, if only they had listened to the wise Memnon of Rhodes. Both Memnon and
his former opponent, Parmenio, thus fit into a theme of their own: that of the wise but oft-ignored
advisor. Memnon does so here, whilst Parmenio will be ignored first at the Granicus (as according to
Arrian and Plutarch, but notably not Diodorus) and then at future engagements as well.

But new evidence suggests that Memnon’s advice was truly untenable. Although today the
Granicus River Valley is dominated by fields of cattle, chicken, sunflowers, corn, and rice, the region
was at its economic apogee during the Persian period. According to the GRVASP, an astonishing 41
percent of all pottery found in the Granicus region dated to the Classical and Archaic periods,
compared to less than 1 percent for the preceding Bronze Age and 5 percent for the succeeding
Hellenistic period. The Classical and Archaic pottery includes numerous imports, from Attic

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65 D.S. Lib., 17.18.2
66 Arr. An., 1.12.9
67 D.S. Lib., 17.18.3
68 With a notable exception at Gaugamela, where Parmenio and the other generals prevails against
Alexander, and Issus as according to Curtius Rufus, History of Alexander the Great, 3.7.8-10; Arrian’s
version of the pre-Issus meeting omits this and only features a one-sided speech by Alexander: Arr. An.,
2.7.3-9
69 Körpe and Rose, 2007, 1. See the Introduction for a detailed explanation of the GRVASP.
black-figure to Lydian and Ionian styles. But the greatest indicator of local wealth may be found in the distinct tumuli still dotting its landscape. Tombs of local Persian aristocrats, many of whom served in the satrapal court located in Daskyleion, were placed in prominent locations, including hills, ridges, along rivers, or on major roads, often to mark the boundaries of their estates. Skilled artisans almost always made these tombs with Proconnesian marble, a very famous variety found on the nearby island of Proconnesus. Some contain alabastra (containers for perfume or oil) stained with Tyrian purple, an expensive imported dye. The tombs are also filled with gold and silver adornments for both the deceased and their surrounding implements; as described in the Introduction, it was the looting of these tumuli that necessitated the project. As the GRVASP states, “It is clear that this area, near the battlefield of Granicus, was one of the most important late Archaic and Classical aristocratic burial grounds in northwestern Turkey.” The tombs dominated the landscape, so much so that their large size allowed use as observation platforms during war, as reported in Xenophon’s Anabasis.

Xenophon also reported that the area surrounding the Granicus was teeming with paradeisoi, the Persian’s aristocratic hunting grounds. One such Paradise still exists in the form of a wildlife preserve on Lake Manyas, the same lake upon which Daskyleion rests. The lands surrounding the Granicus and Aesepos rivers were rich and fertile, and it is likely that Memnon himself owned estates in the very region he wished to burn. Polyaenus in his Stratagems states that Alexander ordered for Memnon’s property and estates to be left untouched in order to raise suspicions among the Persians. Regardless of the statement’s veracity, it suggests that Memnon’s estates were numerous and notable enough for the Persians to know of their status. Scholars speculate as to the exact location of his

71 So famous that the modern name for the Sea of Marmara takes its name from Greek μάρμαρον, “marble.”
72 Körpe and Rose, "GRVASP 2004," 326
74 Xenophon, Anabasis, 1.9.13, 4.6.11, 5.6.7.
75 See below. Xenophon, Hellenika, 4.15-16.
76 Polyaenus, Stratagems, 4.3.15.
estates; Hammond places his main estate near Abydos, while Seibert proposes Skepsis, Kebren, and perhaps Lampsakos, the last of which is supported by new coin findings.\textsuperscript{77} Even if Memnon did not own land within the Granicus Valley itself, some of his fellow generals certainly did.

Memnon had already faced and defeated Parmenio’s force the year prior, but that force numbered only five to ten-thousand. Alexander’s encroaching army numbered nearly five times that number; Arrian claimed there were 30,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry, while Diodorus suggested 32,000 infantry and 4,500 cavalry.\textsuperscript{78} The Persians were outnumbered, and evidently Memnon was not confident that their skill or bravery could overcome their numeric disadvantage, or at least believed that a scorched-earth policy was worth the losses in both economy and pride. Memnon also evidently understood and was hoping to exploit at least one of Alexander’s three deficiencies: his lack of resources.\textsuperscript{79}

Despite those doubts, however, the Persians could not bring themselves to burn their own lands. Instead, they were faced with a different question altogether: where best to place their defense against the Macedonian invasion.

\textsuperscript{77} Hammond: Hammond, 1980, 68.
\textsuperscript{78} Arr. An., 1.11.3; D.S. Lib., 17.17.3-5. The exact numbers of the battle will be discussed in chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{79} In doing so Memnon would also have denied Alexander’s plan for overcoming the deficiencies: a Homeric battle.
The Persians’ Choices for the Site of Defense

Between the satrapal capital at Daskyleion and Alexander’s crossing at the Hellespont, there were three potential sites for a Persian defense. The first and eastmost was to retreat to the defensible capital at Daskyleion; the second was near Zeleia itself, along the Aesepos River Valley; the third was the Granicus River Valley. Any further was impossible. Alexander had already advanced with startling speed, a feat that helped him overcome a rebellion at Thebes the year prior; by the time they heard of his approach, any chance of defending Memnon’s powerbase in Lampsakos was lost.\textsuperscript{80}

Memnon’s scorched earth strategy likely proposed that the Persians retreat from their current location at Zeleia some 20 miles east, towards Daskyleion on the shores of Lake Manyas. Daskyleion was the bustling satrapal capital of Hellespontine Phrygia, its influence spreading from the southwestern tip of the Troad to the shores of the Black Sea. Xenophon describes the abundance of Paradeisoi and royal estates surrounding the capital: “and round about it were many large villages, stored with provisions in abundance, and splendid wild animals, some of them in enclosed parks, others in open spaces. There was also a river, full of all kinds of fish, flowing by the palace. And, besides, there was winged game in abundance for those who knew how to take it.”\textsuperscript{81} The city itself was placed upon a defensible hill and possessed formidable walls (see Figure 1.4). These walls, however, were unable to prevent the Spartan king Agesilaos from ravaging the countryside, pilfering the Paradeisoi, entering the city, and destroying its palace in 396/5 BCE.\textsuperscript{82} Just sixty years later, the Persians facing Alexander still held the defeat within living memory. Daskyleion was not an option to anyone other than Memnon.

\textsuperscript{80} Alexander’s speed towards Thebes: \textit{Arr. An.}, 1.7.4-6
\textsuperscript{81} Xenophon, \textit{Hellenika}, 4.15-16.
\textsuperscript{82} Xenophon, \textit{Hellenika}, 4.1.15-19. Resisted by the satrap Pharnabazos somewhat successfully, Agesilaos would be forced to retreat to the southwestern plain of the Troad a year later.
Figure 1.4: View of Lake Manyas from atop the Daskyleion hill. Photos of the archaeological site were not permitted as work is ongoing.

Figure 1.5: Ruins at Cyzicus/Kyzikos. The city was extremely prosperous due to its proximity to the marble production hub at Prokonnessos.
If Daskyleion was unavailable, then, perhaps Memnon could have proposed a defense along the Aesepos River Valley (modern Gönen River). Though less fertile and more hilly, this area was closer to the rich cities of Zeleia, Cyzicus, and Daskyleion, and thus held a significantly higher number of settlements than the Granicus (see Figure 1.5). Notably, nearly all of these settlements were hill forts owing to the mountainous topography of the Aesepos. Three hill forts were particularly defensible and already well-occupied, as indicated by the extensive amount of evidence gathered there by the GRVASP. One, at Dereköy (modern Gönen), was several miles south of Zeleia; another, at Bostancı, was east, situated directly across from the Aesepos river between Zeleia and Daskyleion. A third, Taşoluk, was in fact nearer to the Granicus Valley, perched high at the foot of the mountains far west of Zeleia. Taşoluk in fact lay at a southern entrance to the Granicus Valley via a road discovered by the GRVASP. This road was used at least until Greco-Roman times and lay atop a high hill, and “from here one can see Gümüşçay [ancient Didymateiche], Biga [ancient Pegae], and Priapus on clear days.” Taşoluk, then, was an ideal defensive position as according to Memnon’s scorched-earth plan, but it was far from ideal for the Persians. Both Taşoluk and the hill forts along the Aesepos were far too mountainous to allow the Persian cavalry room to maneuver in a pitched battle. The Aesepos hill forts, then, were not an option.

Given Alexander’s advanced position at Troy, the Persians had but one option left to consider. The Granicus Valley was home to a wide open plain which stretched between two defensible tributaries with high banks, slippery slopes, and few fords. Though wealthy and productive in its own right, it was nowhere near as important as the estates and Paradeisoi surrounding Daskyleion and the Aesepos. Yet it did possess many of their estates, as well as the prosperous towns of Pegae, Priapos, and

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83 Körpe and Rose, “GRVASP 2006,” 104-5
Didymateiche, the latter of which was left wide open to attack. The Granicus Valley was the boldest, bravest option possible, and the only one left which would allow the Persian cavalry to fight a proper pitched battle. So the Persian defenders set off west along the royal road. The next chapter will deal with their choices and actions upon their arrival in the Granicus River Valley. The ancient landscape significantly differed from its modern counterpart, and the accounts of the ancient historians provide limited but useful landscape markers. In this ancient landscape, the Persians would need to choose an optimal site of defense.
Chapter 2: In Search of the Persian Defense

The Persians arrived from Zeleia into the Granicus River Valley via the eastern royal road, entering in the vicinity of Didymateiche (modern Gümüşçay). The satraps and commanders now had a decision to make: where to locate their defense. When they looked south to their left, they saw the rising mountains from which the river’s two tributaries flowed; the ground there was rocky and steep, the forests and meadows reserved as paradeisoi (hunting grounds). Directly before them, the Adrasteian plain stretched between the two tributaries, which eventually joined up to their right. Estates, vineyards, and patchwork fields lay along the tributaries and in the plain between; this area was famous for its wine, as implied by the name of the harbor town in the far distance to their right, Priapos (modern Karabiga). The town sat across a bay, beyond which glittered the Propontis (modern Sea of Marmara); between the Persians at Didymateiche and the bay was marshy ground, unfit for cultivation or battle. To their right and left along the foothills of the eastern mountains, family tombs marked rich estates, many of which belonged to the army now tasked with defending the valley (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2; these figures will be relevant throughout the chapter).

The decision of where to place their site of defense was a crucial one. The Persians would be outnumbered, and needed any advantage they could find from the terrain. If they could hold what Plutarch would later call the “gates of Asia” (πύλαις Ἀσίας)—or, at least, if they could inflict such heavy losses as to make Alexander’s victory pyrrhic—they could squash the prospects of Alexander’s so-called Asiatic campaign.

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86 Priapos is a god of fertility, vineyards, and erections. Parker, 2003.
87 Precise numbers of the battle to be discussed in Chapter 3.
88 Plu. Alex., 16.1.
Figure 1: The modern Biga River Valley.
Figure 2: Rough theoretical recreation of the ancient Granicus River Valley, based on archaeological findings in combination with Alfred Phillipson’s 1910 survey.
Figure 2.3: A 3D recreation of the ancient Granicus Valley, facing south.

Proper identification of the Persian site of defense is crucial in order to resolve the overall debate regarding the course of the battle itself. Arrian’s description of the battle’s river crossing relies on a placement below (north of) the river’s confluence at Çınarköprü because of the steepness of the banks further upstream, while Diodorus’ river crossing is more likely to have taken place above the confluence. Validating Diodorus would call into question Alexander’s military exploits, the mythoi surrounding those exploits, and the very nature of his Asiatic campaign. Beyond the choice between Diodoran and Arrianic accounts of the river crossing, however, the location of the Persian defense may also provide further insight into the battle proper.

Despite the landscape’s importance in the coming battle, the Alexander historians spent little time describing it. Arrian painted the most vivid scene, yet still declined to describe the valley itself. On the east side, he wrote, was “high ground overlooking the banks” (ὑπερδέξια τὰ ὑπὲρ τὴν ὄχθην
χωρία) upon which foreign mercenary infantry was posted; evidently this hill was either isolated or shallow enough for horsemen to “attack [them] on every side” (πάντῃ προσπεσεῖν) at the conclusion of the battle. Arrian also noted various “lookout places” (σκοπή) from which Alexander’s scouts could report the Persian’s movements and positions. Otherwise, description is limited to the river itself, which Arrian’s Parmenio described as having “many deep spots” (πολλὰ βαθέα) with “high and steep” banks (ὑπερψηλοὶ καὶ κρημνώδεις), and which Arrian’s Alexander described as a “little stream” (σμικρὸν ῥέμα). The other ancient historians didn’t provide much more detail. Diodorus only noted that the Persian cavalry the day prior rested on “high ground” (ὑπώρειαν, literally “the foot of the mountain”) from which they intended to fall upon the enemy. Plutarch described the river similarly to Arrian, through the fear of the Macedonians (though not Parmenio specifically): the river was deep (βάθος), and the banks were uneven and rough (ἀνωμαλίαν καὶ τραχύτητα) as well as moist and slippery (ὑγρῶν καὶ περισφαλῶν). Like Arrian, he also mentioned the “hill” (λόφῳ) upon which the Greek mercenaries gathered. Neither Diodorus nor Arrian nor Plutarch used the term “Adrasteian Plain” to describe the landscape; among all the Alexander historians, only Justin’s *Epitome* mentioned it (campis Adrasteis). Modern scholars have thus been forced to theorize on the precise location of the battle with limited literary evidence, leading to great debate over the ancient river’s course, the ancient landscape itself, and the feasibility of battle placements. This chapter will resolve the debate over the location of the Persian defense, tackling three important misconceptions in order to establish a general site for the battle.

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89 Arr. An., 1.14.4, 1.16.2
90 Arr. An., 1.13.2
91 Arr. An., 1.13.4, 1.13.6
92 D.S. Lib., 17.19
93 Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, 11.6.10. Naiden notes that the plain may have been named after Adrastus, a Trojan prince who supplicated to and was then killed by Agamemnon. Not unrelated was the goddess Adrasteia, who governed inevitable fate and was often linked with Nemesis, goddess of revenge. Naiden, 2018, 63.
by process of elimination. Pictures from a rough 3D recreation of the ancient valley are interspersed for elucidation throughout (see Figure 2.3).

The first misconception to be dealt with regards the modern course of the river. Contrary to some modern historians’ assertions, geophysical investigations by the GRVASP indicate that there has been no change in the river’s upper course since antiquity. Potential change in the course would present a massive obstacle to drawing any meaningful conclusions from modern topography, so the continuity of the river’s upper course enables further discussion regarding the landscape and topography of the defense.

The second misconception regards the traditional placement of the defense by respected scholarly autopsies. The lower course of the river east of the modern village of Çınarköprü, traditionally thought to be the site of the battle, was in fact marsh in 334 BCE. It is also extremely likely that the area even further downstream, toward the coast, was underwater entirely. Both factors combine to disqualify that area, just north of the confluence, as the potential battle site; as a result, the Arrianic riverbank crossing is increasingly less likely, since the banks south of the confluence are far steeper and also punctuated by ancient towns and settlements.

The third misconception regards other scholarly placements. Given the previous two arguments, three factors combine to facilitate a proper choice for the Persian defense. After reviewing the other modern placements and discussing the banks of the river, we must first identify the suitable candidate(s) for the “hill” (λόφος) upon which the Greek mercenary infantry stood. The necessity for a hill which could be attacked from all sides (πάντῃ προσπεσεῖν) narrows down the choice of defense to two possible candidates: the superior choice of Höyük Bayırı Tepe and the inferior choice of Kızöldün Tepe. Second, we must consider the needs of the Persians and Macedonians: both sides needed wide, flat space on either side of the Granicus River to set up camp, along with dry land beyond the camps for
supply lines and, if necessary, a line of retreat. The Persians, having arrived first, would have picked a camp site from which they could be secure and fortified. Following this thought process, we must also discuss the prevalence of now-known archaeological sites and the meaning of their omission from any ancient historian’s narrative of the battle. In doing so, I argue that the omission of important towns such as Didymateiche from the historical narrative of the battle logically implies that those towns lay a suitable distance away from the battle itself, perhaps due to the Persian desire to protect their own land holdings and families living in the area. With these three factors considered, I propose the Persian’s site of defense as having taken place between the two tributaries, with the “hill” consisting of the only possible hill in the area, the Höyük Bayrın Tepe.
Geological Changes: The Course of the River

Today’s Granicus River, called the Biga Çayı, is fed by four sub-basins in the mountains flowing from the south to the north (see Figure 2.1). For our purposes, however, only two sub-basins are of note: the western “Biga” stream enters the valley primarily through the town of Biga, combines with the Kirazlıdere stream, then hugs a ridge along its west bank, upon which stands the modern Biga-Karabiga road. The eastern “Gümüşçay” stream enters the valley through the village of Bahçeli (ancient Sidene), cutting through a fertile plain before passing through the town of Gümüşçay (ancient Didymateiche). About halfway between Biga and Karabiga (ancient Priapos) is the village Çınarköprü, where both major streams converge. From Çınarköprü the river proper flows north through alluvial plains into the Sea of Marmara.

The course of the ancient Granicus River is more of a mystery. Although scholarly debate is not settled, agreement over whether the ancient Granicus followed the same course as the modern river is a prerequisite for further discussion on the exact location of the battle itself. Certainly other aspects of the landscape in the Granicus River Valley have changed dramatically over the past couple centuries. Most notable was a man-made irrigation canal, extending out from roughly the half-way point between the confluence at Çınarköprü and the coast. A dam was also built in the 1960s far up the eastern Gümüşçay sub-basin, somewhat alleviating winter floods.

A third major addition, also for the purpose of irrigation, is that of numerous weirs (low dams) along both major tributaries. Though the weirs do not change the course of the river or the steepness of the banks, they have dramatically affected the river’s depth; as a result, depth varies dramatically from just a couple feet (often immediately after the weirs) to at least ten feet (immediately before the weirs). In July, the river flows just above the weirs, such that they are often used as bridges (see Figures 2.4

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94 This stream is given three various titles. It’s official name is Kocadere (Utlu and Ozdemir); Google Maps dubs it the Kocabaş stream, though Kocabaş is actually the official name of the sub-basin past the confluence at Çınarköprü; the locals and archeologists, however, dub it the Gümüşçay stream for clarity.
and 2.5). Though the weirs are meant to help alleviate the winter floods, water level still varies dramatically by season. By spring, however, the water has generally sunk to a meter high - still four times higher than the summer average of 25cm. Irrigation and farming has generally flattened the landscape as a whole, either through accelerated erosion or in an intentional effort to create more farmland. The result is that only the most difficult or sturdy hills have remained, such as the ridge upon which the modern Biga-Karabiga highway stands. The soil from this ridge is volcanic and dates to the Mesozoic era, whilst the soil around and between the tributaries is alluvial and geologically far younger.

Figure 2.4: The first visible weir on the western Biga tributary also functions as a bridge.

Given these modern changes, the confirmation of the ancient course of the river is of extreme importance. There are three possible views. One view postulates that if the river’s course has changed, the location of the battle is simply unknowable. Such a view invalidates any further discussion on the site of the battle, at least with regard to the utility of modern topographical data. Discussion of the defense

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95 Utlu and Özdemir, 2018.
96 Maden Tetkik ve Arama, 2002.
site would thus revolve solely on literary evidence - a method which has already been well-discussed with few convincing results. No modern historian attempting to reconstruct a view of the battle has taken that view.

Figure 2.5: The west Biga tributary immediately behind the weir is far deeper. Note the extremely high banks just beyond the weir's main affected area.

Instead, some scholars attempt a compromise: even if we cannot know the exact course of the river, perhaps we can speculate. Two modern scholars have advanced this view with differing results. Heinrich Kiepert’s 1877 “Das Schlachtfeld am Granikos” posits that the western Biga tributary once flowed through the seasonal lake of Ece Gol. He theorizes that the battle site itself was along this hypothetical river, extending from the lake’s edge to the confluence of the modern rivers (see Figure 2.2 and 2.3). Meanwhile, N.G.L. Hammond’s 1980 on-site autopsy “The Battle of the Granicus River” points out that “changes in the river systems of the alluvial plains on the Turkish coast are the rule rather than the exception.” He goes on to argue that the Granicus’ ancient course was radically different from the present day. Citing the frequency of uncontrolled winter floods, Hammond theorizes that the ancient

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97 Kiepert, 1877, 263.
98 Hammond, 1980, 78.
river followed the eastern Gümüşçay stream up through the town of Gümüşçay, but then hugged the eastern slopes up to modern Çeşmealtı. As for the western Biga stream, he simply says “there is no clue to [its] course… in 334 B.C.”

Though many scholars reject this view (shown below), notable support comes from A.M. Devine’s 1986 article *Demythologizing the Battle of the Granicus*, who calls the belief that the course of the river is unchanged “totally unfounded,” yet simultaneously entertains the notions that the modern banks of the river must match the ancient banks in height and roughness. The most recent endorsement comes from Damaris Corrigan in her 2004 dissertation *Riders On High*, who declares Hammond’s choice to be most likely.

![Figure 2.6: Map published by Alfred Phillipson depicting Ece Gol, dated 1910.](image)

The third and (perhaps unsurprisingly) most popular view simply states that the river most likely has not changed. In response to Kiepert’s proposition, A.W. Janke pointed out a ridge separating the

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100 Devine, 1986, 265.
102 Phillipson, 1910.
modern lake from the tributaries, which would have prevented any flow from the river into or out of it.  

Clive Foss’s 1977 article “The Battle of the Granicus: A New Look,” directly states that “there is no evidence that the river has changed its course since antiquity.” Foss is cited also in Kenneth Harl’s 1997 on-site autopsy. Harl refutes Hammond’s theory directly, calling his proposal “unwarranted and unsupported by any geophysical evidence.” But for the most part, this third view rests upon unspoken assumption; unless otherwise noted, any modern historian attempting to place the battle site through autopsy necessarily believes that the modern river course may be used as a rough guide for the ancient equivalent.

Two pieces of new evidence provide the decisive answer. Firstly, a 2002 geological survey of Turkey by the MTA (Mineral Research and Exploration General Directorate) has confirmed the existence of the ridge dating back to the Mesozoic era, thus confirming Janke’s refutation of Keipert’s theory. More importantly, as part of the GRVASP in 2006, Professor İlhan Kayan carried out numerous core-drillings in the valley’s floodplain around Çınarköprü and Çeşmealtı, the precise area that Hammond claimed to have contained the ancient river. Instead, their investigations “demonstrated that, at least in this region, there was no change in the river’s course in antiquity, as some military historians have argued.” With this matter settled, it is thus possible to discuss further the possibilities of the location of the Persians’ defense.

103 Janke, 1902, 137
104 Foss, 1977.
105 Harl, 1997.
107 Körpe and Rose, "GRVASP 2006," 107. For a detailed description of the GRVASP, see the Introduction.
Traditional Placement of the Defense

Scholars have put forward a number of sites as potential candidates for the battle at the Granicus River, but the most popularly acclaimed modern view posits that the battle took place directly below (north of) the confluence of the tributaries, first along the riverbanks (as Arrian claimed) and then bleeding into the plain between modern Çınaköprü and Çeşmealtı. Today, this area is an unremarkable collection of flat patchwork fields, rising onto the ridge upon which Çeşmealtı rests. The ridge itself is not too steep and is entirely cultivated past Çeşmealtı itself up to the foot of the eastern mountains marking the valley’s border.

![Image of Çınarköprü's sycamore bridge, facing south. May 1902.](image)

Figure 2.7. Janke’s photo of Çınarköprü’s sycamore bridge, facing south. May 1902.¹⁰⁸

The reason for this view’s popularity is due to its support first from A.W. Janke’s quintessential autopsy, and then from four of the five major English on-site autopsies of the past century. Janke visited the site in May 1902, taking pictures of the local wooden bridge at Çınarköprü and of his own fording

¹⁰⁸ Janke, 1904, 139.
of the river (see Figure 2.7).\textsuperscript{109} After describing in detail the lower course of the river from Çınarköprü to the sea, he states that “Auf diesen unteren Lauf als Schlachtfeld hat uns schon die wahrscheinliche Anmarschlinie Alexanders hingewiesen.”\textsuperscript{110} Nikos Nikolitsis’s 1971 autopsy is the first of the later 20th century autopsies to place the battle in the same region. One advantage to this placement, Nikolitsis states, would be that the Persian’s left wing, beginning at the confluence of the rivers, would be in far less danger of a flanking maneuver owing to the additional tributary through which the invaders would need to cross.

Clive Foss’s 1977 autopsy reached the same conclusion independently from Nikolitsis, placing the battle site east of the village Çınarköprü. Rather than potential advantages for the Persians, Foss emphasizes the inconsistent but notable gravel slopes on the east bank, which are both gentle and easy to walk “without the slightest effort.” Contrary to Nikolitsis, then, Foss favors the area precisely because of how indefensible it was; as he puts it, “once the slope has been scaled, the plain beyond offers no significant features which would be suitable for a defensive position.”\textsuperscript{111}

Twenty years later, Kenneth Harl’s 1997 autopsy seemed to confirm the previous two findings. According to Harl, the only possible fords for a force as large as the Macedonians’ “lay along the four to five kilometers between the marshy lower reaches of the Granicus and the confluence of the Granicus [Biga stream] and Koca Cayi [Gümüşçay stream].”\textsuperscript{112} Having read both Nikolitsis and Foss, Harl notes that while rough terrain beyond the confluence shielded the Persian’s left flank, it also prevented them from utilizing their signature mobility. He also notes the current’s slow flow and wide gravel deposits, offering an “access ramp” for attackers at each bend of the river.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{109} Janke, 1904, 138-9
\textsuperscript{110} In English, “This lower course as a battlefield has already been pointed out to us by Alexander’s probable line of approach.” Janke, 1904, 139.
\textsuperscript{111} Foss, 1977.
\textsuperscript{112} Harl, 1997, 313-315.
\textsuperscript{113} Harl, 1997, 315.
The final autopsy to claim this area is N.G.L. Hammond’s. As discussed in detail above, his view of the battle shifts the site a little further east to accommodate for the flooding and the “hill” mentioned in Arrian and Plutarch.

Once again, the GRVASP provides a decisive refutation in the form of its geophysical core drillings. Just after confirmation of the river’s unchanged course, it goes on to state:

“Moreover, it is now clear that the area to the east of Çınarköprü, which is traditionally regarded as the site of Alexander’s battle, was a very marshy area in the fourth century B.C., and completely inappropriate for warfare of any kind. The actual battlefield must be located further to the south of Gümüşçay, where the ground was solid and the course of the Granicus has remained stable.”114

The view of those four autopsies, then, cannot be correct. Comparison with similar geological areas introduces an interesting parallel. In the case of Troy, as described in Chapter 1, what was once a wide bay in ancient times has, over time, silted up entirely (see Figure 2.8). The ancient bay at Thermopylae, too, has since silted somewhat, rendering the famously narrow pass strategically useless. It is extremely likely that the Granicus River Valley experienced a similar silting over time, and that the land downstream from the marshy area traditionally associated with the battle was, in fact, not land at all. Ilhan Kayan’s geophysical core drillings confirmed this hypothesis, though they were not published.115 The Persians, entering the valley from the east, would have seen this area as marsh and water, entirely unsuitable for battle. Even if the riverbanks themselves were somehow dry, the land behind was not, thus depriving them of a potential area to flee if necessary - not to mention the absence

115 Kayan, Ilhan, per litteras.
of a hill upon which the infantry could stand (see Figure 2.2). The bay and marsh also deprived Alexander of potential advantages - if this area had instead contained a long, flat beach, Alexander could have attacked in the same way as he would later at Issus. With this area rebuffed, we can now move on to other possible placements for the Persian defense.

Figure 2.8. Geomorphological development of Troy’s bay.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{116} BP = Before present. 2000 BP = roughly 0 CE; 5000-4500 BP = roughly 3000-2500 BCE. Kayan, 2014.
In Search of Other Placements

Other modern scholars have proposed various placements of the battle at the Granicus River for varying reasons and with varying efficacy. First is the “lake placement.” As detailed above, Heinrich Kiepert’s 1877 autopsy theorizes that the battle took place along a hypothetical river flowing into and out of Ece Gol lake, a little west of the modern Biga tributary; this view, as above, has been refuted.\textsuperscript{117}

Others provide more noteworthy theories, most commonly the “Biga placement.” W. Judeich’s 1908 “Die Schlacht am Granikos” places the battle directly on the western Biga Çayı, anywhere along the river between modern Biga and the confluence of the tributaries.\textsuperscript{118} The placement along the Biga Çayı persists through scholars such as Fuller and Green. Fuller cites the German scholars in addition to his own experience as a General. He places it on the upper reaches of the Biga Çayi, with the Persian’s right (northern) flank just touching the confluence of the tributaries. Meanwhile, he states, “the southern flank of its lower reach was safeguarded against a turning movement from its western side by a lake, now called the Edje (Ece) Gol.”\textsuperscript{119} Green agrees wholeheartedly with Fuller’s interpretation, though he accidentally calls the western Biga stream the “Koçabas.”\textsuperscript{120}

A different variation of the Biga placement is the “Middle placement” of K. Lehmann. He is notable as the first major modern author to side with Diodorus (followed by Beloch), and likewise places his battle directly across the western Biga between the two tributaries, stating that Alexander managed to deploy his army “on the right bank in full order for battle.”\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117} Kiepert, 1877, 263.
\textsuperscript{118} “Daraus ergibt sich übereinstimmend, dass nur der Unterlauf des Granikos, eben etwa vom heutigen Bigha an, als Kampfplatz in Betracht kommen kann.” Judeich, 1908, 384-97.
\textsuperscript{119} This claim makes very little sense when consulting Figures 2.1 and 2.2. Fuller, 1960.
\textsuperscript{120} Green, 2013, 396.
\textsuperscript{121} “Vielmehr kam er am nachsten Tage den Feinden zu vor, in dem es ihm gelang, sein Heer im Morgengrauen ungestört über den Fluss zu führen und es auf dem rechten Ufer in voller Ordnung zur Schlacht aufmarschieren zu lassen.” Lehmann, 1911, 230-244.
A final alternative, the “Gümüşçay placement,” is provided by Reyhan Körpe in his 2014 article *Son Yapılan Araştırmaların Işığında - Granikos Savaş Alanı* (“In Light of Recent Research: the Granicus Battle Placement”). Following the revelations of the GRVASP, Körpe explicitly rejects the views of Nikolitsis and Hammond, positing instead that the battle may have taken place on the Gümüşçay stream between ancient Didymateiche (modern Gümüşçay) and the tributary confluence at Çınar köprü. Körpe’s view, however, is only possible if one accepts, as he states, that the banks were somehow more gentle and less steep than they are in the present day.

With these modern placements and the previous topographical refutations all in mind, we may now discuss three factors which, when combined, strongly support a placement of the Persian defense along K. Lehmann’s Middle placement.

![Figure 2.9: The Granicus Valley as seen from Pegae (modern Biga).](image)

First to be discussed are the few topographical descriptions given by the Alexander historians. As noted above (introduction), the ancient authors noted four features: the river, the banks of the river, the hill, and the lookout places. Arrian and Plutarch reported that the river is deep. Arrian, Diodorus, and Plutarch all noted the banks of the river, which are high (or “high ground”), steep, uneven, rough,

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122 Körpe, 2014.
moist, and slippery.\textsuperscript{123} Both of these descriptors are supported by either tributary in the present day, but not so much by the river downstream of the confluence, which is already ineligible as noted above. Ironically, these descriptors also drastically harm the case for Arrian and Plutarch’s riverine version of the battle, as noted above by Foss, Naiden, and others. The lookout places, described only by Arrian, are less consequential to our topographical quest, but the ridge first noted by Janke and the foothills surrounding Biga (ancient Pegae) seem likely spots from which Macedonain scouts could spy (see Figure 2.9).

The hill provides a far better method of elimination. As stated above, both Arrian and Plutarch reported a hill overlooking the river, upon which the mercenary infantry was posted. After the battle, both reported that the mercenaries stood their ground and were massacred; most importantly, Arrian wrote that the hill was isolated or shallow enough for horsemen to attack on every side (\textit{πάντῃ προσπεσεῖν}). Given the previous topographical refutations, there is only one modern candidate for such a hill. Today it is the site of a horse stable named “Bigarden”; it is roughly one kilometer west of the eastern Gümüşçay stream, a little less than one kilometer southwest of Gümüşçay village, and roughly 3km east of the western Biga stream. The hill itself is about 1.2km long (northwest to southeast) and one kilometer wide (southwest to northeast). The hill is confirmed to have existed in ancient times: Reyhan Körpe and the archaeologists of the GRVASP found on its southern tip a tumuli and its stones, and dubbed the site “Höyük Bayırı Tepe,” translating to “Inclined Tumulus Hill.”\textsuperscript{124}

There is one other hill which is confirmed to have existed in Alexander’s day and fits all but one of our criteria. The Kızöldün Tepe is roughly 1.2km east of the eastern Gümüşçay stream and 1.2 km southeast of Gümüşçay village.\textsuperscript{125} The hill upon which it rests, however, is far smaller: only 230 meters wide, too small to fit many mercenaries. But the major issue barring Kızöldün from being the probable

\textsuperscript{123} See the introduction of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{124} Körpe, per litteras.
\textsuperscript{125} From which the famous Polyxena Sarcophagus was found.
mercenary hill is its location. While it does rise above the land surrounding it, the Kızöldün Tepe is situated among the foothills of the eastern mountain range. These foothills are admittedly shallow enough for horsemen to easily charge up and attack from all sides, but in the midst of their presence, Kızöldün cannot qualify as a standalone λόφος.

With our hill chosen, there is only one question left to answer regarding the placement of the battle: the location of the Persian camp and, consequently, the direction of attack by the Macedonians. First we must establish what the Persians wanted out of a campsite and out of a defense site. A good camp for their army would require dry land between the riverbanks and their camp, as well as dry land between their camp back to the royal road, from which their supply line (and potential route of retreat) extended to Zeleia and Daskyleion. This factor alone disqualifies the thin strip of land between modern Çınarköprü and Gümüşçay (the “Gümüşçay placement” advanced by Körpe); in such a position, the marsh to the northeast and the foothills to the southeast would have blocked any route of escape.

Logically, the site of the battle could not have overlapped with any of the towns or villages known in the valley. With this in mind, we must next establish the locations of known ancient settlements in the area. There were five ancient villages located along the valley. First was Priapos, located on the coast far from any potential battle site (see Figures 2.2 and 2.10). Harpagia, located on the northeastern edge of the valley and also on the coast, was in a similarly safe position. The first noteworthy settlement, then, was Didymateiche (modern Gümüşçay), whose crucial location has already been noted above as along the eastern Gümüşçay stream, approximately 1.5km southeast of the confluence. Didymateiche was likely along the Persian royal road leading directly east from the regional capital at Daskyleion, and was also by far the most vulnerable settlement, placed just across from the

126 None of the Alexander historians mention any other towns in the Granicus River Valley proper except for Priapos — Another factor against Körpe’s placement, which would require Alexander’s right wing (including Alexander himself) and the Persian left wing to be right up against Didymateiche.
Gümüşçay stream. South of Didymateiche and along the same Gümüşçay stream were the ruins of Sidene. Strabo listed Sidene as a once powerful Phrygian city that had been destroyed by the Lydian ruler Croesus sometime in the 6th century BCE. Sidene marked the southern boundary of the Granicus Valley. Going west, the ancient town of Pegae (modern Biga) marked the entrance of the western Biga tributary into the valley, perched safely upon the foothills of the southern mountains.

Figure 2.10: Priapos as seen from the northern tip of the peninsula, upon which the ruined towers of a medieval castle stand.

With these factors in mind, it is likely that the Persians would have preferred to place their camp just west of Didymateiche (modern Gümüşçay). In this position, the camp would have been

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127 Though not as vulnerable as one might think - the name Δίδυμον Τεῖχος literally means “double walled,” perhaps another advantage contributing to its potential status as a supply depot for the Persian camp/army.
128 The royal road: “We know from the ancient sources that there was a road that crossed the Granicus in the vicinity of Didymateiche (Gümüşçay), not far from the modern bridge near Çınarköprü, which would have been used by the Persian army. Our new milestone probably belonged to this road.” Körpe and Rose, "GRVASP 2006." 108.
129 Strabo, On the Troad, 13.1.11
simultaneously well-protected and well-supplied. Protection was offered by the western Biga tributary, upon which Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus all reported they placed their cavalry awaiting Alexander’s arrival; their north-western flank, too, was protected by the aforementioned marshes between modern Çınarköprü and Cesmealti. All other campsite options would have left the valuable waystation at Didymateiche wide open to attack, yet offered few if any defensive advantages.

Three consequences of this Persian defense placement are immediately apparent. First is the identification of the western Biga stream as the ancient Granicus; second is the confirmation of Lehmann’s “Middle” placement. Third, consequently, is the support for a Diodoran river crossing. Chapter 3 will confront the immediate and extensive ramifications of all three; we will first discuss Parmenio’s council scene and its meaning within the Alexander mythos, then go on to establish the lines of battle before presenting the melee itself.
Chapter 3: Birth of a Mythos

As the sun just began to sink towards the western ridgeline of the Granicus River Valley, Memnon and the Persian officers watched as a silver and bronze column, in full battle order, penetrated into the valley. Just the day prior, scouts had reported a Macedonian presence encroaching into the valley’s northern edge; a subordinate of the invader, named Panegoros, had received the surrender of the coastal Greek city Priapos. That city’s betrayal would be dealt with in turn, but for the time being, the Persian defenders stood their ground. They had prepared well. Their northern flank was protected by the bay and then the marsh, extending south to the confluence of the two tributary streams. Lined up along the banks of the western Granicus River, the Persian cavalry had sat upon their well-bred horses, forming an impressive wall ever since that morning. The cavalry line was an effective show of force and a statement that Alexander would not cross the Granicus so easily as he might have thought.

Chapter 2 discussed the significant differences between the modern and ancient Granicus Valley, the landscape that these Persian defenders stood upon. Utilizing a walkable 3D recreation which roughly approximates what the Persians and Greeks likely saw, walked upon, and fought upon, Chapter 3 will
discuss the ramifications of these differences, particularly the validation of the Diodoran river crossing. Why was this version of the river crossing not favored by Arrian or Plutarch? The narrative structures present in the Parmenio council scene prior to the battle contribute to the answer: the formation of a mythos (μῦθος) surrounding Alexander’s four great battles of his Asiatic campaign. The first section of this chapter will discuss Parmenio’s council scene and its meaning within the different threads of the Alexander mythos/mythoi; the ancient authors were forced to reconcile or reject the (sometimes conflicting) threads regarding the ‘four great battles’ and the humiliation of Parmenio in favor of Alexander. In the second section, the mythos will continue to affect the ancient historians’ depictions of the lines of battle, requiring further dissection of both ancient and modern scholarly sources.

Finally, the third section will show that Diodorus, too, despite his correct choice of truth regarding the river crossing and location, succumbed just as drastically as Arrian and Plutarch to the mythos in his depiction of the chaotic opening, baffling single-combat aristeia, and the confused closing massacre. The battle as a whole may be characterized as a series of blunders. On Alexander’s side, the only major blunder is the river crossing described by Arrian and Plutarch; the Persians, meanwhile, commit several major blunders. Their first was to not patrol the Granicus River overnight and thus prevent a secret crossing; their second was sallying out of their well-defended camp; third was confining Memnon to cavalry rather than allowing him control over his usual Greek mercenary infantry, which remained useless on the hill. Photos of the 3D recreation will be interspersed throughout for clarification and elucidation, and a video is accessible via Google Drive (see Figure 3.1).

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130 Video: depicts Alexander’s entry into the valley. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EA4hZS1JmKTqyGCBdNp3khatwnkLgr4/view?usp=sharing
The Council/Conversation Scene: Navigating a Mythos

Across the Granicus river, Alexander stood upon a ridge overlooking the valley, from the Persian cavalry lined along the banks to the camp defending a small double-walled town (see Figure 3.2). He was now faced with a decision to either attempt an immediate battle, or to wait. One way or the other, he then turned and spoke with his second-in-command, Parmenio. Once again, the accounts of Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus disagree as to this conversation: either it was a one-on-one dialogue, a full council of his generals, or didn’t occur at all. Through the comparison of these accounts, three broad themes emerge: first, Alexander placed in opposition to his generals and advisors, especially Parmenio; second, a comparison with the Hellespont Strait; third, an emphasis on Alexander’s boldness. All three themes were chosen deliberately by the ancient historians, who were confronted with their own conundrum in their writing process.

Figure 3.2: The Granicus battlefield as seen from the western ridge.

Arrian’s account is both the most detailed and most suspect. Upon seeing the Persian troops lined up on the other side of the river, he said, Alexander arranged his army ready to fight. According to Arrian, Alexander called no council; instead, Parmenio approached him individually. Arrian then
ascribed a lengthy speech to Parmenio, who advised the king to pitch camp “at the bank of the river as we are” and instead cross the ford at dawn, before the Persians had the chance to form up. Parmenio gave two reasons for his advice: first, the Persians were “far out-numbered by our infantry” and thus would not dare camp near the banks (opening up the opportunity to cross in secret); second, the stream was extremely deep, and, “as you see,” the banks were high and steep such that would make a crossing under heavy fire extremely perilous. Alexander promptly ignored the advice, stating that after crossing the Hellespont with no resistance, a “little stream” like the Granicus shouldn’t stop him. For good measure he then insulted Parmenio, stating that the Persians would underestimate them, as up until then they had no reason to fear the Greeks based on “what they have experienced,” alluding to Parmenio’s preliminary campaign against Memnon the year prior.

Whereas Arrian limited his advising scene only to Parmenio, Plutarch expanded to include “most of the Macedonian officers” in a council scene. According to Plutarch, it was the Macedonian officers as a whole who were afraid of the river’s depth and steep banks. But Plutarch added a second, religious objection, that the king of Macedonia ought not to fight in the month of Daesius. Alexander dealt with the religious objection, simply switching the calendar month to a “second Artemisius.” Notably, Alexander only responded to the greater issue after Parmenio threw his lot behind the other generals, on the grounds that it was too late in the day. Neither Parmenio nor the generals, however, seem to have proposed an alternative course. Alexander’s response was the same as in Arrian, omitting the direct insult: that the Hellespont would “blush for shame” if he should be afraid of the Granicus.

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131 Arr. An., 1.13.3
132 “ὁρᾷς,” Arr. An., 1.13.3-5
133 Arr. An., 1.13.6
134 Arr. An., 1.13.7
135 Plu. Alex., 16.1.
136 The Macedonian officers: see battle lines below.
137 Plu. Alex., 16.2.
138 Plu. Alex., 16.2.
Diodorus did not include a council scene at all. Instead, his version of the battle happens to be the exact same course of action as Parmenio’s rejected advice as according to Arrian. Given our knowledge of the landscape (see Chapter 2), we know that Parmenio’s advice was indeed correct. As Alexander could see, the Persian camp was most likely far from the western riverbank, instead nearer to the Höyük Bayırı Tepe and their supply depot at Didymateiche. The ridge just west of the Biga stream’s banks also provided an excellent, defensible campsite from which the Macedonians had safe access both to drinking water via the Ece Gol lake and supplies from Priapos.

It is precisely because the advice was so sound that Plutarch omitted it. Both Plutarch and Arrian used this council/conversation scene to further a characterization of Parmenio that simultaneously denigrated him and presented him as the continuously-ignored wise elder mirroring the role of Memnon for the Persians. Both characterizations promote Alexander’s own genius over that of Parmenio and over that of the Persians. But Plutarch and Arrian differed in that Plutarch included an entire council. As a biographer, Plutarch was more interested in Alexander’s religious and administrative roles. Arrian, the supposed historian, neglected his usual administrative focus and instead made a literary choice to prioritize the humiliation thread. Diodorus, writing a world history, prioritized brevity.

The Alexander mythos was also the likely source for the quip attested in both Arrian and Plutarch, that the Hellespont had been a far greater challenge than the little Granicus. A more tactically accurate comparison would have been the Danube. In *Demythologizing the Granicus*, A.M. Devine argues that, in the moment it was actually fought, both the Granicus and the later Hydaspes were in fact “relatively peripheral battle[s],” and tactically simple, more similar to Alexander’s earlier victory at Pelion than his subsequent battles at Issus and Gaugamela.\(^{139}\) Devine is perhaps more correct than he even knew. Parmenio’s Arrianic advice and the Diodoran account of the Granicus are both far more in line with two of Alexander’s more recent Balkan battles, at the Danube and at Pelion. Both previous

\(^{139}\) Devine, 1986, 265.
battles feature a secret river crossing under cover of darkness. At the Danube, the shocked Getae fled after a single confrontation. At Pelion, meanwhile, Alexander used the secret river crossing to attack and destroy an ill-protected and unprepared enemy camp. Twice already Alexander had successfully utilized a secret nightly river crossing, and he would use it again at the other battle mentioned by Devine, the Hydaspes.

Unfortunately, the Danube was a part of Alexander’s earlier campaigns, which don’t fit neatly into another Alexander mythos surrounding the Asiatic campaign - or as Devine calls it, “the dogma of ‘the four great battles of Alexander’ (i.e., the Granicus, Issus, Gaugamela, and the Hydaspes).” The crossing of the Hellespont, meanwhile, was a feat to which in fact Parmenio had contributed far more than Alexander; Parmenio was in charge of the army logistics while Alexander crossed straight from the grave of Protesilaos at Elyaeus (under the modern Gallipoli National Historical Park) to the “Achaean harbor” northwest of Troy. The Hellespont comparison, then, better served the aforementioned themes regarding Parmenio’s humiliation and Parmenio-Memnon, as well as tying into the Asiatic campaign.

A Greco-Roman reader would have found no issue describing the events depicted by Plutarch and Arrian as either bold, brash, or outright suicidal. Plutarch readily admitted that, in his version, Alexander “seemed to be acting like a frenzied and foolish commander rather than a wise one,” but went on to describe how his boldness was nonetheless rewarded through determination and luck. The glorifier Arrian would never level such an accusation, expecting the reader to take Alexander’s actions at face value instead. Diodorus was presented with a more difficult problem: his version, though factually

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140 Arr. An., 1.4
141 Arr. An., 1.6
142 As Naiden points out, ‘Asia’ was an entirely Greek notion. “To the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians, there was no such place.” Naiden, 2019, 52.
143 Devine, 1986, 265.
144 Arr. An., 1.11.6. See Chapter 1.
145 Plu. Alex., 16.3
correct, was unexciting compared to the river battle, and Alexander had already accomplished more
dramatic and difficult secret river crossings in previous encounters. Diodorus’ solution was to emphasize
how Alexander would “boldly” cross the river secretly at dawn, before the Persians could react.146

It seems that Arrian, Plutarch, and perhaps Diodorus all had at least two conflicting versions of
the river crossing thread which they could follow. One account, favored by Diodorus, featured a less
dramatic nightly crossing followed by a conventional battle on flat ground, a set of events far more
similar to Alexander’s Balkan campaigns than his great Asiatic victories.147 The other account, favored
by Arrian and Plutarch, featured a battle on the riverbanks themselves; this version fits better into the
mythoi of Alexander’s four great battles and of Parmenio-versus-Alexander. Each of the ancient
Alexander historians, then, had to choose between a legend and the truth. Diodorus chose truth, and felt
no need to justify his choice. The truth, unfortunately, was less exciting and presented no particularly
new tactics; the legend, meanwhile, only required brief mention of a council scene to justify an account
that fit better into the grandeur of Alexander’s first Asiatic victory.

146 τεθαρρηκώς, literally “having taken courage.” D.S. Lib., 17.19.3
147 In all three cases (Danube, Pelion, and Granicus), Alexander’s foe evidently did not patrol the river
crossing that night. This was the Persian’s first blunder of the battle.
Drawing the Battle Lines

According to the Diodoran account, the army of Alexander forded the river secretly and boldly at sunrise the following day. They then deployed “in good order,” before the Persians could react. As noted, the Persian camp was well-defended and well-supplied by the double-walled Didymateiche and the numerous estates just to the east. There was no opportunity for a sneak attack as at Pelion. Instead, the Macedonians stood, waited, and watched from their position past the eastern banks of the Granicus as the Persians scrambled into battle formation.

![Image of the Granicus battlefield](image)

Figure 3.3: The Granicus battlefield as seen from Didymateiche (right), the Persian camp (middle), and Höyük Bayırı Tepe (left).

Though not depicted by the ancient historians, the Persian defenders were now faced with a choice as crucial as that faced by Alexander. They could sally out and line up for battle, risking everything for the chance to defeat the invader in one fell swoop… or they could stay in the safety of their well-defended camp until a more advantageous opportunity arose (see Figure 3.3). Alexander wouldn’t be so foolish as to attack a well-defended camp with cavalry and infantry. He had neither the time nor funds for even a short siege. If he attempted to set up his own camp where his army

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148 See above.
149 See Chapter 1.
currently stood, the Persians could then attack his vulnerable force; they could do likewise if he attempted to retreat back across the river, similar to the Taluntian’s attempt at Pelion. There was no advantage to sallying out.

The version of Arrian and Plutarch would allow the Macedonians one single advantage, that the Persians looking at their westward enemy would be blinded by the setting sun. In the Diodoran account, however, the Persians would have taken far too long getting into battle formation to exploit the opposite advantage from the sunrise. Perhaps the wise mercenary-general Memnon favored the latter option. Perhaps the Persians rejected him in their own council scene. Regardless, the ancient historians didn’t record the decision process; to the victor goes the historical focus.

So the Persians chose to assemble their battle line. The ancient historians gave wildly varying numbers and order of battle for both sides, and these numerical differences have been well-discussed by modern scholars. Of all the ancient historians, Plutarch provided the most reasonable report. Plutarch conveniently gave his three numerical sources for Alexander’s army: Aristobulus, Ptolemy, and Anaximenes. Arrian, Diodorus, and Justin all gave similar numbers to Plutarch for Alexander’s side. For the Persians, however, they greatly differed. We cannot know who exactly was closest to the truth, but Arrian’s and Plutarch’s (the latter through casualties rather than outright) seem most likely; in any case, the Persians could not have been many fewer or many more than the Macedonian force.

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150 Their second blunder that day.
151 See Nikolitsis, 1974; Harl, 1997, 313-315. Numbers and sources are recorded in Tables 1 and 2 below.
152 Arrian provided a more reasonable ratio of 35 (thousand) Macedonians to 40 Persians; Diodorus raised the ratio to 37 Macedonians against 110 Persians; Justin, even worse, gave a ratio of 37 to 600. The Persians’ casualty ratios differed, too: Arrian provided a remarkably low one-twentieth ratio only somewhat excused by the fact that Alexander would not pursue their retreat. Arrian’s numbers conflict with his own earlier assertion (through the speech of Parmenio) that the Persians “are far outnumbered by our infantry,” unless Parmenio is meant to only have referenced either the cavalry or infantry individually: Arr. An., 1.13.3. Diodorus, meanwhile, reported a one-tenth ratio utterly at odds with Arrian’s and Plutarch’s descriptions of the massacre of Greek mercenaries, as discussed below in the third phase of the battle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Plutarch&lt;sup&gt;153&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Arrian</th>
<th>Diodorus</th>
<th>Justin&lt;sup&gt;154&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aristobulus</td>
<td>Ptolemy</td>
<td>Anaximenes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Infantry</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>~30,000&lt;sup&gt;155&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Cavalry</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Infantry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>~20,000&lt;sup&gt;156&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Cavalry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Numbers given prior to battle.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aristobulus (in Plutarch)</th>
<th>Plutarch&lt;sup&gt;153&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Arrian</th>
<th>Diodorus</th>
<th>Justin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Infantry</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;160&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Cavalry</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>85&lt;sup&gt;161&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Infantry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20,000+</td>
<td>~18,000&lt;sup&gt;162&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>10,000&lt;sup&gt;163&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Cavalry</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2500+</td>
<td>~1000&lt;sup&gt;164&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2000+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Prisoners</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>20,000+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Casualties and Prisoners given after battle.*

Arrian presented a detailed composition of Alexander’s battle line, but omitted the Persian; Diodorus gave the Persians, but did not describe the invaders. The battle line drawn up by Alexander was extremely similar to those employed at his previous battles in the Balkans, with cavalry at the ends

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<sup>153</sup> Plutarch, *Fortune of Alexander*, 1.3
<sup>154</sup> Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, 11.6.11
<sup>155</sup> Arr. *An.*, 1.11.3
<sup>156</sup> Arr. *An.*, 1.14.4 “The Persians had nearly twenty thousand horsemen and an only slightly smaller force of foreign mercenary infantry.”
<sup>157</sup> D.S. *Lib.*, 17.19
<sup>158</sup> “In the Persian line there were 600,000 men,” Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, 11.16.11. No distinction between cavalry and infantry among Persians.
<sup>159</sup> Plu. *Alex.*, 16.7
<sup>160</sup> Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, 11.6.12
<sup>161</sup> 25 Companions and 60+ other horsemen. Arr. *An.*, 1.16.4
<sup>162</sup> “Alexander turned his attention to the foreign mercenaries.... And quickly cut them to pieces. No one got away, unless someone was overlooked among the corpses.” Except for about 2,000 prisoners sent back to Macedonia. See table 1 above. 1.16.2
<sup>163</sup> D.S. *Lib.*, 17.21
<sup>164</sup> Arr. *An.*, 1.16.2
of each wing and the Macedonian phalangites (infantry) forming a solid center (see Figure 3.4).

Parmenio’s cavalry was placed in a defensive stance; as will be seen, the left flank under Parmenio remained stationary as the right flank under Alexander advanced, secure in the knowledge that the left flank could absorb the enemy’s attacks.  

The Persian battle lines as given by Diodorus are equally detailed but less complex (see Figure 3.4). As noted prior, the Persians drew two battle lines: in the front was their cavalry, notably including a contingent on the left flank (facing Alexander’s Macedonian cavalry called the Companions) under command of the mercenary-general Memnon and the satrap Arsamenes “each with his own cavalry.”  

Behind the cavalry line, arrayed upon the modern Höyük Bayırı Tepe, were the Persian infantry. The ancient historians provided somewhat conflicting designations for the infantry: Diodorus simply called them “Persian infantry” with no clear distinction as to whether they were entirely Greek mercenaries or included other Persian auxiliaries; if Diodorus truly believed his ludicrous count of 100,000 infantry troops, he likely meant the latter.  

Given that Darius assigned Memnon five thousand mercenary troops in the previous year (335 BCE) in order to take back Cyzicus, it is highly unlikely that he was able to summon twenty times that number the very next year; even if he was, the Höyük Bayırı Tepe is far too small to accommodate such a huge number.  

Arrian, meanwhile, referred solely to Persian cavalry and Greek “foreign mercenary infantry” who were commanded by Omares, a Persian.  

Plutarch did not make a clear distinction, either, simply calling them “infantry” and only later distinguishing that the “Greek mercenaries” were the only ones not to flee.  

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165 Philip II utilized a similar formation as early as the Battle of Erigon Valley: D.S. Lib., 16.4.  
166 Literally “holding one’s own cavalry,” “ἔχοντες τοὺς ἰδίους ἱππεῖς,” D.S. Lib., 17.19.4  
168 D.S. Lib., 17.7.3  
In any case, it is noteworthy that both Arrian and Diodorus agreed that the Persian infantry, which at least included (if not being entirely made up of) Greek mercenaries, was not commanded by Memnon (the leader of the Greek mercenaries). Once again it seems history’s focus on Alexander has sidelined an important development on the side of the Persians; clearly something must have happened to prevent Memnon from commanding his own troops, instead placing him in command of “his own cavalry” faced directly against Alexander’s Companions.\(^\text{171}\) W.J. McCoy is right to point out that this is “a most unusual assignment for a veteran infantryman,” and goes on to speculate that Memnon was “a virtual prisoner” of the senior satrap Arsites. According to McCoy, the Persians “had cause to distrust Memnon on many counts,” especially considering his history of rebellion and that Alexander’s father Philip “had treated Memnon as an honored guest” during one such rebellious exile.\(^\text{172}\) His reluctance to fight Alexander and his advice to burn their estates to the ground was perhaps the final straw. Regardless of intention or motivation, however, the decision to separate Memnon from his Greek infantry was yet another tactical blunder.\(^\text{173}\)

In the process of curtailing Memnon’s usefulness, the Persians also seemed to waste the Greek mercenaries by placing them behind their cavalry. This position was unique. The Persians were no strangers to using infantry: Cyrus the Great employed his infantry in defensive U formation at Thymbra (547 BCE), whilst at the battle of Cunaxa (401 BCE), Xenophon described both the Persian loyalists and rebels as placing infantry, both mercenary and otherwise, in a central position.\(^\text{174}\) At Issus, Darius would place Greek infantry likewise in a central position.\(^\text{175}\) He would also do so at Gaugamela, albeit with the addition of scythed chariots in front and a mass of Persian infantry behind.\(^\text{176}\) Thus the decision to place the Greek mercenary infantry at the Granicus upon the hill must be explained some other way.

\(^{171}\) McCoy, 1989, 413-433.
\(^{172}\) McCoy, 1989, 413-433.
\(^{173}\) Their third that day.
\(^{175}\) Issus: Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander the Great*, 2.9; Arr. An., 2.8.
Perhaps, as McCoy speculates, the Persians mistrusted their mercenary counterparts; perhaps the Greeks were already encamped upon or closer to Höyük Bayırı Tepe, and preferred to stand in a more defensible position while the cavalry took the greater risk.

Numerous modern scholars have attempted to reconstruct the length of the Macedonian battle line. Ultimately, however, the exact length of the battle is not relevant to the discussion over placement. Following the description of Diodorus that Alexander “placed the stream at his rear” rather than lining up perpendicular to the stream, one finds that even the highest estimate of 4.5 kilometers is well within the bounds of the flat plain between the Granicus and Didymateiche tributaries. The battle lines had been drawn. It was time for the mêlée to begin.

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177 A brief overview from lowest to highest:
Between 2 and 2.5km: Judeich (1908), later followed by Foss (1977) based on descriptions found in Polybius Book 12 20.6–21.1: Judeich, 1908, 384-97.
2.5km: Körpe, 2014.
3.2km: Fuller, 1960.
4.4km: Nikolitsis, 1974.
4.5km: Harl, 1997.

178 “He employed the same device, they say, at the battle of the Granicus, where he placed the stream at his rear, for no one could think of flight when destruction of any who were followed into the bed of the river was a certainty.” D.S. Lib., 17.23.2. Placing the stream perpendicular to the lines of battle would also take away any possible “hill” (λόφος) as discussed extensively in Chapter 2.
Based on Arrian, Diodorus (see above), as well as analyses by modern scholars, Nikolitsis especially.
The Battle at the Granicus

After hours in the hot May sun, trumpets finally sounded and the invaders raised their war-cry to Enyalius. They charged. What followed was the birth of the Alexander mythos. Our three major ancient sources - Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus - each chose to emphasize different aspects of this mythos, but all fell victim to its allure. After taking the mythos into account, we may reconstruct the rough course of the battle by combining the complementary threads from each source and arbitrating any thread that directly conflicts with another ancient source.

Despite their major differences regarding the crossing of the river, the ancient sources depicted a surprisingly similar sequence of events in the melee proper. The battle may be split into three major phases. Plutarch, Arrian, and Diodorus all agreed that the battle opened with a Macedonian cavalry charge which the Persians initially resisted. They also all immediately descended into feats of individual combat far more evocative of Homeric aristeia (ἀριστεία) than Persian or Greek tactics. After that epic, mythologizing digression, they all agreed that the Macedonians gradually bested the Persian cavalry, which fled before Alexander surrounded and utterly annihilated the Greek mercenaries who stayed atop the hill. Tables 3, 4, and 5 show the development of the battle as described by Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus. Direct contradictions are bolded for convenience.

Regarding the first phase of the battle, Arrian differed from the other ancient historians in two ways: first, he included an initial abortive attack by Alexander’s subordinates Amyntas and Socrates, which Devine dubs a “pawn sacrifice”; Plutarch and Diodorus, meanwhile, began with an attack by Alexander on the south wing, with Diodorus adding a simultaneous brave defense by the Thessalian cavalry on the north wing (implying a Persian attack against them).180 Second, Arrian asserted multiple times that the Persians only used darts, javelins, and missiles while the Macedonians primarily wielded

180 Devine, 1988, 3-20.
spears. Plutarch and Diodorus, meanwhile, agreed that the Persians used missiles (particularly javelins) until they clashed directly, whereafter both sides used spears and swords. Neither Plutarch nor Diodorus’ descriptions necessarily disqualify the opening pawn sacrifice, but they do contradict Arrian’s narrow assertion regarding Persian weapon choice (an assertion which he himself contradicts during the aristeia phase). In the latter assertion, Arrian was perhaps influenced by an entirely separate, older, primarily literary mythos that it was quintessentially un-Greek to use long-distance missiles.  

Plutarch and Arrian agreed, uncontested, that the resulting cavalry melee consisted of a shoving match akin to infantry engagements, with horses jammed against horses and men against men. Damaris Corrigan, an expert hippologist, confirms that this natural “shoulder barging” behavior can be trained and executed by cavalries.  

If the shoulder barge engagement is taken as fact, it makes little sense for the Persians to have only used darts and missiles in close combat.

Another aspect of the first phase worth noting is Arrian’s assertion that Alexander charged diagonally north, “slanting to the direction of the [river’s] current” and aiming his attack towards the greatest mass of Persian cavalry and commanders at the Persian left-center (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6).  

As Nikolitsis rightly points out, a fully Arrianic version of the battle featuring a contested river crossing would effectively disqualify the notion of a slanted attack towards the center. Observing that the river is (at present) only about thirty to fifty meters wide, and that the battle lines were somewhere between 2 and 4.5 kilometers long, Nikolitsis states that if Alexander “attacked towards [his] left at an angle... in the case under consideration can be regarded as practically the same as a frontal attack.”  

The diagonal charge, however, perfectly meshes with the Diodoran account, with a distance of about one

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181 See Strabo Geography 10.1.11-12, and Archilochos, Fragment 3.  
182 Corrigan, 2004, 282-3. Also noteworthy: “By adding some opposite leg pressure, the rider can move the horse on an angle to present the shoulder more squarely on the target. The shoulder is an important demarcation for the horse, for horses seem to envision their shoulders as the midpoints of their bodies: contact in front of the shoulder results in an impulse to move backward... contact at or behind... results in an impulse to move forward.”  
183 “λοξὴν... τὸ ρεῦμα.” Arr. An., 1.14.7  
184 Nikolitsis, 1974.
kilometer between the two sides. It seems that Arrian allowed a vestige of the less-exciting Diodoran version to seep into his heroic one.

The first phase also included a key disagreement between Plutarch and the other two authors. Plutarch asserted that Alexander, in the process of charging forward (and up the riverbanks, in his version), was unable to maintain order among his troops such that the fighting descended into pell-mell encounters. As noted above, Arrian stated outright that Alexander charged in an orderly diagonal line. Diodorus made no direct indication one way or the other, but he did continue to refer to the Macedonians in battle lines and gave Alexander the freedom and agency to look around, notice a potential weak point, and ride towards it - an impossibility if he were fighting in utter chaos. Although the battle was likely more chaotic than the apologetic Arrian might have preferred, it may be that Plutarch exaggerated the extent of the chaos for two reasons. First, Plutarch already preferred to characterize Alexander as bold to the point of near madness, and the degradation of the Macedonian battle order into chaos serves to demonstrate the consequences of a heroic but much less sound strategy of ascending huge, slippery banks under heavy missile fire. More importantly, however, the chaos would give Plutarch more narrative leeway to include the otherwise baffling second phase of the battle: the quasi-Homeric aristeía (ἀριστεία).

The first phase of the battle may thus be described as follows: As soon as the Persians were in their battle lines, Alexander gave the first order. Amyntas son of Arrabaios rushed forward from the right wing, leading the skirmishing sarissa-armed Scout cavalry, Paeanian light infantry, one regiment of infantry, and Socrates’ cavalry squadron straight across towards the Persian right wing under the satrap Arsamenes and the mercenary-general Memnon. Alexander and his Companion cavalry followed from the end of the right wing behind the initial rush, charging at an diagonal angle towards the center of Persian leadership, commanded by the satrap Spithridates and the son-in-law of King Darius (either

185 φύρδην μάχεσθαι, literally “to fight in utter confusion.” Plu. Alex., 16.3
Mithridates or Spithridates). The defending Persians on the left wing and center hurled javelins and darts against the Macedonians, while the Persian right wing under Rheomithres boldly charged forward against the Thessalian cavalry under Parmenio. The Persian missiles cut the initial skirmishing force under Amyntas and Socrates to pieces, but the pawn sacrifice was a success; Memnon had been distracted and Alexander charged directly into the Persian center-left, reinforced by the remnants of Amyntas and Socrates’ retreating force. Horses jammed against horses and men against men, destroying the Persian advantage of superior movement. The Persians nonetheless resisted bravely with lances, javelins, and swords. Now began the chaotic aristeia.

The second phase of the battle is noticeably longer and more detailed in all three accounts. It is also the most difficult to grasp, as evidenced by the great confusion between our three authors regarding the exact names and actions of individual heroes. Clearly there were four distinct threads of the Alexander aristeia tale: first, that his spear broke in the fighting; second, that his helmet was split open but barely protected him in the course of a fight against two Persian satraps, Spithridates (or Spithrobates) and Rhoesaces (or Rhosaces); third, that Alexander was nearly killed by either Spithridates or Rhoesaces before Cleitus the Black saved his life. Plutarch and Diodorus both included a fourth thread, that Alexander’s breastplate was pierced by a javelin, but Alexander himself remained unharmed. But the details and order are muddled. Arrian depicted a bold but generally competent Alexander, while Plutarch continued to emphasize both Alexander’s shortcomings (the enemy charged at him due to his extravagant buckler and helmet crest) and the barbarity of the enemy (Spithridates wields a battle axe). Ever the orator, Diodorus spent more proportional time on the aristeia than the other authors, emphasizing the Persians’ bravery and supposed desire to kill the dangerous Alexander.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Arrian</strong>(^{186})</th>
<th><strong>Plutarch</strong>(^{187})</th>
<th><strong>Diodorus</strong>(^{188})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1: Opening Attacks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander orders an initial rush under Amyntas and Socrates (&quot;skirmishing cavalry,&quot; Paeanian light infantry, one regiment of infantry, and Socrates’ squadron).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander leads the <strong>right wing in an oblique, diagonal</strong> charge, behind the initial rush.</td>
<td>Alexander charges against hostile missiles. <strong>He is unable to maintain any semblance of order among troops, instead fighting pell-mell.</strong></td>
<td>The Thessalian cavalry (left wing) defends against a Persian attack. At the same time, Alexander (right wing) personally leads an attack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persians hurl missiles (javelins and darts) at Amyntas and Socrates, who are swiftly cut down and retreat to join Alexander’s charge just behind them.</td>
<td>Persians match horse with horse using <strong>lances and swords</strong>.</td>
<td>Persians resist boldly and bravely using <strong>javelins and swords</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander reaches the fight and assaults directly against the mass of horse “where the Persian leaders [are] posted.” Horses jam against horses “like infantry” and men jam against men. <strong>Arrian reiterates that the Persians only use darts while Macedonians use spears.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Opening Attacks at the Granicus.*

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\(^{186}\) Arrian Phase 1: Arr. An., 1.14.6 - 1.15.5  
\(^{187}\) Plutarch Phase 1: Plu. Alex., 16.2-4  
\(^{188}\) Diodorus Phase 1: D.S. Lib., 17.19.6 - 17.20.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrian(^{189})</th>
<th>Plutarch(^{190})</th>
<th>Diodorus(^{191})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Aristeia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alexander’s spear breaks in the general fighting.</strong> Demaratus, a Companion, gives him his spear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mithridates, son-in-law of Darius,</strong> leads a cavalry charge “far out in front” in wedge formation.</td>
<td>Many Persians rush against Alexander because he is visible with his buckler and white helmet crest.</td>
<td>Spithrobates (Spithridates), son-in-law of King Darius, hurls himself, his cavalry, and Royal Relatives (Persian elites) at Macedonian lines, but not at Alexander specifically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander notices Mithridates’ attack and rides out ahead of the line, then uses Demaratus’ spear to smack him off his horse.</td>
<td>Alexander notices Spithrobates’ attack and turns his horse to ride towards him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A javelin from an unnamed assailant pierces the joint of Alexander’s breastplate.</td>
<td>Spithrobates notices Alexander and seeing an “opportunity for single combat” hurls his javelin, which pierces through Alexander’s shield and breastplate. He shakes it off.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhoesaces and Spithridates charge at Alexander together. He “avoids Spithridates” and stabs Rhoesaces with his spear, which snaps in half.</td>
<td>Alexander stabs Spithrobates with his spear, but the point breaks. Spithrobates, still alive, draws his sword and attempts to stab Alexander, who instead thrusts his (broken) spear at Spithrobates’ face and kills him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The satrap Rhoesaces rides up and hits Alexander on the head with his scimitar, breaking his helmet, then knocks Alexander to the ground with his lance.</td>
<td>While Alexander fights against Rhoesaces, Spithridates rides up from one side and splits open Alexander’s helmet with a barbarian battle axe.</td>
<td>As soon as Spithrobates dies, Rhoesaces (= Rhoesaces), his brother, gallops up and brings his sword against Alexander’s head, splitting his helmet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spithridates comes from behind and raises his scimitar to finish off Alexander, but Cleitus the Black cuts off Spithridates’ arm.</td>
<td>Spithridates raises his arm for another strike, but Cleitus the Black stabs Spithridates with a spear. Simultaneously, Alexander kills Rhoesaces with a sword.</td>
<td>Rhoesaces aims for another blow, but Cleitus the Black dashes up and cuts off Rhoesaces’ arm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Aristeia at the Granicus.

\(^{189}\) Arrian Phase 2: Arr. An., 1.15.6-8

\(^{190}\) Plutarch Phase 2: Plu. Alex., 16.4-5

\(^{191}\) Diodorus Phase 2: D.S. Lib., 17.20.2-7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrian&lt;sup&gt;192&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Plutarch&lt;sup&gt;193&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Diodorus&lt;sup&gt;194&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 3: Close of the Battle</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanwhile, the Macedonian horsemen continue to reinforce and join Alexander’s forces.</td>
<td>Meanwhile, the Macedonian phalanx presses forward and “the infantry forces on both sides engaged.”</td>
<td>The Royal Relatives now press forward with the express goal of killing Alexander. He defends bravely and takes two blows on the breastplate, one on the helmet, and three on the shield. He kills multiple other noble Persians in the process, including Atizyes, Pharnaces, and Mithrobuzanes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Persians and their horses are “struck on their faces” with lances “from all sides,” and are repulsed by cavalry. Macedonian light-armed troops mingle within the cavalry and help also.</td>
<td></td>
<td>With so many commanders killed, the Persians fighting Alexander flee first, then the rest follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Persian center gives way first, then the horse on both wings flee.</td>
<td>The enemy, both cavalry and infantry, does not resist but flees quickly, all except the Greek mercenaries.</td>
<td>After the cavalry rout, the foot soldiers of each army engage one another. The contest ends quickly since the Persian infantry is “shaken in spirit” and flees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander doesn’t pursue the Persians far, but “turned aside” to attack the Greek mercenaries. He surrounds their hill with cavalry and cuts them “from all sides.”</td>
<td>The Greek mercenaries “make a stand at a certain eminence,” asking Alexander for safe quarter. Alexander, influenced by anger more than reason, charges against the Greek mercenaries and loses his horse (not Bucephalas) which is stabbed through the ribs. The majority of Macedonian casualties are against the desperate Greek mercenaries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Closing Developments at the Granicus*

<sup>192</sup> Arrian Phase 3: Arr. An., 1.16.1-2  
<sup>193</sup> Plutarch Phase 3: Plu. Alex., 16.6-7  
<sup>194</sup> Diodorus Phase 3: D.S. Lib., 17.21.1-5
Is there sufficient evidence to directly contradict the idea that Alexander engaged in this seemingly bizarre single combat? It is certainly not implausible that Alexander broke his spear, had his helmet split open by a Persian attack, engaged in battle against Rhoesaces and Spithridates, and was saved from certain death by Cleitus the Black. Both Diodorus and Curtius Rufus reported a similar aristeia at Issus, again initiated by a direct attack against Alexander, but that case was contradicted by other historians’ accounts, particularly Arrian; either way, including such feats of the single combat tale is common for Diodorus. An exaggeration of this tale on the part of Arrian and Plutarch, however, is also suspect, especially given their prioritization of the Four Great Battles mythos over truth. For the purposes of this analysis, then, it may be assumed that the aristeia tale occurred in one way or the other, albeit exaggerated.

The second phase may thus be described as follows (see Figure 3.7). Alexander’s Companions faced heavy Persian resistance, especially by the forces under Spithridates and Rhoesaces. The Persian defenders naturally concentrated reinforcements towards the center, both because the enemy prince was located there, and because that was the area bearing the brunt of the invader’s assault. In such close fighting, Alexander’s buckler and white helmet crest made him a visible target; a javelin pierced through Alexander’s breastplate but barely grazed his person, while his spear soon snapped in half, replaced quickly by one of his Companion’s. A sword, too, managed to find its mark and split Alexander’s helmet open, barely touching his hair; stunned, Alexander was nearly killed, but was saved at the last moment by Cleitus the Black, who killed his attacker. The Macedonians killed, too, the commander Spithridates, the son in law of Darius, and Rhoesaces.

The third phase of the battle is somewhat more straightforward. As Alexander engaged in his aristeia, his counterparts, both cavalry and infantry, advanced to support. Only three disagreements require elucidation. First, Plutarch reported that the “infantry forces on both sides engaged” before any

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195 Curtius Rufus, History of Alexander the Great, 3.11.7-12; D.S. Lib., 17.33.5-34.5.
rout of the cavalry (the main Persian fighting force); Arrian and Diodorus said that the cavalry were routed first, before any of the Persian infantry engaged.\footnote{Plu. Alex., 16.6} Second, Plutarch and Arrian reported that all of the Persian forces fled except for the Greek mercenaries, who stayed on their hill; Diodorus does not describe the Greek mercenaries at all, perhaps including them in the massive 100,000-strong Persian infantry. Third, Plutarch and Arrian both made clear that the Macedonian cavalry, not infantry, surrounded and attacked the Greek mercenaries on the hill; Diodorus says the Macedonian infantry fought against Persian infantry.

It seems that the first two disagreements stem from Plutarch’s attempt to solve the source issue which caused the last. In Diodorus’ Vulgate sources, the infantry of both sides clash after a cavalry rout, followed by a quick Persian retreat with relatively low losses; in Arrian’s sources for the Granicus (which at least had Aristobulus in common with Plutarch), a rout of Persian cavalry by Macedonian combined-arms is followed up with a Macedonian cavalry attack against Greek mercenary infantry, resulting in an utter massacre. Plutarch took the route of Peter Green and synthesized the two, pitting infantry against infantry and cavalry against cavalry followed by a Macedonian cavalry attack against Greek mercenaries. But the distinction need not exist at all. The key issue is the difference of which units the Macedonians used to attack the Greeks on the hill; given that Diodorus was already wrong about the number of Persian infantry and lacking in specific (but not necessarily contradictory) details regarding its composition, it is fair to assume that he simply omitted, by choice or otherwise, the Greek mercenary encounter.\footnote{Another instance of Diodorus prioritizing brevity in his wide-spanning world history.} Diodorus may have been correct about the river crossing, then, but he certainly was not regarding the Greek mercenary infantry.

Here we should note two threads which only Arrian included, and which are not contradicted in any other source: first, that cavalry continued to reinforce Alexander’s forces on the front line throughout
the second phase and the beginning of the third phase; second, that light infantry (ψιλῶν) mingled among (ἀναμεμιγμένων, literally “mixed up”) the Macedonian cavalry in the midst of the fighting. The cavalry of the first thread could only have been the allies, Thracians, and Thessalians commanded by Parmenio, who must have successfully defended against the Persian attack mentioned by Diodorus. Arrian’s convenient omission of Parmenio’s positive involvement here should not come as a surprise. More surprising, however, is the nearly complete lack of details regarding the infantry throughout the battle. The second Arrian-exclusive thread of the third phase, that the infantry mixed in with the cavalry to push back the Persians, hints at a much more important role. In order to succeed in mixing the troops, each phalanx would need to have advanced, separated, and fought on the level of files. As weak points opened up on the front-line cavalry throughout the second-phase aristeia, each phalanx commander would need to dispatch a couple files to fill the gap here, a couple files there, plugging holes and supporting wherever possible while simultaneously moving the entire line of infantry steadily forward. Such a maneuver would require solid command and control, especially by Perdikkas, the commander of the rightmost phalanx. It would have also required a degree of planning before the battle, either by Alexander or one of his generals. Yet evidently the ancient historians were not interested in these threads, instead preferring to glorify and prioritize Alexander’s personal feats.

With this in mind, we may present the third phase of the battle as follows (see Figures 3.8 and 3.9). The fighting was brutal, but the allied, Thracian, and Thessalian cavalry, having won their engagement against the Persian right wing, soon came to reinforce Alexander’s Companions. Macedonian infantry was able to mingle between gaps in the cavalry shoulder-barging, and soon the Persians of the center were aware that other nobles such as Atizyes, Pharmaces, and Mithrobuzanes were down. Now the Persian center gave way, followed by the left wing under Memnon and the right wing, which had no luck against the staunch Thessalian defense. All fled back towards the safety of the
double-walled Didymateiche and beyond. The Greek mercenary infantry watched in horror as even Memnon, their commander under whom they had been so successful just the year prior, left them behind to make their own stand upon the Höyük Bayri Tepe, the native Persian tomb on its southern edge marking the boundary of a great estate whose owner likely lay dead. Alexander was not so foolish as to pursue the Persian cavalry. Catching his breath, he took a message from the Greek mercenaries, asking for quarter. But there would be no mercy for the supposed traitors. He surrounded the hill entirely and cut them down from all sides. The Greek mercenaries, too, resisted bravely, so much so that Alexander’s own horse was stabbed through the ribs. It made no difference, however. The mercenaries were massacred. The battle at the Granicus was over.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 4: Aftermath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrian notes that Alexander honors the 25 Companions, 60 “other horsemen,” and 30 infantry who had died. Alexander orders Lyssipus to sculpt bronze statues of the 25 fallen Companions.(^{198})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Aftermath at the Granicus.

The ancient historians gave varying descriptions of the immediate aftermath. Aside from numbers, there are no direct contradictions, only different emphases on who won glory. Arrian emphasized the Companions over “other horsemen” whilst Plutarch made no specific distinctions; Diodorus, however, went out of his way to note that honor went first to Alexander, and second to the Thessalian cavalry for their bravery in fighting. Diodorus’ emphasis would be somewhat suspect given only his own details - the Thessalians on the left wing were not responsible for any specific actions other than to defend, a noble but less glorious role - but the emphasis makes more sense when it is

\(^{198}\) Arrian Aftermath: *Arr. An.*, 1.16.3-7

\(^{199}\) Plutarch Aftermath: *Plu. Alex.*, 16.7-8

\(^{200}\) Diodorus Aftermath: *D.S. Lib.*, 17.21.5-6
understood that the Thessalians in fact reinforced and perhaps saved Alexander’s front lines throughout the second and third phases.

Meanwhile, the few Persian generals left, Memnon included, fled down the royal road all the way to Daskyleion. They would soon find that, despite relatively minor cavalry losses, their greatest commanders lay dead: Rhoesaces, brother of Spithridates; Spithridates, satrap of Lydia, as well as the son-in-law of king Darius; Arboupales, son of King Darius and grandson of Artaxerxes; Pharnakes, brother of Darius’ wife; Mithrobuzanes, satrap of Cappadocia. The center had suffered the brunt of casualties, whilst it seemed the commanders of the left and right wings were safe to fight another day.

Alexander, however, was now presented with the opportunity to do what he did best: propaganda. He distributed the honors of battle, burying the Macedonian dead with their weapons and gear, ordering Lyssipus to erect bronze statues of the fallen Companions, and then paying lip service to the Thessalian defenders under Parmenio, without whom the entire left flank would have collapsed. He honored the many dead Persian commanders with funeral rites, and buried the thousands of massacred Greek mercenaries. Somewhere in the modern Biga (Granicus) valley, these three groups - the Macedonians, Persian commanders, and Greek mercenaries most of all - are buried, waiting to be discovered.
Figure 3.5: First phase of the battle: the pawn sacrifice.

Figure 3.6: First phase of the battle: opening charge.
Figure 3.7: Second phase of the battle: the “aristeia.”

Figure 3.8: Third phase of the battle: reinforcements.
Figure 3.9: Third phase of the battle: closing envelopment.
Conclusion

Having buried the fallen, Alexander shipped the 2000 captured mercenaries off to Macedonia in chains, and then sent three hundred sets of Persian armor as a dedicatory offering to Athena on the Athenian acropolis, with an inscription denoting “these spoils from the barbarians dwelling in Asia.” The Persians, of course, would have objected to the very notion of a greater Asia. But the Persians were dead. The Alexander historians would write his history, and Alexander made sure they would include what would be his closest encounter with death until the Indian campaigns: his heroic aristeia against Spithridates, the son in law of Darius, and Rhoesaces. His lieutenant Parmenio could deal with the remnants at Daskyleion, but in the meantime Alexander needed to go on a supply run, straight toward the treasury at Sardis. With his supply issue temporarily solved and his first great struggle over, Alexander could expand his vision beyond the horizon. He had killed Darius’s son-in-law, son, and brother-in-law. Now he could set his eyes on the larger objective: Darius himself, and the confirmation of newborn mythos.

Historians, narrators, orators, biographers, and poets almost immediately began to record, glorify, and warp the battle at the Granicus River to their own preferences, both during Alexander’s conquests and especially in the service of his successors. Our extant accounts are all at least one step removed from a primary source, and even these primary sources are suspect. How can we know, with any certainty, anything at all about the battle? The uncomfortable answer, often ignored but always assumed by modern scholars, is twofold. First, we can’t. Second, we must trust the sources we have as much as reasonable within the bounds of logic and available evidence. Neither Arrian nor Plutarch nor Diodorus fabricated threads, but they did sometimes exaggerate, omit, or outright confuse, and it is the job of the modern scholar to unravel these threads and construct a solid, albeit incomplete, tapestry of

\[201\text{ Arr. An., 1.16.7}\]
Alexander’s first battle against the Persians. Archaeology certainly provides a backbone of irrefutable evidence, upon which we can elucidate and prove (or disprove) certain threads; autopsy, however, provides little more than misleading delusion.

Literary/Scholarly Corrections

Accepting a river crossing account of Diodorus is another blow against Arrian. Arrian’s accounts are far from infallible, and ought to be doubted more often if there are reasonable historiographical alternatives. Scholars such as Lehmann have expressed doubts about Arrian’s legitimacy as early as 1911, yet Arrian’s supremacy is still almost uncontested.²⁰² Bosworth, the author of the quintessential Arrian commentary and foremost expert on Arrian’s literature, is also Arrian’s greatest critic. His 1972 assessment of Arrian’s Anabasis as having been written before any supposed military experience seems to me crucial, and yet is ignored in the now-quintessential Landmark edition; instead, Bosworth’s doubts are characterized as “a little overstated.”²⁰³

Much of Diodorus cannot be accepted, however. He was correct about the river crossing thread, but the rest of his tapestry remains just as muddled as Arrian’s and Plutarch’s. Chapter 3 presented one potential tapestry of the battle at the Granicus, one that is woven from the combined threads of our three major accounts, with the few conflicting threads either discarded or chosen according to whatever ancient accounts, modern analyses, and sources of fresh evidence are available.

The result is a less heroic or legendary Alexander. This Alexander is not one who single-handedly brought down the Achaemenids, nor one who overcame the Sogdian Rock, went to the ends of the earth, and perhaps was even born with divine blood. The Alexander of the Granicus is

²⁰² Lehmann, 1911, 230-244.
instead an Alexander of the Balkans and Greece, an Alexander who is not only intelligent but who also listens (if begrudgingly) to his fellow generals. He is less the Homeric ancestor Achilles and more like Agamemnon, leader of leaders. This Alexander wins battles not through a spectacular singular cavalry charge, but through careful planning and coordination with his generals and subordinates. Ancient historians, writing with full knowledge of Alexander’s future heroics, would find a straightforward account of the Granicus (if one ever existed) too modest considering its position as the first of the Four Great Battles. They wished to portray a singular, cohesive character, and so exaggerated the threads of the battle which portrayed him as such. In the process, they ignored other threads: Amyntas’ heroic pawn sacrifice to distract Memnon and Arsites (which allowed Alexander’s heroic charge in the first place); the extraordinary command and control demonstrated by the infantry (which supported Alexander’s line as the battle wore on); the successful defense by Parmenio’s Thessalians and allies (without whom the Persians would have been able to wheel around, utilize their superior mobility, and crush Alexander from behind). The Alexander of the Granicus tapestry presented in this thesis is one who understood the integral part each of these groups held; if one failed, the entire battle - his entire Asiatic conquest - would fall apart at the outset.

The Persians, on the other hand, retain a complicated image. Chapters 1 and 2 explained some of the Persians’ so-called blunders as in fact logical: the Persian leadership refused to burn their own lands, and logically placed their defense site in the optimal area for their cavalry. Chapter 3 revealed some blunders, however, that are difficult to explain. Why was Memnon placed among the cavalry, and why were the Greek mercenary infantry simply ignored and obsoleted, left to die after a hasty retreat? Such questions have been explored by scholars such as McCoy, but those explorations remain incomplete and unsatisfying. What can be gleaned from the tapestry presented, however, is an image of the Persians at the Granicus as ultimately logical and understandable, if not misguided and outsmarted.
Unanswered Questions

Many questions, only somewhat alleviated by scholarly speculations elsewhere, proved outside the scope of this (landscape-focused) thesis. I neglected to deeply explore Arrian’s literary themes present in his other treatises, such as the *Tactica* and *Indica*, nor did I attempt to explain some of his more confusing literary choices by comparing him with his model, Xenophon.\(^{204}\) The utter confusion over Alexander’s Homeric single-combat against Spithridates (or Spithrobates? Or Mithridates?) may never be fully understood or corrected, nor can the varying numbers provided for both sides.\(^{205}\) The sources I was able to translate from Turkish and German proved invaluable, but such translation proved too time consuming to gain a substantial and holistic understanding of Turkish and German scholarship as a whole.\(^{206}\) Although I was able to utilize GIS to elucidate and demonstrate, I was not able to fully exploit it to full potential.\(^{207}\)

Other questions remain that could only be solved through further archaeological work. The GRVASP team did not take any core samples in the center of the land between the two tributaries, west of Höyük Bayırı Tepe, where I posit the battle took place. Valuable archaeological sites such as Didymateiche and Sidene are almost entirely buried under their modern counterparts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Macedonians, Persians, and Greek mercenaries are buried somewhere in the valley, waiting to be discovered. Beyond the valley, the chapters of Curtius Rufus dealing with the Battle at the

\(^{204}\) Xenophon’s account of the battle at the river Centrites also features a contested river crossing, with notable differences (Xenophon’s force used only infantry and defeated the Persians over the course of a long engagement over multiple fords through trickery).

\(^{205}\) The seemingly infinite rabbit hole of scholarship on the so-called Lost Histories also proved too extensive for reasonable utility, explored already by Pearson: Pearson, 1960.

\(^{206}\) Possibly useful French archaeological studies, such as Robert, 1937, were out of my linguistic reach entirely.

\(^{207}\) See Moss, 2020.
Granicus are lost. Further work on or discovery of any of these four could dramatically change our understanding of the battle.

The limitations and delusion of autopsy, as demonstrated in Chapter 2 especially, may have general implications.\textsuperscript{208} I have begun a reevaluation of the battle at the Granicus using archaeological evidence, but other autopsies ought to be called into question as well, such as Hammond’s 1976 autopsy at Issus.\textsuperscript{209} If the modern landscape is not as reliable as once thought, we must rely increasingly on archaeology to take its place. With archaeology rather than autopsy as the main tool for further research, scholars may hope to avoid being taken captive by the Alexander historians.

\textsuperscript{208} See Chapter 2 for a complete breakdown of Granicus autopsies.
\textsuperscript{209} Which focused in particular on the riverbed which Alexander crossed. Hammond, 1992, 395-406.
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