

Poros' son and Alexander at the head of his cavalry. According to the account, Poros' son arrived with a larger force, and Alexander himself was wounded by him, and Alexander's favorite horse, Boukephalos, was also wounded by Poros' son and killed. But Ptolemy son of Lagos says otherwise; [5] for he too says that Poros' son was sent out, but not with a mere sixty chariots, and I agree with his account. For it is not likely that Poros when he heard from his scouts that Alexander himself, or at least some portion of his army, had crossed the Hydaspes, would have sent his son out with only sixty chariots. [6] If these were sent out for spying, they would be too numerous and too unwieldy for a fast retreat; whereas if they were sent to prevent enemy troops from landing and to attack those who had already emerged from the river, they would have been wholly inadequate. Instead, according to Ptolemy, by the time Poros' son arrived with two thousand horsemen and a hundred and twenty chariots, Alexander had already completed his crossing from the island.

5.15.1-2
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HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
After learning the size of the Indian force engaging him, Alexander launches a cavalry charge and puts the Indians to flight. Their heavy chariots bog down in the muddy ground.

[1] Ptolemy also says that Alexander began by sending the mounted bowmen against them, while he himself advanced with the cavalry, as he thought that Poros was approaching with his entire force and that the advance unit of horsemen was the spearhead of Poros' army. [2] But when Alexander had gained an accurate sense of the Indians' numbers, he made a lightning attack with his own cavalry. The Indians fled when they caught sight of Alexander himself and his mass of horsemen, who were attacking not in line but squadron by squadron.^{2a} Up to four hundred Indian horsemen fell, as did Poros' son. The chariots were captured along with their horses; they had proved heavy in the retreat and were of no use in the action itself on account of the mud.

5.15.3-7
HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
Poros commits the majority of his army to meeting Alexander's forces and makes his battle dispositions. He posts elephants in his front line as a moving bulwark, with infantry divisions between and behind them and with cavalry at the wings.

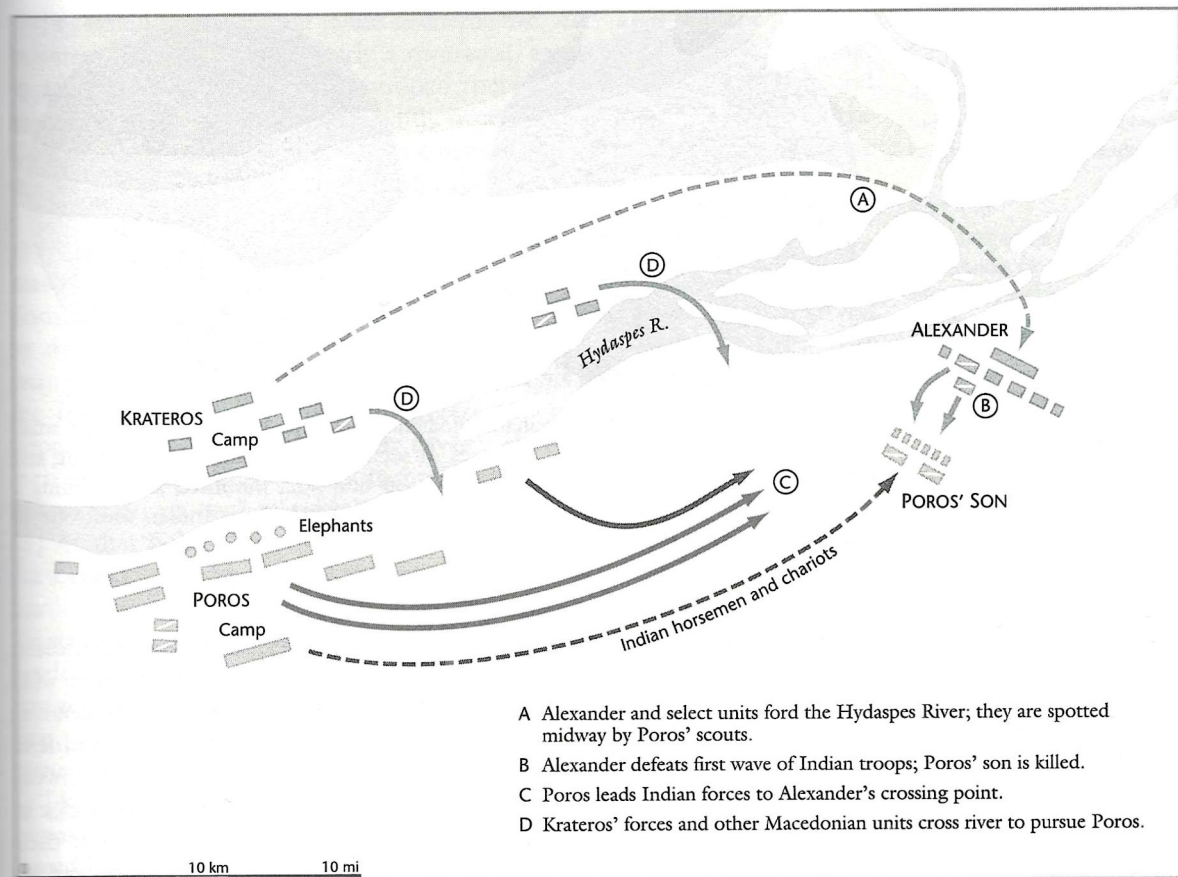
[3] When the horsemen who were able to save themselves by flight had reported to Poros that Alexander himself had crossed the river in force and that his son was dead, Poros nevertheless could not make up his mind what to do, since the men who had been left behind with Krateros in the main camp opposite were clearly attempting to cross the river.^{3a} [4] In the end Poros chose to advance against Alexander and to fight it out, with his entire army, against the most powerful body of Macedonians and the king himself, but he left a few of the elephants with a modest force at the camp to scare Krateros' cavalry away from the bank. Taking his entire cavalry force of up to four thousand horsemen, all his three hundred chariots, two hundred elephants, and the effective units of his infantry—nearly thirty thousand men^{4a}—Poros advanced against Alexander. [5] When he came upon an area

5.15.2a The phrase translated "squadron by squadron" (Greek *kat'ilas*) is not well understood. It seems in this case that Alexander kept his cavalry arranged in a column rather than spreading them out in a line.

5.15.3a If Arrian's account is correct, Krateros moved into the river prematurely, for Alexander ordered him to wait until Poros had marched off with his elephants (see

5.11.4). But Krateros was not one to jump the gun or disobey orders, so Arrian may have misunderstood his sources here.

5.15.4a The number of Poros' forces at this battle is a subject of dispute. Bosworth (II.292), reasoning on the basis of the length of the Indian line, believes that Arrian's source, Ptolemy, has greatly exaggerated the strength of Poros' army to increase the glory of Alexander's victory.



MAP 5.15. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES AS DESCRIBED AT 5.12.2–5.18.1. Alexander is shown crossing the Indus at a point some 20 miles from his base camp, and forming up his battle line in time to meet the first wave of Indian attackers, led by Poros' son.

where no mud was visible, a sandy, level plain with firm footing for the charges and maneuvers of his cavalry, he arrayed his forces, starting with a line of elephants, each animal placed less than a hundred feet from the next, so that the line would be equal in length to that of the opposing infantry phalanx and might terrify the horsemen surrounding Alexander. [6] In any event, Poros did not expect that his adversaries would dare to thrust themselves into the spaces between the elephants, not with their cavalry, given the horses' fear, still less with the foot soldiers whose forward progress would be barred by the onslaught of heavily armed Indians and who would be trampled underfoot when the elephants wheeled on them. [7] Next, Poros posted the foot soldiers not on the same line as the elephants, but in a second line close enough behind them that their companies could be posted in the intervals between the beasts. He also stationed infantry at the wings even beyond the elephants; beyond the infantry at each wing he posted his



FIGURE 5.16. The so-called elephant medallion was apparently cast in very small numbers after the battle of the Hydaspes. It seems to show Alexander standing and holding a thunderbolt in the guise of Zeus on one side, mounted and pursuing a fleeing elephant on the other. The elephant is ridden by two Indian foes, one of whom is often identified as Poros.

5.16.1–3

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HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)

Alexander, leading the cavalry, is rejoined by the infantry. He allows them to rest from the river crossing and then prepares his attack. Leading his own cavalry force on a rightward flanking maneuver, he details Koinos to lead other horsemen in the opposite direction, with instructions to pursue any Indian cavalrymen that ride out to meet Alexander.

cavalry, and in front of the cavalry, likewise at each wing, the chariots.

[1] Such was Poros' battle array. As soon as Alexander saw the Indians drawn up in order, he halted his own cavalry so as to await the infantry who were still approaching. But when the phalanx, hastening up on the double, had joined him, he did not immediately array the troops for battle and lead them forward, lest he deliver up exhausted and panting men to the unwearied barbarians. Instead he had his cavalry ride back and forth in circles in front of his infantrymen, giving them an interval in which to catch their breath. [2] When he saw the Indians' battle order, he decided not to lead his men forward against their center, since the elephants stood on the front lines and the phalanx had densely filled in the intervals between them; he feared the combination of forces that Poros, after calculating carefully, had posted there. Instead, since his cavalry was superior to that of Poros, he took most of it and rode past the enemy's left wing, intending to launch his attack there. [3] He sent Koinos^{3a} against the right with his own cavalry division and that of Demetrios, having ordered him to keep close behind the barbarians once they had glimpsed Alexander's approach and ridden out to counter it.^{3b} He assigned the command of the infantry phalanx to Seleukos, Antigenes,^{3c} and Tauron and ordered them not to join the action until they saw that the Indians' infantry and horsemen were thrown into disorder by his cavalry.

5.16.3a Koinos inexplicably appears here as a cavalry commander, whereas elsewhere (at 4.16.2, for example) Arrian describes him as leading an infantry unit.

5.16.3b The words here translated "against the right" could just as easily mean "toward the right." On the first interpretation, Alexander told Koinos to move leftward and get in position to attack the Indian right wing from behind, as it moved against Alexander

(see Map 5.16). But the other reading is also possible; Koinos in that case would have moved rightward. Both versions of the maneuver seem equally possible and equally problematic, so the passage remains ambiguous.

5.16.3c This is Arrian's first mention of Antigenes, later commander of the elite Silver Shields infantry unit and a major figure in events after Alexander's death. See the Epilogue, §8.

[4] When he was within range of enemy fire, Alexander sent the mounted women, who numbered nearly a thousand, against the Indians' left wing, as to confuse the Indians stationed there with a barrage of arrows and incursions of horses. Alexander swiftly overtook the barbarians' left with the Companion cavalry, taking pains to attack them in the flank while they were still in disarray and before their cavalry could be drawn up in line.

[1] Meanwhile, the Indians had brought their horsemen together from all sides and were riding parallel to Alexander and drawing out their line to match his progress.^{1a} Koinos and his men, following Alexander's instructions, appeared behind them. Once the Indians saw this, they were forced to deploy their cavalry in two directions, the largest and strongest part facing Alexander, the other facing Koinos and his men. [2] This tactic upset the Indians' formation and their presence of mind. Alexander, seeing his opportunity at the moment their cavalry changed direction, attacked the men nearest him, and as a result the Indians did not even await his charge but were driven back to their line of elephants as though to a friendly wall.

[3] At that point the commanders of the elephants led the beasts against the cavalry, and the Macedonian phalanx advanced to meet the elephants, hurling javelins at the men mounted upon them,^{3a} and shooting at the beasts themselves from all sides. The action was like none of their previous battles; for the beasts sallied out against the battalions of foot soldiers and ravaged them wherever they turned, despite their keeping in close formation, while the Indian horsemen, seeing their infantry joining the fight, turned back and charged the Macedonian cavalry.

[4] But when Alexander's men regained the upper hand—for they far surpassed the Indians in strength and experience^{4a}—the Indians were again forced back to the elephants. At that point, Alexander's entire cavalry united in one troop, not in response to an order, but in consequence of the engagement itself; and wherever it assaulted the Indian ranks, these suffered heavy losses. [5] As the elephants were now confined in a narrow space, their friends were injured by them no less than the enemy, trampled underfoot when the beasts wheeled and shoved. As the Indian horsemen were also confined in a narrow space near the elephants, they suffered a heavy slaughter. Meanwhile, most of the elephants' mahouts had been struck down by javelins, and the elephants themselves, some of them wounded, others overcome by their toils and bereft of their masters, no longer remained in formation. [6] Driven senseless by their misery, they attacked friends and foes alike,

5.16.4

HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
The attack begins. The Macedonian mounted archers render the Indian left wing vulnerable to an assault by Alexander.

5.17.1-3

HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
The Indian cavalry pursues Alexander and is caught between his contingent and that of Koinos. They retreat behind the protective screen of the elephants. The infantries of both sides join the fray, and the Indians succeed in using their elephants to harass the Macedonian phalanx.

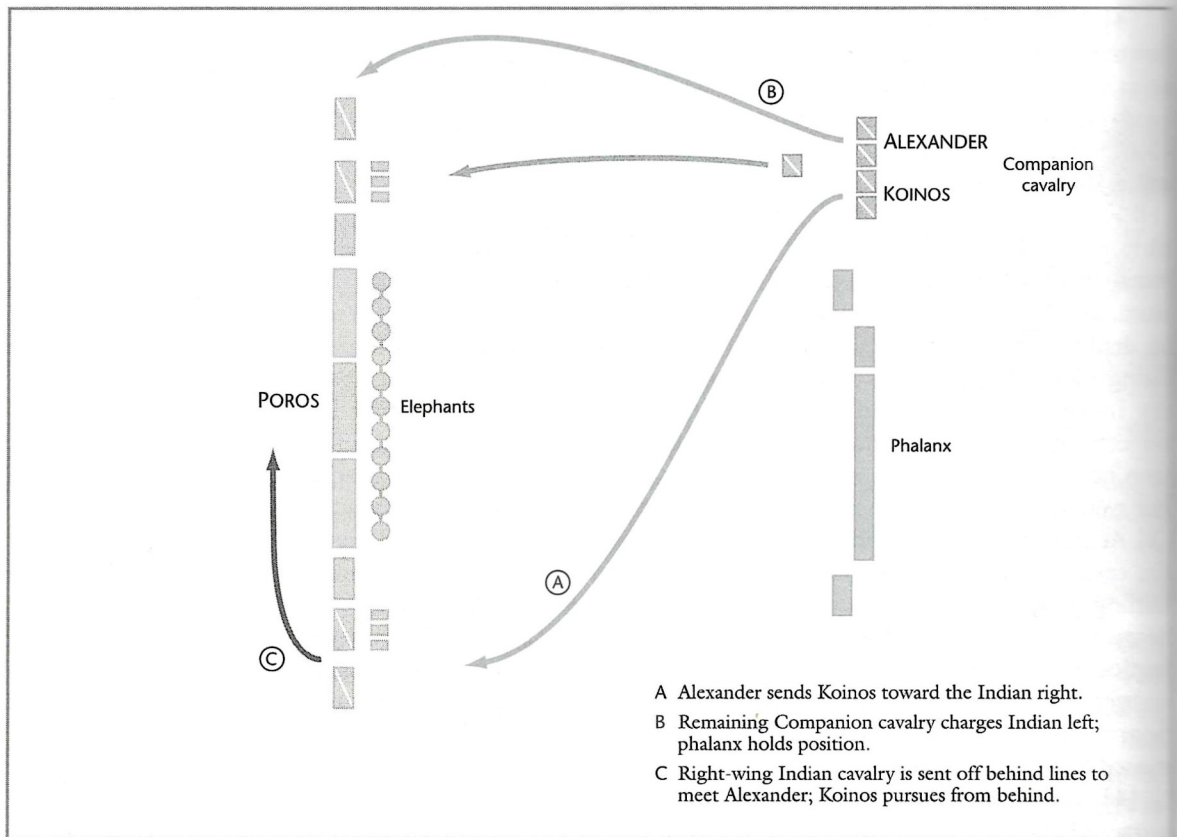
5.17.4-6

HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
Alexander's veterans, relying on their years of experience in battle, turn the tide. The elephants in the Indian line cause great confusion, harming both Alexander's army and the Indians in their panic and distress.

5.17.1a Following Bosworth (II.299) and others, we should imagine that this movement of the Indian cavalry, and the corresponding pursuit by Koinos' regiment, took place in the rear of the Indian lines rather than in front, as some have supposed.

5.17.3a Though facing a major elephant force for the first time, the Macedonians seem to have already understood that a trained war elephant could be rendered ineffective if its trainer-rider was killed.

5.17.4a This seems to be the crucial point: though Arrian's sources have done their best to emphasize the risks Alexander ran in the battle with Poros, the high degree of training and discipline his troops had attained meant that victory was assured even against an army equipped with elephants. There is also a suggestion in Arrian's language here that the Macedonians enjoyed numerical superiority.



MAP 5.16. THE MAJOR ENGAGEMENT OF THE BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES AS DESCRIBED AT 5.16.3–5.17.1. After the arrival of Poros' forces at Alexander's crossing point, Alexander's key move was to send cavalry led by Koinos "toward the (Macedonian) right" or "against the (Indian) right"—Arrian's language is unfortunately ambiguous. The map is based on the latter interpretation. In this reading, Alexander anticipated that the Indians would draw cavalry from their right wing to meet his attack on the left, and planned for Koinos to take these relief forces in the rear. It is unclear how Koinos avoided detection as he moved into position.

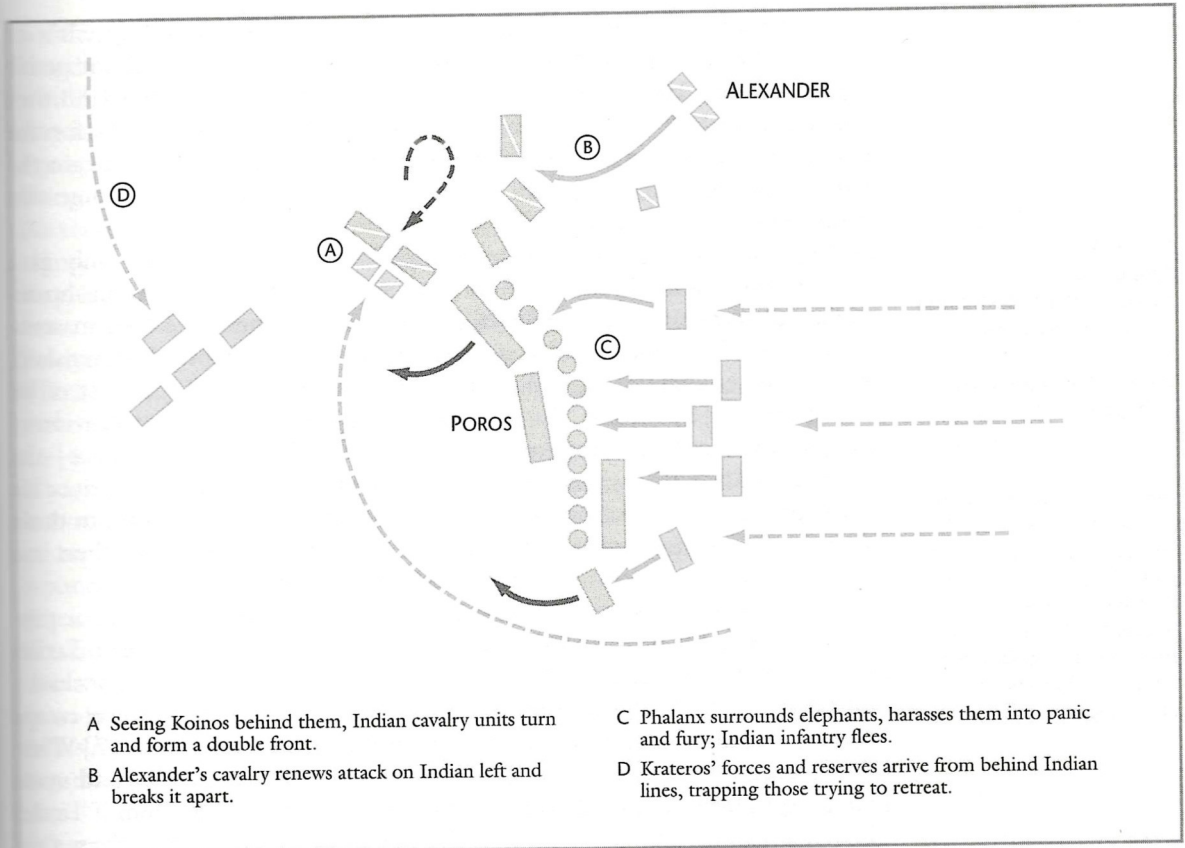
and thrust themselves in all directions, trampling and killing. The Macedonians, who were attacking the beasts in an open field and at their own discretion, were able to give ground when charged, then follow behind and hurl javelins when the beasts turned their backs; it was the Indians, who were at close quarters with the elephants, who incurred the most harm from them.

[7] When the beasts were worn out, and their charges were no longer vigorous—when they merely trumpeted and retired, like ships backing water—Alexander completely surrounded their entire unit with his cavalry and gave the signal for the foot soldiers to lock their shields, draw themselves into the tightest possible formation, and advance the phalanx. And thus all but a few of the Indian horsemen were cut to pieces in the action.

5.17.7

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HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
Alexander orders his phalanx
to advance in tight formation.
The Indian army, routed,
flees the field.



MAP 5.17. THE FINAL PHASE OF THE BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES AS DESCRIBED AT 5.17.2–5.18.1. In Arrian's description, the battle became a rout after Koinos' surprise move startled and disordered the Indian cavalry. Alexander's renewed attacks smashed the Indian left wing, and the Macedonian phalanx, kept out of the fight until now, brought its weapons to bear against the elephants arrayed in the center. The Indians soon lost control of these beasts and fled in panic, only to be boxed in by Krateros' reserve forces, which by then were arriving at the battlefield.

Their foot soldiers were already being cut down, as the Macedonians were attacking them from every side. At that point, where a gap appeared in Alexander's cavalry, all the Indians turned and fled.

[1] At the same time, Krateros and all the other officers of Alexander's army who had been left at the bank of the Hydaspes began to cross the river when they saw Alexander prevailing decisively. These men caused no less of a slaughter in the Indians' retreat, having arrived fresh for the pursuit as replacements for Alexander's exhausted men. [2] Almost twenty thousand Indian foot soldiers and some three thousand horsemen were killed. All their chariots were destroyed. Two of Poros' sons died, as did Spitakes, the chief of the local Indians, the officers in charge of the

5.18.1–3

HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)
Krateros and the men stationed across the Hydaspes now ford the river to aid in the slaughter of the Indians. Losses on the Indian side are huge; only a few hundred Macedonians are killed.

elephants and chariots, and all the cavalry commanders and generals of Poros' army. [. . .]^{2a} Also captured were the elephants that did not perish there. [3] On Alexander's side, about eighty of the eight thousand foot soldiers who had taken part in the initial assault were killed. As for the cavalry, ten of the mounted bowmen, whose task it had been to begin the battle, were killed, along with about twenty Companions and some two hundred other horsemen.

5.18.4–5

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HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)

Arrian commends the bravery and nobility of Poros, who fought on until all hope was lost.

[4] Poros had performed great exploits in the battle, not only as a general but as a noble soldier. And when he saw the slaughter of his horsemen, and some of his elephants fallen, while others, bereft of their masters, were wandering about pitifully, and when most of his infantry had perished, he did not emulate Darius, the Great King, who retreated, the first of his men to flee.^{4a} [5] Instead, Poros stood his ground as long as any portion of the Indian force held firm, until at last, wounded in the right shoulder—the only part of him that was exposed as he ranged over the battlefield, since his breastplate, remarkable for its strength and joint work, as was plain to those who saw it later, protected the rest of his body from missiles—then and only then did he turn his elephant about and retreat.^{5a}

5.18.6–7

HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)

Alexander recognizes Poros' nobility and insists on capturing him alive.

[6] Alexander, having seen that Poros was a great man who had acquitted himself nobly in the battle, was eager to save him. First he sent Taxiles the Indian to him, and Taxiles, having ridden up to what seemed to him a safe distance from Poros' elephant, bade him halt the beast, since escape was now out of the question, and listen to Alexander's proposals. [7] When Poros caught sight of Taxiles, his old enemy, he wheeled about and made ready to hurl his javelin at him, and indeed might have killed him if Taxiles had not seen what was coming and ridden away from Poros. Even then Alexander did not grow angry with Poros, but sent others to him in turn, and in particular Meroes, an Indian, because he learned that the man was an old friend. [8] Poros heard what Meroes had to say, and then was suddenly overcome by thirst. He halted his elephant and dismounted, and when he had quenched his thirst and recovered himself, he urged Meroes to conduct him to Alexander at once.

5.19.1–3

HYDASPES RIVER (EAST BANK)

A legendary exchange of words begins a long alliance between the defeated Poros, now confirmed in power as a vassal king in the Macedonian empire, and an admiring Alexander.

[1] Meroes complied. When Alexander learned that Poros was approaching, he met him in front of the line with a few of the Companions. Halting his horse, he marveled at Poros' height (which appeared to exceed eight feet),^{1a} his beauty, and the fact that his spirit was plainly unbowed: he approached Alexander as one brave man would approach

5.18.2a A sentence or two, completing the casualty lists and giving the number of prisoners captured, has fallen out of the manuscripts here.

5.18.4a Darius, the Persian emperor, was the first to flee after realizing his ultimate defeat in the battle at Issus (2.11.4–7) and again at Gaugamela (3.14.3).

5.18.5a A medallion struck by Alexander in very small numbers, perhaps as a gift to his senior officers in the Indian campaign, depicts a fleeing elephant pursued by a

spear-wielding cavalryman (see Figure 5.16). One of the two figures riding the elephant is generally thought to be Poros, and the cavalryman is thought to be Alexander, even though, according to accounts of the battle of the Hydaspes, the two did not encounter each other until after the fighting had ceased.

5.19.1a Arrian tends to exaggerate the height of Indians (see n. 5.4.4a), but by the accounts of all ancient sources, Poros was indeed exceptionally tall.

another, having contended honorably against another king on behalf of his kingdom. [2] Alexander spoke first and urged Poros to say what he hoped would befall him. Poros is said to have replied, "Treat me like a king, Alexander." Pleased with the response, Alexander said, "That will be done, Poros, on my own account. But on your account, say what would be to your liking." Poros replied that everything was contained in that wish. [3] And Alexander, even more pleased with this response, granted Poros sovereignty over the very Indians he had been ruling and added another territory even more extensive than his former domain.^{3a} Thus he had treated a brave man like a king, and thereafter enjoyed the man's unswerving loyalty. So ended the battle against Poros and the Indians beyond the Hydaspes, which took place in the month of Mounykhion,^{3b} during Hegemon's archonship^{3c} at Athens.

[4] At the battlefield and at the site from which he set out to cross the Hydaspes, Alexander founded two cities. He named one of them Nikaia, in honor of his victory over the Indians,^{4a} the other Boukephala,^{4b} in memory of his horse Boukephalos, who died there. [5] The horse had not been wounded but had succumbed to the heat and old age (he was about thirty years old)^{5a} after years of sharing Alexander's toils and dangers. Enormous in stature and noble in spirit, Boukephalos had been mounted only by Alexander, since the horse had refused to carry any other riders. He had been branded with the mark of an ox head, which some say was the source of his name;^{5b} others say that though the rest of his body was black, his head was marked with a white shape that resembled an ox head. [6] Boukephalos went missing once in Ouxioi^{6a} country, whereupon Alexander issued a general proclamation stating that he would kill every one of the Ouxioi unless they brought back his horse. The horse was brought back as soon as the proclamation was issued, so great was Alexander's regard for Boukephalos and so great the barbarians' fear of Alexander. May this serve as my brief tribute to Boukephalos for Alexander's sake.

[1] When those who had died in the battle had been honored by Alexander with the appropriate ceremony, he performed for the gods the customary rites that honor victories, and held a competition in athletics and horseman-

5.19.4-6

NIKAIA-BOUKEPHALA
Alexander founds two cities:
Nikaia, in honor of his
victory, and Boukephala, in
honor of his horse who died.

5.19.3a It is surprising to find Alexander so willing to trust a man who had until this moment been a determined foe, but his judgment of Poros' character was borne out by later events. Poros remained a faithful vassal of the Macedonians throughout the rest of his life. He was assassinated for unknown reasons by a Macedonian garrison commander in 318.

5.19.3b The month of Mounykhion in the Attic calendar corresponds to late April/early May by our calendar. This passage raises the likelihood that the text of 5.9.4, which in its received condition dates the battle of the Hydaspes after the summer solstice, is somehow corrupt.

5.19.3c Ancient historians, who had no universal system for numbering years, routinely

used the names of Athenian archons or Roman consuls—officials who served one-year terms—to identify points in historical time.

5.19.4a Nikaia: Map 5.25, inset. The name is derived from the Greek word *nike*, meaning "victory."

5.19.4b Boukephala: Map 5.25, inset.

5.19.5a Boukephalos' age seems exaggerated but is within the realm of possibility. The information that Boukephalos was not wounded but died of exhaustion also contradicts our other sources, which claim that the horse died from wounds incurred in the battle (a tradition referred to by Arrian himself at 5.14.4).

5.19.5b *Boukephalos* in Greek means "ox head."

5.19.6a Ouxioi, location of territory: Map 5.25.

5.20.1-4

INDIA
After holding a victory celebration and games, Alexander marches against a tribe neighboring the realm of Poros and puts their territory under Poros' control.