

5,000 cavalry troops. Alexander then brought the assault force to the crossing point at some distance back from the river to hide their movement from Porus. Before the night of the crossing the skin-floats and the thirty-oared galleys had been brought up near the point of embarkation and concealed in the trees. A fortuitous deluge drowned out the noise of final preparations.

THE BATTLE OF THE HYDASPES

Just before dawn, after the wind and rain had subsided, the operation was initiated. The cavalry embarked upon rafts and the infantry were loaded into boats. Alexander himself crossed in one of the galleys, accompanied by three officers of his personal bodyguard—Ptolemy, Perdikkas, Lysimachus—as well as by Seleucus and half of the hypaspists. It was now time to play the Lion.

Indian mounted scouts spotted the crossing party and immediately rode off to Porus with the news of their approach, but the crossing was a success. Alexander, the first ashore, promptly began to put the disembarking cavalry into battle order. The only problem was that, from want of local knowledge, he and the rest of the Macedonians had not landed on the river's opposite shore, but on an island separated from the far bank by a stream. "Intelligence" had let the Macedonians down—as it had before the battle of Issos, when Darius and the Persians were able to circle back behind Alexander and cut the Macedonians off from their Cilician supply bases. Now, on an island in the middle of a rain-swollen river, thousands of miles from home, came the test of Alexander's leadership.

Finding another fording point from the island to the far bank, the assault group calmly reassembled and crossed over. The water rose to the men's armpits and to the necks of the horses during the second crossing.

Having reached the opposite bank of the river, Alexander then marshaled his forces again. The Royal Squadron and the rest of the best cavalry were put on the right wing, with mounted archers in front. In the rear of the cavalry was the Royal Regiment of Guards under Seleucus, then the Royal Regiment of heavy infantry, in touch with the other Guards regiments. The archers, the Agrianes, and the javelin men were

stationed on the wings of the infantry phalanx. Alexander's men had regrouped flawlessly under terrible conditions, a tribute to his leadership and their own professionalism.

Alexander then ordered the turning force to advance, with the cavalry leading the way, the archers following them, and then the infantry. In effect, therefore, he had deployed his cavalry as a kind of screen for his infantry. At this point, our sources diverge. According to one contemporary account, the landing on the bank was initially opposed by Porus' son with sixty chariots; this force promptly drove right past the Macedonians' landing point and was put to flight by the mounted archers. Other writers state that Porus' son did fight Alexander at the landing point, wounding Alexander and striking the blow that killed Bucephalus.

Ptolemy, however, who fought in the battle, later recalled that Porus' son did indeed come, not just with 60 chariots (an improbable number, for it would be insufficient to challenge Alexander, and too many for reconnaissance) but with 2,000 mounted troops and 120 chariots. The purpose of this attacking force must have been to disrupt Alexander's landing or to prevent the Macedonians from forming up in good order. In either case, it was not successful. Alexander routed it with a cavalry attack, with the Indians losing 400 mounted men, including Porus' son. The chariots with their teams were captured in the subsequent retreat; they had driven rather heavily and had been useless in the action itself because of the mud.

News of his son's defeat (or failure) was conveyed to Porus, who now saw that the pinning force left with Craterus was beginning to cross the river. Caught in a classic pincer movement, Porus wisely determined to confront the strongest part of the Macedonian army, which was led by Alexander himself. Leaving behind a small force with a few elephants to spread alarm among Craterus' cavalry as they crossed the Hydaspes, Porus then marched out to meet Alexander on his side of the river with around 2,000 cavalry, 85 elephants, 240 chariots, and 20,000 infantry.

After reaching a place that was sandy (rather than muddy), level, and solid, and therefore suitable for cavalry maneuvers, Porus positioned his elephants along his battle formation at intervals of fifty feet, screening the whole body of his infantry (and intending to terrify the Macedonian cavalry). Behind the screen were set the foot soldiers, slotted into the intervals

between the elephants. Infantry were posted on the wings as well, stretching out beyond the line of elephants. Mounted units, each with a screen of war chariots, provided additional protection on the flanks.

After allowing his infantry to catch up with his cavalry and then to reform and rest, Alexander moved the majority of his cavalry to his right wing (opposite Porus' left). Philotas' brother-in-law, Coenus, with his own and Demetrius' cavalry regiments, was sent over to Porus' right with orders that when Porus sent his cavalry over to his own left to face Alexander's massed cavalry, he should stay behind them. The heavy phalanx infantry units under Seleucus, Antigenes, and Tauron were ordered to hold off from engagement until the Indians were thrown into confusion by the (usual) Macedonian cavalry charge.

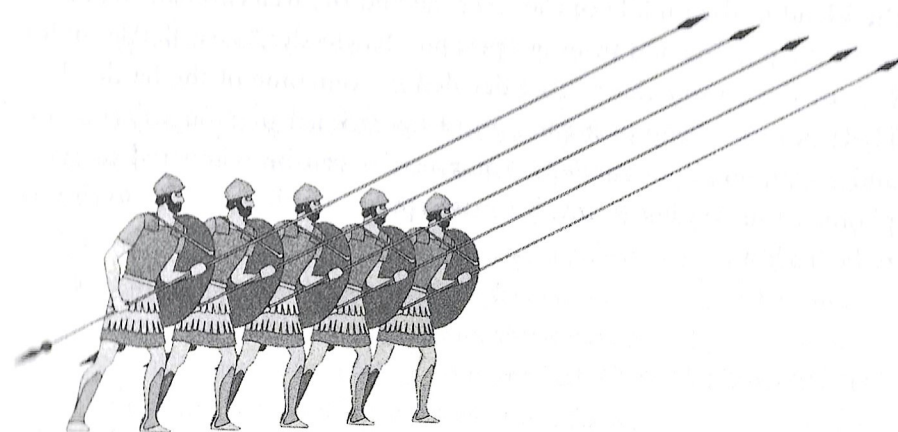
Alexander commenced the attack with an assault by 1,000 mounted archers against Porus' left wing. This assault was followed by a charge of the Companion cavalry led by Alexander against the Indian left, before their cavalry could mass.

The Indians meanwhile were removing all of their cavalry from their line to meet Alexander's charge. These cavalymen were followed by Coenus and his men, who began to appear at the rear of the Indian cavalry as it followed Alexander out to the right. The Indians therefore split their forces to deal with Alexander and Coenus.

In that instant, when the Indian cavalry split, and part of it changed direction to meet Coenus, Alexander charged into the Indian line facing him. The Indians immediately fell back into their screen of elephants.

At this point the Macedonian infantry advanced, hurling javelins at the drivers of the elephants, and, surrounding the elephants, volleyed upon them from all sides. The elephants then charged out into the line of infantry, devastating the infantry of both sides, whichever way they turned. The Indian cavalry, seeing that the action had settled down into an infantry battle, regrouped and charged again into the Macedonian cavalry. Once again, however, the strength and experience of the Macedonians told, and the Indian cavalry was pushed back into the elephants.

By this time the elephants too had been crowded back into a narrow space where they trampled to death as many friends as enemies. The Macedonians, with more room to maneuver than the Indians, gave ground when charged or went after the elephants with their javelins when the opportunity arose.



The Macedonian infantry adopted a close-order formation when they were about to make contact with enemy infantry. Within such a formation, the pikes of the infantrymen in the first few rows projected out in front of the phalanx, like the quills of a porcupine, but at different heights. While the shields-locked formation of the infantry (above) was primarily a defensive formation, it could also be used offensively as it was during the final stages of the battle of the Hydaspes River.

When the elephants grew tired of charging and backed away, retreating like ships backing water, Alexander surrounded the whole lot, elephants, horsemen, and all, and signaled the infantry to lock shields (*synaspismos* formation, in Greek) and move up in phalanx order. Most of the Indian cavalry were cut down in the resulting action. Some of the infantry escaped only to be met by Craterus, who had successfully crossed the river and taken over the pursuit of the survivors from Alexander and his men.

No fewer than 12,000 Indians were killed in the battle, including both infantry and cavalry, and 9,000 were taken prisoner. Of Porus' force of elephants, eighty were captured alive. All of the Indian war chariots were destroyed. On the Macedonian side, 280 cavalry and 700 infantrymen lost their lives.

Alexander and his multi-ethnic force had prevailed against a brave and tenacious foe who was fighting on his home ground from a superior

defensive position. The king had used deception to effect a difficult river crossing under dreadful conditions. Despite the mistake of landing on the island in the middle of the river, he and the Macedonians had executed the pinning and turning operation flawlessly. As usual, Alexander had led the cavalry charge that decided the outcome of the battle. The Hydaspes was a complex triumph of operational planning, deception, and execution. If Alexander's major battles can be compared to symphonies, this was his *Jupiter*, his masterpiece, and like the *Jupiter*, it was to be his last.

THE FATE OF PORUS

Porus himself was not among the Indian casualties. Mounted on the largest elephant, more than seven feet tall himself, the king had fought on. He had refused to surrender, although he was wounded in his right shoulder and he could see that his cavalry had been slaughtered, most of his infantry had been killed, and his elephants had been cut down or were wandering about without riders. At last persuaded to listen to a message from Alexander brought by an Indian friend named Meroes, Porus dismounted and drank some water. Then the towering Indian king was brought to Alexander.

"What do you wish me to do with you?" Alexander asked. Porus replied, "Treat me, O Alexander, like a king." Impressed, Alexander restored Porus to his sovereignty and even enlarged his realm.

Alexander then founded two new cities (*poleis*). The first, sited on the east bank of the Jhelum where the battle took place, was named Nikaia (Victory), in honor of Alexander's victory over Porus and the Indians. The second city stood on the west bank, perhaps on the spot where Alexander had initiated his crossing; it was christened Bucephala, in memory of his beloved horse, who had died there (at the age of thirty) not wounded by anyone, but from exhaustion and age.

THE EULOGY OF BUCEPHALAS

Of Bucephalas and Alexander, Arrian wrote:

In former days, he had shared with Alexander many a danger and many a weary march. No one ever rode him but his master, for he would never permit anyone else to mount him. He was a big horse, high-spirited—a noble creature. He was branded with the figure of an ox-head, whence his name—though some have said that the name came from a white mark on his head, shaped like an ox. This was the only bit of white on his body, all the rest being black. In Uxia, once, Alexander lost him, and issued an edict that he would kill every man in the country unless he was brought back, as he promptly was. The story is evidence both of the fear which Alexander inspired and of his devotion to Bucephalas. But I must say no more: what I have written in Bucephalas' praise, I have written for Alexander's sake.