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THE ASSASSINATION OF PHILIP II: AN ELUSIVE MASTERMIND

Setting the scene*

‘The greatest of the kings in Europe’,¹ thus was Philip described by Diodorus, but his rule came to an abrupt end by the hand of his bodyguard Pausanias during the wedding procession as Philip’s daughter was being wedded to Alexander, the king of Epirus in the autumn of 336. Ancient and modern works abound with attempts at explaining the murder as it is central to understanding the political climate of the time. This climate was dominated by the rise of Macedon and the imminent invasion of Persia which would come to be hugely important for the future of the region. If we look merely at this political outline, it poses a question that has most often been rejected *a priori*: could the Persians be involved in the murder? This is the question on which the following will focus as the possibility has been neglected and it would have important implications in supporting the movement towards partial rehabilitation of the late Persian Empire.² The aim of this article is to uncover the neglect of previous scholarship in their premature rejection of Persian involvement and to offer evidence to suggest Darius as a possible alternative mastermind.

Scholarship has evolved along three main lines since the middle of the last century. Olmstead in his work on Persian history, briefly indicates Alexander as the mastermind and points out that the new king blamed the Persians, using the letters of Arrian as Curtius as evidence.³ However, even in a history of Persia, Darius is not considered to have possibly been involved and Olmstead moves swiftly

* In the completion of this article, Sian Lewis has provided invaluable help for which I am sincerely grateful.

¹ Diod. 16,95,1.

² Seen in e.g. P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: a History of the Persian Empire*, Winona Lake 2002.

³ A. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire, Achaemenid Period*, Chicago 1948, 491.

on from the assassination. Ernst Badian laid the foundations to an important perspective in 1963 in the article *The Death of Philip II*. Here Badian argues that it was Alexander and his mother Olympias who engineered the assassination because Alexander's position as heir was threatened by Philip's new marriage to the Macedonian noblewoman Cleopatra in 337.⁴ He rejects the idea of Persian involvement as mere Alexandrian propaganda.⁵ His influence is clearly seen in Milns' book from 1968 as he comments: 'There can be little doubt that Alexander became King by becoming a patricide.'⁶ Bosworth attempted to offer a completely alternative explanation in 1971 when he explained the murder as the result of internal power struggles between Upper and Lower Macedonia, masterminded by the Lyncestian brothers.⁷ However, the exact ethnicity of the different individuals in the royal house, and the importance hereof, has been under much debate and their motivation seems dubious, which has resulted in the view not winning acceptance.⁸ In 1975, Rufus Fears asserted that a deranged Pausanias had sufficient personal motives to act on his own and rejected the idea of Alexander's estrangement from his father.⁹ He also points to Olympias being the one whose position was undermined by the marriage of Philip and therefore the more likely candidate if indeed a mastermind existed.¹⁰ The Persians are mentioned as having more to gain from the assassination than Alexander but nothing further regarding their involvement is written and this point thus seems more like an argument against Alexander than for Darius.¹¹ Develin in 1981 argued for a much more rational Pausanias but developed Fears' arguments of Olympias being the mastermind to argue that she alone was behind.¹² The idea of the Persians being involved was rejected as 'worthless'¹³ without further arguments. Ellis' work from the same year rejected any mastermind as he did not see Alexander's position as undermined and instead argued that Pausanias' motives were purely personal, developed in 'the solitary mind of a lunatic'.¹⁴ Ellis is slightly less categorical in his rejection of Persian involvement but likewise dismisses it without arguments.¹⁵ In 1992 there was a rehabilitation

⁴ E. Badian, 'The death of Philip II', *Phoenix* 17 (1963), 250.

⁵ Badian, 'The Death of Philip II', 248.

⁶ R. Milns, *Alexander the Great*, London 1968, 31.

⁷ A.B. Bosworth, 'Philip II and upper Macedonia', *CQ* 21 (1971), 93–105.

⁸ E. Carney, 'The politics of polygamy: Olympias, Alexander and the death of Philip II', *Historia* 41 (1992), note 44. For a refutation, see J.R. Ellis, 'The assassination of Philip II', in D.J. Dell (ed.) *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson*, Thessaloniki 1981, 120–121.

⁹ J.R. Fears, 'Pausanias, the assassin of Philip II', *Athenaeum* 53 (1975), 123, 126.

¹⁰ Fears, 'Pausanias, the assassin of Philip II', 134–135.

¹¹ Fears, 'Pausanias, the assassin of Philip II', 134.

¹² R. Develin, 'The murder of Philip II', *Antichthon* 15 (1981), 88–89, 99.

¹³ Develin, 'The murder of Philip II', 98.

¹⁴ Ellis, 'The assassination of Philip II', 118, 137.

¹⁵ Ellis, 'The assassination of Philip II', 128–129.

of Olympias by Carney through a rejection of the main sources as unreliable and hostile and Pausanias is presented as ‘a very plausible assassin’.¹⁶ While rejecting Alexander or Olympias as possibilities Carney briefly entertains the idea of Persian involvement, presenting the idea as a possibility and concludes that ‘Pausanias, quite possibly with some foreign help, remains the most obvious choice for chief murderer’.¹⁷ However, she fails to pursue this idea as her main focus is on Olympias’s position at court. This could seem like a breakthrough; however, Briant in his enormous work on Persian history fails to suggest the idea and only briefly mentions the assassination.¹⁸ Worthington continued this neglect in 2008 as he did not even mention the possibility of Persian involvement but instead pointed to Alexander as the instigator as a consequence of Philip leaving him behind for his conquest of Persia but no major evidence is given to prove Philip’s decision.¹⁹ The fact that Worthington does not even mention the possibility underscores the neglect of modern scholarship towards Darius as a possibility. From the above it can be seen that there are three main possibilities: Pausanias acting alone, Olympias acting alone or a combination of Olympias and Alexander. Other possibilities have been rejected and the idea of the Persian involvement has only been briefly supported once and never been seriously argued and pursued.

The three main positions are founded primarily on the accounts of Diodorus, Justin and Plutarch. Diodorus is generally positive towards Philip, and his rather superficial account ascribes the murder to a purely personal motive: ‘Pausanias [...] nursed his wrath implacably’.²⁰ On the other hand, Justin, through stories unattested in other sources, offers a hostile view of those royal women who were judged to be encroaching on the territory of government, and his conclusion that Alexander and Olympias were the instigators is a logical continuation of this background.²¹ Lastly, Plutarch has a clear agenda in his narrative: Philip’s downfall is the result of polygamy and women unnaturally intruding on the power struggles of men²² – a narrative where Olympias being the architect makes a perfect climax.²³ As is now clear, the three different main sources correspond almost exactly with the three chief positions of scholarship; however, there are serious weaknesses in the sources as shown above. Given these weaknesses of the sources and the perennial dispute over the assassination, can we be sure that the answer is to be found

¹⁶ Pausanias: Carney, ‘The politics of polygamy’, 181; Olympias and the sources: 187–189.

¹⁷ Carney, ‘The politics of polygamy’, 185–186.

¹⁸ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 817.

¹⁹ I. Worthington, *Philip II of Macedon*, New Haven 2008, 185–186.

²⁰ Diod. 16,94,1. View on Philip: Diod. 16,95,1; 16,93,8.

²¹ Justin 7,4,5–8; 9,5,9; N.G.L. Hammond, ‘The sources of Justin on Macedonia to the death of Philip’, *CQ* 41 (1991), 497; Ellis, ‘The assassination of Philip II’, 106.

²² Plut. *Alexander* 9,5.

²³ Plut. *Alexander* 10,6.

in these three positions which have been criticised and counter-argued for more than half a century? The following will briefly identify main points of criticism in the different positions described above, although the long-standing scholarly dispute has ensured that most weaknesses have already been explored. The main part of this article will concentrate on the novel perspective offered here, namely the proposition of Persia as a potential instigator for the murder.

The traditional suspects

Pausanias was Philip's lover but was replaced by another Pausanias whom the assassin drove to suicide, but Attalus, ward of Philip's new wife, was sympathetic to the deceased Pausanias and therefore organised a rape of the assassin. Hereafter, Philip was killed by a single strike of Pausanias' dagger, after which the assassin ran to the horses posted for his escape but tripped on a vine and was slain by Philip's bodyguards.²⁴ These are not the actions of a '*lunatic*'.²⁵ He only stabs Philip once, killing him instantly, and both our accounts specify horses being posted for his escape.²⁶ Instead of a vengeful lunatic, Pausanias seems like a cynical assassin who planned his escape after an effective and fast assassination. To sum up, this appears to be a calculated, well-executed murder foiled by a moment of inattention with fatal consequences. Moreover, if Pausanias or somebody else had the foresight to place horses, in plural, for the escape it would indicate that Pausanias was not working alone. It is possible that he was part of a team of assassins since the flight of any of the high-ranking Macedonians present would be construed as an admission of guilt. This picture points not to a lunatic but instead to a disgruntled bodyguard whose story of humiliation must have been widely known, and it thus seems conceivable that some of his enemies might be willing to spend enough money to turn the bodyguard into a ready assassin.

The involvement of Alexander and Olympias, on the other hand, rests on the assumption that Alexander's position as heir had become precarious due to a string of events starting with the marriage of Philip in late 338 or early 337. This was followed by a symposium where Attalus and Alexander had a drunken dispute, during which Attalus possibly questioned the legitimacy of Alexander, which resulted in Alexander and Olympias leaving the Macedonian court.²⁷

Too often have these events been projected back to the marriage itself, as in Badian who sees the marriage as a sign of Philip replacing the half-Epirote Alexan-

²⁴ Justin 9,6; Diod. 16,94.

²⁵ Ellis, 'The assassination of Philip II', 137.

²⁶ Diod. 16,94,3; Justin 9,7.

²⁷ Plut. *Alexander* 9,4–9,5; Athen. 13,557; Justin 9,7,3–5.

der as heir with a full-blooded Macedonian.²⁸ However, if we look at the marriage in relation to previous events, as contemporaries would have, a rather different picture is presented. Alexander had been regent of Macedonia at the age of sixteen in 340 and had been allowed to found a city in his own name after a successful attack on the Thracians during this time.²⁹ Furthermore, he had joined Philip for his campaign against the Scythians in 339 and at Chaeronea in 338 he had commanded part of the cavalry with great success and Philip had summoned Aristotle, one of the great Greek thinkers, for Alexander's education.³⁰ This shows that Philip since at least the late 340s had groomed Alexander as his heir. However, Philip still only had two sons of whom one, Arrhidaïos, was mentally incapacitated, and, especially after Chaeronea, Alexander was an obvious choice for the all-important campaign against the Persians. A marriage to produce another son was therefore logical. It could perhaps be argued that exactly because Alexander was trusted, he would have been assigned the important position of regent in Macedonia while Philip was on campaign. However, Antipater was much more experienced politically as he had been the ambassador to Athens in 346, the Macedonian representative in the Amphictyony in 342 and the effective regent in 342 with Alexander.³¹ It should also be noted that he had not been selected by Philip to command the advance troops but instead as a diplomat to Athens after Chaeronea and Alexander also used him as regent of Macedonia when he himself went to Persia.³² Thus, Antipater was highly experienced and clearly used by Philip as a diplomat and administrator for political ends. He was therefore the rational choice for regent of Macedonia.

Another important even for the idea of Alexander as mastermind is the symposium, however, the versions of the notoriously hostile sources Plutarch and Justin, where Philip actually tries to attack Alexander, are often related uncritically even though the scene seems almost a too perfect proof for Plutarch that the problems were due to Philip's unrestrained womanising.³³ Our last source, Athenaeus, simply relates that they quarrelled, and considering the swift return of Alexander and quite probably Olympias as well this does not seem inconceivable.³⁴ We must also note that once Attalus had made the drunken remark regarding Alexander's legitimacy, each person was locked into a culturally defined pattern of actions: Alexander had to respond to the insult whereas Philip was bound by

²⁸ Badian, 'The death of Philip II', 244, 247.

²⁹ Plut. *Alexander* 9,1.

³⁰ Justin 9,1,8; Plut. *Alexander* 9,2.

³¹ N.G.L. Hammond, *The History of Macedonia. Volume 2*, Oxford 1979, 545.

³² Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 606, 681.

³³ Plut. *Alexander* 9,4–5; Justin 9,7,3–5.

³⁴ Carney, 'The politics of polygamy', 178–179.

xenia, a cultural concept of hospitality and respect for guests.³⁵ Lastly the vast amount of wine at the symposium must be noted, possibly rendering rationality less important in analysing the affair. Problems to some extent between Philip and Alexander must be admitted, but they were minor, and it seems highly unlikely that Philip would stir up trouble by a change of succession on the eve of his great campaign. This is supported by the grooming of Alexander from 340 onwards, his swift return after exile and the fact that Alexander was the only person, besides the bridegroom, who accompanied Philip in the wedding procession in 336 in a ceremony that was meant to be a piece of propaganda.³⁶

It has often been argued that Alexander profited immensely from the death of Philip.³⁷ Even though Alexander was quickly proclaimed king he was encircled by enemies on all sides who in the young king saw a weak link in the Macedonian control, as evidenced by the rebellion of Thebes in 335. This weak position would have been made considerably easier to handle had Alexander been aware of the murder, and the idea that Olympias acted entirely on her own therefore seems improbable.³⁸ A further argument against Alexander's involvement is his strong traditional beliefs. These are evidenced throughout the campaign most clearly in Egypt where his assertion that he was the son of Ammon seems to have brought him mostly trouble with his troops and few tangible benefits and therefore appears to be a potent example of his strong religiosity.³⁹ In this tradition patricide is one of the most heinous crimes, and it thus seems very unlikely that Alexander would even consider murdering his father.⁴⁰ As outlined above, the idea of Alexander's and Olympias' complicity in the murder rests on hostile sources, a string of events fraught with problems and the idea is further undermined by the fact that Alexander actually stood in quite a precarious position after the murder.

Darius' predicament

As shown above, Darius III has for some reason never been seriously argued as a player in this game. However, if we take the approach of *cui bono*? Persia overshadows the other candidates. The Persian Great King Artaxerxes III was, along with all his sons, murdered by the eunuch Bagoas during the period 338–336, effectively disrupting the direct Achaemenid line and thereby creating instability in the

³⁵ Carney, 'The politics of polygamy', 177.

³⁶ Develin, 'The murder of Philip II', 96.

³⁷ Badian, 'The death of Philip II', 244–250.

³⁸ As seen in e.g. Fears, 'Pausanias, the assassin of Philip II', 99.

³⁹ Arr. 7,8,3; Diod. 17,108,3; Justin 12,11,6.

⁴⁰ Soph. *OT* 1440; L. Edmund, 'The religiosity of Alexander', *GRBS* 12 (1971), 371.

empire.⁴¹ Briant has questioned the view spread by the Macedonian propaganda that Darius was a mere usurper, unsupported by the aristocracy and has rightly pointed to the distinguished family of the new king which ensured that his accession was within the bounds of historical precedent in Persia.⁴² However, dynastic turmoil and rival factions at the time of accession was a mainstay of Persian culture, seen e.g. when Artaxerxes III attempted to hide the death of his father to gain an advantage over possible rivals, and Darius must therefore to some degree have been exposed.⁴³ The commonplace internal court struggles could further cast doubt on Bagoas' alleged prominent role in these assassinations as this portrayal could be attributed to the *topos* of Persian decadence as a eunuch, no less, became 'master of the kingdom'.⁴⁴ Darius probably had a bigger hand in acquiring the throne than usually acknowledged by the sources, except for Arrian, a role further supported by his decisive removal of Bagoas shortly afterwards.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the mere presence of Bagoas, who had dispatched most of the Achaemenid line in the early part of Darius' reign, must have been threatening as the murder of Arses had shown that Bagoas could swiftly withdraw his support in deadly fashion. The tumultuous history of the Persian kings in the early 330s could then indicate a struggle between different factions of the Persian court, and it is thus clear that even though Darius' position might not have been as illegitimate as previously claimed, there was still the murderous Bagoas and rival court factions that must have been problematic for Darius.

Darius was thus in 336 embroiled in a transition period in which establishment of his rule was paramount, but the military front was a further factor of instability. In the late 340s the general in Anatolia, Mentor, had sent substantial forces of Greek mercenaries east to Artaxerxes III for yet another Cadusian campaign, which must have depleted the local supplies of these vital troops.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Egypt rebelled after Arses' death in 338, which is shown in the appearance of a pharaoh called Chababash on items from the fourth century such as the so-called Satrap's Stela.⁴⁷ Since we know the complete line of pharaohs in this century down to Nectanebo in 343/342 and that Chababash must have reigned before the satrap Sabaces, who was in control of Egypt in 333 at the latest, this obscure pharaoh

⁴¹ Diod. 17,5,3; S. Ruzicka, *Politics of a Persian Dynasty: the Hecatomnids in the Fourth Century B.C.*, Norman 1992, 129.

⁴² Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 769–783.

⁴³ Artaxerxes III: Polyae. 7,17; Justin (10,3) claims that Artaxerxes III filled the palace with blood. This would only strengthen the idea of court struggles at the time of accession.

⁴⁴ Diod. 16,50,8; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 775–776.

⁴⁵ Arr. 2,14,5.

⁴⁶ Diod. 16,50,7; Ruzicka, *Politics of a Persian Dynasty*, 127–129.

⁴⁷ Translation: E. Bevan, *A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*, London 1927, 30–31.

must be placed within this gap.⁴⁸ There is, furthermore, an Apis bull sarcophagus from Memphis that gives Chababash's reign at two years and three months, and we have an inscription that indicates Persian rule prior to 338.⁴⁹ This shows that Egypt revolted successfully sometime after the conquest of Artaxerxes in 343/342 and strongly suggests that this happened after the murder of the Persian king – an opportune moment given the wholesale slaughter of the royal family. The probability of Chababash taking power sometime in late 338 in conjunction with the information that Chababash ruled for two years and three months would then put the re-conquest of Egypt in 335, i.e. under Darius III. It must be remembered that Egypt was rich and productive and a natural ally for enemies of Persia but had been independent from the end of the fifth century, and the re-acquisition of this vital territory had dominated Persian foreign politics until Artaxerxes III in 343 managed to re-conquer the region.⁵⁰ The revolt of Egypt was thus a serious threat for the new king and exerted further pressure on the already limited manpower of Asia Minor.

The military problems of this region were further exacerbated by Mentor's death in 337, or slightly before, as indicated in Diodorus' account as the general's prominent position in this narrative stops abruptly in the late 340s and he is not further mentioned.⁵¹ Briant has also pointed, as part of his general attempt at rehabilitating the late Persian Empire, to the excessive prominence of Greek commanders in Asia Minor in especially Diodorus' description, and it seems right to suggest that the Persians were not completely without military competence.⁵² However, with Philip's seemingly imminent invasion it must have been fundamental to have competent Greek commanders who would be more able to hire Greek mercenaries and who probably had a better knowledge of Macedonian tactics than most Persian commanders. Memnon was still present, but he could have been seen as untrustworthy as a result of a ten-year stay at the Macedonian court.⁵³ The military situation in Anatolia in 336 was thus deeply problematic as a result of troop movements, loss of an important commander and the simultaneous Egyptian revolt.

However, the Persian Empire and its kings can to a certain degree be said to have needed wars. The notions of the good warrior and the good commander

⁴⁸ Arr. 2,11,8; S. Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West: Egypt and the Persian Empire, 525–332 BCE*, Oxford 2012, 199.

⁴⁹ Apis bull sarcophagus, translation: B. Gunn, 'Two inscribed sarcophagi in the Serapeum', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 26 (1926), 86–87; inscription, translation: Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West*, 202.

⁵⁰ Egypt as an ally for Persia's enemies: Plut. *Agesilaus* 36–37, Diod. 15,92,3. Re-conquest of Egypt: Diod. 16,51.

⁵¹ See Diod. Book 16.

⁵² Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 817–818.

⁵³ Ruzicka, *Politics of a Persian Dynasty*, 129–130.

were integral to the authority and legitimacy of a Persian king and were often used when new monarchs came to power.⁵⁴ This is seen in a multitude of representations of imperial power as e.g. in the story of Darius' exceptional personal valour in a campaign against the Cadusians, disseminated as part of his propaganda after the ascent to power.⁵⁵ Greek sources, however, often point to the cowardly nature of the Persian kings but this should rather be viewed as a typical *topos* as seen in e.g. the Macedonian propaganda about Darius III.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the completely contradictory nature of the traditions about Darius' accession testifies to this importance of the image of the Persian kings as able commanders and warriors. Also Xenophon, a Greek writer no less, asserts that military success was an important justification for the kingship as he has Cyrus uttering: 'I shall not win this realm without fighting for it'.⁵⁷ Moreover, the Persian Empire was not rigid and closely connected and a change of king would thus incite many regions to revolt in an attempt at redefining the relationship between the regional king and the Persian Great King. One should thus be wary of seeing the military problems of the Persian Empire of the fourth century through the lens of a coherent modern state and instead examine the empire as a flexible unit with frequent negotiations of the mutual dependence between the Great King and the regional powers.⁵⁸ However, revolts were not always an accepted part of the grand structure. Especially the case of Egypt should here be noted, as the area was highly important to Persia, as previously mentioned, and the revolt in 338 was no doubt a grave problem, particularly considering the long history of Egyptian independence in the fourth century.

The severity of these military problems was enhanced by the aggressive new power of Macedon which had achieved the submission of the Greek states, apart from Sparta, and their military support in the League of Corinth. The subsequent centuries of monarchic and Roman rule might obscure the extraordinary situation of the general Greek acceptance of an alliance, for the first time in history, with a king who was termed a barbarian, testifying to the military strength of Macedon and the political adroitness of Philip. Furthermore, the formation of the League of Corinth could have limited the availability of fresh Greek mercenaries as any Greek bound by the League who opposed Philip was viewed as a traitor.⁵⁹ If Greek mercenaries had become scarcer it would have been a blow to Persia as

⁵⁴ As argued by Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 227–229, 687.

⁵⁵ Diod. 17,6,1–3; Justin 10,3; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 225–229.

⁵⁶ Cowardly Persian kings: E.g. Diodorus about Artaxerxes III: 16,40,4–5. Macedonian propaganda: Arr. 2,14.

⁵⁷ Xen. *Anabasis* 1,7,9; 1,8,12.

⁵⁸ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 766–768.

⁵⁹ IG II2 236 in P. Harding, *Translated Documents of Greece and Rome 2: From the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Battle of Ipsus*, Cambridge 1985, no. 99.

they were a mainstay of the Persian infantry line and their supposed relative scarcity could have exacerbated the shortage of troops in Asia Minor even further.⁶⁰ It must also have seemed significant to the Persians that the Greeks had been bested in a pitched battle in Greece itself, a feat that had eluded the Persians in the fifth and fourth centuries. This defeat also signalled the end of the undisputed supremacy of the Greek phalanx. Furthermore, the march of the Ten Thousand in 401 and the campaign by Agesilaus show the Persian problems with engaging and defeating the Greeks in set battles.⁶¹ Agesilaus might not have achieved any lasting victories but it still remains significant that he was able to campaign from 396 to 394 in Asia Minor without suffering a decisive defeat and only retreating due to Greek matters.⁶² These previous strategic problems would not have boded well for a future engagement with Philip.

Philip thus posed a threat to the new king which was only enhanced by the explicit goal of the League of Corinth: to avenge the Persian invasion of Greece.⁶³ However, it should be noted that Philip's aim must have appeared regional in the broad perspective of the Persians as a grand vanquishing of Persia in the style of Alexander the Great would not have appeared part of the plans.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Macedonia had only recently risen to power and was thus not a traditional threat in this region to the Persian Empire. However, even though Philip was not an existential threat to the Persian Empire, he must have appeared increasingly threatening to the stability of the region, especially with the victory at Chaeronea and the support of the Greeks

In the spring of 336 Philip acted on his threats as he sent a preliminary force of 10 000 men under Attalus, Amyntas and Parmenion to Asia Minor, to secure a base of operations for the main expedition that would arrive later.⁶⁵ The expeditionary force initially won major victories: Lesbos, Chios and Ephesus came under Macedonian control, and, according to Polyaeus, Parmenion advanced as far as Magnesia ad Sipylum.⁶⁶ The Persians were consequently under quite a significant regional pressure in this period. The new king Darius III thus inherited an empire in disarray, plagued by internal court intrigues and military problems in Egypt and Asia Minor. Furthermore, Darius faced a determined and militarily powerful foe that had the support of the majority of the Greek *poleis* and the explicit goal of attacking the Persian lands in Asia Minor – a deeply problematic situation.

⁶⁰ Importance of Greek mercenaries: Arr. 1,16.

⁶¹ Xen. *Anabasis*; Diod. 14,80.

⁶² Diod. 14,83,1.

⁶³ Diod. 16,89,2.

⁶⁴ Seen e.g. in Isoc. 4,162 and 5,120: 'Asia from Cilicia to Sinope'.

⁶⁵ Diod. 16,91,2; Justin 9,5,8.

⁶⁶ Arr. 1,17,11; Polyaeus. 5,44,4.

The rebellion of Glos

In these circumstances an assassination of Philip must have seemed tempting, but the above merely establishes the motivation and the advantages that could be accrued from an assassin's hand; it appears an open question whether this strategy can likely be attributed to the Persians. However, if we glance over the fourth century at least two distinct parallels to the possible Persian assassination of Philip emerges. The first precedent, relatively understudied so far, is found in the 380s during the Cypriot War against Evagoras, the king of Salamis, who was attempting to extend his influence on Cyprus at the expense of Persian control and possibly even attacked Cilicia and Phoenicia.⁶⁷ The war only really seems to have commenced after the Peace of Antalcidas in 387/386 under the command of Orontes and Tiribazus who controlled the Persian land and naval forces, respectively.⁶⁸ Orontes encountered severe problems, was unable to assert his superiority, and suffered a mutiny, whereas Tiribazus' forces under the command of his son-in-law and able leader Glos won a major naval battle and played a crucial role in supplying Orontes' men with grain.⁶⁹ In this problematic situation, and with an eye for the fierce competition for the king's gratitude, Orontes alleged that Tiribazus was involved in treasonous activity; the latter was promptly removed and Orontes put in sole command whereafter he soon concluded a weak peace.⁷⁰ As a result of this, Glos broke away with his navy and rebelled towards the very end of the 380s as he allegedly feared that the charges would implicate him given that he was Tiribazus' second in command.⁷¹ Tiribazus was found innocent, but Glos was soon '*assassinated by certain persons*',⁷² whereafter Tachos, presumably Glos' son, took over the rebellion but is mentioned in passing as dead further on in Diodorus' narrative.⁷³

However, if we look at the overall political situation it is clear that this constituted a far graver problem for Artaxerxes than has traditionally been acknowledged. An important factor was that Egypt had broken away from direct Persian power merely two decades earlier, and Artaxerxes had recently suffered defeat in a prolonged campaign to re-conquer the area.⁷⁴ The Egyptians were furthermore gathering forces for the fight against Persia, and the area thus remained a trouble-

⁶⁷ Isoc. 9,62.

⁶⁸ Diod. 15,2,1.

⁶⁹ Diod. 15,3,1–6.

⁷⁰ Charges of treachery: Diod. 15,8,3–5. The weak peace: Diod. 15,9,1–2.

⁷¹ Diod. 15,9,3; S. Ruzcika, 'Glos, son of Tamos, and the end of the Cypriot War', *Historia* 48 (1999), 27 note 11.

⁷² Diod. 15,18,1.

⁷³ Diod. 15,10–11; 15,18.

⁷⁴ Isoc. 4,140; Ruzcika, 'Glos, son of Tamos'.

some neighbour and an obvious ally for any enemy of the empire.⁷⁵ Diodorus and Isocrates, furthermore, mentions Hecatomnus of Caria as a secret ally of Evagoras, and Diodorus asserts that ‘not a few soldiers were sent him by the king of the Arabs and by certain others of whom the King of the Persians was suspicious’⁷⁶ were sending support.⁷⁷ These assertions of Diodorus and especially Isocrates are of course rather shaky grounds for evaluating this support with certainty, but it does not seem inconceivable that certain players seized the opportunity presented by the insurrection of Evagoras. The Cadusians near the Caspian Sea also stirred up trouble as they seem to have required the personal attention of the king since Tiribazus according to Diodorus was only prosecuted after this campaign against them was finalised.⁷⁸ However, here again we should not overstate the instability of the Persian Empire as e.g. Cadusian campaigns could be seen as a way for Persian kings to re-assert their dominance over the region and their legitimacy as kings. Furthermore, the level of co-ordination between the different insurrections could appear a literary construction from Greek sources, which would indicate that e.g. the assistance from Caria and the Arabs, if genuine, should rather be seen as minor regional problems.⁷⁹ However, the continuing problems and defeats in Egypt and initially in Cyprus were damaging to the king’s image and also presented a threat on a political level, especially in the case of Egypt. The military situation thus looked problematic already, and Glos’ defection with the entire western fleet was therefore a significant blow to Artaxerxes since this made it considerably more difficult to vanquish Evagoras and the strategically fundamental Egypt.

Glos seemed to have a strong position as we are also told that he was ‘well supplied with money and soldiers and had furthermore won the commanders of the triremes to himself by acts of kindness’.⁸⁰ The money mentioned could very well have come from the 2000 talents, a huge sum, which Tiribazus, prior to his arrest, had been given by the king to end the war against Evagoras, and it seems highly likely that the funds simply stayed in Glos’ possession.⁸¹ This is further supported if we believe Polyaeus’ story that Tiribazus was seized by a ruse, and given the latter’s successes and the devotion of the fleet to Glos it seems likely that Orontes merely managed to remove Tiribazus in order to seize the overall command but not to obtain the money.⁸² Furthermore, the support of the trireme

⁷⁵ Diod. 15,29,1. Egypt as an ally for Persia’s enemies: Plut. *Agesilaus* 36–37, Diod. 15,92,3.

⁷⁶ Diod. 15,2,4.

⁷⁷ Hecatomnus: Diod. 15,2,3; Isoc. 4,162.

⁷⁸ Diod. 15,10,1.

⁷⁹ Isoc. 4,161–162; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 650–651.

⁸⁰ Diod. 15,9,3.

⁸¹ Diod. 15,4,2.

⁸² Polyaeus. 7,14,1.

commanders could be supported by the probability that the fleet came mainly from Glos' home area of western Asia Minor, as the normal recruiting grounds of Cilicia, Cyprus and Phoenicia were seemingly unavailable.⁸³

Glos appears to have put his monetary resources to good use immediately as Diodorus reports that Sparta was offered an alliance and generous subsidies for their wars in Greece.⁸⁴ Diodorus relates how the Spartans felt they had betrayed their fellow Ionian Greeks and therefore looked for war with Artaxerxes.⁸⁵ Even though this sounds like a rhetorical embellishment (maybe derived from Ephorus, the probable source for this passage) it does not appear impossible that the Spartans would enter into an alliance with Glos, given the prospect of monetary aid.⁸⁶ First of all the Spartans had been very active in Greece since the Peace of Antalcidas; in 380 they had concluded the sieges of Phlius and Olynthus and were thus in a very strong position, which both Xenophon and Diodorus testify to.⁸⁷ The Peace of Antalcidas was of course relatively new, but a recent alliance or treaty did not preclude future aggression as seen with Agesilaus' campaign from 396 to 394 shortly after their victory in the Peloponnesian War, gained with Persian support. Egypt was also offered an alliance, which was undoubtedly deemed welcome as any enemy of Persia could potentially relieve some of the pressure on Egypt, evidenced by the support for Evagoras during the Cypriot War.⁸⁸ Finally, Diodorus mentions in connection with slightly later events that 'After these events the rebellions in Asia came of themselves to an end.'⁸⁹ This is the only allusion we have to rebellions in Asia, but it might be suggested that the Ionian Greeks who had been 'betrayed' to the Persians, as Diodorus puts it, under a decade before would have seized the opportunity to support the rebel Glos.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Glos' family had originally served the Persian king in western Asia Minor, but all except for Glos had died in the aftermath of Cyrus' rebellion which was crushed in 401.⁹¹ Glos then presumably returned to this area after 401, which is further supported by the fact that he became Tiribazus' son-in-law during the latter's stint in the same area and would thereby have been a known figure to the Ionians.⁹² Their support for him so shortly after the Peace of Antalcidas does on this background seem

⁸³ Diod. 15,2,2; Isoc. 9,135.

⁸⁴ Diod. 15,9,4.

⁸⁵ Diod. 15,9,5.

⁸⁶ Ephorus: T. Ryder, 'Spartan relations with Persia after the King's Peace: a strange story in Diodorus 15.9', *CQ* 13 (1963), 106.

⁸⁷ Diod. 15,23,3–5; Xen. *Hellenica* 5,3,27.

⁸⁸ Alliance with Egypt: Diod. 15,9,4; support for Evagoras: Diod. 15,2,3.

⁸⁹ Diod. 15,18,4.

⁹⁰ Diod. 15,9,5.

⁹¹ Diod. 14,19,6; 14,35,3–5; Xen. *Anabasis* 1,2,21.

⁹² Diod. 15,9,3.

possible, even probable. Glos' network of alliances can of course not be completely proven unless new evidence comes to light, but it must at least have remained a distinct possibility in the mind of Artaxerxes that Glos would form alliances with Persia's traditional enemies, and it is exactly this perceived threat, in addition to his ample supply of money, ships and men, that is important in understanding Glos' death.

Diodorus significantly uses the Greek word *dolophonetheis*⁹³ to describe Glos' death which normally alludes to assassination, and two main suspects here come to mind.⁹⁴ The first possibility is Orontes out of jealousy and competition with the young, previously successful commander, but it seems that Orontes achieved his main goal of becoming over-all commander and therefore lacked clear motivation to act on his own. A further factor that points away from Orontes but towards Artaxerxes is the actions of Tachos after Glos' death as he took over the rebellion and swiftly moved to set up defences on elevated ground at the Gulf of Smyrna.⁹⁵ This is a clear parallel to Amorges in the later fifth century who held out for years in a similar situation, and one could imagine that Tachos entrenched himself in the hope of a life-saving deal with the king.⁹⁶ However, if Orontes was the assassin this dogged resistance would seem unnecessary as Tiribazus had been exonerated and Orontes had no personal animosity towards Tachos – only if Artaxerxes is behind the assassination do these defensive measures make sense. Furthermore, any deal with Glos would have been costly for Artaxerxes in consideration of the former's strong position, and due to Glos' control of the western fleet it was difficult and potentially extremely costly to attack him directly. Besides, Orontes' army had been plagued by insubordination and poor discipline throughout the Cypriot War, and the army of Glos thus constituted the only effective, sizeable force in the west, given that the Persian forces were simultaneously committed on the eastern front against the Cadusians and to the south against Egypt.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Glos had been embroiled in Cyrus' attempt to usurp the throne in the late fifth century, which is a further reason why a settlement with the now two-time rebel would have seemed less than enticing for Artaxerxes.

The Great King thus seems the obvious candidate for instigating the assassination in a situation that was oddly similar to Darius', given that they both encountered a strong foe who would be difficult to defeat in pitched battle, supported by powerful allies while having simultaneous military commitment else-

⁹³ Diod. 15,18,1.

⁹⁴ *LSJ* s.v. δολοφονέω.

⁹⁵ Diod. 15,18,1.

⁹⁶ Amorges: Thuc. 8,5,5; 8,54,3; Ruzicka, 'Glos, son of Tamos', 41.

⁹⁷ Diod. 15,3,2; 15,9,1.

where in the empire. Significantly, Egypt was highly problematic both at the time of Glos and Philip but could not be addressed before the western front had been pacified. A speedy resolution was therefore of the essence, which only a decisive assassination could bring about. Furthermore, given the importance of military success for the image of the Persian king it must have seemed a daunting task to take on Glos or Philip while the more politically important and glorious task of subduing Egypt would have been far more enticing. Moreover, Diodorus passingly refers to Tachos as dead after the latter had prepared his defences.⁹⁸ There is of course very thin evidence for Tachos' death, but if we accept the likely idea that Glos was assassinated by Artaxerxes it may not seem impossible that Tachos met the same fate as his young age and sudden demise does not suggest natural causes and his strong defensive position might have made him problematic to attack directly. Artaxerxes thus appears to have used the political tool of assassination in the events connected with the Cypriot War in at least one and possibly two circumstances where conventional battle was problematic and where he was militarily threatened, thereby establishing a precedent for Darius to possibly act on.

The rebellion of Datames

The second precedent is set around the hotly contested course of events commonly known as the Great Satraps' Revolt. In the early 360s the Persian Datames had been in charge of an imminent Persian expedition against Egypt to finally settle the problematic area, but the Persian commander rebelled and occupied Cappadocia and Paphlagonia on account of information that a court conspiracy was plotting his downfall.⁹⁹ Datames displayed brilliant generalship; he defeated the general Autophradates who was sent to eliminate him and seems to have reached a separate truce just before the Great Satraps' Revolt started in 366 according to Nepos, which is supported by Diodorus as he does not mention Datames among the rebellious satraps.¹⁰⁰ The Great Satraps' Revolt itself was a confused affair involving betrayal and counter-betrayal *en masse*, and the co-or-

⁹⁸ Diod. 15,18,4.

⁹⁹ Nep. *Datames* 3,5; 5,1–6.

¹⁰⁰ Battle against Autophradates: Nep. *Datames* 7–8. Diodorus (15,91,2–7) has the same story of victory but Artabazus is the Persian commander while Polyaeus (7,21,3) even has Datames going across the Euphrates. Diodorus and Nepos disagree about the dating, but the structure of the description of the battles is so alike that we can infer that the battles described are one and the same. See Ruzicka for this view: *Trouble in the West*, 129. However, the important element for our analysis is Datames' decisive victory in the battle, on which there is total agreement among the sources. Datames acquires a separate truce: Nep. *Datames* 8,6; Diod. 15,90,3.

dination and aim of the rebellion is a hotly contested issue.¹⁰¹ However, it is clear that Orontes betrayed the rebellion and that in the latter stages only Ariobarzanes and Datames are left fighting and that they are both killed through treachery some time before Artaxerxes' death in 359/8.¹⁰²

However, despite the questions surrounding the degree of co-ordination between the rebels, Datames still held a strategically strong position as he controlled both Cappadocia and Paphlagonia.¹⁰³ He was, furthermore, a member of the Paphlagonian royal family, which would have strengthened his control over this satrapy.¹⁰⁴ In conjunction with his possession of Cappadocia this effectively severed communications with the important western part of Asia Minor for the Persian Empire.¹⁰⁵ This situation was made even more problematic by his control of the few passes that led into the mountainous area as the enemy Persian commanders thereby could not bring their numerical superiority to bear.¹⁰⁶ To this should be added that the sources emphasise the great generalship of Datames and the severe losses which he inflicted on his adversaries; it would therefore seem that Datames, like Gloss, was decidedly difficult to defeat in a pitched battle.¹⁰⁷

Let us again turn our attention to the political picture to put these events in perspective. In the late 360s we encounter a variety of factors that reminds us of the circumstances of Glos' assassination: '*For at one and the same time he [Artaxerxes] must needs fight the Egyptian king, the Greek cities of Asia, the Lacedaemonians and the allies of these, — satraps and generals who ruled the coastal districts and had agreed upon making common cause with them.*'¹⁰⁸ That a common cause was made might be a subjective evaluation of Diodorus, but that Egypt, Athens, Sparta and a number of rebellious satraps were all hostile to Artaxerxes is clear. Let us now examine the different threats in turn.

The Egyptians had eluded defeat since their break from Persian authority and, under the native pharaoh Tachos, were preparing an offensive; the rebels and Egypt appear to have been communicating which only seems logical.¹⁰⁹ Further-

¹⁰¹ See e.g. M. Weiskopf, *The So-called 'Great Satraps' Revolt', 366–360 B.C.: Concerning Local Instability in the Achaemenid Far West*, Stuttgart 1989; cf. R. Moysey, 'Plutarch, Nepos and the Satrapal Revolt of 362/1 B.C.', *Historia* 41 (1992), 158–168.

¹⁰² For Datames: Diod. 15,91,7; Nep. *Datames* 10–11; Polyæn. 7,29,1. For Ariobarzanes: Harp. s.v. *Ariobarzanes*; Xen. *Cyropaedia* 8,8,4; Arist. *Pol.* 5, 1312A; Val. Max. 9,11 ext. 2.

¹⁰³ Nep. *Datames* 5,6.

¹⁰⁴ Nep. *Datames* 2,3.

¹⁰⁵ D. Bing, 'Datames and Mazaeus: the iconography of revolt and restoration in Cilicia', *Historia* 47 (1998), 56.

¹⁰⁶ Nep. *Datames* 7,2–3.

¹⁰⁷ Diod. 15,91,7; Nep. *Datames* 7–8.

¹⁰⁸ Diod. 15,90,3.

¹⁰⁹ Egyptian offensive: Diod. 15,90,2. Rebels in contact with Egypt: 15,92,1.

more, it seems apparent that a large proportion of the troops on the Egyptian frontier had been diverted for the inconclusive fighting with Datames in the first half of the 360s;¹¹⁰ the Egyptian offensive therefore constituted a significant threat. This assertion is further supported by the fact that Tachos' ultimately unsuccessful attack penetrated deep into Persian territory relatively quickly, which would support the idea that adequate manpower was absent in this period.¹¹¹ Moreover, both the Athenians and the Spartans seem to have been hostile to Persia in this period. Athens seized the island of Samos which was under Persian control and seems also to have had collaborated with Ariobarzanes to some extent.¹¹² Even though this might not constitute a full-scale declaration of war, especially the seizing of Samos during Persian weakness showed the opportunism of Athens. Sparta, likewise, sent their now aging king Agesilaus with a thousand hoplites to support Tachos' invasion whilst seemingly supporting Ariobarzanes and thus clearly showed that they were ready to support anti-Persian activities militarily.¹¹³ Both Athens' and Sparta's hostility is corroborated by Persia's pro-Theban stance seen in the backing of the liberation of Messenia, a city that was vital to Sparta, and the beaching of Athenian ships.¹¹⁴ Artaxerxes thus again faced the deeply problematic situation of Greek and Egyptian hostility coupled with a militarily powerful enemy whom it was exceedingly difficult to defeat in battle. Here, as in the case of Glos, we should take care not to overestimate the threat posed to the Persian Empire as a whole as rebellious satraps were a frequent occurrence in the Persian administrative structure. However, the defeats to Datames must have been problematic to the now ageing Artaxerxes as successors more suited to the image of able commander and warrior would have been waiting, a picture supported by Plutarch.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the Egyptians continued to constitute a political problem utilised by e.g. the Spartans in their support for Tachos. The structures of this situation are very much akin to the one regarding Glos twenty years earlier, and another swift assassination against a troublesome and militarily strong opponent in order to be able to direct the attention towards the more glorious and politically threatening task of conquering Egypt must have seemed inviting.

To this should be added that many of the sources stress the ageing Artaxerxes' suspicious nature and the court intrigues brewing among his possible successors.¹¹⁶ These were common in Persian politics and would have been even more

¹¹⁰ Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West*, 136.

¹¹¹ Diod. 15,92,3.

¹¹² Seizing of Samos: Nep. *Timotheus* 1,3; Isoc. 15,111; Dem. 15,9. Collaboration: Nep. *Timotheus* 1,3; Isoc. 15,112.

¹¹³ Egypt: Diod. 15,92,2; Xen. *Agesilaus* 2,26. Ariobarzanes: Xen. *Agesilaus* 2,26.

¹¹⁴ Xen. *Hellenica* 7,1,33–40; Plut. *Pelopidas* 30; Isoc. 6,27.

¹¹⁵ Plut. *Artaxerxes* 26,1–2. See also Moysey, 'Plutarch, Nepos and the Satrapal Revolt', 161–162.

¹¹⁶ Plut. *Artaxerxes* 26–28; Diod. 15,8,5; Nep. *Datames* 5,3–5.

prominent since the king was at an advanced age at over seventy and renegade rebels was therefore a further problem for a suspicious king fearing pretenders in the court.¹¹⁷ Here we might also find the reason for Datames' defection since a setback in the notoriously difficult Egyptian campaign would have left him open to attacks from his rivals at court which the suspicious king could have believed – or chosen to believe in order to fashion a scapegoat for a possible defeat in Egypt. It should also be noted that all our three extant sources, Nepos, Polyaeus and Diodorus, agree that it was Artaxerxes who through Mithrobarzanes, Ariobarzanes' son, instigated the assassination of Datames.¹¹⁸ With this unanimity of the sources, the characterisation of the ageing king and the military and political troubles, it seems distinctly probable that Artaxerxes organised the assassination. This is also supported by the unnerving prospect for Artaxerxes of fighting on two fronts during the imminent Egyptian offensive and the only way swiftly to solve this problem and re-establish communication links with western Asia Minor was through the assassination of Datames. We should also in this context note the effectiveness of the assassination, which again is a parallel not only to Glos but also to Philip. Egypt might not have been subdued in either case, but the assassinations quickly quelled the revolts in both cases, which is exactly what they were meant to do.

The death of Ariobarzanes shortly before Datames should also be noted as he too was removed through treachery by his son Mithrobarzanes and Ariobarzanes was allegedly crucified.¹¹⁹ However, only the lexicon of Harpocration from the second century AD asserts the crucifixion, whereas the other sources merely say that Ariobarzanes was betrayed. Despite the uncertainty as to the method of Ariobarzanes' death, Artaxerxes again used subterfuge and monetary resources to do away with a challenging adversary. Both in the case of Ariobarzanes and Datames there seem to be distinct similarities to the murder of Philip, as in the case of Glos, given that the Persian king is again under military and political pressure and is pitted against an enemy who is not easily defeated in battle. Furthermore, in the case of Datames there is the added parallel to the situation in 336 of personal weakness, as both Artaxerxes' and Darius' rule was characterised by court intrigues. There is of course a difference between assassinating a rebel and a foreign king, but the sheer extraordinariness of Philip's position speaks against the probability of exact parallels, and it should be remembered that the strategic and political situations examined shows striking similarities.

¹¹⁷ Diodorus (13,108,1) places his accession in 405/404 whereas Plutarch (*Artaxerxes* 26,2.) says his son was fifty in the late 360s: This would make Artaxerxes at least seventy in this period.

¹¹⁸ Diod. 15,91,7; Nep. *Datames* 10–11; Polyaeus. 7,29,1.

¹¹⁹ Assassination: Xen. *Cyropaedia* 8,8,4; Arist. *Pol.* 5,1312A; Val. Max. 9,11 ext. 2. Crucifixion: Harp. s.v. *Ariobarzanes*.

Persian involvement in the assassination of Philip

The above clearly shows how Persia had previously utilised the assassin as a political tool when faced with deeply problematic situations. However, this is only part of a wider use of monetary resources directed towards the Greeks by the Persian Empire in the fourth century. Since the Second Persian War the Persian kings had accepted the superiority of the Greek infantry and therefore used its vast funds to counter the Greek *poleis* through the indirect intervention in Greek struggles by e.g. sponsoring the Spartan navy in the Peloponnesian War. Furthermore, one should note that the incidents of assassinations outlined above are only the assassinations from the fourth century directed at military adversaries, whereas if we look at the use of assassinations in different contexts a more complete picture emerges. It is for example striking that seven, i.e. more than half, of the Achaemenid kings succumbed to assassination.¹²⁰ In this web of internal assassinations it does not seem a big leap to apply the strategy to external matters. Thus the use of assassinations and monetary resources were deeply imbedded in Persian politics, and on this background with the precedents and political situation of Darius III in mind we now turn to the possibility of Persian involvement in the assassination of Philip.

Firstly, we must consult the sources claiming Persian involvement in the crime and we here have an alleged letter from Alexander to Darius given in the accounts of Arrian and Curtius. In Arrian's version Alexander begins by emphasising the legitimacy with which he is invading Persia and thereafter moves on to accuse the Great King directly of murdering Philip and even boasting about it.¹²¹ The focus then switches to the illegitimacy of Darius' accession, followed by an on the Persian king for attempting to bribe the Greeks and in the end comes Alexander's assertion that he was now superior to the Great King in authority.¹²² The version of the alleged letter in Curtius' account likewise starts with underlining the legitimacy of Alexander's attack whereafter Alexander accuses Darius for being behind Philip's death and finally, as in Arrian's account, he claims superior authority compared to Darius.¹²³ Even though these two instances are the only ones in the sources where Darius is portrayed as the instigator of the assassination they are of slight use as evidence; they are clearly the product of Alexandrian propaganda, preoccupied as they are with legitimacy and guilt for the war and with painting personas of the two rulers useful to the propaganda of Alexander. The

¹²⁰ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 772–774.

¹²¹ Arr. 2,14,4–5.

¹²² Arr. 2,14,5–9.

¹²³ Curtius 4,1,10–14.

letters as such are mere devices employed by the historians for their own goal. It could be argued that the letters have their root in an actual accusation of Darius by Alexander, disseminated through propaganda, however, the existence of such a claim is hardly surprising as it would have been hugely beneficial for Alexander to deflect any suspicion onto the Great King, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of the war and his own rule. However, the existence of such propaganda does not in any way lessen or strengthen the possibility of either Darius or Alexander being the instigator as propaganda would have been employed no matter who the culprit was. This flexible use of blame is further supported by the execution of two of the sons of Aëropus in the first time of Alexander's reign for their alleged involvement in the assassination, in a period where it was vital to purge the court of problematic characters. The propaganda of accusations is thus merely a tool employed for political purposes and therefore not useful for our purpose. It could seem an unsurmountable obstacle that the sources do not directly support our idea of Persian involvement, however, we must not forget that the sources are late and tendentious and the only source to e.g. explicitly point at Alexander as culprit is the unreliable and tendentious Justin.

We must therefore turn our attention to the circumstances of the crime, however, first it would be beneficial to evaluate if it was even possible for the Persians to set up such an assassination. Three important factors here spring to mind: The susceptibility of the Macedonian dynasty to assassinations, the willingness of the Persians to use their monetary resources for foreign policy and lastly the level of contact between the Persian and Macedonian court which would enable the Persians to organise a plot. If we turn first to the Macedonian court the sheer statistics show them to be highly susceptible to assassination. The first king which is more than a name in our sources is Alexander I who is said to have died a violent death in 452.¹²⁴ If this was by war or assassination, we do not know but he is at least a possible victim of assassination. The following king Perdiccas II seems to have died peacefully in 413, however, his successor, Archelaus is said by several sources to have been killed in 399 by a certain Craterus during a hunting trip. Diodorus says it was unintentional, however, Plutarch, Plato, Aristotle and Aelian all claim that Archelaus was actually assassinated by Craterus.¹²⁵ The favour of the evidence seem overwhelmingly to be in favour of assassination which seems to have been a conspiracy involving at least the assassin, a Macedo-

¹²⁴ Curtius 6,11,26; Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 115.

¹²⁵ Diod. 14,37,6; Plu. *Amatorius* 23; Plato *Alcibiades* 2,141d; Arist. *Pol.* 1311b; Ael. *Varia Historia* 8,9. The name of the assassin is given variously as Craterus, Crateas, Crataeus or Crateuas. Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 167 among others asserts that Plutarch and Plato were not the actual authors of the works assigned to them above. However, that is not essential for our purpose. Aelian seems quite clearly to have taken his story from the work attributed to Plato.

nian page named Decamnichus and a certain Thessalian named Hellanocrates of Larissa. The claimed cause of the assassination is a love affair with Archelaus that went wrong and the incident starts to look strikingly like Philip's case. Especially the mention of Hellanocrates is interesting as Archelaus the year before his death had intervened in Thessalian politics causing the Aleuadae to become the ruling dynasty.¹²⁶ Hellanocrates seems to be the son of a leading member of this dynasty, given over to Archelaus to further political alliances in the same way as Philip later did.¹²⁷ Whether the Thessalians were involved here we will never know but there are indeed interesting parallels to the situation of Philip. In the next years down 393 we have a string of kings who were all somehow involved in or affected by assassination. First we have Orestes who was slain by his guardian Aëropus who in turn died of illness.¹²⁸ He was succeeded by his son Pausanias who was also assassinated by his successor Amyntas III who then reigned to 369.¹²⁹ Another king, Amyntas II, has to be inserted somewhere in this period, however, we have no literary sources writing about him.¹³⁰ Amyntas III the third died in 370 or 369 at an advanced age without suspicion of treachery but hereafter the assassinations emerge again.¹³¹ Amyntas' son Alexander II took over but ruled only a year before he was assassinated by a certain Ptolemy of Alorus.¹³² Plutarch even has Alexander and Ptolemy being at war with each other and also gives the assassination of Alexander by Ptolemy.¹³³ Ptolemy then acted as regent for the minor Perdiccas III until the latter assassinated Ptolemy in 365.¹³⁴ The cause of all these struggles after the death of Amyntas III is difficult to discern but dynastic infighting or a struggle between Upper and Lower Macedonia have both been suggested.¹³⁵ Perdiccas now ruled until his death at the hands of the Illyrians in 359 whereupon Philip ruled until he in turn was assassinated. Even Alexander the Great's death is in some sources attributed to assassination.¹³⁶ Thus, a quick glance at the above list shows us that of all the kings we are given literary evidence about only Perdiccas II is completely free from suspicion of having either been assassinated or having used this tool himself whereas Alexander I and Alexander the great are at least possibil-

¹²⁶ Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 140.

¹²⁷ Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 140–141.

¹²⁸ Diod. 14,37,6; 14,84,6.

¹²⁹ Diod. 14,84,6; 14,89,2.

¹³⁰ Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 168.

¹³¹ Diod. 15,60,3; Justin 7,4,8; Isoc, 6,46.

¹³² Diod. 15,71,1; 16,2,4.

¹³³ Plut. *Pelopidas* 26,3–27,1.

¹³⁴ Diod. 15,77,5; 16,2,4.

¹³⁵ Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 182–183; R. Fox, '399–369 BC', in R. Fox, (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedonia: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC–300 AD*, Boston 2011, 217–218.

¹³⁶ Justin 12,13,10; Diod. 17,117.

ities. The remaining nine rulers are quite clearly involved as either user or victim of assassination. We can therefore conclude that the Macedonian royal dynasty was incredibly susceptible to assassinations which would suggest that it was not impossible for Darius to orchestrate Philip's murder. This could perhaps be seen as an argument in favour of Alexander as the instigator of his father's murder as the cases are mostly internal disputes in Macedonia. However, a closer look reveals that not a single of these assassinations seems to include the son of a king but are rather attributed to personal enmity or struggles between different branches of the royal dynasty and these cases therefore argue against the idea of Alexander as mastermind rather than supporting it.

Let us now turn to the second factor, namely the willingness of the Persians to use bribery. There are no cases directly involving Macedon in our extant sources but this should not surprise us as most of the sources are intensely focused on Greek affairs and suspicions of bribery between Macedon and Persia would hardly merit mention. However, there are plenty of instances where the Persians have swayed ranking Greek officials with bribes, which still shows the use of this strategy by the Persians. We have some early instances, one from 489 when Miltiades, the hero from Marathon, was accused of having received a Persian bribe for retreating from the island of Paros whereas another is from the peace of Callias in 449.¹³⁷ Both could merely be fabrications by political enemies and regarding Callias access was of course not a problem. However, they still indicate Persian willingness to use bribes and at the very least they suggest the existence of a *topos* of Persian bribery which the consistent allegations down to the time of Alexander and hereafter support. Our next example comes from the time of the invasion of Agesilaus in the 390s where Persian officials were sent to Greece to stir up trouble for the Spartans, thereby forcing Agesilaus back and several Greek city states seem to have taken the bribes, including Argos, Thebes, Athens and Corinth.¹³⁸ In the case of Agesilaus we clearly see how the Persians employed the vast monetary resources in the face of problems in the west that were risky to face head on militarily. It even seems from a speech in Lysias that one of these men accepting Persian bribes, named Epicrates, was involved in another case of being bribed by the Persians shortly after.¹³⁹ The list of Persian bribery in the sources is long and it is clear that the Persians used money to counter military problems as not only bribes were used but also support for the enemies of their enemies or to gain influence in the Greek world as is seen by the previously mentioned support for the Spartan fleet during the Peloponnesian

¹³⁷ Miltiades: Nep. *Miltiades* 7. Peace of Callias: Dem. 19,273.

¹³⁸ Xen. *Hellenica* 3,5,1; *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 7,2–5; Paus. 3,9,8.

¹³⁹ Lys. 27,3–4.

War. This is further supported by the close diplomatic ties that Persia maintained with the Greek world, seen in the frequent embassies sent there by the Greek city states to obtain money or other favours. An example hereof is the embassy of Pelopidas in 367 where the Greek ambassadors were actually competing for the favour of the Great King.¹⁴⁰ We can thus see that it was an ingrained part of Persian politics to use their financial superiority to gain the upper hand politically and even to avoid problematic military confrontations as seen in the case of Agesilaus but also Glos and Datames.

The last factor we must look at, the level of contact between the Macedonian and Persian courts, is highly difficult to ascertain precisely. However, we do know that Macedonia was occupied by Persia around the Greco-Persian wars and that Macedonia borrowed heavily from the Persian Empire regarding e.g. material culture or political institutions.¹⁴¹ Especially Philip imitated many of the institutions of the Persian Empire such as a Persian throne or the formation of the royal pages who according to Arrian helped the king on his horse 'in the Persian manner'.¹⁴² Politically the two kingdoms had also been in contact as they clashed over Perinthus and Byzantium and afterwards Philip attempted to form a marriage alliance with the renegade Persian satrap Pixodarus. It should be noted that Diodorus tells us that 'Philip's growth in power had been reported in Asia'.¹⁴³ and that his rise was viewed with alarm by the Persian king, which explains his strong support for Perinthus and Byzantium, ultimately forcing Philip to withdraw.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, we have high ranking Persian officials fleeing to the Macedonian court in the aftermath of the above described revolt involving Datames. We are told that the general Memnon of Rhodes and the satrap of Phrygia, Artabazus a grandson of Artaxerxes II, with all his 21 children fled to the Macedonian court and stayed there for ten years until Mentor, brother of Memnon, secured their pardon.¹⁴⁵ The three were interrelated by marriage and interestingly both Artabazus and Memnon rose to honour again as Memnon is the formidable general fighting Alexander during his conquest of Asia Minor and Artabazus remained loyal to Darius until the end for which Alexander pardoned him and awarded him the satrapy of Bactria.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, Artabazus' son, Pharnabazus, became leader of the Persian naval forces after Memnon and Mentor laboured to secure his neph-

¹⁴⁰ Xen. *Hellenica* 7,1,33–40; Plut. *Pelopidas* 30–31; Dem. 19,137.

¹⁴¹ E. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus: The Emergence of Macedon*, Princeton 1990, 268.

¹⁴² Arrian 4.13.1; M. Olbrycht, 'Macedon and Persia', in J. Roisman, I. Worthington (eds), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, Chichester 2010, 345–347

¹⁴³ Diod. 16,75,1.

¹⁴⁴ Diod. 16,75,1–2.

¹⁴⁵ Diod. 16,52,3–4; Athen. 6,69; Curtius 5,9,1; 6,5,2.

¹⁴⁶ Curtius 5,9,1; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 866.

ews distinguished commands in the armed forces.¹⁴⁷ The exiles were allowed to return only in 343 after staying about ten years at the Macedonian court during which time Philip was expanding and preparing the ground for the eventual attack on Persia while Isocrates was calling endlessly for an attack on the Great King, including explicit encouragements to Philip.¹⁴⁸ Living for so long at the Macedonian court would have given the exiles insights into Philip's plans and contacts at court, an assertion further supported by Curtius who mentions 'the pledges of guest-friendship'.¹⁴⁹ between Artabazus and the Macedonian royal house. These insights and contacts would of course have been obvious to share with the Persian king upon their return as they successfully strove to regain their former positions. The exiles' long stay in Macedon could help to explain and lend support to Demosthenes' assertion that Philip sent embassies to the Great King about 351 as this was just after Artabazus and Memnon would have arrived from Persia.¹⁵⁰ Thus, there are broad, general connections between the two kingdoms and there is the very specific connection of a large group of exiles where Memnon, Artabazus and the latter's many sons returned to hold prominent positions under Darius. It therefore seems entirely possible that one of these exiles could have furnished the link between Persia and the Macedonian court which ultimately enabled the assassination of Philip. From the above we can conclude that it at least seems a possibility that Persia could have orchestrated the murder as the Macedonian dynasty was the victim of constant assassinations, the use of monetary resources to counter threats was deeply embedded in Persian foreign policy and there was contact between the two kingdoms both in a general sense and in the specific period before Philip's death.

The crime itself and its aftermath

After thus demonstrating the possibility of Persian involvement let us now look at the crime itself and its circumstances. One factor is the dating of the rape. Here *opinio communis* is rightly in support of the late dating of the rape, i.e. after the wedding of Philip and Cleopatra in late 338 or early 337.¹⁵¹ The assassination took place in the summer of 336 and even though this would not have given much time to the Persians it would still have been time enough to contact Pausanias, especially given the contacts to the Macedonian court mentioned above.

¹⁴⁷ Diod. 16,52,3–4; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 700.

¹⁴⁸ Isoc. 5,120.

¹⁴⁹ Curtius 6,5,2.

¹⁵⁰ Dem. 10,48.

¹⁵¹ Fears, 'Pausanias, the assassin of Philip II', 121–123; Carney, 'The politics of polygamy', 181.

Another element which should be noted is Pausanias' apparent plan for escape given the horses posted, but it remains an open question where he hoped to find safety. As shown above the idea that Pausanias acted entirely on his own is untenable. If hatred and personal motives in themselves are an insufficient explanation, any instigator of the assassination would have needed to offer Pausanias a place of refuge. Alexander would have struggled to offer such a thing as he could never have publicly reconciled himself with the killer of his father. The court of Alexander the Molossian could have been Pausanias' aim, but the king appears to have been deemed reliable by Philip at this point given the trusted position next to the Macedonian king in the wedding procession in which Philip was killed.¹⁵² Furthermore, Macedon would experience internal trouble in the aftermath, but it would not have taken them much recovered strength to invade Molossia or demand the handing over of Pausanias. It is therefore highly unlikely that Alexander the Molossian, who does not seem to have been involved in the crime, would have accepted Pausanias in his kingdom. The only possible player with the strength to resist Macedonian invasion or demands and thus to offer Pausanias subsequent protection was Persia. Furthermore, Greek and Macedonian defectors were welcomed with open arms in Persia as seen in the contemporary case of Amyntas.¹⁵³

A further consideration in regard to the murder is the consequences of a possible failure or capture of the assassin but let us first turn to the nature of succession and kingship in Macedonia. It seems that the king indicated a successor which was then seconded by an assembly where the nobles and army probably played a part but it is difficult to suggest anything more concrete.¹⁵⁴ However, we must not forget that the Macedonian kingdom had been riddled with instability before and especially in the aftermath of assassinated kings. A possible example is after the death of the abovementioned Alexander I where the future king Perdiccas had to fight for almost two decades against his brothers to gain full control of the throne.¹⁵⁵ It is striking that the first period of Macedonian succession extant in our sources is so marred by internal struggles. Another example is the aftermath of the death of Archelaus, consisting of a period of six years with several different kings and constant struggles.¹⁵⁶ Indeed the whole period until the reign of Philip II is often seen as one of instability, further supported by the above analysis of the

¹⁵² Justin 9,6.

¹⁵³ Arr. 1,17.

¹⁵⁴ On the nature of kingship and succession, see e.g. M.B. Hatzopoulos, 'Succession and regency in classical Macedonia', in *Ancient Macedonia IV*, Thessaloniki 1986.

¹⁵⁵ Thuc. 2,100,3; Plato *Gorgias* 471b; Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 115.

¹⁵⁶ Diod. 14,37,6; 14,84,6; 14,89,2; 15,60,3; Aeschin. 2,26–29; Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 168.

use of assassinations. A further example is the assassination of Alexander II in 368 or 367 whereafter a civil war between two possible successors, Ptolemy and Pausanias, followed.¹⁵⁷ It is only with Philip that Macedon enters a period of stability again but even his accession was quite unusual as he was appointed king rather than regent for the heir, Amyntas, who was only a minor.¹⁵⁸ This was probably the result of the external pressures on Macedon as two claimants to the throne, Pausanias and Argaeus, with foreign backers in Berisades, a Thracian king, and Athens respectively, were putting pressure on Macedon while a half-brother of Philip had recently been murdered by him.¹⁵⁹

This cursory overview of the court intrigues of Macedon and the earlier overview of the dynastic assassinations clearly show how hotly contested and elastic the nature of Macedonian kingship could be. How the king was chosen has been endlessly discussed, however, one factor that seems to be constant is that the successor needed to be the son of a previous king as Herodotus tells us that the Argead line continued unbroken all the way to Alexander.¹⁶⁰ This is further supported by Curtius who says of the soldiers that ‘they were accustomed to honour and venerate the name and no one assumed it unless born to rule’¹⁶¹ and the fact that the soldiers preferred Arrhidaios, the mentally incapacitated half-brother of Alexander, upon the latter’s death. The unpredictability and the chaos which successions and especially assassinations seem to have provoked argue against the idea that Alexander should have engineered the plot. This is further supported by the potentially disastrous implications for Alexander or Olympias had they been revealed as instigators given that a strong position in the event of succession struggles was of vital importance. This is true generally but especially in this case since both Arrhidaios, Amyntas and Philip’s new son all could have been used by Alexander’s political enemies to threaten his accession. Attalus e.g., a successful general who was popular with the army and related to the new son of Philip could certainly have posed a threat by using the new born son, a possibility asserted by Diodorus and Plutarch and further supported by Alexander’s subsequent removal of him.¹⁶² Furthermore, we must not underestimate the importance of the army regarding the accession of a new king, especially if there were multiple claimants, seen e.g. in the case of Alexander where Antipater’s swift

¹⁵⁷ Justin 7,4–5; Hammond, *The History of Macedonia*, 183.

¹⁵⁸ Diod. 16,1,3. Justin (7,5,6–10) claims that Philip was merely a regent. However, Justin seems unreliable as he is misinformed about the death of the former king Perdiccas immediately before this section. See J.R. Ellis, ‘Amyntas Perdikka, Philip II and Alexander the Great’, *JHS* 91 (1971), 15–24, for a fuller discussion.

¹⁵⁹ Worthington, *Philip II of Macedon*, 20.

¹⁶⁰ Hdt. 8,139,1.

¹⁶¹ Curtius 10,7,15.

¹⁶² Diod. 17,2,4–6; 17,5,1–2; Plut. *Demosthenes* 23,2.

actions secured their support. Philip, through his many victories and personal leadership, was very popular with the army and they would therefore hardly have supported Alexander had he been revealed as the instigator of the plot. It is thus clear that Alexander would have stood in a highly precarious position if he had been revealed as the mastermind of the crime. It has often been argued that the killing by the bodyguards of Pausanias is an argument for Alexander's involvement as he thus removed Pausanias from questioning. However, only some of the bodyguards had links to Alexander and it seems extremely risky to entrust an assassination plan to several of Philip's most trusted bodyguards no matter if they were Alexander's friends or not. We should rather remember that the bodyguards were not like a modern police force with rules and regulations and therefore could easily have slain the assassin out of rage or as self-defence given that Pausanias was of course armed. The Persians on the other hand ran no risk as Macedon was on the brink of invasion anyway and therefore could not use a failed assassination attempt to hurt Persia.

In connection with the above we must consider the timing and location of the crime. The marriage in 336 was supposed to show unity of the Greek cause and Macedonian dominance but ended up being a huge embarrassment to the Macedonian royal family. This would have been an unnecessarily risky occasion had Pausanias acted alone and a glaring case of bad judgement from Alexander and Olympias if they were the instigators and both parties would have had much easier and for Alexander less detrimental occasions for an assassination. We must also not forget that Alexander was positioned right next to Philip in the procession and only the latter's unpredictable action of sending the two Alexanders away opened up the possibility for assassination.¹⁶³ It would have been highly risky for Alexander to orchestrate an assassination when he himself was to stand immediately next to Philip. Furthermore, the Macedonian weakness indicated by the assassination in this context had predictably massive consequences in disrupting the stability and alliances Philip had formed, completed with the victory at Chaeronea. From Plutarch among others we e.g. learn that the Athenians, who had been one of the leaders of the anti-Macedonian fight, were thrilled at the news of Philip's assassination: 'At once, then, the Athenians proceeded to make thank-offerings for glad tidings and voted a crown for Pausanias'.¹⁶⁴ Aeschines even has Demosthenes claiming that 'Alexander would never stir out of Macedonia, for he was content, he [i.e. Demosthenes] said, to saunter around in Pel-la'.¹⁶⁵ Here we might see how Alexander at the time was not considered the fear-

¹⁶³ Diod. 16,94,3.

¹⁶⁴ Plut. *Demosthenes* 22,2.

¹⁶⁵ Aeschin. 3,160.

some general he would become but rather a youth with limited experience who stood in a deeply problematic situation. This is further supported by Diodorus who says that when Philip died Darius 'was relieved of his anxiety and despised the youth of Alexander'.¹⁶⁶ Plutarch, furthermore, in the *Moralia* emphasises the widespread discontent in Macedonia and in his *Fortuna* he describes the many threatening neighbours, the rebellious mood of Macedonia, the lack of funds and the Persian gold undermining the position of Macedonia.¹⁶⁷ Justin describes the shock of the death and the grievous political situation of Macedonia at the time: 'The sudden turn of events had also caused the late king's 'Friends' no little trepidation as their thoughts turned to Asia, which had been challenged to fight; then to Europe, which was still not totally subdued; then to the Illyrians, the Thracians, the Dardanians, and the other barbarian tribes, of dubious loyalty and unstable character – a simultaneous uprising by all these peoples would be impossible to check'.¹⁶⁸ Justin is of course tendentious but his description still manages to capture the severe strategic predicament that Macedon was in following the assassination. This picture is supported by the serious revolts that broke out immediately after Philip's death where e.g. the Thracians revolted and Arrian emphasises the great difficulty of countering it.¹⁶⁹ Arrian here has the aim of portraying Alexander as a great general but this does not undermine the seriousness of the revolt. Thessalians and the Greek city states also rebelled thus breaking up the League of Corinth which was all-important for a future campaign against the Persians. All the revolts were predictable under the circumstances of the assassination, especially given that a young king on the Macedonian throne would have looked like a golden opportunity and the Greeks were urged on by the fact that in the League of Corinth they had been bound by oath to Philip, not Macedon.¹⁷⁰ The Greeks even renewed their resistance after being subdued by Alexander and he had to burn Thebes to the ground to finally crush pacify the Greeks. If there was one player who knew the resilience of the freedom loving Greeks it was the Persians, who were, furthermore, the only ones with a vested interest in humiliating Macedonia and thereby causing internal dissension. The prospect of internal division after Philip's death is further supported by the constant dynastic struggles and civil wars that had made the rise of Macedon impossible until Philip as it was a possibility that the kingdom would again descend into civil war when he was removed. That this did not happen is to a large part due to Antipater's swift action in presenting Alexander as the new heir and by the immediate military suc-

¹⁶⁶ Diod. 17,7,1.

¹⁶⁷ Plut. *Moralia* 327c; *Fortuna* 1,3D-E.

¹⁶⁸ Justin 11,1,7–10.

¹⁶⁹ Arr. 1,1–6.

¹⁷⁰ IG II2 236, see n. 59.

cesses of the young king.¹⁷¹ As we see above, the Persians would have been entirely justified in hoping that the removal of Philip could plunge Macedon into dynastic chaos or expose Macedonian weakness to the Greeks and thereby uprooting the League of Corinth. At the very least an assassination would undoubtedly postpone the imminent invasion which would have been an important factor in consideration of Persian military weakness in the west. Indeed the assassination did actually break up the League of Corinth which had to be forced back together by Alexander, ultimately postponing the invasion by two years. The overall development was as shown above predictable and must have looked highly tempting for the new Persian king given his situation.

We must also not forget that the postponement of the Macedonian invasion gave Darius some direly needed time to settle the revolt in Egypt during 335 and free himself of the threat presented by Bagoas.¹⁷² In Darius' situation we can identify an important parallel to the assassinations of Glos and Datames, namely an insurgent Egypt. To the newly appointed king the revolt of Egypt probably seemed at least as threatening, if not more so, compared to the Macedonian progress in Asia Minor, which in all probability looked less significant in the broad Persian perspective than our Greek sources present it. This is supported by Persia consistently prioritising Egypt over western matters as seen with Glos and Datames and by the fact that Macedonia had only risen to great power during the reign of Philip and was therefore a relatively new threat. A further parallel is the military strength of the Macedonians, which made a pitched battle a decisively risky undertaking. This proposed reluctance to fight Philip is corroborated by the Persian strategy against the retreat of the infamous 10 000 mercenaries (401–399) and the Spartan king Agesilaus (396–394) as the Persians here attempted to avoid pitched battle and in the latter case used money to rouse Greek city states as a threat to Sparta.¹⁷³ These were of course Greek adversaries, but considering the large number of Greek soldiers in the Macedonian army and the seeming superiority of the Macedonian soldiers at the battle of Chaeronea, it appears reasonable that the Persians would have been hesitant to take on Philip as well. Furthermore, the newly appointed king Darius, especially with the internal court struggles in mind, needed a successful campaign to legitimise his rule. As mentioned earlier, this was a constant for newly appointed Persian kings as seen e.g. in the case of Artaxerxes III's campaign in 343. Diodorus e.g. writes that the Egyptian king, Nectanebo, did not dare take the risks necessary to maintain his kingdom whereas Artaxerxes III rejected the use of generals and in person carried out 'the

¹⁷¹ Worthington, *Philip II of Macedon*, 188.

¹⁷² Diod. 17,7,2; Ruzicka, *Politics of a Persian Dynasty*, 132.

¹⁷³ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 632–637.

struggles to preserve his kingdom'.¹⁷⁴ Theopompus supports the importance of this campaign as it was an occasion where Artaxerxes summoned representatives from the subjects he passed and received ritual gifts thereby reinforcing the bond between the Great King and the subject territories.¹⁷⁵ From the above we clearly see the importance of a strong military campaign and, just as in the cases of Glos and Datames, Egypt was for Darius a much more glorious opportunity than a regional, hazardous battle in Asia Minor. There are thus clear parallels to Datames and Glos: a defiant Egypt posing quite a significant threat which the empire needed to address as swiftly as possible but regional problems in the west, which were dangerous to confront head on, obstructed this undertaking. It is on this background not improbable that Darius acted on the precedents that history presented him, especially given the probability that the Persian king had already utilised this tool to remove his predecessor.

Furthermore, the military situation in Asia Minor was also greatly improved in the aftermath of Philip's death; Attalus the general was killed on Alexander's orders and Parmenion, the main Macedonian general, was recalled at some stage since we hear about him organising the crossing of the Hellespont in 334.¹⁷⁶ It should also be noted that Darius managed to undo much of the work Philip's commanders had accomplished before his death as Memnon e.g. forced the Macedonians out of the Troad, probably helped by the killing of Attalus and the recall of Parmenion.¹⁷⁷ The Persian king thereby presented Alexander with a far more focused resistance than had been possible in 336.¹⁷⁸ That Darius was eventually defeated obscures the fact that he on this background actually was the main beneficiary of the murder as he was given time to settle the revolt in Egypt while still undoing the successes of Macedon which had to spend two years recovering its strength and political position. Furthermore, the kingdom could quite possibly, as shown above, have collapsed into dynastic struggles.

Turning to the aftermath of the crime, we come across an assertion that has often been put forward, which would undermine the idea of Darius as mastermind, namely the apparent unpreparedness of the Persians and the relative ease with which Alexander overran Asia Minor. However, first of all we must guard ourselves against the anachronistic knowledge of Alexander's military brilliance. When Alexander invaded Persia he had successfully led the right wing at Chaeronea and subdued rebellious peoples in the Balkans. He had also razed Thebes, but

¹⁷⁴ Diod. 16.40.6. On Nectanebo: 16.51.1.

¹⁷⁵ FGrH 115 F263.a-b, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 687.

¹⁷⁶ Attalus: Diod. 17.2,4-6; 17.5.1-2; Curtius 7,1,3; Justin 11,5,1; Parmenion: Arr. 1,11.

¹⁷⁷ Arr. 1,11,6-1,12; Diod. 17,7,8-10; Polyæn. 5,44,5.

¹⁷⁸ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 817.

one should remember that he had inherited the most powerful military machine of the day from Philip and after the army's endorsement of his accession these successes were impressive but not extraordinary. Thus, the Persians could not have predicted the high level of Alexander's generalship and thereby the threat he posed and, furthermore, an actual destruction of the Persian Empire seems never to have been the goal under Philip but rather a limited conquest of Asia Minor.¹⁷⁹ However, Diodorus e.g. writes that Darius indeed did take the threat seriously, especially after Alexander put down the Greek rebellions and from this 'Darius took warning and began to pay serious attention to his forces. He fitted out a large number of ships of war and assembled numerous strong armies, choosing at the same time his best commanders, among whom was Memnon of Rhodes, outstanding in courage and in strategic grasp'.¹⁸⁰ Thus, at least according to Diodorus, Darius was actually focused on the threat of Alexander and it is a fact that he sent Memnon who reversed many of the Macedonian successes. Furthermore, when we remember that Egypt was also revolting at the same time the alleged unpreparedness of Persia seems more like prioritisation than neglect. Moreover, if we look at the first battle, the Battle of Granicus, the Persian forces do not appear unprepared according to our two sources Diodorus and Arrian as both testify to the multitude of satrapal commanders with their armies present at Granicus. Arrian, in addition to Memnon, gives us 'Arsames, Rheomithres, Petines and Niphates in association with Spithridates, the satrap of Lydia and Ionia, and Arsites, the governor of northern Phrygia'.¹⁸¹ Diodorus on the other hand writes that 'Memnon of Rhodes and the satrap Arsamenes held the left wing each with his own cavalry; Arsites was stationed next with the horsemen from Paphlagonia; then came Spithrobates satrap of Ionia at the head of the Hyrcanian cavalry. The right wing was held by a thousand Medes and two thousand horse with Rheomithres as well as Bactrians of like number'.¹⁸² We need not focus on the details of the order of battle but rather notice that the two authors give the same satrapal commanders with Arrian also mentioning Petines and Niphates. It is hard to imagine that both authors completely falsified the presence of this many high ranking individuals as they would thereby have encountered problems in their narratives. We can thus see how all the nearby satrapal commanders, each of whom had an army, banded together with Memnon in order to oppose Alexander. Considering the recent revolt in Egypt and that this must have appeared a regional problem, especially given the relatively limited number of troops, pro-

¹⁷⁹ Seen e.g. in Isoc. 4,162 and 5,120: 'Asia from Cilicia to Sinope'. Also seen in the surprise of the other Macedonians as Alexander refused to come to terms: Arr. 2,26; Diod. 17,39,2.

¹⁸⁰ Diod. 17,7,2.

¹⁸¹ Arr. 1,13,1.

¹⁸² Diod. 17,19,1-5.

visions and money at Alexander's disposal, we should not be surprised that the whole Persian army had not been assembled but rather be impressed that this many commanders were actually present with their armies.¹⁸³ The accounts of the actual battle are hopelessly confused, but in the few discernible facts we might for the first time glimpse Alexander's brilliance as he defeated a relatively strong opponent who held a commanding position, and he did so decisively, thereby allowing him swiftly to move on. Regarding Alexander's crossing, it could appear surprising that the vastly superior Persian fleet did not hinder it, but given that Egypt, as seen above, was subdued only in 335 it seems probable that the Persian fleet was forced to stay put until the opening of the sea-lanes in 334. Furthermore, it would have been difficult for the Persians to predict the exact point of Alexander's landing, and the strong position on the banks of the Granicus River must therefore have looked appealing. Thus, the Persians appear to have been as prepared and strong as possible given the perceived threat of the situation and the recent revolt of Egypt.

Looking more broadly at the aftermath of the assassination, we see that the practice of bribes and at least attempted assassinations seems to have continued after 336, indicated by the alleged use of Persian gold which 'flowed freely through the hands of the popular leaders everywhere, and helped to rouse the Peloponnesus'.¹⁸⁴ Here we again see the use of the *topos* of Persian bribery but it would also be a continuation of their previous policy of using bribes to influence politics on their western frontier and the assertion is therefore not unrealistic. We also have the capture of a letter to Alexander the Lyncestian offering a bribe from the Persians after Alexander had crossed to Asia Minor.¹⁸⁵ This story is of course hotly contested, but it does not seem exceedingly far-fetched that Darius, perhaps surprised by the decisiveness and swiftness of the new king, sought to remove him by using a disgruntled court figure whose brothers had been killed by Alexander in the aftermath of his accession.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, we also have the immediate suspicion of bribery of a physician when Alexander falls ill and requires treatment.¹⁸⁷ Some of the stories of Persian bribery might be fabricated, but the Persian use of bribes must at least have been a common notion, since allegations as shown were made from Herodotus to Demosthenes.¹⁸⁸ In this context a possible bribe of Pausanias would merely be a continuation of a policy that had been in place for over a century and which continued after the assassination as well.

¹⁸³ Diod. 17,1,3–4; Justin 11,6,2; Plut. *Alexander* 15,1; Plut. *De Fortuna* 1,3D-E; Arr. 1,11,3.

¹⁸⁴ Plut. *Fortuna* 1.3C-D.

¹⁸⁵ Arr. 1,25.

¹⁸⁶ Justin 11,2; Arr. 1,25.

¹⁸⁷ Arr. 2,4.

¹⁸⁸ Hdt. 9,5; Dem. 19,273.

Later through a letter Darius allegedly offered Alexander a large ransom for the Persian captive royal family, huge swathes of territory and an alliance with the Great King through the marriage of his daughter to Alexander.¹⁸⁹ This might appear a peculiar proposal if we accept the idea of Darius being behind the murder of Alexander's father as Alexander would then have the added motive of revenge rather than just political goals. However, we must not forget the immense rewards for this alliance, which other Macedonians would allegedly have accepted,¹⁹⁰ and the fact that the aim in propaganda from e.g. Isocrates was not the destruction of the Persian Empire but instead a limited campaign in Asia Minor¹⁹¹ – Alexander was thus given what Darius thought he had come for. Against this collective background Darius was in all likelihood baffled by Alexander's intransigent rejection of the generous terms offered even if the Great King had masterminded Philip's assassination.

Thus, as the above has shown the Persians seem certainly to have had the possibility of assassinating Philip given Macedonian vulnerability to this weapon, their use bribes and the contact between the courts of the two kingdoms. Furthermore, large parts of the circumstantial evidence points to Persian involvement and they appear to have continued the use of bribes and at least attempted assassinations. As we move towards the end I hope on the strength of the above to have at least pointed a finger at a weakness in the current scholarly tradition but also to have offered a well-supported alternative explanation. This is needed as Darius has simply never been seriously argued as a possible mastermind behind Philip's death and the above has hopefully shown that at least this *a priori* or implicit rejection through silence of Persian involvement is insufficient. This neglect of Persia as a possibility seems to be rooted in the traditional assertion that the kingdom was a moribund colossus on clay-feet and that the weak and indecisive Darius only hastened the demise. However, in the above Darius appears a most able and determined king in the short time before Alexander's crossing, and Briant's enormous work on the Achaemenid kings has done much to rectify the tendentious view of Persian history bequeathed to us by the Greek historians.¹⁹²

In conclusion, the three main positions all have their weaknesses: Pausanias acting alone is inconsistent with the execution of the crime and his motivation is dubious. The string of events destabilising the positions of Olympias and Alexander is founded on poor, hostile sources, and the application of *cui bono?* does not

¹⁸⁹ Arr. 2,25; Diod. 17,39,1–2.

¹⁹⁰ Arr. 2,26; Diod. 17,39,2.

¹⁹¹ Macedonians urging Alexander to accept: Arr. 2,26; Diod. 17,39,2. Propaganda: Isoc. 4,162 or 5,120.

¹⁹² Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*.

point to either of them. The Persians, on the contrary, had previously used assassinations in very similar circumstances to great effect, the Macedonians were highly susceptible to his tool and the contact between the two courts was sufficient. The Persians had the means, the motivation and they benefited the most. This suggests that the murder was not the cynical act of either Alexander or Olympias, or a deranged crime on the part of Pausanias. Instead it was a calculated, well-executed piece of political strategy by a newly inaugurated Persian king under pressure using a time-honoured tool of Persian foreign policy.

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