



0. ASSASSINATION OF PHILIP II - Story Preface

1. LEARNING FROM ARISTOTLE

2. THE YOUNG ALEXANDER

3. ALEXANDER'S HOMETOWN

4. ASSASSINATION OF PHILIP II

5. DISCOVERY OF PHILIP'S TOMB

6. ROYAL TREASURES

7. ALEXANDER'S BEQUEST

8. ALEXANDER'S EARLY CONQUESTS

9. CHASING DARIUS III

10. GAUGAMELA AND THE END OF DARIUS

11. ELEPHANTS IN WAR

12. VICTORY IN INDIA

13. GOING HOME

14. ALEXANDER'S DEATH

15. ALEXANDER'S JOURNEY IN PICTURES

16. THE REST OF THE STORY

Andre Castaigne imagines how the assassination of Philip II of Macedonia may have appeared when he was stabbed by Pausanias, one of the King's own bodyguards. Castaigne created this illustration between 1898-1899. The murder took place at Aegae (known, today, as Vergina) during October of 336 BC.

In the summer of 336 B.C., Philip II was home in Macedonia.

His conquests had been many (like Mount Pangeon which provided a source of gold to fund Philip's expeditions). Towns had been named after him (like Philippi, later made famous when Paul the apostle preached there). But the once-handsome man now carried the scars of war. After two decades of fighting, his immediately noticeable injury was a missing eye.

Alexander (who had a previous falling-out with his father) was also at the royal palace that summer day since his family was celebrating both a wedding and Philip's upcoming invasion of Asia. Philip, known as a "man whose like had never been seen in Europe," had given his daughter (Cleopatra) in marriage to an ally (King Alexander of Epirus).

Philip himself had married - again - not long before. He had already divorced Olympias, Alexander's mother (who was from Epirus, not Macedonia).

The king's new wife Eurydice (his seventh, also called Cleopatra) was a young Macedonian, with whom Philip had a young daughter (named Europe) and an infant son (named Caranus, after the founder of the Macedonian royal dynasty).

Angered by her own denigration, Olympias was also concerned about the succession of Alexander. In Macedonia, it was never certain that the oldest son would become king. And Alexander, unlike Caranus, was not a full-blooded Macedonian.

Although it may not have disturbed Philip, there is another interesting piece of Macedonian history to consider. None of Philip's predecessors had died in his own bed. Since the king's power was purely personal, his authority was as absolute as he could make it.

Homer's statement, made hundreds of years before, still applied:

Rule by might.

In Homer's world, heroes always strive for glory since death is inescapable. In Philip's world, a loss of face could lead to a loss of title - or worse.

As part of the celebrations, Philip ordered his bodyguards to leave him for a time. (Philip was a leader, not a tyrant, and it would have sent the wrong signal for him to attend a public celebration, in the royal theater,

surrounded by armed men.)

Pausanias, one of Philip's guards, disobeyed those orders and lingered behind.

Unnoticed, Pausanias clutched a Celtic dagger which he plunged into Philip, killing him. Recent excavations have revealed the probable spot in the theater where Philip was stabbed.

To this day, no one really knows who plotted Philip's murder. Many scholars point to Olympias who surely had motive. Alexander was soon cleared as a suspect, although scholars have wondered about his involvement.

The prince acted quickly, however, to secure his power base and to make sure he would become his father's successor.

More than 2,300 years later - in one of the most stunning archeological achievements of the 20th century - a tomb, believed to be Philip's, was rediscovered. Left untouched for thousands of years, its contents were nothing short of astonishing.

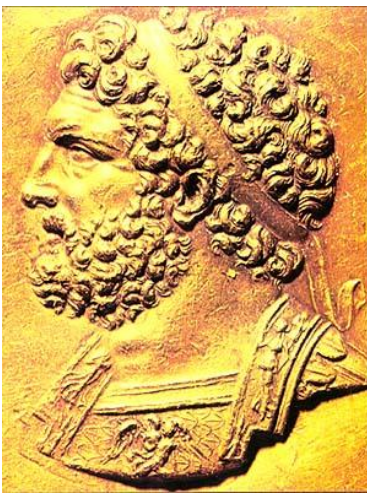
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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Media Stream

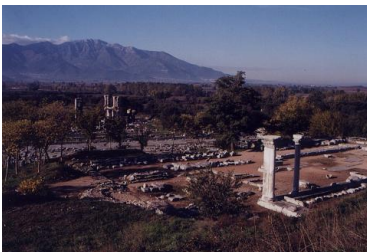


Philip II - Macedonian King and Great Conqueror

Image online, courtesy the [History of Macedonia](#) website.

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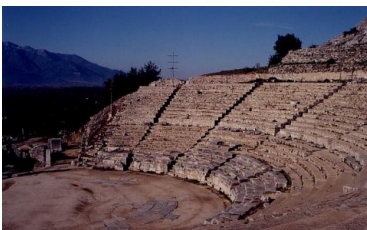


Mount Pangeon - Source of Gold for Philip II

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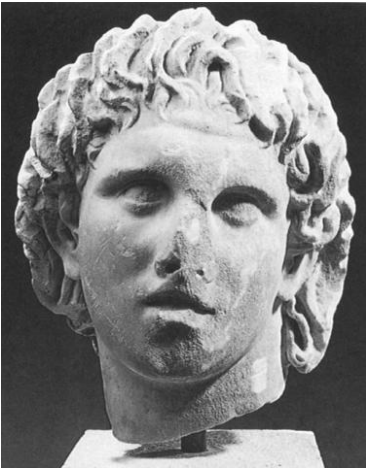


Phillipi Ruins - Philip II's Namesake City

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The Great Conqueror

Online image, courtesy The Honors College at the University of Maine.

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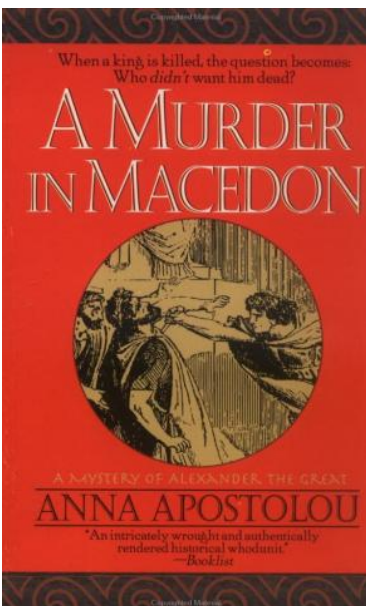


Olympias - Descendent of Achilles

Image online, courtesy the alexander-the-great.co.uk website.

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A Murder in Macedon - by Anna Apostolou

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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Phillipi Today

Image online, courtesy the greatcommission.com website.

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Scene of Assassination Today - Philip II

Image by Dr. Jona Lendering; [online via Livius.org](http://www.livius.org).

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ASSASSINATION OF PHILIP II

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Alexander the Great - Background in Macedonia

Clip from *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, a BBC documentary hosted by Michael Wood (which also aired on PBS). Video online, courtesy BBC.

View this asset at:

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