

# Redrawing a map of Alexander the Great's empire. Correcting old historical geographical errors

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## ABSTRACT

The general maps of Alexander the Great's empire published today often contain numerous variants and contradictions. The aim of this study is to present a new version of the general map, based on the hypotheses of commentators on Arrian and Curtius, as well as on a series of field explorations, rearticulating and cartographically representing the authors' ongoing research on this topic. This general map also includes a new representation of Central Asia, intended to correct the contradictory schemes that have been published until recently. This map therefore includes updated toponymy and details of the routes followed by Alexander, his generals and ambassadors, Darius, and, to the East, the Bactrian-Sogdian satraps and regional governors. The reconstruction of this map has significant implications for our understanding of Alexander's story.

## KEYWORDS

Alexander the Great; Alexander the Great's empire; Achaemenid empire; Darius III; Hellenistic toponymy; Hellenistic geography; mapping of ancient geography.

The history of Alexander the Great is based on a wide variety of literary sources, all of which are secondary (and even 'tertiary'), since no contemporary biography of the conqueror's life has survived. Even today, reconstructing events in their exact order and location remains a puzzle and is often hypothetical. The ruins of the monuments created by Alexander during the founding of his cities are difficult to identify. Direct material evidence of his existence can be summed up as destruction, not limited to the famous burning of Persepolis, but also involving numerous cities that he obliterated during his expedition, which marked the end of the Achaemenid era.

Reconstructing material contexts is further complicated by the lack of precise information regarding the itinerary followed by Alexander and his generals, as well as the sequence of certain events. These data are crucial for understanding the local political and economic context, and for studying the military strategies of Alexander and the other Macedonian or Eastern figures involved, their psychological developments, and so on. As such, historical geography is an essential basis for any research of this kind. Cartographic representation of this historical geography is an important tool of articulating and disseminating the results of research on this topic, but many past and current maps remain problematic for diverse reasons. This article is therefore concerned with presenting and explaining a new map of these campaigns which illustrates the findings of some more recent research on this topic, and particularly those of my ongoing research dealing with the route of Alexander and identification of toponyms in Central Asia during his campaigns.

## HISTORICAL CARTOGRAPHY AND LITERARY SOURCES

Medieval cartography, such as the *mappae mundi*, was one of the heirs of ancient geography, from which it inherited many names. It did not overlook the existence of Central Asia and its key toponyms, such as Bactria or the Oxus, adjacent to a Caspian-Hyrceanian Sea open to the peripheral ocean and enclosed by the ‘Caucasus’ range, with the Caspian Gates locked, sometimes with Gog and Magog imprisoned behind the legendary wall that Alexander is said to have built to keep them at bay (see GORSHENINA – RAPIN 2021, 176).

However, cartographic representations of Alexander’s empire form part of a long tradition that began only in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, particularly following the publication of Curtius’ and Arrian’s *Lives of Alexander*. This tradition was first established by the heirs of Gerhard Mercator (1512–1594), including Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598), Jodocus Hondius (1563–1612), and Jan Janssonius (1588–1664), and continued by their successors, who were often interconnected. It was these cartographers, notably Ortelius and Johannes Baptista Vrients (1552–1612), who produced in 1595 a comprehensive map of Alexander’s empire titled *Alexandri Magni Macedonis Expeditio*.<sup>1</sup> This was the first map based on toponyms derived from accounts of the Macedonian conquest, but independent of those of Claudius Ptolemy’s *Geography*.

While the world map was rapidly evolving in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>2</sup> Central Asia retained Ptolemy’s schema, with Asia dominated by an oval-shaped Caspian Sea. The modern map of North Asia emerged with the ‘discovery’ of the Aral Sea on the eve of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, marking the culmination of a long process (GORSHENINA 2021) that gradually resolved issues related to the positioning of rivers, mountains, and cities. The development of maps of Alexander’s empire paralleled advances in historiography, marked by works such as Clarke’s synthesis (1665) and Droysen’s famous *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen*, published in 1833. The most complete representations of the empire began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the cartographer Guillaume Delisle (1675–1726), although the toponymy remained highly hypothetical, and the locations approximate.

It was not until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the ‘Upper Asia’ of the Greek world truly began to open up to the West during the conquests led by European powers, allowing for the production of increasingly realistic cartography.

Despite numerous syntheses published in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the historical geography of Central Asia initially remained limited to library research, only advancing as archaeologist-philologists gained greater access to the region, particularly those interested in the ancient, and more specifically, Hellenistic period.

The first field studies were conducted during the Russian conquest of the region and continued into the Soviet era by numerous archaeologists and historians, such as Boris A. Litvinskij and Igor V. P’jankov (P’JANKOV 2013). Western specialists who had access to the field included archaeologists like Paul Bernard, director of the DAFA at the time of the Aï Khanoum excavations (1965–1978) (see below for one of his studies on historical geography published in 1982).

Despite this research, the toponymy of the eastern part of the empire remained imprecise for a long time, especially when compared with the historical geography of the Mediterra-

1 This map was republished in the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and maintained its popularity for more than a century and a half, as shown by its republication by Janssonius in 1662 and its reuse in an Arrian’s edition dating from 1757.

2 With, of course, updates for regions like Southern Asia, Africa, and the West. An example of such updates can be seen in the *Asia Antiqua cum finitimis Asiæ et Europæ* published in 1680 by Nikolaas Blankaart (1625–1703).

nean world. The absence of detailed regional maps added to the handicaps, particularly in regions that were previously within the Soviet Union's territory. Since Droysen's time, the eastern part of the general maps of Alexander's empire has been the subject of numerous variations, punctuated equally variably by solutions that now seem erroneous or correct but were forgotten from one publication to the next. This inconsistency is evident in various maps published in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, some of which in my view display more accurate toponymy of Alexander's route than current maps.

This diversity of maps also arises from the different scientific schools – particularly French, German and English – which have 'dominated' studies of Alexander's history since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The French school seems to me to have had more influence on Latin-language maps. German maps, supported by a robust school of historians and philologists, had a greater international impact, largely due to the publication of complex 'school' atlases over a long period, such as Spruner and Menke's *Atlas Antiquus* (1850–1865), Heinrich Kiepert's *Atlas Antiquus* (1896), and Putzger's *Schul-Atlas* (which later became *Putzger Historischer Weltatlas*) from 1877 to the present day. Many English-language maps, such as those by the American William R. Shepherd (1871–1934), also reflect this German cartographic tradition and its toponymic choices.

From the 2000s onwards, several highly detailed atlases of Antiquity have been published, the most comprehensive being the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (2000). This inventory of place names, spanning a thousand years and incorporating modern names of archaeological sites, reflects the state of research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, unlike the maps covering the Roman Empire, those of the Hellenistic Far East do not include a road network (part 6: maps 86–99). In Central Asia, the atlas stops at the Hissar range, considering it the border between ('Northern') Bactria and Sogdiana. The area beyond, including Samarkand, is limited to a few place names and does not account for the Sogdian sites, as is the case with those on the right bank of the Oxus. This omission aligns with a tendency among Bactria-focused archaeologists to overlook that Samarkand was part of the same empire, despite significant Hellenistic period excavations conducted there by the Franco-Uzbek Archaeological Mission (MAFOuz) of Sogdiana. Therefore, this atlas is not particularly central to a traditional reconstruction of Alexander's route in Iran and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

To visualise this route, it is preferable to refer to school or academic atlases where the place names are limited to those found in the ancient sources of Alexander's expedition. Recent maps published in single or double page format are represented in several historical atlases, including:

- The latest editions of the *Putzger Historischer Weltatlas*, which underwent significant updates by new historians around 2002 (103<sup>rd</sup> ed.), though with no notable changes thereafter (see the 105<sup>th</sup> ed. since 2021).
- The *Historischer Atlas der Antiken Welt* published in 2007, which complements *Der Neue Pauly*, the modern historiographical successor of the *RE* (*Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*) and *Der kleine Pauly*.
- The English-speaking world has a very rough *Historical Atlas*, published in Sydney and translated into French under the title *Atlas Historique* (2010).

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3 I also do not include in this study the Bregel's *Historical Atlas of Central Asia* (2003), which covers all the periods from the time of Alexander to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For Central Asia it offers a more comprehensive inventory of archaeological sites than the *Barrington Atlas*.

- In France, for example, Alexander's empire is included in the *Atlas Historique du Proche-Orient ancien* (2020), which is not, however, based on L. Martinez-Sève's *Atlas du monde hellénistique*, one of the best atlases covering the Hellenistic period, and which has been published several times since 2011, offering detailed regional maps.

Generally, there is no discernible connection between these various atlases, aside from occasional variations that align with 19<sup>th</sup> century cartographic traditions. This highlights the significant uncertainties that persist in mapping Alexander's empire, particularly in its eastern regions – namely, the Iranian, Central Asian, and Indian world – where the precise location of cities and the events of Alexander's campaigns (from 330 to 325 BC) remain elusive.

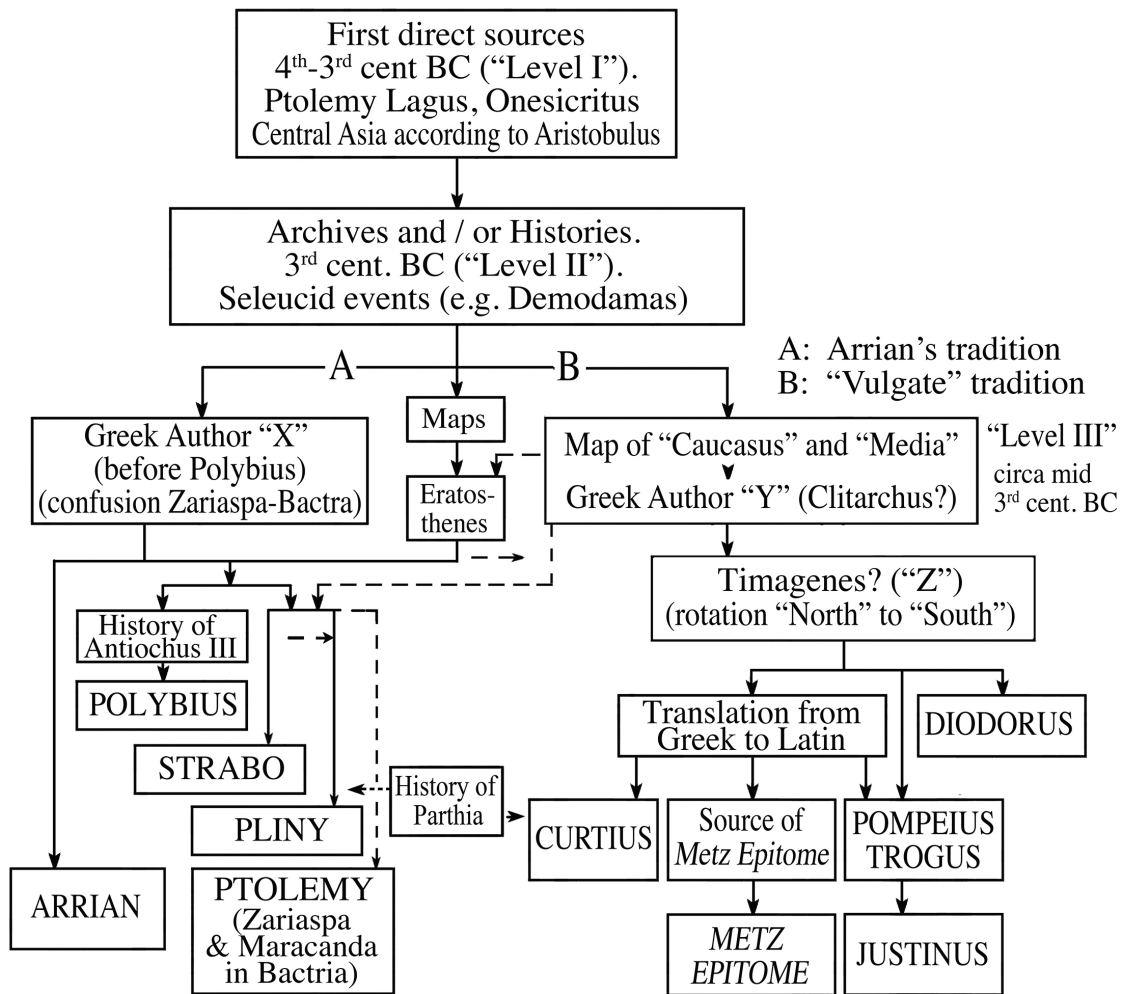
The data from Ptolemy's *Geography* only partially overlaps with that provided by the historians of Alexander, necessitating a more thorough examination of regions where ancient toponymy has not been preserved. However, analysing this geography remains crucial, especially when cross-referenced with other detailed syntheses, such as Strabo's *Geography*, Pliny's *Natural History*, the *Peutinger Table*, and the *Ravenna Cosmography* (whose original source dates to the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD).<sup>4</sup> Comparative studies of these works continue to yield new insights, as in the case of the Hellenistic site of Aï Khanoum. I have proposed the name \**Oskobara*<sup>5</sup> for this site (or its neighbour, the 'Ville ronde' of Kuhna Qal'a: see below) during the Achaemenid period and *Eucratideia* for the era of the last Graeco-Bactrian ruler, Eucratides I (r. 171–144 BC) (RAPIN 2005, 146–147, 172; RAPIN 2007, 41). Reflections on the rivers in this region (below) have also led me, alongside F. Grenet, to reject the often repeated identification of Aï Khanoum with the mythical Alexandria of the Oxus (GRENET – RAPIN 2001, 82). Nonetheless, a large community of researchers continues to refer to the city by this name, following the inertia of received ideas (see for example the *Barrington Atlas* 2000, the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007, and the recent Putzger atlases).<sup>6</sup>

A major obstacle to research lies in the divide between the ancient historiographical trends concerning Alexander, particularly the accounts of Arrian (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) and those of the so-called 'Vulgate' tradition, which follows Clitarchus (including Diodorus Siculus, Quintus Curtius Rufus, Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus, *Metz Epitome*, etc.) (Fig. 1). Albert Brian Bosworth (1942–2014) extensively studied this divide, striving to restore the Vulgate's historical value and balance the two traditions (BOSWORTH 1976 and subsequent publications).

4 RAPIN 2005; 2017. For an extract from the eastern part of the *Peutinger Map*, see e.g. RAPIN 2017, 57.

5 RAPIN 2005, 146–147, 172; RAPIN 2013, 52, n. 40. This toponym appears in many forms in the geography of Antiquity, then in Late Antiquity, where it is transformed into 'mons Oscobares' by Orosius, before being mentioned in this form by Boccaccio in *De Montibus* during the Renaissance. Its location has never been identified before: in 2000, the *Barrington Atlas, Map-by-map directory* 1, 88 places Oscobares M. as a mountain in China without paralleling it with the Scobaru of *Peutinger Map*. At the same time, the *Barrington Atlas* listed separately other variants, such as Ostobara (Ptol. VI, 11.9) and Skordai (Ptol. VI, 11.6) among the 'Unlocated Toponyms', p. 97, like several Central Asian place names which have become easier to locate in recent years.

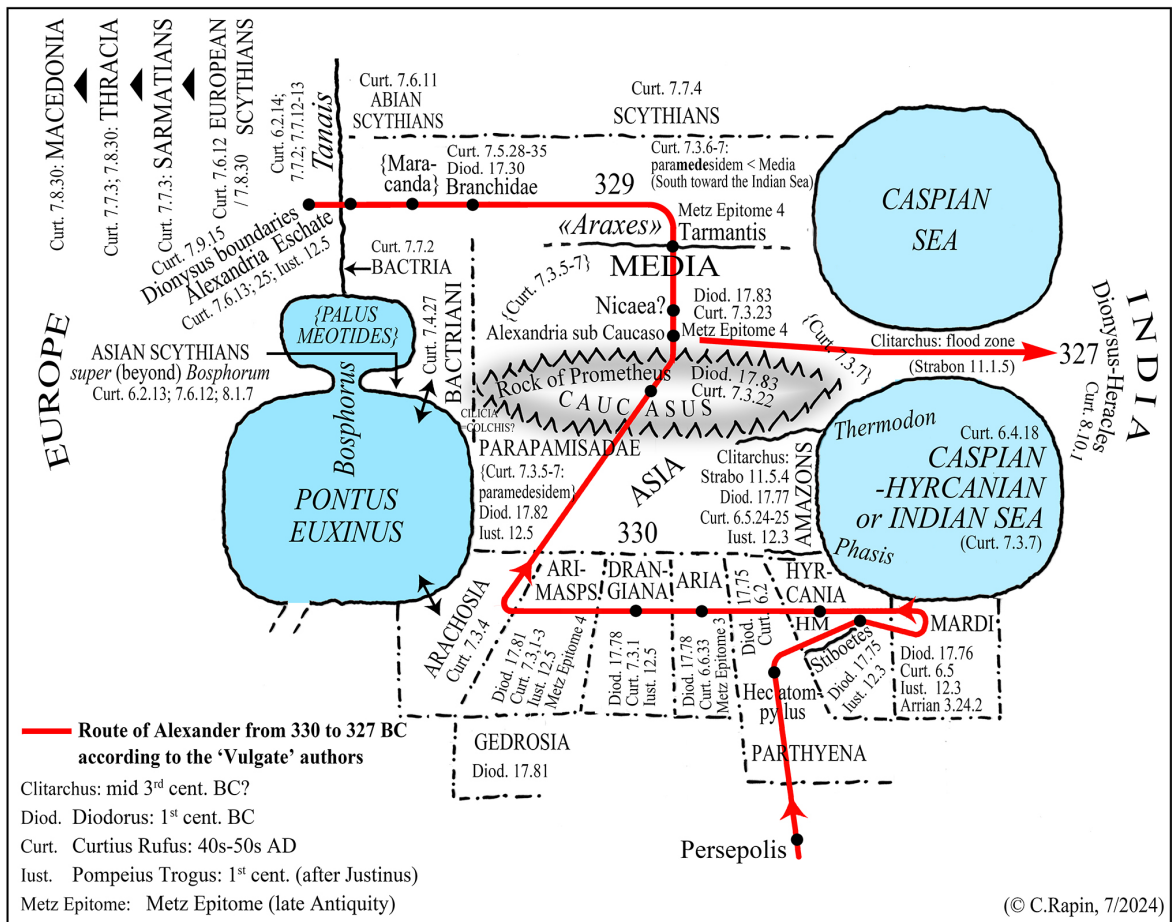
6 For the identification of this Alexandria, P. Bernard did not reach a definitive conclusion between Aï Khanoum and Termez as potential locations for this city (BERNARD 1982, 236). E. Rtveladze has proposed Kampyr-tepe as a candidate for Alexandria Oxiana, a view detailed in RTVELADZE 2002 and RTVELADZE 2019. On modern politico-economic considerations that today erroneously justify assimilating Kampyr-tepe to Alexandria Oxiana, see GORSHENINA – RAPIN 2024, 400, 403, 405. My own proposal places this Alexandria to the north of the Sherabad Darya plain, as detailed in RAPIN 2017, 96, 104, n. 10.



**Fig. 1: Genealogical tree of ancient authors based on the content of their chapters on Central Asia (drawing by C. Rapin).**

One of the great weaknesses traditionally attributed to Clitarchus' successors, especially Curtius, concerns their seemingly nonsensical geographical concepts when compared to Arrian's authority. However, these weaknesses are not universal; they specifically concern data from the period 330 to 327 BC, which Clitarchus introduced due to the lack of an illustrative map or description in his sources to clarify the geographical distribution of events. The inventory and transcription on paper of the geographical 'anomalies' led me to reconstruct a 'coherent' map, where a mythical Caucasus is inverted and superimposed over the actual Caucasus between the Black Sea and a double Caspian Sea (**Fig. 2**).<sup>7</sup> This speculative map, likely of graphic origin rather than purely 'mental', intertwined real events with a strange mix of fictional data. It included the Amazons as being contiguous with Hyrcania, but linked to their rivers of the Black Sea (Thermodon and Phasis), the Arimasps, an Arachosia contiguous with the Black Sea (in this passage only), the Rock of Prometheus, Media, and its

7 My renderings of this imaginary map based on Clitarchus's work have undergone several refinements since my initial version in 2005; see RAPIN 2005, 166, map 2; RAPIN 2014, 149, fig. 2; RAPIN 2018a, 260, fig. 2; RAPIN 2018c, 160, fig. 3; RAPIN 2021, 362, fig. 4; and RAPIN 2023, 448, fig. 2.



**Fig. 2: Reconstruction of Clitarchus' 'map of the Caucasus' based on the geographical descriptions adopted by the 'Vulgate' historians for the years 330-327 BC (drawing by C. Rapin).**

river Araxes, the city of the Branchidae, a Bactria swept by the winds of the Black Sea, Asian Scythians 'super Bosphorum,' and 'European' Scythians beyond the Tanais/Don, followed by other European peoples.

If we exclude these anomalies – which, like Bosworth, I have deliberately refrained from 'correcting' to make them 'acceptable' – the Vulgate's order of events appears more reliable than Arrian's. However, by using these anomalies as markers, I pursued a genealogy of the sources available for Central Asia. This led to the hypothesis that Clitarchus may have composed his work in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century rather than in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, as commonly believed (Fig. 1).<sup>8</sup> The Vulgate's absurd geographical data could hardly have been compiled while any of the expedition's participants were still alive. It is plausible that this map was 'invented' in the wake of the Seleucid propaganda of the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. It is in this pseudo-geographical context that Clitarchus also drew his account of the Branchidae massacre (RAPIN 2018a, 257, 263, 278, 280-281). Curtius' description of the city of the Branchidae coincides with Arrian's description of the place in Nautaca where Bessus was arrested. Thus, I find it unrec-

8 I have discussed the dating of Clitarchus in RAPIN 2017, 37-38, 51-52, 106, n. 27; RAPIN 2018a, 260-263, 278-282. My graphic representation of the genealogy of sources has evolved and been refined since 2018 (RAPIN 2018a, 259) until my latest variant in 2023 (RAPIN 2023, 447).

essary to locate their city on an actual map, as is common in many ancient atlases and recent publications, such as the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007 and recent Putzger atlases.

Similar anomalies are present in Arrian, who also seems to have relied on indirect syntheses compiled between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, as well as on disparate sources. Arrian tended to reposition and thematically group data, or amalgamate episodes of similar appearance, leading to chronological distortions or his well-known contradictions with the Vulgate, particularly in the East. Therefore, his work cannot be taken at face value, no matter how elegant its style; each assertion must be carefully analysed in comparison with other sources.

Although Curtius has been rehabilitated by modern historians, many issues remain problematic. For a synthesis of detailed studies on Alexander, however, one of the best approaches remains the commentaries on Arrian by A.B. Bosworth and F. Sisti – A. Zambrini,<sup>9</sup> and the commentaries on Curtius by John Atkinson.<sup>10</sup>

Paul Goukowsky published a French translation of Arrian's Books III–V in 2023. In his 'Notices' for Books III and IV (pp. 28–59 and 117–155), and in his footnotes, Goukowsky offers a commentary that largely refers to the state of research of the 1980s, while remaining faithful to the early hypotheses of F. von Schwarz (1893). As Goukowsky dismisses the new hypotheses I have proposed in my own research on the basis of one of my publications (RAPIN 2017), and what are, in my view, important advancements made in the fields of Central Asian historical geography and Alexander's campaigns, I cannot engage with it in extensive detail in the present text, although this edition of Arrian will likely become a reference work in French bibliography.

While Curtius and Arrian dominate the historiography of Alexander, any analysis of his itinerary must also consider the *Metz Epitome*, a text still too often overlooked but of far greater significance than it might appear, particularly regarding events following the death of Darius (BAYNHAM 1995). However, just as in my reconstruction of the 'Caucasus' map, a crucial methodological step must be taken.

The most comprehensive edition of the *Metz Epitome* was published by P. H. Thomas (1966), which includes all the variants of the codices. However, this text should be approached with certain preconditions in mind. Contrary to popular belief, this epitome is not a traditional summary but an extract from a more extensive summary, from which some sections have been excised. The remaining segments have not been reworked for logical continuity, and the texts that follow the cuts often begin abruptly with the words 'deinde' and 'ibi'. In modern transcriptions, these terms should therefore be preceded by ellipses [...] to indicate the presence of discernible gaps. Furthermore, Thomas's edition contains a number of questionable textual corrections (see below). For example, the variants of codex D indicated at the bottom of the page should sometimes be preferred for establishing the text, particularly in paragraphs 3 and 4.

However, field observations have prompted me to reconsider the issues posed by sources on Alexander's military operations in the Iron Gates region near Derbent in Uzbekistan (RAPIN – KHASANOV – RAKHMANOV 2022). My research has attempted to integrate the geographical context of the various regions through which Alexander possibly passed with the historical texts. These texts are so contradictory that one must consider the possibility that ancient au-

9 BOSWORTH 1980 (vol. 1: books I–III) and BOSWORTH 1995 (vol. 2: books IV–V). His publication has been supplemented and updated by the more recent annotated translation proposed in Italian by F. Sisti and A. Zambrini: SISTI 2001, vol. 1 for books I–III, and SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004, vol. 2 for books IV–VII. The commentaries on books VI and VII included in the latter volume compensate for the absence of the third volume planned by Bosworth for the commentaries on Alexander's journey down the Indus after his retreat from the Hyphasis.

10 See in particular his commentary accompanying the Italian translation of Curtius: ATKINSON – ANTELANI (vol. 1) 1998; ATKINSON – GARGIULO (vol. 2) 2000.

thors often worked with already fragmented sources, which earlier writers had amalgamated as best they could into cohesive monographs. Even minor inconsistencies between seemingly identical episodes can indicate that the sources were not actually describing the same event. As analysis of the texts on Central Asia reveals, episodes may have been fragmented and re-assembled with other, superficially similar episodes, leading to the confusion we encounter today. Beyond the undeniably common data, the accounts from these two historiographical traditions should be viewed as complementary.

From the Iron Gates, my research has gradually expanded to include the entire region of Central Asia, from northern Iran to the entrance of India, with a particular focus on Sogdiana. This region is the most confusing in Graeco-Roman literature, typically receiving only cursory treatment in syntheses on Alexander, despite the complex military movements that occurred there.<sup>11</sup> However, this paper will not be limited to the results of these studies; it will also explore the history of the development of the new cartography of Alexander's route. The problem of the genesis of errors in maps since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, will be addressed in a later publication.

## FOR A NEW GENERAL MAP OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE

My research on Central Asia has always been accompanied by regional maps, which I have regularly updated as new developments emerged in the texts. Over time, I have proposed to locate almost all the place names mentioned by Alexander's historians. After compiling these maps in recent overviews devoted to Central Asia (RAPIN 2021; 2023), I recognised the need to integrate these results into a general map of Alexander's empire. Unfortunately, the maps currently in circulation rarely keep pace with advances in textual research and often replicate toponymic schemes from older studies.

The general map I present here (**Pl. 2/1**) is based on an in-depth analysis of historical sources, drawing particularly on the findings of my past research on the topic. The first atlas I consulted for comparison, the *Grosser historischer Weltatlas* (*GHW*) of 1953, contains a map of Alexander's empire that has been reprinted with little change for more than half a century, with the last version appearing in 2009. Since 2000, there has been a growing number of cartographic variants due to advances in computing and the search for new styles (see my short inventory above). However, this apparent renaissance has not led to significant changes in toponymic choices. Particularly in the eastern half of Alexander's empire, this cartography remains rooted in 19<sup>th</sup>-century historiographical traditions, notably the German tradition, with Droysen's work as its cornerstone. Additionally, modern historiography does not develop information homogeneously in a linear fashion but is instead subdivided into diverging schools and opinions (BRIANT 2010, 153–185). Consequently, these maps have not incorporated much of more recent research on the topic, as evidenced by the absence of the solutions proposed by scholars like Bosworth (e.g., BOSWORTH 1976). 'Mainstream' maps are still heavily influenced by outdated backgrounds found online and by the conventional wisdom of traditional knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

11 One of the most cited syntheses is that of Holt (2005 and earlier works). However, some of his conclusions need to be revised in light of recent studies on historical geography. Additionally, a new generation of historians is making progress on other topics; see, for example, their contributions in Mairs (2021).

12 At the moment, this scheme has been reproduced by several researchers, notably in BRIANT 2010, 18–19 (from a variant of my map dated 2010) and in a map by Peter Palm in FERRARIO 2023, 714, map.

In my view, the only maps that reflect the progress of research – despite divergences from my recent hypotheses – are the regional maps published in syntheses such as those by D.W. Engels (1978) and studies by Bosworth. For example, L. Martinez-Sève's *Atlas du monde hellénistique* (2017) is one of the few publications that integrates the main data from Bosworth.

General maps covering the area from Greece to India, published between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and today, vary widely in projection systems, making them difficult to overlay to create a new map. Technically, I have chosen an online base map from 'maps-for-free.com' compatible with 'google.com/maps' for my work. My map is limited to the toponymy of Alexander's time, with a few rare additions such as Eucratideia (Aï Khanoum) and other cities Alexander did not pass through or that were built after him, like Antiochia Margiana, Dura-Europos, Ipsus, Asaak, etc. (some atlases extend chronologically to include all partners involved in the conquest, adding their cities like Seleucia, Apamea, and Laodicea: see the recent Putzger atlases).

The primary changes I propose to the traditional cartography occur in the eastern part of Alexander's empire. These include a redrawing of the borders between the Central Asian satrapies north of the Hindu Kush (Bactria, Sogdiana, 'Scythia intra fines'), repositioning of river names, and the revised proposals for the location of several cities (for Bactria-Sogdiana, see the detailed map in **Fig. 3**).

In addition to the main route followed by Alexander north of the Elburz and Kopet-Dagh mountains, my map includes the Royal Road from Hecatompylos to Herat, measured by the bematists (**Pl. 2/1C:R**) (see below). It also tracks movements by other key figures such as Darius (**D**), Bessus (**B**), the satrap of Sogdiana Spitamenes (**S**) on the Iranian-Central Asian side, and Parmenion (**P**), the ambassador Derdas (**D**), Craterus (**C**) and Nearchus (**N**) on the Macedonian side.<sup>13</sup> In the following text, I roughly follow Alexander's route to clarify choices I have made in this cartographic representation according to thematic topic, beginning with the issue of identifying Alexandrias and Antiochs, then outlining some revised toponymic identifications in some of the routes from Egypt to Hyrcania, among the difficulties that delayed the conquest of India, movement in southern Afghanistan, and the cartographic representation of events between the Hindu Kush and the Steppe, cities and battles on the route of conquest here in Central Asia, and Alexander's movements in India.

## ALEXANDRIAS AND ANTIOCHS

From Egypt to India, the most famous toponyms of Hellenistic Antiquity are the Alexandrias founded by Alexander.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to the confusing list – likely containing duplicates – by Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. Ἀλεξάνδρειαί),<sup>15</sup> it seems that each satrapy or region had only one Alexandria, as evidenced by the thirteen identified for the current map east of Mesopotamia:

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8.2 (based on a variant of my map dated 2016–2017); however, the general Map 8.1 (p. 686 of the same study) is still traditional.

13 For the representation of the military movements of other key figures in the conquest, see MARTINEZ-SÈVE 2017, 12–21.

14 For a detailed analysis of the sources, see FRASER 1996 (although his hypotheses on the identification of the Alexandrias in Central Asia are not included here due to advances in research since that publication).

15 For Stephanus of Byzantium, the Meineke edition of 1849 has been replaced now by Billerbeck's edition and translation of 2006–2017. For Central Asia, the commentary in this latest edition does not propose any correspondence with current toponymy, but relies mainly on FRASER 1996 (see note above).

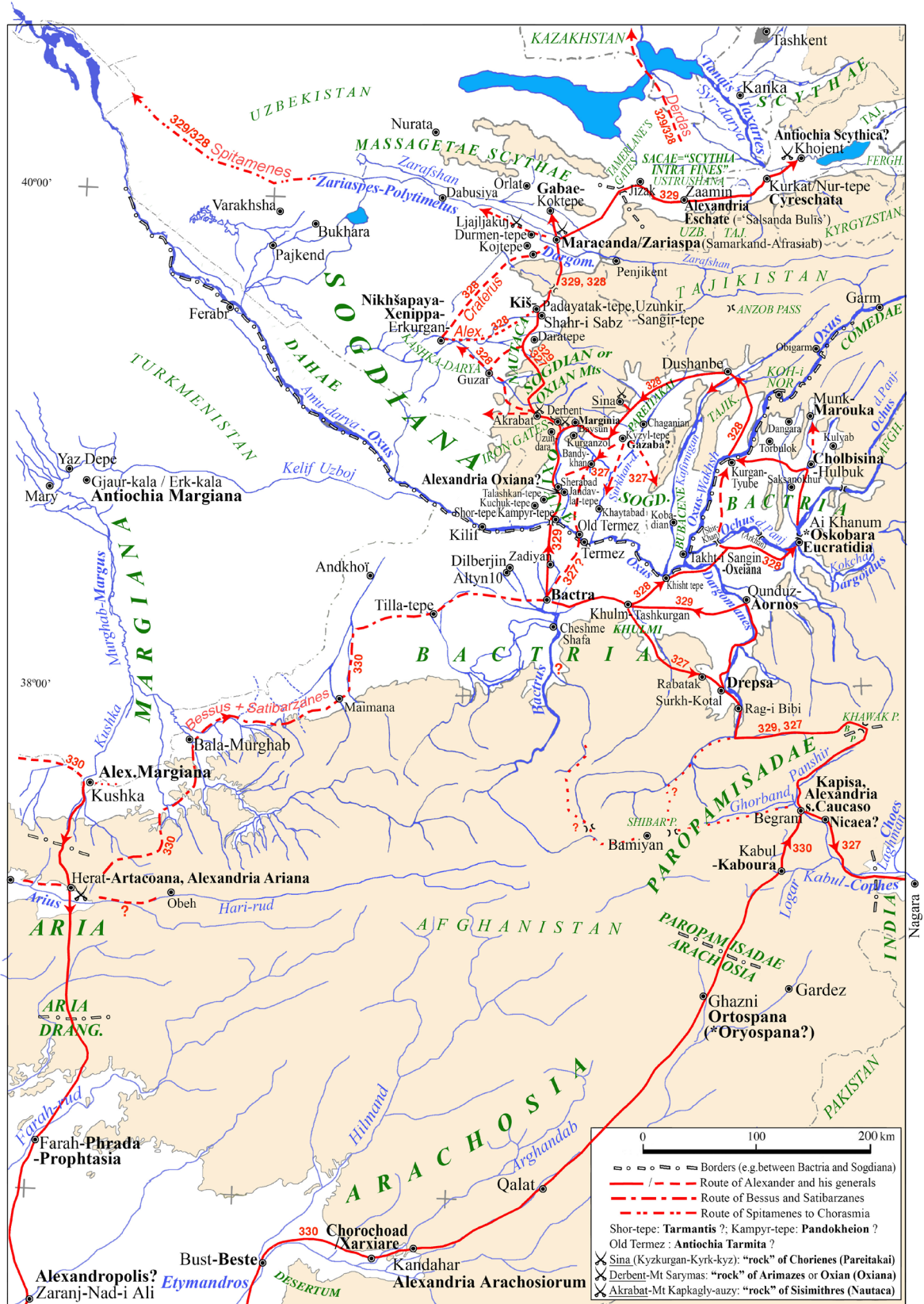


Fig. 3: Map of Hellenistic Central Asia according to recent research (drawing by C. Rapin; Sept. 2024).

in Margiana, Aria, Drangiana, Arachosia (RAPIN 2005, 163), Bactria (?), Sogdiana, ‘Scythia intra fines,’ the land of Taxiles (region of the Hydaspes/Jhelum),<sup>16</sup> and the Mallians (at the confluence of the Indus and the Acesines), the Oritae, Gedrosia (which may have included Alexandria in Makarene, see note 58), Carmania, and Characene/Susiana. East of the Mediterranean, these Alexandrias generally left no material traces, but for some, an approximate regional location can be proposed, often differing from the traditionally identified ones.

These cities were generally not intended to replace the old Achaemenid capitals; rather, their locations were primarily chosen based on economic or strategic criteria to provide an economic and military foundation for the new Macedonian power.

In the case of Central Asia, it is evident that some Alexandrias were founded near the old capitals, which already occupied the most favorable locations in the oases (see the cases of Aria, Drangiana, Arachosia, and the Paropamisadae). However, others were established at a greater distance from the old capitals, such as Merv in Margiana,<sup>17</sup> Kyreschata or Cyropolis (Kurkat) in ‘Scythia intra fines’ (see below), and Maracanda (Samarkand) in Sogdiana. Traditionally, the Alexandrias in these three regions have been associated with well-known archaeological sites, but recent historical research suggests that they may be located in other regions. For example, most modern maps and atlases locate Alexandria of Margiana at Merv, in the delta of the Murghab (see, for example, the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007 and the Putzger atlases). The same applies to historians like Goukowsky, who defends this location in his 2023 edition of Arrian (GOUKOWSKY 2023, 126–127). However, in my view, this ‘traditional’ identification results from an amalgamation of the account of Margina/Margania taken by Alexander in Sogdiana (Curtius VII, 10.15–16) and Pliny’s almost certainly erroneous mention of Alexandria of Margiana being replaced by an Antioch (Pliny VI, 47, RAPIN 2021, 334, n. 92). An analysis of the routes in time and space leads me to date the founding of this Alexandria to 330 BC rather than 328 BC and to search for it much further south, in the Kushka (Serhetabat) region, where today stands a monument marking the southernmost point of the Russian Empire (RAPIN 2017, 38–39, 82–85; RAPIN 2018a, 259, n. 5; see also below and **Fig. 3**).

Under the influence of Strabo and ancient historians (but in contrast to Ptolemy), two other Alexandrias have been traditionally but mistakenly located on rivers. First, contrary to an almost unanimous general opinion (ref. in SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 376), Alexandria Eschate, founded in 329 BC, can no longer be identified with Khojent on the Syr Darya (present-day Tajikistan), but rather with a site of still uncertain location near Zaamin in central Ustrushana (in Uzbekistan; references in RAPIN 2018a, 272, 283, 286; RAPIN 2021, 333, 344–347). The traditional identification continues to appear in atlases and the scientific literature (GOUKOWSKY 2023, 123). Second, I have argued that Alexandria of the Oxus (or rather ‘Oxian’) should instead be sought in the central Sherabad Darya (the ancient Oxiana, also in Uzbekistan), rather than on rivers with suggestions favoring cities like Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan (for example, in

16 Stephanus of Byzantium does not include Bucephala in his list of the Alexandrias, but mentions this Alexander’s foundation under Βοὸς Κεφαλαί and Βουκεφάλεια.

17 The pre-Hellenistic name of the capital of Margiana, represented by the Erk-kala site at Merv, is unknown. This name might have been derived from that of the country, such as the *Mōuru* of pre-Achaemenid Avestan geography (*Vidēvdād* I and *Mihr Yašt* [Yt 10.14]) or the *Marguš* of Old Persian. Ptolemy does not mention a directly relevant toponym, although Iasonion (VI, 10), with its sacred connotation, might be associated with Erk-kala and its inner platform, or another site in the region, such as Yaz-depe. The *Barrington Atlas* 2000 locates Iasonion at the confluence of the Kushka and Murghab rivers, under the influence of Ptolemy’s map. However, considering Ptolemy’s systematic approximations, it is possible that this confluence actually refers to the Murghab delta near Merv, suggesting that Iasonion might also have been located in this delta.

the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007), or Termez and Kampyr-tepe in Uzbekistan (see note 6 above).

Alongside these ‘real’ Alexandrias, it is also noted that the name Alexandria is sometimes incorrectly attributed to other cities, one of which, according to Pliny (VI, 113), would have been somewhere north of Parthia,<sup>18</sup> and others in Afghanistan, notably Ghazni (which the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007 designates as an Alexandria: see below) and Phra/Prophthasia.

South of Aria, Prophthasia (formerly Phra, present-day Farah in Afghanistan: SISTI 2001/1, 538) indeed cannot lay claim to this name. According to Isidorus of Charax (18), the part of Drangiana that had taken on the name Sakastan (Seistan) in his time, centred on the region of Zaranj/Nad-i Ali and Hamun-i-Helmand Lake (on the Afghanistan/Iran border), contained two cities named after Alexander (Alexandropolis and Alexandria). These two toponymic variants likely refer to the same city, namely Alexandria of Drangiana (which became Sakastan), which should be clearly distinguished from the simple Prophthasia.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, I believe that, contrary to Fraser’s opinion (FRASER 1996, 128), there is no reason to oppose the idea that this Alexandria mentioned by Isidorus was indeed founded by Alexander. This case is no different from that of other Alexandrias in Central Asia, whose locations have not yet been identified, as is also the case, with few exceptions, for the regional Achaemenid capitals.

In Asia, Alexandrias are often paired with Antiochs, and it is traditionally believed that the latter were founded by Antiochus I to replace Alexander’s foundations (for some references, see RAPIN 2021, 333, n. 89). However, in reality, only Antioch of Characene could have replaced an Alexandria after it had been previously inundated and destroyed. In contrast, Antioch of Margiana (Gyaur-kala in the delta of the Murghab), Antioch of Scythia (at Khojent?), and Antioch Tarmita (Termez?) were likely founded in regions completely distinct from the corresponding Alexandrias (Margiana, Eschate, and Oxiana).

## REVISION OF SOME ROUTES FROM EGYPT TO HYRCANIA (PL. 2/1 A-B-C)

A number of routes have long been problematic due to contradictions between Arrian and the authors of the Vulgate. On general maps, these routes often result in, in my view, errors that historians pass down from generation to generation. The current map has attempted to incorporate some of the major new findings, some of which have been reported for nearly half a century, beginning with Bosworth (1976).

Regarding the founding of Alexandria and the visit to the oracle of Zeus Ammon in Egypt, Arrian’s account suggests that Alexander might have gone directly back to Memphis without returning to Alexandria, by an inland route that most maps have reproduced since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the latest edition of the Putzger atlases. However, several studies<sup>20</sup> have shown that this direct southern route should be dismissed, as Curtius’s text more clearly sug-

18 It is possible that this Alexandropolis resulted from a cartographic shift and originally referred to Alexandria in Aria: see my argument in RAPIN 2017, 59 and 62–64. BERVE 1926, 292 had already expressed doubts about this city. See also FRASER 1996, 29.

19 For the problem of Prophthasia and Alexandria of Sakastene see the state of the art in FRASER 1996, 123–131. On the location of Prophthasia: RAPIN 2017, 61, 90, 94; RAPIN 2018c, 149–155, appendix 2: 175–176.

20 BOSWORTH 1976, 136–138; BOSWORTH 1980/1, 263–264; SISTI 2001/1, 464. For this route see also the corrected maps by ENGELS 1978, map 7 and MARTINEZ-SÈVE 2017, 17.

gests that after his visit to the oracle, Alexander would have returned to the city to initiate his construction program. This implies a round trip along the same Mediterranean coastal route.

To travel from Susiana to Persia and Persepolis, Alexander's army likely had to cross two interconnected passes in sequence, the Uxian and Persian Gates, for which philologists like Bosworth propose a different location than that shown on commonly used modern maps.<sup>21</sup>

Historians do not agree on the route from Pasargadae to Rhagae (Tehran). However, Bosworth has demonstrated that, contrary to Arrian's account and its various amalgamations, Curtius's testimony indicates that Alexander likely limited himself to sending Parmenion in his place to Ecbatana (see **Pl. 2/1 B:P**).<sup>22</sup> After taking the main route from Pasargadae to Ecbatana, where he had intended to meet Darius, Alexander would have left this major axis to head towards Rhagae in order to intercept Darius, who had just fled from Ecbatana towards the Caspian Gates (see **Pl. 2/1 B:D**). The junction from which Alexander might have left the main route could correspond to a location such as the town of Arak. He would have previously passed through Isfahan (Aspadana/Gabae), which Arrian mentions without naming, in connection with the capture of the capital of the Parætacene.<sup>23</sup>

Somewhat lacking in this part of the narrative, Curtius (v, 13.2) mentions the city of Tabae, which cannot be precisely located but, according to Bosworth, must have been situated along this segment of the route between Arak and Rhagae (BOSWORTH 1980/1, 335). Proposals that Tabae could be identified with Gabae based on a hypothetical distortion of the letter *gamma* into *tau* must indeed be rejected. If we are looking for a city near the northern border of Parætacene, I would suggest that this Tabae, where Alexander was informed by deserters of Darius's destination to Bactra, could have been located in Saveh (or \*Sabae)<sup>24</sup> (rather than in Qom), as Alexander could not have encountered these deserters if they were not on the main route between Ecbatana and Rhagae. It may also have been at Rhagae, where Alexander had stopped for five days that he subsequently received further information from the Babylonian Bagistanes about Darius's perilous situation.

It is not always possible to accurately assess the actual distances given by sources in terms of days of march, which vary in speed, to reconstruct the pursuit of Darius and Bessus (the satrap of Bactria-Sogdiana who took control of Darius). The same issue applies to distances measured in stadia, which were likely based on measurements by the bematists for the route

21 For information on the Uxii, see BOSWORTH 1/1980, 321–326 and his scheme following p. 326; SISTI 2001/1, 510–513; and the map by MARTINEZ-SÈVE 2017, 18. The routes travelled in the Zagros are challenging to reconstruct from the sources (the distance between Susa and the Persian Gates exceeds 400 km in a straight line). Putzger's atlas of 2021, however, seems to give the Uxii too limited a territory by locating them only in the upper Karun, 250 km northwest of the Persian Gates, which is too distant from the route Alexander intended to take to Persepolis.

22 BOSWORTH 1976, 132–136; BOSWORTH 1980/1, 335–336; SISTI 2001/1, 464; maps in BOSWORTH 1988, 2–3, and MARTINEZ-SÈVE 2017, 18. Against this hypothesis: GOUKOWSKY 2023, 26–27.

23 The original orthography of the manuscripts is 'Paritakene', which refers to the Paritacene and the Paritacai of the upper Surkhan Darya, in Uzbekistan (the 'hyparchy' of Chorienes); it has been corrected in current editions to 'Par[a]itakene' ('Paraetacene') of the Iranian plateau (BOSWORTH 1980/1, 334). This confusion led Ortelius to mistakenly relocate several geographical features from Uzbekistan to Iran, an error that was not corrected until Guillaume Delisle addressed it in his *Theatrum Historicum* of 1705.

24 For the identification of 'Tabae' with Saveh, I propose that an original \*cáβαι underwent a paleogeographical transformation, with the initial lunate *sigma* being modified into the Latin letter 't'. This location is likely mentioned in the *Peutinger Map* (segmentum XII, 2) on the road between Ecbatani Partiorum and Rages (Rhagae) under the name 'seuauicina' (Seva vicina: see also the *Ravenna Cosmography* II, 5). Marco Polo also referred to it as Saba. See SCHAEDEER 1997, 85–87.

from Rhagae to Hecatompylos.<sup>25</sup> However, Arrian's account appears to be the most detailed in providing information that likely locates in the oasis of Lasjerd<sup>26</sup> the place where Bessus had Darius chained, and then in the oasis of Semnan (Semina in Ptolemy VI, 5) the following camp from which the Persians and Bactrians fled before Alexander. Finally, Darius was reportedly killed just before reaching Hecatompylos by Bessus and his accomplices Nabarzanes and Barsaentes (Arrian III, 21.10).<sup>27</sup>

With Darius dead, his assassins fled in two opposite directions: Nabarzanes headed west, crossing the Kopet Dagh towards the Caspian Sea and Hyrcania, and Bessus and Barsaentes went east, with Bessus heading towards Herat via the route measured by the bematists and Bactria (**Pl. x/1C:B**), and Barsaentes moving towards his capital in Drangiana (in the Helmand region).<sup>28</sup>

Maps often depict the events in Hyrcania in a very schematic manner and rarely distinguish between Zadracarta and the Hyrcanian capital. These two cities are still distinct in the earliest 19<sup>th</sup>-century maps, including the first edition of the Putzger atlas, but later merged into one on the site of Hyrcania/Gurgan. Few maps have since updated their locations, positioning Zadracarta, the capital of the Tapurians, near the modern city of Sari (Mazandaran, Iran), and the Hyrcanian capital near present-day Gurgan (Golestan, Iran), where Nabarzanes was ultimately captured.<sup>29</sup>

## INITIAL DIFFICULTIES DELAYING THE CONQUEST OF INDIA – PLANNED FROM THE OUTSET?

After conquering the capital of Hyrcania, Alexander probably did not retrace his steps to Sari to cross the Elburz again and continue east via the bematists/Royal Road (**Pl. 2/1 B-C:R**) that runs south of Parthia (the sources do not provide details on this), but I propose he may have continued north via one of the two routes that connect Gurgan to the northwest of Aria through the Atrek Valley (Ochus: see below). This route would have Alexander to control the parallel valleys in the heart of the Kopet-dagh, passing in Parthia by the bifurcation where the future Parthian capital Asaak (Quchan) would develop, before entering Aria via the Kasaf-rud Valley, which enabled him to reach Susia (Tus).<sup>30</sup> It is there that Satibarzanes joined him as the satrap of Aria. The *Alexandri Magni Regnum* map from Spuner's 1855 atlas correctly places Susia within the boundaries of Aria. The 1877 edition of the Putzger atlas does the same, but subsequent editions, including those of today, exclude Susia from these boundaries.

25 RAPIN 2017. To determine the distances, I chose the 0.185 km stadium, while Lasserre (1975) chose the 0.157 km Eratosthenian stadium. Given the margins of error, the lengths obtained do not appear to be too incompatible.

26 BOSWORTH 1980/1, 343. City named *Thara* by Justin XI, 15. 1. Coordinates: 35°24'25"N 53°05'04"E.

27 It is probably by mistake that Arrian cited Satibarzanes instead of Nabarzanes: BOSWORTH 1980/1, 344–345; SISTI 2001/1, 529. On the flight of Nabarzanes, see also RAPIN 2017, 65–69, 75; on the flight of Barsaentes to Drangiana and beyond, see RAPIN 2017, 89–90 and 113, n. 132.

28 See previous note.

29 ENGELS 1978, 84. *Contra* Engels' commentary and Goukowsky (2023, 32–34), Zadracarta was a regional capital and that the capital of Hyrcania as a whole was located near Gurgan, further east. See RAPIN 2021, 332, 335 and the detailed map p. 360, fig. 1 (an update of the map published in RAPIN 2017, 47, fig. 3.4).

30 See the detailed map in RAPIN 2021, 360, fig. 1 (refer to the previous note), *contra* GOUKOWSKY 2023, 32–34, note 151.

While in Susia, already envisioning himself as the definitive conqueror of Darius's empire and tending to ease the pressure of his campaign, Alexander encountered unforeseen situations that forced him to change direction twice. Although Bactria was not a priority for him, he learned in Susia that Bessus had crowned himself king under the name Artaxerxes V. This news prompted Alexander to head towards Bactra, in my view probably taking a route through the upper Murghab and most likely bypassing Herat, which was too far south.

Having expected the cooperation of Satibarzanes, the governor of Artacoana (Herat),<sup>31</sup> Alexander was surprised by his defection when he may have been about a hundred kilometres north of the city. Likely having left orders to establish Alexandria in Margiana (see above) at this location, Alexander abandoned the route to Bactra, where Bessus was still retreating, to hasten towards Artacoana. Meanwhile, Satibarzanes fled northeast and joined Bessus. In a detailed account, Curtius (VI, 6.23–32) here refers to the capture of a 'rock', whose location and role in this part of the narrative are however difficult to pinpoint. Engels (1978, 89–90) suggested identifying this 'rock' with the site of Kalat-i Nadiri, located about sixty kilometres north of Susia and twenty kilometres southeast of Ulug-Depe, thus too far west relative to the events along the Arius (for its location, see the map **Pl. 2/1** and RAPIN 2017, 47, fig. 3.4, 82, 112, n. 109). However, if we accept that this 'rock' indeed corresponds to Kalat-i Nadiri, it can be hypothesised that this episode was misplaced in Curtius's narrative and that the capture and destruction of this natural fortress might have occurred around the time of Alexander's arrival in Susia. It remains unclear whether this violent context was related to the capture of the city, and if this event explains why Satibarzanes had to go there to meet Alexander.

After the submission of the defenders of Artacoana, Alexander proceeded towards Drangiana. Along the way, he received reinforcements coming from the west via the bematists route (Curtius VI, 6.35), a meeting that suggests his initial plan might not have included a military detour through Bactria but had already considered taking the route through southern Afghanistan and later India.

### Southern Afghanistan

The development of Alexander's map in Drangiana has undergone many transformations. The route of Alexander in this region has been particularly distorted by Arrian's version, which conflates various episodes that occurred in Drangiana/Zarangiana and beyond. Arrian begins by grouping events in the southern capital on the Helmand, where Alexander caused the flight of Barsaentes before capturing and executing him in India much later (III, 25.8). He then briefly mentions the Philotas affair (III, 26.1–27.3), which had originated further north, at Phra/Farah (the refounding of the city under the name Prophthasia is not reported by historians), before returning south with the episode related to the Evergetes (III, 27.4–5).

Some maps (as shown for a period in the Putzger atlases and, more recently, in the *Atlas Historique* [2010] and the *Atlas Historique du Proche-Orient ancien* [2020]) present this city as a crossroads from which Alexander might have directly turned towards Kandahar (as he theoretically could have). However, a comparison with other sources indicates that, after the

31 On variants of this toponym, see SISTI 2001/1, 537. There is no material evidence for Aria from the Hellenistic period, nor for the exact location of the ancient cities named by the sources (BALL 2021). If one accepts the route to Bactria via the Kushka (Serhetabat) region (see note above), it seems implausible to position Artacoana further downstream on the Arius, far from Herat and Alexandria in Aria, as shown on traditional maps. Both Isidorus of Charax (15) and Ptolemy (VI, 17) present these two cities in Aria as distinct from one another. However, distinguishing them does not necessarily imply that they were very far apart in the Herat region.

Philotas affair, Alexander more probably traveled through the Helmand basin and its capital (a conclusion derived from Isidorus of Charax's itinerary: see above).

The *Metz Epitome* (3) recalls the same episode concerning Barsaentes in the passage 'devenit ad agros, ubi erat ariobazanes', referring to Alexander's arrival in this region. This passage was very likely preserved after an excised section from the original source, which must have included the episodes related to Aria and Phra (see note 19 above). To restore the original text, one would need to revert to the term 'agros' from the D codex, rather than 'Arios' from Thomas's edition or 'Drangas' according to Goukowsky's hypothesis (1989, 246). 'Ariobazanes' (a form derived from Satibarzanes) instead of Nabarzanes is clearly an ancient confusion, as the same mistake regarding Darius's assassins appears in Arrian III, 21.10, where Satibarzanes is incorrectly cited instead of Nabarzanes (see note 27 above). Unlike Bessus, Nabarzanes, and Barsaentes, Satibarzanes did not play a role in Bessus's conspiracy and was initially not pursued by Alexander, as evidenced by his encounter with Alexander in Susia (see above).

The episode involving the Ariaspans (or Arimaspi in the 'Vulgate' tradition: Curtius VII, 3.1-4), referred to as Evergetae (SISTI 2001/1, 144), cannot be precisely located. However, it is worth noting that archaeologically, the region around Zaranj is known for significant sites such as Dahan-i Ghulaman and Kuh-e Khwaja.<sup>32</sup> If Alexander founded an Alexandria in Seistan, it is not the one mentioned in the *Metz Epitome* 4: 'ibi oppidum, qua in Indiam iter est, constituit et nomen Alexandriam imposuit' ('there he established a town, on the route to India, and named it Alexandria'). This passage continues the events following a truncated section, where the original source of the *Epitome* had likely detailed the episodes related to the death of Satibarzanes and the conquest of Arachosia. Therefore, this 'oppidum, qua in Indiam iter est' can only refer to Alexandria in the Caucasus/Begram. This methodological approach allows for resolving the problematic conclusions of Bernard (1982, 234) and Goukowsky (1989, 246; GOUKOWSKY 2023, 41-52).

That said, the continuation of the route towards Begram must have passed through Kandahar (Alexandria of Arachosia), Ghazni, and Kabul. To roughly locate these cities, the only precise distances come from measurements taken by the bematists and mentioned by Eratosthenes.

These measurements were contradictorily reproduced by Pliny and Strabo and have been the subject of numerous analyses (FRASER 1996). Revisiting this study of distances with a new analysis of the texts, I found that the figures given by Strabo correspond to the actual distances between Hecatompylos and Begram (as a crossroads towards India), provided that Ortospa is separated from Kabul/Kabura (according to Ptolemy) and identified with Ghazni, despite the fact that no Hellenistic site has been discovered in this region (RAPIN 2014, 170, n. 2; RAPIN 2017, 38-39, 92-95 and especially RAPIN 2018c; BALL 2021). Originally, Ortospa may indeed have been spelled \*Oryospa (derived from Urvā, which in Avestan geography probably referred to the region of Ghazni) (RAPIN 2018c, 149-150, 154-156, 172-173). This hypothesis was further supported by F. Grenet (GRENET 2018, 173-174) in a linguistic analysis of the suffix -spana, which fits well with the geographical situation of Ghazni as a 'postal station'. This hypothesis suggests that Ortospa/Ghazni belongs to the basin of the Arachotos river and not to the Paropamisadae. This stop at Ghazni, which Strabo and Ptolemy mistakenly identified with Kabul, did not attract the attention of ancient historians, particularly because it could not have been an Alexandria, as there was already one in Kandahar, within the same province of Arachosia. This identification of 'Ortospa in Arachosia' (or 'postal station in Urvā') also

32 On the chronology of this site, some fifty kilometres west of Zaranj, see S. Ghanilati, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2015, s.v. Kuh-e K̲w̲āja.

rules out a connection between the name Ghazni and that of Gazaca (FONTAINE 1977, 118, n. 252), which Ptolemy (VI, 18) and Ammianus Marcellinus (XXIII, 70) placed in the Paropamisadae. Finally, as a sign of the usual confusions related to the connection with India, it can be noted that the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007 seemingly confused the real Alexandria/Begram with the false Alexandria/Ghazni (from the older editions of the Putzger atlases) by positioning the latter as a crossroads towards India.

Despite the evidence we have today, the route leading towards Bactria remains relatively unclear in most ancient historical accounts. Upon finally reaching the foothills of the Hindu Kush at Begram, Alexander founded Alexandria of the Caucasus, where he settled in preparation for his passage into Bactria. The city's location is very vaguely mentioned by historians. Arrian (III, 28.4) does not specify that the city he founded during the winter of 330–329 BC also served as a crossroads to India, as shown by the data from the bematists. Regarding his second passage through the same area in 327 BC, after the operations in Bactria-Sogdiana, Arrian still does not specify the geographical position of the city but mentions that Alexander then reached the city of Nicaea and the river of Kabul (IV, 22.3–6). Historians are therefore unable to understand that the route taken towards India in 327 BC was through the lower Panjshir Valley, where Nicaea should be located, and that the junction with the Kabul River must have occurred at least fifty kilometres east of Kabul. It is this lack of precision in Arrian's account, combined with Strabo's errors, that has led most modern maps – including the latest editions of the Putzger atlas – to mistakenly mark Kabul as the crossroads to India.

The location of this Alexandria is even more confusing in the framework of the 'mythical Caucasus' presented by vulgate historians like Diodorus (XVII, 83), Curtius (VII, 3.23), and the *Metz Epitome* (4). These sources suggest that this Alexandria was founded at the foot of the northern slope of the Hindu Kush and fail to acknowledge that Alexander passed through it again in 327 BC.<sup>33</sup> This cartographic 'rotation' in the Vulgate (which I have explored in previous studies: see supra notes 7–8 and **Fig. 2**) would make it unnecessary to posit the existence of another Alexandria on the northern face of the Hindu Kush.

No ancient source explicitly states that this Alexandria was the crossroads to India, except indirectly in Pliny (VI, 62) and, more notably, in the passage 'ibi oppidum, qua in Indiam iter est' from the *Metz Epitome* (4), as discussed earlier. However, as with Diodorus and Curtius, it is certain that the truncated source of the *Epitome* had mentioned this 'oppidum' after the account of crossing the Caucasus at the beginning of 329 BC and arriving in 'Media,' where Alexander crossed the 'river of the Medes' at Tarmantis.

To understand the coherence of the *Metz Epitome* 4, one must also adopt, without modification, the variants from codex D that were not accepted by Thomas: 'pervenit ad oppidum tarmantidem, quod est positum in flumine medorum' and reject the reading 'paropamisadarum' proposed by Thomas and adopted by P. Bernard (1982, 235).

### **A New Cartography Between the Hindu Kush and the Steppe**

Alexander's route north of the Hindu Kush has been the subject of the greatest historical uncertainties.<sup>34</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this led to inaccurate specialised maps (TOMASCHEK 1877, *Sogdiana Antiquissima* map; SCHWARZ 1893), which, in later atlases, reduced Alexander's route in the region to a simple line leading straight to Samarkand and Alexandria Eschate (as being on the Syr Darya), or to a slightly more complex network of vague itineraries. Additionally,

33 BERNARD 1982; GOUKOWSKY 1989; BOSWORTH 1980/1, 369–370; SISTI 2001/1, 546–547.

34 RAPIN *et al.* 2006; RAPIN 2013; 2014; 2018a; 2021; 2023.

some maps exaggerated the distances, adding hundreds or even thousands of kilometres to the reported journeys of Alexander, his generals, and their adversaries.<sup>35</sup> Some itineraries extend westward to include the region of the Oxus up to Bukhara (which is identified as another Bactra or as Ptolemy's Tribactra, though I do not consider it part of the area conquered by Alexander), or even as far as the Murghab Delta, and eastward to the upper Wakhsh, where the 'Rock of Chorienes' is considered by some, in my view erroneously, to be located (see below), or further east to the upper Darya-i Panj, where an undefined Alexandria is encountered. Aside from a few names like Bactra, Nautaca, and Maracanda, most of the toponyms are incorrectly placed, making it difficult to grasp the complexity of the operations conducted in the region from 329 to 327 BC.

To address these issues, I have proposed several new hypotheses focused on analysing borders, rivers, battle sites, and the theoretical locations of cities. Toponymy has been transmitted only very indirectly in modern geography, but linguistics can play a crucial role. In several cases, I have benefited from hypotheses put forward by linguistic specialists such as Frantz Grenet, Philip Huyse, Pavel Lurye, and Shaul Shaked.<sup>36</sup>

#### SATRAPIES, 'HYPARCHIES,' AND THE WORLD OF THE STEPPE

The distribution of territory among satrapies, regions, and provinces is one of the challenges in mapping the pre-Hellenistic and Hellenistic periods. Indeed, reconstructing Alexander's route north of the Hindu Kush must first consider the location of the boundaries between the satrapies (Bactria, Sogdiana, and 'Scythia intra fines') and the political-administrative limits of the 'hyparchies,' namely the local governorships identified mainly in Sogdiana and centred around oases:<sup>37</sup> Zariaspa/Zerafshan, Xenippa, Nautaca, Paritacene, Oxiana, Bubacene, etc. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a growing number of scholars have artificially established the Hissar range as the northern boundary of Bactria, referring to the entire right bank of the Amu Darya and Darya-i Panj as 'Northern Bactria.' In other words, they consider Bactria to be synonymous with the Oxus basin upstream of Kilif.

In his 1833 work, Droysen does not seem to have clearly defined the location of this boundary line or specified the satrapy to which Paritacene belonged. German atlases such as those by Spruner and Menke (1845–1860) initially present ambiguous boundary lines, but since 1877, all Putzger atlases have clearly placed the boundary between the two satrapies along the Hissar range. However, the study of sources from Alexander's time to that of Claudius Ptolemy shows that, from the Achaemenid period through the Seleucid era (and possibly the Graeco-Bactrian period<sup>38</sup>), the separation between Bactria and Sogdiana was aligned with the Oxus, defined to the west and south by the Amu Darya and to the east by the Wakhsh.

35 See in particular the map published in the Curtius' edition of *The Loeb Classical Library* (ROLFE 1946/1976).

36 For linguistic approaches to Central Asian toponymy of the Hellenistic period, see for example Grenet, in GRENET – RAPIN 2001; LURYE 2004. The Achaemenid parchments from Bactria published by NAVEH – SHAKED 2012 are among the most important primary sources for the geography of Bactria-Sogdiana at the end of the Achaemenid period and during the reign of Alexander.

37 In his recent study on Bactria-Sogdiana, P. Briant (2020) offers an important synthesis on the Achaemenid organisation of the Central Asian satrapies and presents some nuances – summarised on p. 39 – regarding my reconstitution of the hierarchy of power in Sogdiana.

38 Justin XLI, 6.3 mentions the wars led by Eucratides I against the Sogdians, suggesting that he did not overlook Sogdiana as part of Hellenic territory.

In Antiquity, it was already established that Sogdiana extended northwards to the Syr Darya/Iaxartes, although I have suggested that, in reality, this territory was geographically bounded by Gates of Tamerlane northeast of Samarkand. The area corresponding to Ustrushana between these Gates near Jizak and the Syr Darya could therefore be considered an independent region from Sogdiana, a 'satrapy' governed by Saka (Curtius VII, 9.17), which I would designate as 'Scythia intra fines.' These Saka, whose cavalry was engaged at Gaugamela, did not actually fall under the control of Bessus (and therefore not of Bactria-Sogdiana) but were presented as allies of Darius III (Arrian III, 8.3); they correspond to the Saka integrated into the empire by Cyrus and thus to the Saka Haumavarga of Darius I's time, namely the Amyrgian Sakas-Scythians of Herodotus (VII, 64) (RAPIN 2018a, 271-274; RAPIN 2018b; RAPIN 2021, 343-349). Independent from the capitals Bactra and Maracanda, this 'Scythia' had its capital at Kyreschata/Cyropolis until its destruction by Alexander. In the Seleucid period, the name Antioch of Scythia (cf. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Ἀντιόχεια) could represent another toponymic remnant of this forgotten satrapy.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike the Saka of Ustrushana, the Scythians on the right bank of the Syr Darya remained independent after Cyrus's death. They continued to maintain their independence during Alexander's time, despite his attempts to encroach upon the region. In later cartography, they roughly correspond to the 'Scythia within the Imaus mountains' of Ptolemy (VI, 14) – that is, Northern Central Asia, including the Zerafshan Valley after the fall of Hellenistic power – to the west, and to the 'Saka' of Ptolemy (VI, 13) – that is, the Scythians of the Wakhan and the Pamir, whose territory extended up to the later 'Stone Tower' – to the east (see analysis in RAPIN 2021, 349-356, with references).

As the Greeks also knew the river by the name of Tanais, these Scythians on the right bank are referred to as 'European'. Symmetrically, the Scythians on the left bank of the lower Syr Darya are referred to as 'Asiatic.' These Scythians established close ties with the Achaemenids and were known in Darius I's geography as the 'Saka Tigrakhauda' (the 'Orthokorybantoi Skythai' of Herodotus III, 92) (RAPIN, 2018a, 269-272; RAPIN, 2018b, 32-36). It is among these Scythians – and not the 'European' ones of the right bank of the Syr Darya – that Alexander sent a delegate, Derdas, in 329 BC, who returned the following year to Samarkand with a friendly Scythian delegation (**Pl. 2/1C:E**).

Contrary to what traditional maps show and what can be inferred from Arrian, in my view it is unlikely that Alexander reached Bukhara, located 250 km west of Samarkand (his maximum distance from Samarkand probably did not exceed 40-120 km), during his pursuit of Spitamenes in 329 BC. Instead, Spitamenes took this route as far as the Khwarezmians, who, however, refused to assist him to maintain good relations with Alexander (**Pl. 2/1C:S**).

## THE RIVERS OXUS AND OCHUS

While excavating at the Sogdian Iron Gates at Derbent, I observed that in spring 328 BC Alexander could only have passed through this defile from the east. This observation led me to hypothesise that the *Ochus*, which Alexander crossed on his way to these gates (Curtius VII,

39 RAPIN, 2023, 467-468, n. 54. For this Antioch (the tenth in Stephanus of Byzantium), see also the list of sources in FRASER 1996, 33. The context of this city is most probably Central Asian, contrary to BILLERBECK 2006/1, 215, n. 491, who limits her comment to Jacoby's erroneous hypothesis, according to which this Antioch was the Antioch in Propontis mentioned by Pliny (V, 151).

10.15 and *Metz Epitome* 14), was located in Eastern Bactria.<sup>40</sup> F. Grenet subsequently proposed identifying this river with the Darya-i Panj, affirming earlier hypotheses (GRENET – RAPIN 2001, 79–81). The study of hydronyms reveals that there were two rivers with the name Ochus, which can be identified respectively with the Atrek, flowing into the Caspian Sea, and the Darya-i Panj, which joins the Oxus near Takht-i Sangin.

The ancient name of the Atrek has been the subject of much cartographic speculation. The most common theory is based on Strabo's description (XI, 8.1), which suggests that the route to the Ochus must first cross the river *Sarnius*, marking the boundary between Hyrcania and the desert. As shown by the evolution of Putzger's atlases, the identification of the *Sarnius* with the Atrek and, consequently, the Ochus with the Tejen and Hari Rud further east, became established in modern cartography by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and remains so today. However, it should be noted that Strabo did not specify that the Ochus was an extension of the Arius, nor that it constituted the main river of Aria in its entirety. If we also consider that Strabo's text may have been disrupted by a lacuna (cf. LASSERRE 1975, 82, n. 2), it is more reasonable to assert that the Ochus is more likely to correspond to the Atrek, while the *Sarnius* corresponds to the Gurgan River. Meanwhile, the Arius would correspond to the combined Tejen/Hari Rud (*Barrington Atlas* 2000, 1358) rather than the Etymandrus/Helmand (FONTAINE 1977, 116, n. 249). It can thus be hypothesised that the Aria extended longitudinally along this river into the desert sands to the north, similarly to how it also included the lateral valley of the Kasaf Rud, which drains the Susia plain.<sup>41</sup>

The precise identification of the eastern Ochus in Bactria – along with recognising the Wakhsh river as the upper Oxus – is one key to resolving some confusion about Alexander's second journey from Bactra to Samarkand. In the spring of 328 BC, he would have then crossed eastern Bactria to suppress the Sogdian uprising by bypassing it from the southeast, particularly through the plain of Aï Khanoum. From the *Metz Epitome* 14 ('Deinde post diem undecimum ad flumen Ochum pervenit. id transit'), it is possible, indeed, to deduce that Alexander may have passed through this site. The eleven-day march eastward before crossing the Ochus/Darya-i Panj corresponds to this distance (RAPIN 2013, 51). Prior to providing this distance, the *Metz Epitome* likely excised from its source the information given by Curtius (VII, 10.13) that Alexander had previously reached the left bank of the Oxus – near the confluence with the Kafirnigan River – but without crossing it, after four days from Bactra (**Fig. 3**).

Located at the confluence of the Darya-i Panj/Ochus and the Kokcha/Dargoidus, and not situated on the Oxus, Aï Khanoum therefore cannot have been Alexandria on the Oxus (regarding its name, see above). This city, therefore, was not a frontier town either, as its position – midway between the true boundary with Sogdiana on the Wakhsh and Badakhshan – meant it served as the capital of a great eastern Bactria, parallel to Bactra in western Bactria. In contrast, located to the west of the confluence of the Wakhsh/Oxus and Panj/Ochus, and about a hundred kilometres west of Aï Khanoum in a straight line, the sanctuary of Takht-i Sangin (perhaps Oxiana?) geographically belonged to the territory of Achaemenid, later Hellenistic, Sogdiana. Although it was directly linked to the cult of the Oxus, this centre appealed to both the Sogdian and Bactrian populations, as suggested by its position on the frontier.

40 The same general hypothesis was formulated by Bosworth in 1981, though it did not succeed in convincing specialists of the time (see BOSWORTH 1995/2, 108, 110). Previously, the nomenclature of Central Asian rivers varied in diverse ways (see references in FONTAINE 1977, 103–104, n. 227).

41 GOUKOWSKY 1989, 262, n. 31; BOSWORTH 1995/2, 110. I initially adopted the traditional hesitation concerning the Atrek and the Tejen rivers (RAPIN 2017, 47, fig. 3.4), before ultimately identifying the western Ochus with the Atrek (RAPIN, 2018c, 145–146; new map of Hyrcania in RAPIN 2021, 360, fig. 1).

## Cities and Battles on the Conquest Route

Cartographic and toponymic changes are not limited to borders and rivers; they also affect the positions of cities and battle sites. These include the assaults on the three famous ‘rocks’ that Alexander is said to have captured all in 328 (and not in both 328 and 327 BC, as traditionally asserted by historians<sup>42</sup>) (**Tab. 1:** Phases II, III, V). Armed conflicts also encompassed the sieges of several cities (whether imposed or endured) as well as battles in the plains, often involving cavalry engagements.

I will not revisit the sequence of events in the conquest that can be inferred from this new cartography (for that, refer to my bibliography on the subject). Instead, I will point out, from south to north, the main new or updated locations I consider compared to the traditional cartography of modern atlases (see, for example, my more detailed map of Bactria-Sogdiana in **Fig. 3**).

In **Bactria**,<sup>43</sup> Drepsa (Ptol. vi, 12) = Drapsaka (Arr. III, 29.1), Darapsa (Strab. xi, 11.2), or Adrapsa (Strab. xv, 2.10), the first city reached after crossing the Hindu Kush in 329 BC, is most probably located in the Surkh-kotal region (and not at Qunduz).

– Aornos, the next city, likely corresponds to Qunduz (and not to Tashkurgan/Khulm).

– Although Khulm, the capital of the *Khulmi*, was an important crossroads city, it is not mentioned by Alexander’s historians. It is from Khulm to Rabatak (references in BALL 2019, 319, n° 944) and Surkh-kotal, without detouring through Qunduz, that Alexander set out towards Begram in 327 BC, thus taking a shorter route north of the Hindu Kush than on his way in (Strabo xv, 1.26). Therefore, there is no longer a need, as in the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* (2007), to envisage alternative routes or returns through passes other than the Khawak Pass on maps.<sup>44</sup>

– As suggested by the silence of the sources, the conquest of Bactria in 329 BC seems to have proceeded almost effortlessly during the pursuit of Bessos. Bactra is mentioned only in a limited number of episodes, as Zariaspa – a toponym used only by Arrian – no longer refers to Bactra but rather to Samarkand (see below). Paradoxically, like other cities in Bactria, Bactra did not experience any siege, either by Alexander or by Spitamenes, who never returned to the city after crossing the Oxus with Bessos in 329 BC.

Sources do not mention any other Bactrian city, although it is likely that Alexander passed by \*Oskobara, the site which would later become Ai Khanoum, or the Achaemenid fortress of Kuhna Qal’a (BALL 2019, 229–230, n° 631), on a cliff dominating the Darya-i Panj one kilometre to the north (see above).

**Sogdiana** is the region for which, in my view, the most toponyms have been identified.<sup>45</sup> The first city name related to Alexander’s arrival is Tarmantis (*Metz Epitome* 4), an Achaemenid settlement located on the right bank of the Oxus, likely corresponds to Shor-tepe, near Kampyr-tepe to the northwest of Termez (above). Alexander would have crossed the Oxus at this location while pursuing Bessus, thereby entering Sogdiana. He then proceeded through Oxiana to reach the Iron Gates during his rapid campaign of 329 BC up to the Syr Darya (**Tabl. 1:** Phase I).

42 In his edition of Arrian, GOUKOWSKY 2023, 373–375 essentially aligns himself with Bosworth’s initial hypotheses.

43 On the geography of late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Bactria, see also NAVEH – SHAKED 2012, and the recent synthesis by MARTINEZ-SÈVE 2021.

44 On P. Bernard’s inventory of the Hindu Kush passes, see GOUKOWSKY 1989, 264, n. 65.

45 On the archaeology of Sogdiana, see the syntheses by LYONNET 2021 and STANČO 2021.

The localisation of battles can only be achieved through a comparative analysis of sources and their connections with the terrain conditions. This often leads to identifying two distinct episodes where the texts describe only one, as in the case of the dual defeat in 329 BC of the two columns that Alexander sent against Spitamenes from Ustrushana,<sup>46</sup> or in the two interventions of Craterus in 328 BC during the revolt of Xenippa and then during the assault by Spitamenes against Zariaspa/Maracanda (e.g., RAPIN 2018a, 290–291). This analysis led me to propose a logical restoration of the chronological order of events related to the three ‘rocks’ captured in Sogdiana (see above and **Tab. 1**).<sup>47</sup> In the spring of 328, all the Sogdian governors of the ‘hyparchies’ revolted within their own territories under the leadership of Spitamenes, the satrap of Sogdiana whom Alexander had ousted from his palace in Samarkand the previous year. After sweeping through the southeastern part of Sogdiana along the foothills of the Hissar range from east to west, the first ‘rock’ that Alexander would have captured was that of Chorienes, the governor of the Pareitakai (Paritacene) in the upper Surkhan Darya (**Tab. 1**: Phase II). This fortified height has been jointly identified by several archaeologists near Sina, on the route between Dushanbe and the Iron Gates. However, it is in the capital of Chorienes, *Gazaba* (and not *Gabaza*), which may correspond to the site of Kyzyl-tepe (WU 2018; BRIANT 2020), that Alexander’s marriage to Roxane took place in 327 BC (**Tab. 1**: Phase VII).

Shortly after, Alexander conquered Marginia (in my view, the area around Baysun), which he secured with fortifications (such as Kurganzol [SVERCHKOV 2008], etc.). The ‘rock’ of Arimazes, governor of Oxiana,<sup>48</sup> whose capture occurred in 328 BC, immediately following the defeat of Chorienes, was probably located around the Iron Gates pass near Derbent, in line with several modern hypotheses (**Tab. 1**: Phase III).

In central Sogdiana (Kashka Darya), two cities played a major role: Nautaca (Kish, near Shahr-i Sabz), governed by Sisimithres, where Bessus was captured in 329 BC.<sup>49</sup> In 328, Sisimithres took up position on a third ‘rock’ (probably Mount Kapkagly-auzy, west of the Derbent frontier), in a vain attempt to resist and block Alexander’s communications with the south (**Tab. 1**: Phase V). Xenippa (logically, probably Erkurgan, near Karshi), governed by Dataphernes, was at the centre of two revolts in 328 with the help of Dahae cavalry (**Tab. 1**: Phase IV).

Further north, the proposed identification of two toponyms – Zariaspa and Gabae – suggest that the Zerafshan Plain played a more significant role than historians have suspected. Contrary to a long-held belief dating back to Antiquity, Zariaspa is not another name for Bactra but refers to Maracanda.<sup>50</sup> This identification necessitates relocating important events traditionally attributed to Bactria to the Zerafshan and Kashka Darya region.

46 On the two battle locations to the northeast and west of Samarkand, and Alexander’s pursuit of Spitamenes, see RAPIN 2017, 97–98; RAPIN 2018a, 274–275, 284–286; RAPIN 2023, 466–467; *contra* GOUKOWSKY 2023, 123.

47 For a ‘traditional’ cartography of the capture of the ‘rocks,’ see, for example, the *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt* 2007 and recent Putzger atlases, and similarly GOUKOWSKY 2023, 143–152.

48 It was moreover on the territory of Arimazes that Alexander founded Alexandria Oxiana at an undetermined date (see above).

49 Arrian’s description of the place of capture at Nautaca coincides with Curtius’ descriptions of the city of the Branchidae. Therefore, I suggest locating this arrest in the fortified sanctuary of Sangir-tepe, which is situated outside the walls of Uzunkir/Padayatak-tepe: see RAPIN 2021, 338, n. 109. On the name of Kish, the city encompassing these three sites, see NAVEH – SHAKED 2012, 21, 22, 25, 28.

50 See GORSHENINA – RAPIN 2015; RAPIN 2018a; with a final synthesis in RAPIN 2023; *contra* GOUKOWSKY 2023, 31–32.

The city of Gabae mentioned by Arrian (most likely in the lacuna of IV, 5.3<sup>51</sup> and in IV, 17.4) has often been identified with Gabaza (above) or positioned west of Bukhara under the name 'Bagae', especially in German maps following the publication of Droysen's synthesis in 1833 (p. 341). However, Gabae seems more likely to be identified with the city of Koktepe,<sup>52</sup> situated a little north of Samarkand, at the edge of the steppe. It was there that Spitamenes may have established his base with his Massagetae cavalry until his final defeat and death during the winter of 328/327 BC (**Tab. 1**: Phase VI).

Moreover, 'Gabae' would correspond to 'Gava' in Avestan geography, which also applies to Koktepe, as its plateau was the site of a major sanctuary in the pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid periods. This identification seems to me to be further strengthened by the fact that the imposing dimensions of the outer wall of Koktepe make it one of the largest urban complexes on the Zerafshan plain, which would have represented the first capital of Sogdiana before the foundation of Samarkand by Darius I in the 530s BC (RAPIN 2017; RAPIN 2018a, 263, 267, 273–275, 277, 284–286, 292; RAPIN 2018b).

## In India

Alexander's entry into India was marked by several stages not shown on the current map.<sup>53</sup> Descending from Begram through the lower Panshir Valley to the Kabul River, Alexander would have likely moved up the Laghman (indicated here on the right bank shortly after crossing the border between the Paropamisadae and India) to reach the region of Nysa. Then, after traversing the Kunar Valley towards the upper Swat, reaching Ora/Udegram and Bazira/Birkot, Alexander would have proceeded southward, passing along the eastern flank of Mount Aornus. This mountain, used as a stronghold by the Indians, is traditionally identified with Pir Sar on the right bank of the upper Indus (including the recent Putzger maps), although Italian archaeologists have long proposed identifying it more logically with Mount Ilam on the left bank of the upper Swat. After having crossed Dyrta and Embolima (to the south of Mount Ilam), Alexander would have finally crossed the Indus south of the Ouandabanda region<sup>54</sup> to reach Taxila, where the local king was already waiting for him.

In the plains of the Indus, the natural environment makes any material identification of the cities that came into contact with Alexander very difficult, and one can only make conjectures about the general toponymy inherited from Graeco-Roman historians. According to these authors, Bucephala and Nicaea, the two cities founded in the kingdom of Porus after his defeat, were situated facing each other on the banks of the Hydaspes/Jhelum. If we assume that each satrapy had only one Alexandria, then only the first of these cities, Bucephala, could have borne the title of Alexandria.

The geography of the regions traversed after the founding of Bucephala and Nicaea is based primarily on mentions of kingdoms rather than precisely locatable cities, as the topography of the Indus plain is believed to have changed over time, particularly in the course of the rivers.

51 For a paleographic reading referring to Gabae, see RAPIN 2018a, 274. GOUKOWSKY 2023, 166 and 361, note 62, instead fills the gap with a vaguer term: τὰ ἀβασίλευτα: 'towards the regions of Sogdiana that did not depend on the Great King'.

52 See the synthesis of this city and Sogdiana in LYONNET 2021.

53 Description and references in RAPIN 2018c; SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2. For the map of the route from Begram to Taxila, see my new variant completed after COLORU – OLIVIERI 2019, in RAPIN 2021, 363, fig. 5. For the geography of north-western India, see also the recent works by COLORU 2021 and OLIVIERI 2021.

54 Ptolemy located this region in Sogdiana, but near the border with India: see RAPIN 2018c, 161, 165–166.

The kingdom of Abisares would be located to the northeast of that of Porus, in the foothills of the Himalayas upstream of the Acesines/Chenab (Curtius IX, 1.7). The territory between this river and the Hydraotes included the realm of the 'bad' Porus (SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 499), which Alexander would later transfer to the 'good' Porus. Beyond the Hydraotes/Ravi (BOSWORTH 1995/2, 326), the main city is Sangala, which may be identified with Amritsar or Lahore rather than Sialkot (SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 500). Regarding the adjacent regions, historians differ on the exact location of the Cathaei and the kingdom of Sopeithes/Sophites.

Alexander ceased to advance eastward, moving parallel to the foothills of the Himalayas, when he reached the banks of the Hyphasis/Bias. He erected twelve altars, which cannot be situated further south than the confluence of the Hyphasis and the Zaradrus/Sutlej. His decision was reinforced by reports of the presence further east of the powerful people known as the Gangarides/Gandarides/Gandarites (approximately positioned on the map). These likely corresponded to the powerful Nanda dynasty (345–322 BC), which, during Alexander's time, extended its dominance over the Ganges basin (BOSWORTH 1995/2, 325; ATKINSON – GARGIULO 2000/2, 531; SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 500).

Returning to the Hydaspes/Jhelum, Alexander organised the descent of the Indus to then resume his journey westward. It is difficult to locate the four Indian Alexandrias mentioned by Stephanus of Byzantium in the Punjab and along the Indus, as his list is confusing (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>?, and 14<sup>th</sup>) and hard to interpret. Additionally, historians like Arrian and the Vulgate do not seem to have preserved the same episodes in their narratives, further complicating the identification of these cities.

South of Multan, the capital of the Mallians near the southern border of their territory, the only Alexandria that can be approximately located was established at Uch, on a confluence that in Antiquity corresponded to the meeting of the Indus and the Acesines/Chenab rivers. From this position, it controlled the southern end of the Punjab (SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 539). It is often identified with Alexandria in Opiane, known as the fifth Alexandria in Stephanus of Byzantium's list, and this may be the city referred to by Curtius IX, 8.8 and Diodorus XVII, 102. 4. Indeed, according to Goukowsky (1989, 250–251), Opiane was unlikely to have corresponded to the Begram plain, as Bernard (1982, 232, 239–240) and Fraser (1996, 143, 148–150) have argued.<sup>55</sup> A connection with the Indian people of the Opiiai mentioned by Hecataeus (Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Ὀπίαι) may strengthen the localisation of the Opiane near the Indus (Goukowsky, *ibid.*).

It is also difficult to ascertain the identity of the seventeenth Alexandria mentioned by Stephanus of Byzantium as 'in Sogdiana near the Paropamisadae (ἐν τῇ Σογδιανῇ παρὰ Παροπαμισάδαις).' The mention of the Paropamisadae usually refers to Alexandria/Begram (Arrian IV, 22.3), while the location in Sogdiana evokes both Alexandria Oxiana and Alexandria Eschate of Claudius Ptolemy. However, the amalgamation of these epithets can also refer to *Alexandria Eschate* alone, if one takes into consideration Claudius Ptolemy's cartographical scheme, where this city is assigned towards the southeastern extremity of Sogdiana, near both the Caucasus and the Paropamisadae.<sup>56</sup>

The eighteenth Alexandria, defined as 'on the Tanais' as it appears in Ptolemy's third book, is usually identified with Claudius Ptolemy's Alexandria Eschate, located in present-day Ustrushana, in the region of the Iaxartes (Syr Darya), a river that Alexander's historians, such as Arrian (IV, 1.3), referred to as Tanais. By referencing *Ptolemy's third book*, Stephanus of Byzantium did not mean Ptolemy Lagus and his lost history of Alexander, but seems to

55 I have also previously erroneously accepted this hypothesis: RAPIN 2014, 145, n. 1.

56 As proposed by BILLERBECK 2006/1, 144–145.

have instead erroneously cited the geographer's well-known third book, in which chapter 5 does not describe the Syr Darya, but the European Don, and includes the fictitious 'Alexandri arae.'<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the seventeenth Alexandria appears—at least partially—as a doublet of the eighteenth.

Among the events south of this confluence, Arrian VI, 15.4 is the only source to mention the capital of the Sogds (possibly Rajanpur, according to ATKINSON – GARGIULO 2000/2, 540; SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 540), then the fortification of one of their cities (possibly near Kashmir, according to SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 540–541). Historical sources then agree on the expedition against the Musicani (Arrian VI, 15.5; Curtius IX, 8.8; Diodorus XVII, 102.5) and neighbouring kingdoms.

Thus, Sindimana, the capital of Sambos captured during these operations, is traditionally located at Sehwan, but other hypotheses have also been proposed (ATKINSON – GARGIULO 2000/2, 546; SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 543). Similarly, the exact location of Patala remains uncertain (ATKINSON – GARGIULO 2000/2, 548; SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2/2004, 546).

The exact date and location of Craterus's departure westward, possibly with the mission of addressing issues on the route before joining Alexander in Carmania, are problematic due to an error by Arrian (BOSWORTH 1976, 127–129). This departure likely occurred after the death of Musicanus. It is possible that Craterus left from Musicanus's capital, Alor/Rohri (ATKINSON – GARGIULO 2000/2, 545), and took the direct route to Alexandria of Arachosia, then to Alexandria of Drangiana (Alexandropolis near Zaranj). The transition from the Indus plain to Arachosia can be made through two main passes: the Mulla Pass and the Bolan Pass. Maps, such as those by Putzger, often depict a winding route through both passes. However, since this route cannot be followed continuously, one must choose between the two passes.

If Craterus did indeed depart from Alor, he most likely crossed the Bolan Pass, which is the more direct route. However, it is not out of the question that he might have taken a detour through the Mulla Pass, particularly for logistical reasons related to managing his elephants (Arrian VI, 17.3; FRASER 1989, 179; SISTI – ZAMBRINI 2004/2, 541–542, 545).

As the Indus delta was reached, Nearchus directed his fleet from *Alexandrou Limen* westward along the coast of the Indian Ocean, while Alexander began his return towards Gedrosia and Carmania. His overland route started at Rhambacia, corresponding to Alexandria of the Oritai among the Ichthyophagi, listed as the fourth Alexandria by Stephanus of Byzantium.<sup>58</sup> Alexander followed the coast of the Indian Ocean at varying distances, depending on the reconstructions. According to a convincing version proposed by Aurel Stein, Alexander might have approached the coast from the city of Turbat before moving northward to Pura and Alexandria of Carmania (STEIN 1943, 220; FRASER 1996, 165–167). However, it remains unclear whether Alexandria in Makarene was founded in this region along the ocean shore.<sup>59</sup>

57 In her comment and translation of Stephanus of Byzantium's eighteenth Alexandria, BILLERBECK 2006/1, 144–145 presents an ambiguous position. In both Greek and German versions of the text, she refers to Ptolemy Lagus' FGrHist 138F 31, and agrees with Jacoby's opinion according to which this Tanais corresponds to the Don (p. 145: 'Das achtzehnte <befindet sich> am Tanais [Don], eine Gründung Alexanders, wie Ptolemaios im dritten Buch <der *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen*> [FGrHist 138F 31] angibt'). Below the Greek text (p. 144), however, she refers to Arrian and the Asiatic Tanais: 'Alexandria prope Tanaim flumen sita' Arr. An. IV, 1. 3.

58 For the location of Rhambacia, whether inland towards Las Bela or closer to the shore, see FRASER 1996, 164–165 and ATKINSON – GARGIULO 2000/2, 552. For the route from the Indus delta to Rhambacia, see BIAGI 2017. See also BILLERBECK 2006/1, 145, n. 268.

59 If the current transcription is correct, Alexandria in Makarene – the thirteenth Alexandria listed by Stephanus of Byzantium – may have been located in Gedrosia and referred to Makran (Achae-

As reported by Arrian in his *Indica* (26.3), the description of the coast with the mention of the port of Bagisara would have been provided by Nearchus as part of his journey before his arrival at Harmozia, from where he set out to meet Alexander, located five days' march to the north (Arrian, *Indica* 33, 7). Salmus, the city where the main events in Carmania are said to have occurred, is generally located at Gulashkird, although Diodorus places this encounter on the shores of the Strait of Hormuz (xvii, 106.4).

Recent atlases present both variants (at Gulashkird in MARTINEZ-SÈVE 2017, 20 and 23; at Harmozeia on the coast in Putzger's atlas since at least 1997). It is possible that Alexandria of Carmania mentioned by Pliny (vi, 107.27) and Ptolemy (vi, 8) was founded approximately in the same region as Gulashkird.

## CONCLUSION

The 'school' atlases published since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially the most recent ones like the *Grosser Historischer Weltatlas* and *Putzger Historischer Weltatlas*, show how difficult it is to restructure maps of Alexander's empire in line with new research findings, to the extent that some maps can remain unchanged for more than half a century.

Reconstructing Alexander's empire requires a diversified approach. On one hand, there is an internal, literary approach, seeking to analyse what the authors believed they understood and intended to convey (according to their own ideology or that of Alexander and his successors). On the other hand, there is an event-based approach that aims to uncover what lies behind the narrated events and legends, starting with a reconstruction of the historical context, a location of events in space and time, which can only be understood through a precise mapping of the routes. It is only after this approach to the actual terrain that one can attempt to deduce the non-material viewpoints derived from Alexander's expedition. The Central Asian stages were significant in this regard. As demonstrated by the events at Sousia and the proposed reorganisation of events related to the 'rocks' or to Maracanda/Zariaspa, Central Asia represents a key moment during which Alexander began to face unstable situations that required him to remain in the region for two years.

Through a reorganisation of toponyms, in my view it becomes clear that Alexander always aimed to reach India, but had to adapt his strategy and policy to a series of unforeseen events by relying on diplomacy and alliances, without necessarily resorting to massacres of the defeated in battles—at least before his descent along the Indus. In this regard, Alexander's marriage to Roxane at Gabaza and the weddings at Susa likely played a significant political role in ensuring the success of his successors in the region.

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menid Maka). For a discussion of this topic, see FRASER 1996, 166–167. Although it is inserted at the sixteenth position between two Asiatic Alexandrias, Alexandria 'on the Black Gulf' is commonly considered to be in Europe, near the Thracian Chersonese (FRASER 1996, 26–27).

**Tab. 1: Comparative table of versions drawn up by ancient historians (Arrian, Strabo, Curtius and Metz Epitome) for the events of 328–early 327 BC (with identification of the ‘rocks’ captured by Alexander). *Italicised text* : data erroneously associated from another ‘rock’. For the actual events, see the corresponding Phase numbers (I to VII) in column A: ‘Reconstruction / interpretation’.**

	A	B	C
<b>Phases/ Dates</b>	<b>Reconstruction / interpretation</b> Site/‘rock’ (see phases <b>II</b> , <b>III</b> and <b>V</b> ), proposed location and dimensions in stadia (st.=0.185 km) (H: height, circ.: circumference); –natural environment or defense system; –capture strategy ***	<b>Curtius (Curt.) and Metz Epitome (ME)</b> Capture of two ‘rocks’ in spring and autumn 328 BC (=phases <b>III</b> and <b>V</b> ), before the marriage of Alexander and Roxane in 327 BC  ***	<b>Arrian and Strabo</b> <b>Arrian</b> : capture of two ‘rocks’ at- tributed by him to the spring cam- paign of 327 BC (=phases <b>II</b> and <b>V</b> ) <b>Strabo</b> : two ‘rocks’ (=phases <b>III</b> and <b>V</b> )  ***
<b>I</b>  Early 328 BC, from Bactria to Sogdiana	<b>Oxyartes</b> (former Bactrian governor, rallied to Alexander after Bessus fled to Nautaca in 329 BC); expedition from Bactra to Samarkand and crossing of the Panj river, then the border between Bactria and Sogdiana on the Wakhs/upper Oxus, then first division of the army into five columns (according to Arrian) and conquest of Marginia (Baysun oasis) (according to Curtius)	<b>Curt.</b> VII, 10.15 and <b>ME</b> 14: crossing of the Ochus/Panj and the Oxus/ Wakhsh; <b>Curt.</b> VII, 10.15: arrival at Marginia / Margania (not ‘Margiana’). No mention of a division of the army after entering in Sogdiana (but after arrival in Maracanda: see phase <b>IV</b> )	<b>Arrian</b> IV, 16.1–3: (after crossing the Oxus) division of the army into five columns, four across southern Sogdiana and one directed towards Maracanda
<b>II</b>  Early 328 BC, Southern Sogdiana	<b>‘rock’ of Chorienes</b> hyparch of Paritacene province of Sogdiana (upper Surkhan-darya: Kyzkurgan/Kyrkgyz near Sina); –H: 20 st.; circ.: 60 st.; –fortified mountain; steep on all sides; access by ladder or footbridge; refugees; –captured after negotiations through Oxyartes who had followed Alexander from Bactra as adviser and negotiator; his family, including Roxane, cap- tured there (he had entrusted them to Chorienes the year before); –treaty concluded, then author- ity over his province granted to Chorienes; –supplies provided to Alexander from a large reserve; –region also under the control of Perdiccas (commander of the third column of the army according to Arrian)	episode not mentioned; about Chorienes, see phase <b>VII</b>	<b>Arrian</b> IV, 16.3: vague reference to the capture of fortresses; <b>Arrian</b> IV, 21.1–9: event erroneously listed as the <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> <b>and last ‘rock’</b> captured at the end of the Sogdian operations in spring 327: Alexander enters Paritacene and attacks the ‘rock’ of <b>Chorienes</b> before returning to Bactra (its location ‘beyond Sogdiana’ is an erroneous attribution to ‘Bactria’); –H: 20 st.; circ.: 60 st.; –canyon and trees (see phase <b>III</b> ); –capture thanks to a bridge (see phase <b>III</b> ); <b>Arrian</b> IV, 21.10: supplies provided to Alexander from a large reserve
<b>III</b>  328 BC	<b>‘rock’ of Arimazes</b> hyparch of the Oxiana province of Sogdiana (Sherabad-darya: Machai gorge and Iron Gates near Derbent) –H: 30 st.; circ.: 150 st.; –canyon, river; –captured by a bridge built with trees and stones along the Machai river; execution of Arimazes; subsequent control of the region (Sherabad-darya and the Baysun oasis / Marginia) by Artabazos, governor of Bactria (one of the two commanders of the fourth column of the army according to Arrian)	<b>Curt.</b> VII, 11–29: rock of <b>Arimazes</b> –H: 30 st.; circ.: 150 st.; ( <b>ME</b> 15–18: ‘Ariomazes’; H: {20} st.); –supplies for two years (see phase <b>II</b> ?); –cave (+river: <b>Curt.</b> VII, 11.4); –capture by ‘alpinists’: <b>Curt.</b> VII, 11 and <b>ME</b> 15–18 (see phase <b>V</b> ); <b>Curt.</b> VII, 28–29: execution of Arimazes and Artabazos governor of the region; <b>ME</b> 17–18: ‘Ariobazanen’ (fusion of ‘Ariomazes’ and ‘Artabazos’) killed by his own people	<b>Strabo</b> XI, 11.4: mentioned as a <b>2<sup>nd</sup> rock</b> : rock of Arimazes, or Oxian, in Sogdiana; ‘of Sogdiana’ –H: 30 st.;  <b>Arrian</b> IV 16.3: indirect allusion

<p><b>IV</b> 328 BC</p>	<p><b>a)</b> new division of the army into three corps decided at Maracanda; <b>b)</b> 1<sup>st</sup> revolt in Xenippa (Karshi/ Erkurghan) with the killing of the governor Attinas and intervention of Craterus from Maracanda; <b>c)</b> Spitamenes, ex satrap of Sogdiana, captures a commander (near Samarkand: in Gabae?) then attacks Zariaspa / Maracanda; intervention of Craterus back from Xenippa; <b>d)</b> hunt in Basista/Bazaira (southeast of Samarkand) and murder of Clitus; <b>e)</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> revolt in Xenippa; <b>f)</b> wintering in Nautaca (its satrap Sisimithres had fled from his city Kish)</p>	<p><b>a) Curt.</b> VIII, 1.1: division of the army into three corps; <b>b)</b> VIII, 1.3–6: governor Attinas killed and intervention of Craterus; <b>c)</b> no mention of the new attacks by Spitamenes and second intervention of Craterus; <b>d)</b> hunt in Bazaira (Diodorus: Basista) and murder of Clitus; <b>e)</b> VIII, 2.14–19: 2<sup>nd</sup> revolt of Xenippa (revolt against Amyntas); <b>f)</b> VIII, 2.13 and 19: beginning of the wintering in Nautaca; <b>f+e) ME</b> 19: wintering in Nautaca and expedition to Xenippa (2<sup>nd</sup> revolt)</p>	<p><b>a) Arrian</b> IV, 16.3: division of the army into three corps; <b>b)</b> events in Xenippa not mentioned; <b>c)</b> Spitamenes captures a commander (IV, 16.4–5), then attacks Zariaspa/ Maracanda (IV, 16.6–7); intervention of Craterus (IV, 17.1–2); <b>f)</b> wintering in Nautaca mentioned in phase <b>VI</b></p>
<p><b>V</b> End of 328 BC</p>	<p><b>'rock' of Sisimithres</b> in Nautaca, province of Sogdiana (mount Kapkagly-azyu near Akrobat); H: 15 st.; circ.: 80 st.; –mountain with a flattened summit on two levels; –captured by Alexander's "alpinists"; treaty, then authority granted to Sisimithres; expedition against other insurgents</p>	<p><b>Curt.</b> VIII, 2.19–40: rock of Sisimithres, satrap of Nautaca –canyon (see phase <b>III</b>); –capture through a bridge (see phase <b>III</b>); negotiations through 'Oxartes' (Oxyartes); expedition against insurgents; <b>ME</b> 19: treaty with Sisimithres ('sissimere') in 'Nautacen'</p>	<p><b>Arrian</b> IV, 19: anonymous 'Rock in Sogdiana' erroneously mentioned as the 1<sup>st</sup> 'rock' captured in spring 327; 'near the (erroneous) border (of Bactria)'; <i>Sogdian refugees</i> (see phase <b>II</b>); –capture by Alexander's "alpinists"; –capture of Oxyartes' family (see phase <b>II</b>); IV, 19.4–5 and IV, 20.4: <i>marriage of Alexander and Roxane</i> (see phase <b>VII</b>); <b>Strabo</b> XI, 11.4: mentioned as 1<sup>st</sup> 'rock': rock of Sisimithres in Bactria; "there was Oxyartes' daughter, Roxane" (see phase <b>II</b>); –description: H: 15 st.; circ.: 80 st.; <i>Place of Alexander's marriage to Roxane</i> (see phase <b>VII</b>)</p>
<p><b>VI</b> Winter 328 BC / Spring 327 BC</p>	<p><b>g)</b> Spitamenes at Gabae (Koktepe) and his death among the Dahae (region of Xenippa); Dataphernes, ex governor expelled from Xenippa, is sent as a prisoner to Alexander by the Dahae; <b>h)</b> crossing of the Sogdian mountains between Nautaca (Kashka-darya) and Gazaba (Surkhan-darya) in freezing weather; help from Sisimithres and expedition against Sacae; departure for Gazaba and reception on the road by Choriene</p>	<p><b>g) Curt.</b> VIII, 3.1–16; <b>ME</b> 20–23: death of Spitamenes among the Dahae; Dataphernes taken prisoner; <b>h) Curt.</b> VIII, 4–17; <b>ME</b> 24–27: march in freezing weather; <b>Curt.</b> VIII, 4.19–20: assistance from Sisimithres, then expedition against Sacae; <b>ME</b> 28: march to Gazaba and reception on the road by Choriene ('corianus')</p>	<p><b>g) Arrian</b> IV, 17.3–7: Spitamenes attacks Sogdiana from his base in Gabae but is defeated by Coenus before being killed by his own Massagetae; <b>f)</b> wintering in Nautaca (IV, 18.1–2); <b>h)</b> episodes along the road towards Gazaba not mentioned by Arrian</p>
<p><b>VII</b> Spring 327 BC</p>	<p>again in Sogdian Paritacene on the road between the Iron Gates and the Oxus; <b>territory and capital of Choriene:</b> events occurred in his capital Gazaba (Kyzyl-tepe) and not on his 'rock'; presence of Oxyartes; marriage of Alexander and Roxane, and between Macedonians and Persians/Central Asians; defeat of Catanes and Austanes in Paritacene (southern Surkhan-darya?) and control of Bubacene (Kafirnigan province); crossing of the Oxus and return to Bactra</p>	<p><b>Curt.</b> VIII, 4.21–30: region of the satrap '<b>cohortandus</b>' (Choriene and not Oxyartes – confusion in <b>Curtius</b> text); presence of Oxyartes; marriage of Alexander and Roxane and between Macedonians and 'Persians'. Same account in <b>ME</b> 28–31; <b>Curtius</b> VIII, 5.2: defeat of Austanes and Catanes, and capture of Bubacene</p>	<p><b>Arrian</b> : marriage of Alexander and Roxane erroneously located on the anonymous 'Rock in Sogdiana'; <b>Strabo</b>: marriage erroneously located on the 'Rock of Sisimithres' (phase <b>V supra</b>); <b>Arrian</b> IV, 22.1–2: Catanes and Austanes defeated by Craterus in Paritacene</p>

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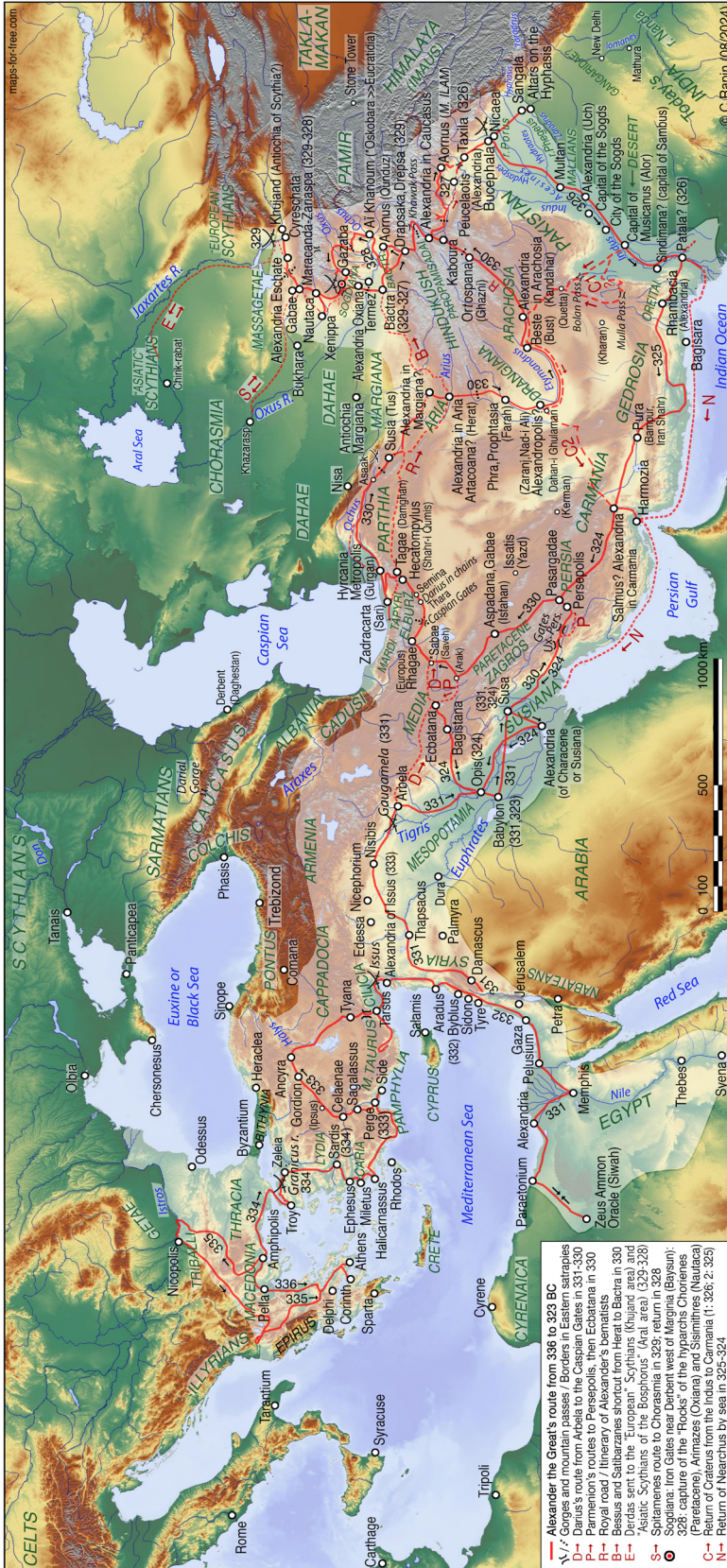
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Pl. 2/1: New general map of Alexander's empire (map by C. Rapin; August 2024).



(a)

Pl. 2/1 A: West.



Pl. 2/1 B: Centre.



(c)

Pl. 2/1C: East.