

From the Battle of the Granicus in 334 BCE, the shield's inscription

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Abstract:

This paper is about the inscriptions on the shields that were carved after the first battle the Macedonians fought against the Persians. It is basically about what the carving might symbolize to the people at a time and what Alexander III wanted to portray in this inscription. In this work the main essential message of the shield is about Alexander dedicating the victory of the Battle of the River Granicus to himself and the soldiers fighting at his side. Alexander is also dedicating his victory to Athena since he sent the shields back to Athens. The text also left out the Spartans since they didn't take part in the battle. This piece may allow people to understand more about Alexander's early aims for his conquests and how he portrayed the people of the ancient world. It may also give some insight into Alexander's character as well.

Keywords: Alexander III of Macedon, shield, Macedonians

1. Introduction

The inscription on the 300 Persian shields that Alexander ordered craftsmen to carve in ancient Greek wrote, Below is the script translated in English: "Alexander, son of Philip, and the Hellenes, except for the Lacedaemonians, (dedicated these spoils) from the barbarians who dwell in Asia." Alexander III of Macedon was a son of Philip II of Macedon and Olympias. Philip the II is the king of Macedon. He started in 336 BCE to prepare for the invasion to free the Greeks in the western coast from Persian rule [1]. After Philip II of Macedon died, Alexander III of Macedon took up this conquest of Asia in 334 BCE when he was 22 years old [1]. At the start of Alexander's conquest, there was this battle called the Battle of the Granicus that took place in 334 BCE. This battle is located in Asia Minor, and even though the Per-

sians had a better geographical advantage. Alexander still leads his troops of Greeks and Macedonians to victory even with a disadvantage in the landscape [1]. After the victory at the Battle of the River Granicus, Alexander decided to send 300 suits of the Persian armor they had captured from the Persians and send them to Athens to dedicate to the goddess Athena. Alexander wanted to thank the goddess of war, Athena, for her support in this victory of the River Granicus. The argument in this essay is that the shield's inscription demonstrated Alexander's political idea of his initial stage of the expedition. He used this shield to establish an Hellenic alliance under Macedonian's leadership to take revenge and enslave the Persians as barbarians in Asia.

2. Analysis

2.1 Who is the source?

The person who ordered the inscriptions of the 300 shields to be carved was Alexander III of Macedon. Alexander III of Macedon is the person who made the source, which is the shield's inscription. Without Alexander, the inscriptions wouldn't exist. Arian and Plutarch documented Alexander III's inscription in the same wording. The work of Arian and Plutarch was publicly recognized for the studies of Alexander the Great.

2.2 What do we know about the source?

The shield's inscriptions were approved or maybe even written by Alexander. (G. Rogers Chapter 5) These 300 shields were spoils sent to Athena, the goddess of wisdom and warfare, for her help in the Battle of the River Granicus. Also, in 480 BCE, the Persians burned down Athenian temples, and these spoils were like an offering to the goddess for the Pan-Hellenic war of revenge against the Persians since this is the reason the war started in the first place [1].

2.3 Who is the audience?

The audience of the inscriptions on the shields sent back to Athens by Alexander the II of Macedon would be the Athenians living in Athens after 334 BCE Another trait of the audience of the shield's inscription are the people that are at Athens where the shield was held and people that could read ancient Greek since at that time most people in Ancient Greece were illiterate.

2.4 What is the essential message?

In order to know one of the essential message of the shield we need to know about is how Alexander II of Macedon wanted to portray himself to the general public of Ancient Greece. (G. Rogers Chapter 5) This is because in the inscription Alexander asked the craftsmen to carve son of Philp instead of his other titles like the king of Macedon. Alexander wanted people to see him only as the son of Philp.

Alexander also wrote "And the Hellenes," which means that he dedicated this shield and the victory of the Battle of the River Granicus not only to himself but also to the soldiers that were Hellenes, which were Greeks and Macedonians by his side [2]. Together, Alexander and his soldiers won the Battle of the Granicus River. In this way Alexander was saying that this victory was only possible with the help of the Hellenes. Also, in this way, Alexander informed the Greeks of his support and reliance on them.

After that, Alexander wrote "Except for the Lacedaemonians," which refers to Spartans who were still organizing anti-Macedonian campaigns with the help of Persia [2]. He wrote that because the Spartans undermined the official message of the campaign Alexander decided to leave them out of his dedication for the spoils. They also hadn't taken part in the Battle of the River Granicus, meaning that when Alexander asked the Greek cities to provide soldiers, the Spartans refused, so Alexander decided to leave them out.

At last, Alexander wrote, "from the barbarians that dwell in Asia" [3]; the barbarians that Alexander means are the Persians barbarians. Since Alexander got the shields or the tribute from the Persians. Without using the actual name, which is Persians, but substituting it with the phrase "barbarians". Alexander claims that they didn't own the land of Asia but just conquered and lived there. So, in this shield's inscription, Alexander is paying an insult to the Persians [4]. The wording of the last phrase could be propaganda to the Greeks since the people who would look at the shield were Greeks at the time who could read ancient Greek, so Alexander would enhance the idea that the Persians were barbarians.

3. Conclusion

There are many messages that Alexander wants to portray in his inscriptions of the shields. These inscriptions also portrayed Alexander's relationship with some Greek cities and what Alexander wanted the Greeks to think about the Persians.

Alexander's political idea of the initial stage of the expedition. He used this shield to establish a Hellenic alliance under Macedonian leadership to take revenge and enslave the Persians as barbarians in Asia.

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