



ALEXANDER OF MACEDONIA'S MILESTONES INTO CENTRAL ASIA.

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Abstract: This article provides information about Alexander the Great's military campaigns in Central Asia, his struggles with the local population, the resistance of Spitamen, and the cities founded by Alexander.

Keywords: Central Asia, Bess, Alexander the Great, Sogdiana, Bactria, Spitamen, Oxus.

Having easily conquered the main parts of the powerful Achaemenid state, the Greeks also invaded Central Asia, but they encountered fierce resistance in these regions. Alexander spent three years of his life conquering these lands, defeating Spitame, and breaking the resistance of the local population. He resorted to various tricks to overcome his difficulties. For example, he became a son-in-law to local nobles and founded several cities. Alexander defeated the troops of Darius III, the last ruler of the Achaemenids of Macedonia, and gradually began to conquer the territories. Darius fled to the eastern regions of the country. However, Darius was treacherously killed by Bess, a member of the Achaemenid dynasty. Bess was the satrap of Bactria.

Alexander successively conquered the provinces of Hyrcania and Parthia and approached Arria, but his viceroy, Satibarzanes, surrendered to Alexander because he was not yet ready for war. The Macedonian invader left him as viceroy and himself went to Bokhtar. Seizing the opportunity, Satibarzanes massacred the Macedonian soldiers left in Artakoana and hesitated to unite with Bess. In this situation, Alexander was forced to stop his march eastward and turn back to suppress the rebellion. He surrounded the 3,000-strong Aryan army, killed some of them, and enslaved the rest. Having suppressed the rebellions in Arria and the adjacent regions, Alexander finally had the opportunity to deal with the Bokhtar region. Upon learning of this, Bess sent Satibarzanes to Arria with 2,000 cavalry in order to divide Alexander's army in two. Thus, the Aryans again rebelled against the Greco-Macedonians. Alexander, who sent a small army to suppress the rebellion, despite the cold weather, crossed the Hindu Kush mountains with his main army and captured the Drapsak fortress. Bess, whose military strength was half that of Alexander (7,000 and 14,000), did not dare to fight in the open field and was forced to cross the Amu Darya and retreat to Sogd. Seeing this, the Bokhtar soldiers abandoned Bess and dispersed to their homes. After all, Bess was also a stranger to the people of the Bokhtar land. As a result, Alexander, in the spring of 329 BC, first captured the Aorn fortress, and then the city of Bokhtar without much resistance.




Although Bessus's struggles against Alexander yielded almost no positive results, they delayed the conquest of Turanian lands by half a year. In addition, the Turanians, who were part of the Achaemenid army, had the opportunity to become familiar with the weapons and methods of attack of the Greco-Macedonians. This would later come in handy in the battles in Sogdia. [1, P. 72-73].

By the spring of 329 BC, Alexander had conquered the regions of Aria, Drangiya, and Arachosia and reached the banks of the Oxus-Amudarya. According to Arrian and Curtius, at that time the river was very wet and overflowing. The place of the crossing of the Amudarya was determined by researchers Kelif, Chushkagozar, Termez and Shorab are considered. In any case, written sources have preserved information that Alexander's troops filled sacks with straw and crossed the Amu Darya for five days. After crossing the river, Alexander's troops pursued Bess and headed for "Sugd province Navtaka" (first the advanced part led by Ptolemy Lag, then the main forces). In the Sogdian lands, local commanders led by Spitaman, in order to stop Alexander, captured Bess and handed him over to him. [2, P. 74-75].

The main part of Alexander's army followed Ptolemy's trail. On his way was the city of Branchids, priests of the temple of Apollo from Didyma, near Miletus in Asia Minor. They had been moved to Central Asia by the Achaemenid king Xerxes (481–465 BC) for fear of Hellenic revenge for giving him temple treasures. Therefore, the Branchids were the first Greeks to arrive in Transoxiana, the interfluvium of two rivers in Central Asia, in the 5th century BC. The city of the Branchids may have been located in Yerkurgan, the center of the Kashkadarya region, 10 km north of the city of Karshi. Alexander completely destroyed the city for the treachery of the Branchids. Then he moved towards them to unite with the Ptolemaic army. Ptolemy, in turn, handed over the captured Bess to him. Bess was later sent to Ecbatana, where she was brutally executed. After that, Alexander marched with his entire army from Nautaka to Marokand (Samarkand) - the largest city in Central Asia at that time. [4, P. 140].

Alexander captured Marokanda in 329 BC. Here he burned the military garrison and the surrounding villages. Then he continued his military campaign and when he came to Ustrushana, between Samarkand and Khujand, he encountered the defenders of the homeland. There was such a fierce battle that 22 thousand of the 30 thousand defenders of the homeland were killed. Alexander himself was even wounded in this battle. After brutally subjugating the Ustrushana people, he continued his march along the Syrdarya. The inhabitants of seven cities located here rose up against Alexander and fought for independence. In particular, in the city of Kiropol, a fierce battle took place between the defenders of the homeland and the invaders, and 8 thousand of the indigenous population died. Many were wounded. The enemy soldiers also suffered heavy losses, but they achieved victory. Alexander was wounded here too. He becomes enraged by this and exterminates most of the population. [5, P. 18].

Such terrible events taught Spitamen a lesson. He now sees the true face of Alexander and embarks on a holy struggle against him. Alexander, having defeated the highlanders in battle, reaches the banks of the Syr Darya. Here, Alexander is greeted by the Sakas of the Kyrgyz.



Darya on the other side of the Tanais (Syr Darya) with friendly gifts and greetings. Alexander leaves the Sakan ambassadors hostage and sends one of his men to the land of the Sakas beyond the Tanais to spy. At the same time, a messenger arrives from Samarkand, informing Alexander that a rebellion has broken out against him in the city under the leadership of Spitamen. Spitamen captures Samarkand and destroys the 3,000 infantry and 800 cavalry troops left there by Alexander under the command of Farnukh. Alexander immediately sets off for Samarkand. As soon as Alexander left, the Sakas, who were held hostage in the Khujand fortress, rebelled and massacred the Greek troops.


In 328 BC, Alexander brutally suppressed the uprising in Samarkand led by Spitamen and captured the city for the second time. According to Diodorus, "Alexander defeated the Sogdians who had rebelled and killed 120,000 of their inhabitants." In the second phase, "he punished the Bactrians, brought the Sogdians back under his control, and built fortresses in their places." In the third phase of the uprising, "those of the Sogdians who had fled to the mountains were taken captive." From that time on, Spitamen became Alexander's main and most formidable opponent. [3, P. 51].

The rebels were hiding in the mountainous regions of Sogdiana, where the invaders had not yet reached. Almost the entire population of Sogdiana sided with Spitamen and had high hopes for his victories. Alexander, however, did not waste time, spending the winter of 329–328 BC in Bactria (some sources call it Nautaka). Here he held negotiations with the ruler of Khorezm, Pharasman. As a result, Alexander's plan to march on Khorezm was suspended (this is attributed to Pharasman's fear of an attack from the "state of the Sakas beyond the river" and his attempts to stop Alexander's campaigns).

From the spring of 328 BC, the struggle against the Greco-Macedonians intensified again. The local population continued to fight in large cities, fortresses, and mountainous areas. Concerned by the worsening situation, Alexander divided his 30,000-strong army into 5 groups, appointing trusted commanders - Hephæstion, Ptolemy Lagus, Perdikkas, Kenes and Artabose as leaders. As a result of the brutal wars of the Greek-Macedonians, many local residents perished. The rest continued to fight in the mountainous regions. It is worth mentioning the courage of Spitaman at this point. He always looked for the weak points of his opponents and struck them from those very places.

Spitamen tried to fight the enemy in alliance with the Sogdian and Bactrian nobles and the Sakas. According to sources, at the end of 328 BC Spitamen became a victim of betrayal by his own compatriots. Spitamen was an experienced statesman and commander, he took all possible measures to expel the invaders from his homeland, tried to use the measures effectively. He was a skillful commander, he took advantage of even the smallest mistakes of the enemy and sought to find his weak points. But Alexander was superior to Spitamen in military power. [6, P. 125-126].

Alexander's marriage to Roxana, the daughter of the Bactrian nobleman Oxyart Vakhshuvor, also led to the marriage of his commanders to Sogdian and Bactrian beauties. Alexander IV, the son born from the marriage of Alexander and Roxana, was therefore half-



Bactrian. All the Seleucid rulers who ruled the Near and Middle East for more than two hundred years had Sogdian blood in their veins. The marriage of the founder of the Seleucid state, Seleucus I (312-311-281 BC), with Apama, daughter of the Sogdian chieftain Spitamenes and mother of Antiochus I (280-261 BC), was concluded in Susa in 324 BC, during the lifetime of Alexander. Apama was deeply respected by her husband and son. Cities named Apamea were founded in her honor in Syria and Iran. [4, P. 138-139].

In conclusion, Alexander's campaigns in Central Asia were extremely complex and full of fierce resistance. The local peoples, especially the forces led by Spitamen, fought bravely against the invaders. Although Alexander had a military advantage and brutally suppressed many uprisings, these campaigns caused him great losses and long-term resistance. At the same time, this period was not only a period of military clashes, but also a period of cultural and political rapprochement. Alexander's establishment of kinship ties with the local nobility, in particular his marriage to Roxana and the marriage of his generals to local women, created a certain degree of rapprochement between the East and the West. In general, these events played an important role in the history of Central Asia and had a significant impact on subsequent political and cultural processes.

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