

## Monsoons, 'Mutiny' and Macedonian Limits

Alexander's seemingly abrupt halt of his Asian campaign at the Hyphasis (Beas) River in 326 has been much discussed with regard to his personal aims of conquest. The orthodox view is that Alexander did intend to cross the Hyphasis and continue his campaign with the aim of conquering all of India or reaching the outer ocean: e.g. Badian 1961: 20; Holt 1982: 48, Bosworth 1988: 133, Carney 1996: 37, Anson 2013: 172-174, 2015 [accepting in principle Arr. *Anab.* 4.15.6, Curt. 9.2.11, 26, Diod. 17.93.1, 94.3]. Two challengers to this view have argued that Alexander staged the 'mutiny' in order to protect his reputation as a general. Spann (1999) argues that Alexander changed his mind once he reached the Hyphasis and learned about the great challenges that lay beyond [Arr. *Anab.* 5.25.1; Plut. *Alex.* 62; Diod. 17.93.2; Curt. 9.2.2-4]. Heckel (2003) argues that Alexander never intended to advance beyond the outer limits of the Persian Empire; so also Howe and Müller (2012: 23-24) but they argue that the 'mutiny' is a literary myth. Anson (2015) rebutted the 'no mutiny' views, arguing that the army and/or commanders did not refuse to follow orders, but did force Alexander to turn back against his wishes.

The aim of this paper, while arguing for the authenticity of the 'mutinous' (Holt 1982) episode, is to step away from the Hyphasis and the spotlight on Alexander and to look at some of the evidence for 'Macedonian limits' from the perspective of the soldiery, to look beyond the more familiar episodes that whittled away morale, which were mainly "court" affairs (trials, *proskynesis*), and consider the day-to-day existence as the soldiers that brought them to their limit. No one disputes that by the time the Macedonians reached the Hyphasis they were "exhausted by heat, monsoon and severe fighting" (Howe and Müller (2012: 21). However, what taxed the Macedonians was a mountain of hardships, catastrophes, losses and fears that had been

piling up for four years, since the death of Darius when Alexander had to persuade both officers and troops that continuing the campaign (pursuit of Bessus) was necessary. [Plut. *Alex.* 47.1-8; Diod. 17.74.3; Curt. 6.2.18-19, 3.1-4.1; Just. 12.3.2-4.] Two years of relentless guerilla fighting followed, with the army barely eeking out subsistence. [Curt. 7.4.22-25; Str. 15.2.10.] Casualties were high from weapons, but increasingly from fatigue and illness [Arr. *Anab.* 3.28.1, 8-9; Diod. 17.82.2-8; Curt. 7.3.11-18, 5.1-16.]. Garrisons and foraging details were regularly attacked. [e.g. Arr. *Anab.* 4.3.6; Curt. 7.6.24.] In a severe hail and ice storm some 2,000 perished from exposure. [Curt 8.4.2-12. Cp. Plut. *Alex.* 58.1.] In India the army began to suffer higher numbers of casualties than ever before: at Massaga [Arr. *Anab.* 4.26.6-27.1.], at Sangala [Arr. *Anab.* 22.4-24.5; Diod. 17.91.4; Curt. 9.1.14-18; cf. Polyæn. 4.3.30.]. Crossing the Hydaspes some were swept away by the current, others struck by lightning; and on it went.

That the army *and* officers refused to follow Alexander any farther and that he relented tells us a good deal about the nature of Macedonian kingship, that fundamentally, at this stage, it still functioned as a relationship of acclamation, persuasion and trust. At the Hyphasis Coenus voiced the sentiment of the rank and file: they did not refuse to follow Alexander (he gave no direct order), rather they could no longer endure the hardships and the fighting; their strength and their will were spent. [(Arr. *Anab.* 5.27.2-9; Curt. 9.3.4-15; cp. Diod. 17.94.5; Plut. *Alex.* 62, Just. 12.8.10-17). Without the *will* of the army Alex could not continue.

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