

12.1. Justin / The Beginning of Philip of Macedon's Reign

Philip II of Macedon (reigned 359 to 336 BCE) took a faction-ridden, semi-civilized country of quarrelsome landed nobles and boorish peasants, and made it into an invincible military power. The conquests of Alexander the Great would have been impossible without the military power bequeathed him by his almost equally great father. At the very outset of his reign Philip had to confront sore perils in his own family and among the vassals of his decidedly primitive kingdom. Some of these perils are here explained.

Justin [Marcus Junian(i)us Justin(us)] wrote sometime in the Third century CE. an epitome of the first century CE historian, Pompeius Trogus' Historiae Philippicae.

Justin Hist. 7.5. Source: William Stearns Davis, *Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources*, 2 Vols., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-1913), Vol. I: Greece and the East, pp. 284-286.

Alexander II [King of Macedon] at the very beginning of his reign purchased peace from the Illyrians [the peoples north and west of Macedon] with a sum of money, giving his brother Philip as a hostage. Some time later, also, he made peace with the Thebans by giving the same hostage, a circumstance which afforded Philip fine opportunities for improving his extraordinary abilities; for being kept as a hostage at Thebes for three years, he received the first rudiments of a boy's education at a city famous for its strict discipline, and in the house of Epaminondas, who was eminent as a philosopher as well as a great general. Not long afterward Alexander perished by a plot of his mother Eurydice, whom Amyntas [her husband]—when she was once convicted of a conspiracy against him—had spared for the sake of their children, little imagining that one day she would be their destroyer. Perdiccas, too—Alexander II's brother—was taken off by like treachery. Horrible, indeed, it was that children should have been deprived of life to gratify the passion of a mother—whom a regard for those very children had saved from the reward for her crimes. The murder of Perdiccas seemed all the viler in that not even the prayers of his little son could win him pity from this mother. Philip, for a long time, acted not as king, but as guardian to this child; but when dangerous wars threatened, and it was too long to wait for the cooperation of a prince who was yet so young, he was forced by the people to take the government upon himself.

When he took possession of the throne, great hopes were formed of him by all, both on account of his abilities, which promised that he would prove a great man, and on account of

certain old oracles touching Macedonia, which foretold that “when one of the sons of Amyntas should be king, the country should be extremely flourishing,” to fulfill which expectations the iniquity of his mother had left only him.

At the beginning of his reign, when both the treacherous murder of his brother, and the multitude of his enemies, and the poverty of the kingdom exhausted by successive wars, bore hard upon the immature young king, he gained respite from attack by his many foes, some being put off by offers of peace, and others being bought off. However, he attacked such of his enemies as seemed easiest to be subdued, in order that by a victory over them he might confirm the wavering courage of his soldiers, and alter any feelings of contempt which his foes might feel for him. His first conflict was with the Athenians [who sent a fleet to sustain one Manteias, a pretender to Philip's throne] whom he surprised by a stratagem, but—though he might have put them all to the sword—he yet, from dread of a more formidable war, allowed them to depart—uninjured, and without [even] a ransom. Later, leading his army against the Illyrians he slew several thousand of his enemies and took the famous city of Larissa. He then fell suddenly upon Thessaly (when it was fearful of anything but a war)—not from a desire of spoil but because he wished to add the strength of the Thessalian cavalry to his own troops; and he thus incorporated a force of horse and foot in one invincible army.

His undertakings having thus far prospered, he married Olympias, daughter of Neoptolemus, king of the Molossians [of Epirus]; her cousin-german, Arrybas, then king of that nation, who had brought up the young princess, and married her sister Troas, doing all he could to promote the union. This proceeding, however, proved to be the cause of Arrybas's downfall, and the beginning of all the evils that afterward befell him; for while he hoped to strengthen his kingdom by this connection with Philip, he was deprived of his crown by that very sovereign, and spent his old age in exile.

After these proceedings Philip, no longer content to act on the defensive, boldly attacked even those who had not injured him. While he was besieging Methone [a Greek town on the Thermaic Gulf in Macedonia], an arrow shot from the walls, as he was passing, struck out his right eye; but this wound did not make him less active in the siege, nor more resentful towards the enemy. In fact, some days after, he granted them peace when they asked it, on terms not only not rigorous, but even merciful, to the conquered.