

0. ALEXANDER'S EARLY CONQUESTS - Story Preface

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As the story goes, Alexander the Great found a unique way to undo the Gordian Knot. He used his sword to cut it. This image depicts an artist's conception of how that legendary event may have occurred. The painting is by Jean-Simon Berthélemy (1743-1811) and is currently maintained at École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts (in Paris).

It is often said that Alexander's army made him great, but his murdered father (Philip of Macedon) made the army great.

Using professional soldiers, not a citizen-based militia, Philip created different types of military units which gave him diversified strength. Infantry, cavalry, foot soldiers who employed extra-long spears (called a *sarissa*) and elite foot guardsmen (called *hypaspists*) all made the Macedonian army a formidable fighting machine.

Alexander, who had fought with his father against Athens in the Battle of *Chaeronea*, thus inherited a standing army which employed unusual instruments of war and unique battle formations.

- Typical Macedonian battle formation under Philip and Alexander.
- Typical "hammer and anvil" tactics of the Macedonian army under Philip and Alexander.
- The sarissa was a Macedonian weapon which was often fifteen-feet long.
- Soldiers, in a battle formation called the Macedonia phalanx.
- The phalanx with front weapons extended.
- Macedonians were known as great horsemen and Macedonian Companions rode with the King.
- Bronze helmets, typical of the time, were not unique to the Macedonian army.

Solidifying his position soon after taking power, Alexander marched south into Greece and freed Greek cities

from Persian rule. Heading north to Gordium (the capital of ancient Phrygia), he made relatively short work of a famous legend.

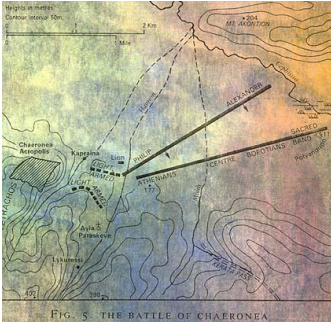
Whoever untied the Gordian Knot, it was said, would rule the world. Alexander approached the problem in a different way. He undid the knot by simply slashing it with his sword, then unraveling it.

His conquests were just beginning.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ALEXANDER-S-EARLY-CONQUESTS-Alexander-the-Great>

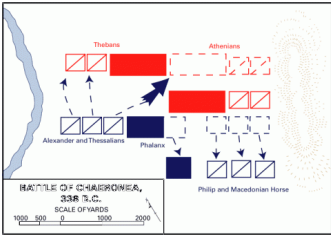
See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ALEXANDER-S-EARLY-CONQUESTS-Alexander-the-Great>

Media Stream



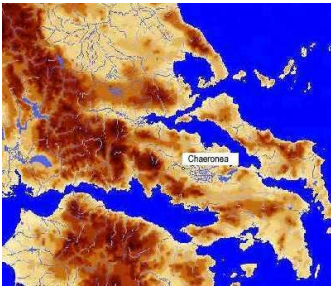
Battle of Chaeronea - Map of the Battle

Image online, courtesy the imgarcade.com website.
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Battle of Chaeronea - Battle Plan

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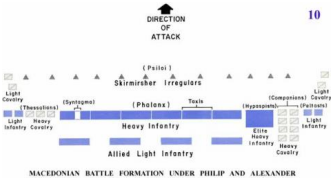
Chaeronea - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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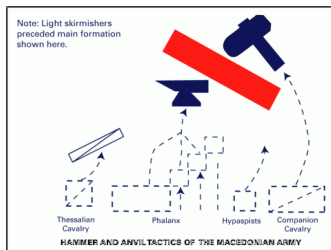
Chaeronea - Contemporary View

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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Macedonian Battle Formation Under Philip and Alexander

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Detail of Hammer and Anvil Tactics

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

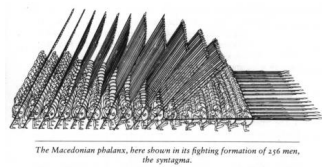
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Sarissa

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

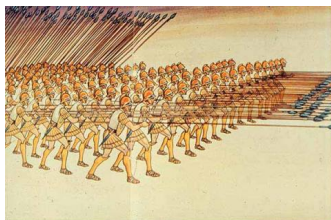
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The Macedonia Phalanx

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

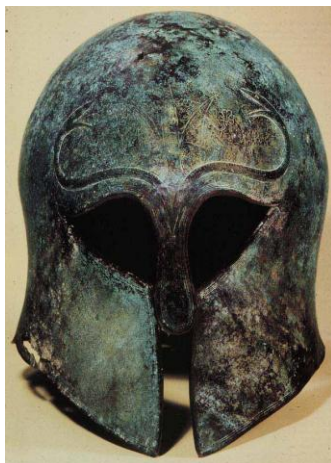
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Phalanx with Weapons Extended

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Bronze Helmets

Image online, courtesy the University of Warwick [website](#).

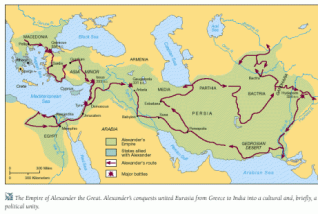
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Macedonian Horseman

Image online, courtesy the Monolith Community website.

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Map Depicting the Empire of Alexander the Great

Image online, courtesy the Ancient Peoples blog site.

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Phrygian Kingdom

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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