

## The Death of Alexander the Great by Andrew Chugg

**13.61** Then *Pithon*<sup>28</sup> in torrents of tears started by saying how Alexander was most to be commiserated on having been defrauded of the friendship and fellowship of such superb citizens and soldiers: for they were so single-minded in their surveillance of the laurels and legacy of the king that all else was veiled from their view. And he ***was not at all ambiguous in speaking against the man to whom the realm was being rendered.*** “*It is not just on account of his disreputable dam, for he was born of a band from Larissa,<sup>29</sup> but also because of the intense imbecility that afflicts him, and lest, were he king in name, some other should wield the authority.*”<sup>30</sup> Through throwing in their faces such vehement vitriol, he stirred up more antagonism towards himself than disdain for Arrhidaeus. For their sense of sympathy began to sow their support. Hence with relentless roaring they insisted that they should suffer no sovereign save such as had been sired into the succession and thus they bade that Arrhidaeus be summoned. Meleager promptly propelled him into the palace out of hostility and hatred towards Perdiccas and so ***the soldiers saluted him as their sovereign under the pseudonym of Philip after his father.***

**13.62** Such was the cry of the crowd, but **the foremost fellows** felt differently. Among these Pithon **began to pursue the policy of Perdiccas by proposing Perdiccas and Leonnatus, both related to the royal line, as guardians for any future son of Roxane; adding that Craterus and Antipater should be assigned the administration of affairs in Europe. Then an oath of obedience was exacted from each of them** that they should acknowledge any king begotten by Alexander.

**13.63** Not without just cause, Meleager was worried he would be punished; hence he had withdrawn with his faction. But now he burst back into the palace dragging Philip along with him, proclaiming that he was of tempered maturity well suited to the public duties of a new monarch as they had envisaged just a little while ago. Let them merely audition this scion of Philip, son and brother to a brace of kings: let them favour their own feelings foremost.

**13.64** Neither oceanic depths nor vast, storm-swept sounds can summon such surges as are seen in the emotions of a mob, especially if it is revelling in a recent yet transient autonomy. Few favoured the freshly picked Perdiccas, whereas many were minded to make their master Philip, whom they had

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<sup>28</sup> Or possibly Ptolemy: manuscripts of Curtius had *phiton*, but Justin has *ptolomeus* object to Arrhidaeus.

<sup>29</sup> Arrhidaeus was the son of Philip and Philinna, a “dancing-girl” from Larissa, but he seems to have been formally acknowledged by Philip, perhaps in the context of the Pixodaros affair.

<sup>30</sup> The actual words of the denunciation of Arrhidaeus are missing in the surviving text of Curtius, which shows signs of corruption at this point, but a partial reconstruction may be read in from Justin 13.2.11; it is a reasonable hypothesis that Curtius omitted the invective, because he was drawing a parallel between the accession of Arrhidaeus and that of his own emperor, Claudius; cf. Curtius 10.9.3-6.

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disdained. But they were incapable either of opposing or approving anything for long, at some points repenting their plans, at others repenting their repentance. But in the final analysis their affiliation inclined towards the royal line. Arrhidaeus had quit the Assembly having been mightily alarmed by the lordliness of the leading men, yet the effect of his departure was more to muffle rather than diminish his support among the troops. And upon being now recalled, he wrapped himself in the raiment of his brother, the self-same suit as had been set upon the throne. Meleager donned a cuirass and clutched his arms to act as escort to the new king. The phalanx followed suit, smiting their shields with their spears to signal that they would spill the blood of any who aspired to the throne without warrant. They rejoiced that the imperial power would remain with the same house and family. The royal dynasty would duly appropriate their heritage of empire. They were accustomed to respecting and reverencing the name itself and none assumed it save such as were born to reign.

**13.65** Therefore in consternation Perdikkas commanded that the chamber in which the corpse of Alexander lay should be bolted. With him were six hundred supporters of proven prowess. And also Ptolemy and the retinue of Royal Pages had coupled themselves to his cause. But the barriers were readily ruptured by so many thousands of men-at-arms. The king too burst in, beset by a cortège of collaborators, among whom Meleager was pre-eminent *with Attalus acting as his accomplice*. Perdikkas, in a rage, rallied any who wished to ward the body of Alexander, but those who had forced their way in flung their javelins at him from afar. And many were wounded, when eventually the veterans doffed their helms, the better to be known, and began to beseech those who were with Perdikkas to refrain from fighting and to defer to the king and force of numbers. Perdikkas was the first to sheathe his arms and the rest followed suit. Then, when Meleager confided that they should not forsake the corpse of Alexander, they supposed he sought to snare them there, so they stole away, passing through part of the palace facing the Euphrates. ***The cavalry, which was constituted from the best-born youths, fully followed Perdikkas and Leonnatus and favoured faring forth from the city and fighting from the fields.*** But Perdikkas did not despair of the foot following him as well. Hence, so it should not seem that he had severed himself from the rest of the army by withdrawing with the cavalry, he stayed within the city.

**13.66** Moreover Meleager repeatedly reproached his ruler, saying that his right to reign would best be ratified, if Perdikkas were to perish, since, if his unbridled spirit were not crushed, he would subvert the situation; for Perdikkas knew full well what treatment he deserved from the king and no one was fully faithful to one whom he feared. The king rather heard him out than concurred; and so ***Meleager*** simply supposed his silence to constitute a command and ***arranged for Attalus to send henchmen to arraign Perdikkas*** in the king's name. ***They were commissioned to kill him***, if he were to demur. When the approach of these henchmen was heralded, ***Perdikkas posted himself*** in the entrance to his residence ***attended by*** a total of sixteen of the retinue of ***Royal Pages***. From