

**Murder in Macedon: Part II
Who Really Killed Phillip II:
A Possible Resolution**

by R.L. Porter

In 336 BC, in front of the gathered ambassadors of the Greek world, Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, was knifed in the back by one of his own bodyguards, an aggrieved wretch called Pausanias. Pausanias ran up from behind the king, who was wearing a snow-white cloak, and drove a broad-bladed Celtic dagger through the king's ribs, burying the weapon up to the hilt. This action took place in a crowded theatre at the old capital of Aegae. When Pausanias wheeled around and made for the city gate where a number of horses awaited him (and his accomplices?) he tripped on a vine and was speared by Perdikkas, Leonnatus and Attalus. These three were close personal friends of young Prince Alexander. They, I believe, were the ones who put Pausanias up to the murder and were the true architects of the plot. They killed Pausanias quickly to seal his mouth. Otherwise the obviously intelligent move was to capture Pausanias and torture him until he revealed everything he knew about the killing, including any possible accomplices. Just so, in the JFK assassination, Lee Harvey Oswald (insert Pausanias) died too soon, before all possible revelations had been made.

Pausanias did have a private grudge against the king, but this need not have been settled in such a public forum as the theatre where Philip was celebrating the marriage of his daughter before thousands of locals and

visitors. However, this was a place very suitable for the real movers of the murder since they wished everything to be enacted publicly so as to clear themselves of any blame which might have attached to them had the murder been done in a back alley or bed chamber. Ten thousand people saw Pausanias kill Philip—only a few would have seen Alexander's three friends kill Pausanias after he had fled the theatre. The wielder of the murder weapon died that day and took with him the knowledge which could have hanged the real killers who had put him up to the deed. They may even have told Pausanias that Alexander himself approved of the deed but obviously couldn't say so publicly (today we call this plausible deniability).

In any murder the homicide detective asks the question "cui bono" (who benefits). The number one beneficiary was Alexander, who in recent years had been in growing conflict with his father. But Alexander's incredible piety rules out seeing him as a patricide upon whom the Furies ("Erinyes") would seek a terrible divine revenge. Alexander's mother Olympias was also a major beneficiary since by 336 she clearly despised her husband. But Olympias had an alibi (though the chronology is uncertain here) since she appears to have been in exile in Epirus in 336 and thus would not have had ready access to Pausanias.

With Philip dead and Prince Alexander now king, two of the conspirators, Perdikkas and Leonnatus, could look forward to brilliant careers, while the third, Attalus, at least had some moderate achievements ahead. When Alexander died in 323 BC Perdikkas, who was second-in-command to Alexander, actually inherited his power as regent, while Leonnatus was by then a senior field marshal in the army.

It is my own guess that Alexander had from the first suspected the true circumstances of the murder, but found it impolitic to follow up on what were, after all, only suspicions. Putting these three men, who in fact had been and would be in the future totally loyal to him, to death would not have served Alexander's interests. Alexander himself would also have looked bad.

As my final argument as to their guilt, I add this last speculation. Alexander's piety caused an uneasy conscience about the grim but beneficial affair. In 331 in Egypt, according to army scuttlebutt, Alexander asked the god Ammon-Ra whether all the murderers of his father had been punished. He may have had some inkling over the years of the truth but never cared to press the issue. Now the god spoke and possibly cleared the problem away by giving divine sanction and approval to close the case forever.

Toward the end of Alexander's life he had occasion to praise his father's accomplishments before the army and to plan a magnificent tomb for Philip—an act of overt piety for all to see. The unease about the murder had ended in Egypt in 331, and the murderers were smoothly promoted to the highest positions at court. Crime had paid well on this occasion.