One of the more important developments following the battle of Issus late in November 333 BC was the capture of Dareius’ field treasury and baggage train which he had despatched from Sochi to Damascus before the battle. The fullest account of this enterprise is provided by Quintus Curtius Rufus, which many modern critics regard as being considerably embellished (3.12.27-13.17; 4.1.4). By contrast, Arrian’s notices of the event are very brief (2.11.9-10; 15.1). Plutarch provides additional important information (Alex. 24.1-3), as does Athenaeus (13.607f-608a). Polyaeus also provides a useful detail (4.5.1), whereas Justin casts an ambiguous shadow over the matter (11.2-4). Diodorus, notably, omits any reference to it.

Since Arrian is regarded by most modern critics as still our best ancient source on Alexander, we may begin with his account, as brief as it is.

Arrian carefully records that Parmenion was ‘specially detailed [ἐν τούτῳ τούτῳ σταλεντῳ]’ to seize Dareius’ field treasury in Damascus (2.11.10). We do not know just when Parmenion was despatched to Damascus. Curtius states that he had been ‘sent ahead’ (3.12.27) and had ‘gone in advance’ (3.13.1), but does not clarify by how much. Moreover, Arrian, equally vaguely, says that ‘the money at Damascus too was captured soon after [seizure of Dareius’ camp at Issus] by Parmenion’ (2.11.10). Some modern critics think that these statements can be construed to

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1 Heather M. Loube read the MS of this study, and I should like to thank her for a number of helpful suggestions.
mean immediately after the battle.\(^2\) For his part, Tarn did not think that Alexander despatched Parmenion until he had reached Marathus.\(^3\) This, however, seems to be incorrect, because, according to Arrian, it was while Alexander was at Marathus that he received a report from Parmenion that he had already completed the mission (2.15.1)—which appears to be borne out by Athenaeus (13.607f-608a).

Since Parmenion had been given such specific orders about seizing the remainder of Dareius’ treasury, one would surely not be wide of the mark in concluding that Alexander also gave him instructions on what to do with the treasury once he had succeeded in his mission. The fact that when Arrian next refers to the matter he indicates that Parmenion was transporting it to Phoenicia surely indicates that he must have been acting in accordance with the orders he had received. It therefore comes as a surprise when Arrian in the same breath tells his readers that Alexander ‘ordered Parmenion to take the spoils back to Damascus and guard them there \([\tauούτα μὲν ὅπως κομίσαντα ἐς Δαμασκόν Παρμεΐ'ίωνα φυλάσσειν ἐκέλευε]\)’ (2.15.1).

To my knowledge, the significance of this move by Alexander has not to date been fully appreciated. In fact, only rarely does it seem even to have been noticed, much less does one find any comment on its possible importance.\(^4\)


\(^4\) Droysen noted it (J.G. Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* [Gotha—Stuttgart <‘1833> 6 1925], 179), as did Berve, initially (H. Berve, *Alexander der Grosse auf prosopographischer Grundlage* II [Munich 1926], 303), but later refers to Parmenion as simply commanded to guard the booty in Damascus (RE XVIII 4 [1949], s.v. Parmenion no.1, 1562). Beloch has a brief reference to the Damascus mission, being under the impression that Parmenion was given half the army for this enterprise (K.J. Beloch, *Grieschische Geschichte* III 1 [Berlin and Leipzig 121922], 638). Other instances in which the mission receives a brief notice or a passing nod, but
By contrast, Green treats the matter in considerable detail. Like Curtius, Green gives a highly embroidered account, which in a number of places goes well beyond the ancient sources and is at the same time characterised by several contradictions.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) For instance, it was ‘only a few days after Issus’ that Alexander headed south; it was ‘early in January’ that Alexander left Marathus; the force which Parmenion was given was ‘wholly inadequate’ for ‘safe’ execution of the mission; upon reaching Damascus, Parmenion ‘advanced through a flurry of snowstorms’. Despite such a ‘flurry of snowstorms’, ‘even when the snow stopped, the ground remained frozen solid with hoar-frost’ (P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon 356-323 B.C. A Historical Biography* [Berkeley—Los Angeles—Oxford 1991], 244) (emphasis added). At the same time, however (i.e. apparently after the melting of the snow), we have ‘a long column of refugees plodding through the snow,’ but seconds later the Persian treasure is abandoned, ‘scattered in the snow’, whereas, according to Curtius, part was ‘buried in mud’ (3.12.7, cf. 13.11) (ibid., 244).
Coming in the following year, Heckel’s study, which contains a succinct but comprehensive reference to the mission, constitutes a marked contrast to Green. He notes that the mission was ‘accomplished without difficulty,’ and that the episode is ‘heavily dramatised’ by Curtius. He also draws attention, hesitatingly, to Parmenion’s letter to Alexander as recorded in Athenaeus, which ‘appears to have reached Alexander at Marathos’. He further advances the view (citing Arrian) that it was at Marathus that Alexander ‘instructed Parmenion, who was on his way back to Alexander’s camp, to send him only the captive Greek envoys and take the remaining spoils back to Damascus and guard them there’. For the rest, he concentrates on one of the captives, Barsine.⁶

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define the problem more specifically. For instance, O’Brien expresses the view that ‘Alexander ordered Parmenion to transport the spoils from Issus to Damascus and to seize the baggage train there’.⁷ He does not cite any source for the first part of his statement, but it seems from the context that the only passage he can have had in mind is Arr. 2.15.1. His is, however, an inadmissible reading of this passage. Apart from that, it should be noted that in no ancient source is there anything specific about Parmenion being ordered ‘to transport the spoils from Issus to Damascus’. As for Arrian’s statement, ταύτα must refer to τά τε χρήματα ὄσα ... ἀποπέποφει εἰς Δαμασκόν Δαρείος, το καί ὄσα Περσῶν ἄριστα αὐτὰ ἐγκαταλείφθησαν and to τῇ ἄλλῃ βασιλικῇ κατασκευῇ. These are further circumscribed by ἐάλωκε, and ἐάλωσαν—i.e., as having been seized by Parmenion at Damascus. None of this can therefore refer to what Alexander seized at Issus. Furthermore, ὄψις ομίσυτα εἰς Δαμασκόν Παρμενίωνα φιλάσσειν ἐκέλευσε implies that we are dealing here with things which Parmenion himself transported out of Damascus. All of this is consistent with


⁷ O’Brien (supra n. 3), 81.
Arrian's earlier statement about Parmenion—namely, καὶ τὰ ἐν Δαμασκῷ χρήματα ὀλίγοι ύστερον ἐλώ ὑπὸ Παρμενίωνος ἐπὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο σταλέντος (2.11.10). It is also consistent with Plutarch's statement—namely, that μετὰ δὲ τὴν μάχην τὴν ἐν Ἰσσῷ πέμψας [sc. Ἀλέξανδρος] ἐὰς Δαμασκὸν ἐλαβε τὰ χρήματα καὶ τὰς ἀποσκευὰς καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας τῶν Περσῶν (Alex. 24.1). Nor is there the slightest hint in Curtius' very detailed account that Parmenion was bringing anything with him from Issus when he entered Damascus.

Consequently, the ὀτῆσω in Arr. 2.15.1 can only refer to what Parmenion had seized at Damascus. We are therefore faced with the problem of why Alexander ordered Parmenion to transport the booty back to Damascus.

We should also note, however, that Grote, as one might expect, noticed a particular nuance in Arrian's statement. He commented as follows:

The words of Arrian (ii. 15,1) —ἀκούσαντα ἐς Δαμασκὸν—confirm the statement of Curtius that this treasure was captured by Parmenio, not in the town, but in the hands of fugitives who were conveying it away from the town.⁸

At first sight, this looks like a plausible observation, but it calls for some comment, especially in view of the position taken by others. Curtius writes of Parmenion that, after leaving Issus, he 'went on in advance [ille cum praecessisset]' (3.13.1). At some point on this journey Parmenion sent scouts ahead (exploratores ab eo praemissos) (3.13.2). Then a Mardian sent out with a letter from the satrap met up with these scouts. Upon reading this letter, Parmenion sent the Mardian back, who 'entered Damascus before daylight' (3.13.4). Before Parmenion proceeded further, he ordered that some peasants be seized and compelled to act as

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⁸ G. Grote, History of Greece XII (London 1856), 173 n. 4.
guides for the journey. This having promptly been done, Curtius
tells us, Parmenion ‘arrived at the city on the fourth day [quarto
die ad urbem pervenit]’ (3.13.4).9

At this point, Curtius’ account becomes significant. He explains that the governor of Damascus,10 because he did not think
the fortifications of the city were strong enough, gave orders that
the King’s money along with his most precious possessions ‘should
be brought out [efferi iubet]’ (3.13.5). Curtius continues:

Multa milia virorum feminarumque excedentem oppido
sequebantur, omnibus miserabilis turba praeter eum cuius
fidei commissa erat (3.13.6).

There follows the account of the snowstorm and the pathetic scene
of locals carrying large quantities of money and treasures in the
snow and cold (3.13.7). Rolfe, however, appears to have
misunderstood the above passage—namely, in translating the
phrase, excedentem oppido, as follows: ‘As Parmenion was leaving
the city of Damascus’.11 Such a translation introduces an
unwarranted degree of confusion into Curtius’ account. For
Parmenion, upon seeing this throng, became apprehensive, as he
gained the impression that it ‘was an army not to be despised [non
spernendi agminis speciem], ‘and so, ‘with unusual care encouraged
his men with a few words, as if for a regular battle, bidding them
put spurs to their horses and make a swift charge upon the enemy’. This they did, with the result that those who were carrying the
money and treasures panicked and dropped everything and fled
(3.13.7-9).

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9 Whatever ‘on the fourth day’ means in precise terms in this case (cf. J.E. Atkinson, A Commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus’ Historiae Alexandri Magni
Books 3 and 4 [Amsterdam 1980], 258).

10 Probably Cohen, son of Artabazus (cf. ibid., 257).

The point is that if Parmenion were going out of the city (excedere), one would have to conclude that he had already entered the city. That being so, one will also expect him to have met up with the satrap, as he had been encouraged to do in the letter from him, and thereby have secured the handover of the treasure. But on Rolfe’s translation he would not have done so—something which would make him look inexplicably naïve, and just about the last thing one would expect of Parmenion. Moreover, if this throng of men, women and children, and all those carrying and moving vast quantities of treasure and precious objects were following Parmenion as he was leaving the city (i.e., not going out after he had left the city)—one wonders how Parmenion could ever have mistaken them for a regular armed force! Otherwise, why Parmenion should have decided to depart from Damascus before he had secured anything, would remain a complete mystery. No less inexplicable is why the satrap would have wanted to run after the retreating Parmenion in order to hand over to him the King’s treasure and leading Persians.

The grammar, however, eliminates this confusion. We may therefore conclude that as so often, Grote was already correct—namely, that the most likely place where Dareius’ field treasury and baggage train were handed over to Parmenion was at the outskirts of the city.

It also seems legitimate to conclude that Parmenion set out from there in order to transport to Alexander what had been turned over to him at Damascus. From Arrian’s account we must presuppose that he (and this would have been entirely plausible) sent a despatch to Alexander to the effect that he had been completely successful in his mission, that he had embarked on the next phase of what he had been ordered to do, and, especially, was also seeking information about Alexander’s exact whereabouts.

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12 It is pertinent to point out that Yardley does not make the same mistake as Rolfe (cf. J. Yardley and W. Heckel, Quintus Curtius Rufus. The History of Alexander [Harmondsworth 1984], 47).
By the time that Parmenion’s purported despatch (so one may assume) had reached Alexander at Marathus (a distance of about 150 km) and the king had sent his message back, Parmenion must have covered a considerable distance. How surprised he must therefore have been to receive the command to transport everything ὄττίσω to Damascus and guard it there!

Is one, however, really to place so much emphasis on a single word? A survey of Arrian’s use of ὄττίσω in fact suggests that in this case one should. The term occurs 32 times in his Anabasis. In all of them, movement is either specifically indicated or certainly implied, with a number of parallels very close to our example.

For instance, only a short time later, namely, when Alexander had accepted the surrender of Sidon and was on his way from there to Tyre (εἰς τοὺς ἀρχαῖους οὐτεὶ ὦς ἐνὶ Τύρῳ), he was met, on the road (κατὰ τὸν ὄδον), by Tyrian envoys bearing certain overtures. Alexander thanked them and expressed to them his own wishes, in particular his desire to offer sacrifice in their temple of Heracles (2.15.6-7). They returned to the city with these wishes, put them before the authorities, who deliberated and sent them out to Alexander again with their answer. Upon receiving this, Alexander, Arrian tells us, ‘angrily sent back the envoys [τοὺς μὲν πρέσβεις πρὸς ὃργὴν ὄττίσω ἀπέπεμψεν’ (2.16.7-8). From Arrian’s account, then, this event must have taken place somewhere between Sidon and Tyre—doubtless closer to Tyre, but clearly some distance from it.

An equally close parallel is the case of the statues of the tyrannicides which Xerxes had removed from Athens in 480 and which Alexander encountered upon his arrival in Susa in 331. According to Arrian, καὶ ταύτας Ἠθικαῖοι ὄττίσω πέμπει Ἀλέξανδρος (3.16.8), and ... Ἀριστογείτοιον εἰκόνα τὰς χαλκὰς ὀύτω λέγεται ἀπεγεχθῆναι ὄττίσω ἐς Ἐθικαῖος (7.19.2).

There is also the celebrated instance in which Alexander discharged the Greek allies at Ecbatana in 330: καὶ νῦν ταλοῦς
Moreover, Acuphis of Nysa reminded Alexander that at a much earlier era Dionysus, after conquering the Indians, himself returned to Greece:

Moreover, Acuphis of Nysa reminded Alexander that at a much earlier era Dionysus, after conquering the Indians, himself returned to Greece: *Διόνυσος γαρ ἐπειδὴ χειρωσάμενος τὸ Ἰνδων ἔθνος ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ὑπέστη τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν* (5.1.5).

In connection with Alexander's brush with Porus, he sent Coenus back to the Indus: *'Αλέξανδρος, Κοῖνον ... πέμψας ὑπὸ τὸν Ἰνδον ποταμόν* (5.8.4). A particularly close parallel occurs shortly after Alexander was forced to turn back at the Hydaspes, when he despatched the cavalry of Nysa: *τοὺς ἵππεας δὲ τοὺς Νυσαίους ὑπὲρ ὑπὶ τὴν Νύσαν* (6.2.3.). Another close parallel is found in connection with Alexander's crossing of the Tanais (Jaxartes) and his pursuit of the Scythians. Upon falling ill from having drunk polluted water, he had to be carried back into camp: *ἐκομίσθη ὑπὸ τὸ στρατόπεδον* (4.4.9).

In fact, in all instances involving the use of this adverb, movement of a greater or lesser distance between two points is incontrovertibly indicated. This is indeed no less so in those instances in which an adverb is not used. This is indicated in particular by the case of the tyrannicides cited above: in one instance without an adverb, in the other with it—with the same meaning in each.

13 Cf. *'Αλέξανδρος δὲ τὴν μὲν λείαν ὑπὲρ ὑπὲρ ὑπὲρ ὑπὲρ τὰς πόλεις τῶν Ἐπὶ θαλάσσῃ* (1.2.1).

14 Cf. τὸ δὲ πολὺ πλῆθος τῶν Τριβαλλῶν ἐφύγεν ὑπὸ ὑπὶ τὴν Νύσαν (1.2.3), and ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀκεσίνην αὐτὸ ἐπαινεῖ ὑπὸ (5.29.2).

15 See, in addition to the parallels already cited, the following: 2.7.2; 2.8.1; 5.20.4; 6.8.2; 6.29.1.

16 See, further, 1.4.8 (he'sent them [the Celtic envoys] back home again'); 2.12.4 (his [Dareius'] shield has been brought back [into the camp']); 3.3.5 ('the serpents led the way to the oracle [of Siwah] and back again'); 3.30.3 ('Ptolemy, after seizing Bessus, went back'); 4.26.2; 5.25.3; 26.3; 28.5; 7.17.2; 7.19.1; 20.10.
It may therefore be concluded, as already indicated, that the force of Arrian’s statement is that Parmenion was already well under way to Phoenicia with a good deal (if not all) of what he had seized at Damascus.

How, however, is one to resolve the problem posed by Alexander’s order to go back to Damascus? There could be two explanations. It is possible that he did not want his army exposed to the luxuries of Persia while engaged in pursuing crucial strategic objectives. And luxuries there seem to have been at Damascus, if Curtius is to be trusted:

Scattered over all the fields lay the King’s riches, that money designed for the pay of a great force of soldiers, the adornments of so many men of high rank, of so many illustrious women, golden vases, golden bridles, tents adorned with regal splendour, chariots too, abandoned by their owners and filled with vast riches ... For of the fortune, incredible and beyond belief, which had been stored up in the course of so many years, a part was now seen rent by brambles and part buried in mud; the hands of the ravishers were not sufficient to carry the spoil (3.13.10-11).\(^\text{17}\)

The booty also seems to have included people, who figured in Parmenion’s reported Letter to Alexander. According to Athenaeus, they involved

329 royal mistresses who played musical instruments, 46 weavers of chaplets, 277 caterers, 29 kettle-tenders, 13 cooks for milk products, 17 bar-tenders, 70 wine-clarifiers and 40 perfume-makers (13.607f-608a)—making a total of 821.

\(^{17}\text{Cf. the comments by Atkinson (supra n. 8), 263-65. According to Curtius the pecunia amounted to 2600 talents, and the wrought silver to 500 pounds, not to mention the 30,000 homines and 7000 pack animals (3.13.16).}\)
And Plutarch offers the general comment that (after Issus)

they were like dogs in their eagerness to pursue and track down the wealth of the Persians.

However, Alexander determined first to make himself master of the seacoasts (Alex. 24.2).

This last statement by Plutarch would seem to support the idea that Alexander wanted to get on with more serious business before letting his troops loose on Persian luxuries, with the numerous debilitating or at least distracting ramifications implied in the manner in which Plutarch construes the situation.

There are, however, difficulties posed by Plutarch’s statements. For one thing, there is no evidence that later, when the Macedonians did become exposed to Persian luxuries in their full scope, this had either a debilitating, or indeed even a seriously distracting, influence on their performance. It might of course be argued that Alexander could not know this in advance. But, apart from this consideration, there are other, and more serious, problems raised by Plutarch’s statements. He implies that Alexander’s decision ‘first to make himself master of the seacoasts’ was determined by the fact that the Macedonians ‘had struck the trail,’ that ‘they were like dogs in their eagerness to pursue and track down the wealth of the Persians’. In part, this is a general statement, referring to the Macedonians as a whole. More specifically, the term, ἀψάμενοι στίβου, must refer back to καὶ γευσάμενοι τότε πρώτον οἱ Μακεδόνες χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργυροῦ καὶ γυναικῶν καὶ διαίτης βαρβαρικῆς.

If one takes Plutarch in a strict sense, at the time it will have been the few troops with Parmenion (paucitas suorum) (Curt. 3.13.1) who ‘tasted’ Persian luxuries. It should therefore follow that those who had not tasted them, the bulk of Alexander’s army, at the time in northern Phoenicia, could not be painted as similar to dogs breathlessly trying to track down the wealth of
the Persians. But Plutarch says, specifically, that 'the rest of the army also was filled with wealth'—i.e., in addition to the troops with Parmenion (Alex. 24.1). This, however, is simply not true. The best solution would seem to be to regard Plutarch as having confused things, and to accept Curtius and Diodorus. If one accepts Curtius' graphic account, the Macedonians will already have had a substantial taste of Persian luxuries:

But that camp also [at Issus], rich with every kind of wealth, the victor had already entered. The soldiers had plundered a huge weight of gold and silver, the equipment not of war but of luxury, and since they were taking more than they could carry, the roads were strewn here and there with packs of less value, which their avarice had scorned in comparison with richer prizes.

And now they had reached the women, from whom their ornaments were being torn with the greater violence the greater they were; force and lust were not sparing even their persons (3.11.20-21).18

But if Alexander's army numbered about 35,000 at the time, as has been calculated, one wonders just how many luxuries there were to go round, and just how many of the rank and file really did get a genuine taste of things—and not least since Dareius had already moved the greater part to Damascus. Nor is there any indication that in immediate terms the efficiency of any of those who did get a taste of Persian luxury was seriously affected. Indeed, Polybius commented that Alexander's officers and soldiers

defeated the enemy in many marvellous battles, exposed themselves often to extraordinary toil, danger and hardship, and after possessing themselves of vast wealth and unbounded resources for satisfying every desire, neither suffered in a single case any impairment of their physical powers, nor even to gratify their passion were

18 Cf. Diod. 17.35.1-5. See also Atkinson (supra n.8), 240-41.
guilty of malpractices and licentiousness; but all of them, one may say, proved themselves indeed to be kingly men by virtue of their magnanimity, self-restraint and courage, as long as they lived with Philip and afterwards with Alexander (8.10.9-10).

One can therefore scarcely accept Plutarch's explanation that the reason why Alexander wanted to protect his troops from Persian luxury was his desire first to secure important strategic objectives. It could of course be argued that, despite Plutarch, Alexander may still have wanted to maintain strict discipline within his army. But this appears to be called into question by another statement by Plutarch. He tells us that at Damascus

most of all did the Thessalian horsemen enrich themselves, for they had shown themselves surprisingly brave in the battle, and Alexander sent them on this expedition, wishing to have them enrich themselves (Alex. 24.1).

Alexander can scarcely have let one part of his army loose on Persian luxuries and not at the same time the others—i.e., unless he had some specific objective in mind.

There is a further point. It is noteworthy that, according to Arrian, Parmenion was not only to take everything back to Damascus, but also φυλάσσειν it there. But it was not necessary for Parmenion to remain at Damascus, for, once captured, the booty could easily have been guarded by a much lower-ranking general, with only a moderately sized force. According to Curtius, when Parmenion approached Damascus, he was, as we already saw, met by a native of Mardia who delivered to him a letter sent by the satrap of Damascus to Alexander. When Parmenion opened it, he found therein a statement to the effect that

Alexander should speedily send one of his generals with a small force [cum manu exigua], to whom he might hand over what Dareius had left in his charge (3.13.3).
Moreover, given the nature of Alexander's project in Phoenicia, it would certainly have been desirable for him to have his 'chief of staff' and second-in-command present with him. The order to Parmenion to return to Damascus must therefore be regarded as rather surprising. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the impression that Alexander was attempting to keep Parmenion grounded in Damascus. One must accordingly look for an explanation—other than the one given by Plutarch.

As a second solution, I suggest that Alexander's order in fact fits into a pattern—namely, of his overall treatment of Parmenion. So far as I can tell, it was Schachermeyr who drew attention to such a pattern in the greatest detail. He designated it as the Alexander-Parmenion polarity. He clearly appears to have been following suggestions made by Beloch, who maintained that, when Alexander departed for Asia, Antipater and Parmenion more or less assumed control of Macedonian affairs—the former by taking over control of Macedonia and Greece, the latter by being at the head of the army that was to conquer Asia. In addition, the two most important sectors of the army were being commanded by Parmenion's sons: Philotas in command of the whole of the Companion cavalry, and Nicanor in command of the core of the infantry, the Hypaspists. Furthermore, Parmenion's brother was in command of the light cavalry, and then was placed in charge of the satrapy of Sardis, the most important post in the whole of Asia Minor. Schachermeyr may also have been following Berve, who asked the question: How could the precarious expedition to Asia have even begun, had not Parmenion's proven leadership within the army acted as a kind of guarantee of its success?

As for his part, Schachermeyr expanded on these ideas, and suggested that it can hardly have been to Alexander's liking that

19 K.J. Beloch, Griechische Geschichte IV 1 (Berlin and Leipzig 1925), 20.

from the very outset all the commanding officers in the army were confidants of Parmenion. Upon examining the command structure of Alexander’s army in 335 one could gain the impression that it was more an army of Parmenion than an army of Alexander. After returning from Asia Minor at the end of 335 he helped Alexander organise for the expedition against Persia, and then set out with him. His position was essentially that of chief of staff. And if Diodorus can be trusted, Parmenion could be seen as the chief architect in organising the different components of the army—the Macedonian Companions, the Greek allies and the mercenaries (17.17.3). One of his sons, Philotas, was commander of the Hetairoi, while another, Nicanor, was commander of the Hypaspists. A close friend, Hegelochus, was in charge of the Scouts, the Prodromoi. His brother, Asander, was in charge of organising the light cavalry, indeed perhaps the whole cavalry. Thus all the key commands were exclusively in Parmenion’s hands. Much the same was true at the regimental level. These included, for instance, Coenus, his son-in-law, and Amyntas, the son of Andromenes. Moreover, Amyntas’ brothers seem to have been amongst Parmenion’s very close friends. This monopoly comes as something of a surprise, given Parmenion’s absence from the country in 336/35. It must therefore by seen as a carry-over from the time of Philip, when Parmenion organised the various contingents of the army in such a way that he was able to place his sons and brothers and friends in key commands—a situation which Alexander inherited when he assumed the throne, but could not do anything to alter for the time being. Accordingly, he had to put up with a situation in which Parmenion was actually in a more powerful position than he was himself.21

While this, understandably, was not to Alexander’s liking, it can scarcely have been to Parmenion’s liking that from the very beginning of the expedition he was systematically discriminated

21 The only leading position which Alexander was able to corner was that of the finances of the army, which he gave to his friend from childhood days, Harpalus. But this was not a post to which any of Philip’s veterans were attracted.
against. Not only did Alexander engineer things in such a way that not Parmenion, but he himself assumed the offensive position in the line of battle, and so faced the enemy in its strongest position—i.e., where the most glory was to be won. While such action by Alexander may indeed be consonant with his position (as king) and with his own personality, it does not, given all the other factors, rule out that it may at the same time have been part of a long-range strategy. Moreover, not only did he again and again advocate the very opposite policy of what the experienced Parmenion counselled. Rather, from the very time that they crossed to Asia Minor Alexander repeatedly shunted him aside, and at every convenient opportunity commissioned him to carry out secondary operations. He excluded him from taking part in the campaign in Lycia and Pamphylia, but also sent him ahead from Tarsus to secure the frontier passes. After Issus he despatched him to Damascus. And in such operations he did not as a rule provide him with Macedonian troops—presumably with the object of weaning the latter away from Parmenion; henceforth it was to be Alexander’s army, not that of Parmenion. This could even have important constitutional ramifications, seeing that the military assembly was composed of the Macedonian army. If Alexander could bind the troops in blind commitment to himself, he need not fear any opposition from the side of the commanders—i.e., from the Parmenion clique.

Alexander took other measures as well, whereby he undermined Parmenion’s position. He left Asander behind in Lydia—in what appeared to be an important post, but which in fact eliminated him from the central theatre of action. In a somewhat similar manner he despatched Hegelochus to the Hellespont. Nicanor and Philotas retained their positions, but were not entrusted with any major projects. Moreover, when Alexander proceeded against the mountain tribes in the Anti-Lebanon, he did not appoint them to represent him during his absence, but Craterus and Perdiccas. And when he organised the naval force at Tyre, it was again Craterus who was in command on the left wing. It is noteworthy too that Craterus and Perdiccas came from the mountain cantons of western Macedonia—creating
the impression that Alexander was attempting to find his support more in the mountain aristocracy rather than in the old families of the central region of the country. In addition, he began to draw increasingly on companions of his youth who came from the same district as he himself did. True, the appointment of Harpalus as keeper of the military purse had turned into an embarrassment, when he recently fled to Greece. But now Hephaistion, his bosom companion, was elevated to prominence for the first time, and given significant commissions—thus the reorganisation of the monarchy of Sidon, as well as being put in charge of the completely safe expedition with the fleet from Tyre to Egypt. Erigyius was placed in charge of the allied cavalry. And Laomedon’s position in charge of oriental war prisoners now also became more and more important. In short, everywhere one looks one sees a definite reshuffling of personnel—albeit without any evident friction or without resorting to force, and apparently without creating any overt enemies. This may explain why Parmenion continued to be loyal and correct, but he must certainly at the same time have had his own thoughts about things.22

Badian adopted an almost identical view, with the inclusion of a few additional, minor details.23 Heckel has now also provided a thoughtful discussion, with additional details.24

The above scenario is further understandable if one bears in mind that while Philip was still alive Alexander had few friends amongst the great Macedonian families. Nor should one forget that Philip’s last bride was the niece of Attalus, and therefore the famous, cutting remark made by Attalus, Parmenion’s son-in-


24 Heckel (supra n.5), 13-23. See also his brief overview of what he calls the ‘Old Guard’ (ibid., 3). On the suppression of Parmenion’s contributions generally by Arrian, see Atkinson (supra n.8), 243-44.
law, at the celebration of Philip’s wedding to Cleopatra in 337, which, according to Plutarch, brought on ‘the most open quarrel’ (Alex. 9.3-5) and resulted in all but incalculable consequences.

It may therefore be argued that Alexander’s order to Parmenion to return to Damascus with the booty from Dareius’ field treasury, and then to remain there guarding it, can be seen as consonant with the above pattern of an Alexander-Parmenion polarity.

There are, however, some additional features which need to be taken into account. Curtius also tells us, after finishing his account of Parmenion’s seizure of Dareius’ treasury and going on to other things, that

Alexander had made Parmenion, through whom the booty at Damascus had been recovered, governor [praefecit] of the part of Syria called Coele, with orders to preserve the booty itself and the prisoners with diligent care [diligenti] (4.1.4).

There has been much discussion about just what was meant by Coele Syria in antiquity, and especially at this time.²⁵ Moreover, Arrian mentions that Alexander, just before or just after leaving Issus and proceeding south towards Phoenicia,

appointed Menon son of Cerdimmas as satrap of Coele Syria, giving him the allied cavalry to protect the country (2.13.7).

This clearly complicates the issue. Whatever the problems, it would seem that Parmenion was given command of some district. Bosworth has sought to resolve the problem by positing ‘two

separate tasks in Syria, one civil and one military'—with Menon charged to ‘secure and police the area of north Syria acquired by the victory at Issus’. At the same time, there was ‘also a military task’—namely, ‘to secure the interior of southern Syria while Alexander moved down the coast’. Parmenion was placed in charge of this task. This is indeed an attractive solution, but admittedly remains strictly conjectural. There are other possibilities. Leutze, for instance, earlier argued that Arrian made a mistake here, that Menon was not appointed as the first satrap of Syria by Alexander until the winter of 332/1—i.e. not until after Parmenion and Andromachus, to whom Parmenion handed it over, had fulfilled their tasks (Curt. 4.5.9, cf. 4.8.9-11).

Heckel offers a third possibility, suggesting that Parmenion may be ‘a corruption of Menon’. This is an elegant solution, although he concedes that it is not entirely without difficulties.

By contrast, Green offers a very simplified solution. Failing to note Arrian’s detail regarding Alexander’s order to Parmenion to return to Damascus, he depicts Parmenion asking, as from Damascus, ‘what ... were the king’s instructions now?’ He knows that Alexander’s reply was ‘very crisp and practical’—not to return to Damascus and preserve the spoils there, but ‘to organize the military defences of lowland Syria, in collaboration with Memnon, the new governor’. Quite apart from the circumstances


28 Heckel (*supra* n.5), 19 n. 54.

29 No such action by Parmenion is either stated or even implied in our sources.

30 Green (*supra* n. 4), 245.
that a) none of this is at all so certain, and b) it creates the impression that there is no problem at all about what was Coele Syria and who was governor of Coele Syria at the time, Green creates even more problems by coming up with even more governors—with a total of at least two, if indeed not three. In the first place, he seeks to fudge the problem by implying that Parmenion did not have any official status, certainly not any independent one, but operated under the governor of Syria. Curtius, however, explicitly states that Parmenion was appointed governor of Coele Syria (at Alexander Parmenionem ... Syriae quam Coelen vocant praefecit) (4.1.4). Thus, as already noted above, there appear to be two governors of Syria at the same time. But apparently not satisfied with two such governors, Green seems determined to have a third—for earlier he tells the reader that Alexander 'left Menon as governor of Lowland Syria,' whereas now Parmenion allegedly receives instructions to act 'in collaboration with Memnon, the new governor'.

Berve suggested that Alexander appointed Parmenion to this added responsibility at the time that he gave him the order to return to Damascus with the booty. On the theory being advanced here, this would make good sense. With Alexander's strategy of shunting Parmenion aside whenever he could do this adroitly, he must have hoped that the project of seizing the field treasury of Dareius would take some time—which could find some support in the small size of the force which he gave him. Alexander must therefore have been greatly surprised when having proceeded no further than Marathus he received a report

31 On this, see Atkinson (supra n. 8), 269.

32 On Menon, see Arr. 2.13.7, cf. Bosworth (supra n. 25), 224-25.

33 Green (supra n.4), 239, cf. 245. To my knowledge, no Memnon was ever governor of Syria. The anomaly seems to have crept into the 'revised and enlarged' second edition (cf. P. Green, Alexander the Great [London 1970], 133-34).

34 H. Berve, Alexander der Grosse auf prosopographischer Grundlage II (Munich 1926), 301-02.
from Parmenion that he had already accomplished his mission. And how much greater the irritation must have been at the news that Parmenion was already en route with the booty! Hence the order to return and ‘preserve the booty itself and the prisoners with diligent care’! Hence too the additional task of securing the interior of southern Syria! But once again Parmenion carried out his mission in exemplary and typical fashion. As Curtius tells us, the Syrians were quickly [CELERITER] subdued and obediently did what they were ordered (4.1.5).

Little wonder that it is possible to say that Parmenion ‘was soon back in Alexander’s headquarters at Tyre’ (Arr. 2.25.2).\textsuperscript{35} This can hardly have been to Alexander’s liking. Least of all if Parmenion on his own initiative left someone else in charge of a good part of the booty and the prisoners at Damascus—which appears to be a real possibility, although our sources are completely silent on this question. In the circumstances, it would have taken only a few of his Thessalian cavalrmen to do this. Such a move would be all the more remarkable in view of Alexander’s specific order to ‘preserve the booty itself and the prisoners with diligent care’. Since the Persian governor had suggested in his letter to Alexander that he need send only ‘a small detachment’ to take over the Treasury (Curt. 3.13.3), it should have required an even smaller force to guard it—leaving Parmenion to return to Alexander’s headquarters, for which he could easily have envisaged any number of reasons. Is it possible that this development helps to explain in part the manifest irritation recognised by all modern critics in Alexander’s famous quip, ‘if I were Parmenion’?\textsuperscript{36}

There is, finally, the discrepancy in Plutarch, already noted, involving the Thessalians and the rest of Alexander’s army. As we saw, it would not have made sense for Alexander to have attempted to protect the rest of his army from Persian luxuries,

\textsuperscript{35} Atkinson (supra n. 11), 269.

\textsuperscript{36} If this in fact ever took place (cf. Beloch [supra n. 18] IV 2 (1927), 297.
while deliberately sending the Thessalian horsemen to ‘enrich themselves’. Nor does Plutarch’s reasoning behind this decision make sense—namely, because ‘they had shown themselves surpassingly brave in the battle [τούτους γὰρ ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς διαφερόντως ἐν τῇ μάχῃ γενομένους]’ (Alex. 24.1).37

Although the Thessalians did perform very well, there is nothing in the accounts of the battle that suggests that they showed themselves ‘surpassingly brave’. In any event, this seems to be a subject on which some caution is warranted.38 Other contingents had distinguished themselves just as much, if not indeed more.

If Plutarch’s contention is true, that Alexander deliberately sent the Thessalian horsemen with Parmenion in order to ‘enrich themselves’, is it possible to see this as also part of the above pattern—i.e., that Alexander sent them not in order to reward them for their outstanding performance in battle, but to expose them to Persian luxuries for the same reason that he wanted to spare the rest of his army from such exposure—namely, to weaken that element on which Parmenion seems chiefly to have depended? As Hamilton remarked: ‘in all the great battles they fought under Parmenio on the left of the battle-line’.39

If this was Alexander’s objective, it too does not seem to have met with success. At least there is no indication that thereafter the Thessalians showed themselves any less efficient than heretofore.40 On the surface, it could of course be argued that it

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37 Peyrefitte went even beyond Plutarch, and suggested that ‘this mission was a way of compensating his leading general [not just his soldiers] and the cavalry which had once again contributed so much to the victory’ (Peyrefitte [supra n. 3], 268).

38 Cf. Atkinson (supra n. 8), 243, also Heckel (supra n. 5), 16.


40 His dismissal of the Thessalian cavalry at Ecbatana in 330 (Arr. 3.19.5) could be seen as another snub of Parmenion.
would have been absurd for Alexander to have set out deliberately to weaken any element within his army, least of all any cavalry, in which department the Persians were so strong. But it may be argued that it would have been just as absurd to have tried to weaken Parmenion by a systematic policy of shunting him aside. And yet, to what advantage could he have employed his services at Tyre!

In conclusion, Alexander’s order to Parmenion to go back to Damascus with the booty and to guard it there, as well as his further command in connection with Syria, may be seen as part of the pattern of his overall treatment of his indispensable ‘chief of staff’. But in this instance, as well as in the possible attempt to weaken his Thessalian cavalry—all these are elements in his strategy of systematically attempting to shunt Parmenion aside—the seasoned veteran from Philip’s camp was an equal match for Alexander. Consequently, Alexander had to wait for another day to move against him more effectively—and then for the last time. That occasion was to afford what one critic has called ‘a terrifying glance into the daemonic nature of Alexander’.41 From Ecbatana we may cast our glance back to Damascus, and see already foreshadowed there Alexander’s basic attitude towards the one and only general Philip claimed ever to have had.