

THE SUCCESSORS

And the wars for Alexander's Empire. By Jeff Jonas.



When Alexander the Great died in 323 BC, he left his newly conquered empire in disarray. He was the first to conquer the "known world" at that time. Alexander had forced Greek culture onto the people from the cradle of civilization, which had been lorded over by the Persian Empire for two hundred years. After rampaging across Persia, Alexander's armies struck north into the lands of the Skythian nomads. He then vacated the steppes after three long years of tough campaigning against the elusive nomad horsemen. Alexander's insatiable quest for conquest took him east to India, where he defeated a number of armies and people along the Indus. Eventually his army grew tired of the endless march and they mutinied, and forced Alexander to turn back to Babylon. Alexander was planning a campaign to circumnavigate Arabia and maybe conquer the west when he died of mysterious causes at the age of 33.

Alexander's shocking death at a young age without an obvious heir, left it to his general's to decide the fate of the "spear-won" lands under their control. Many of these generals were trustworthy, others conniving and ambitious. Some of the men wished that Alexander's slow-witted half-brother Philip Arrhidaeus should be king, others wanted to wait until Roxanne, Alexander's Sogdian bride, delivered her unborn child. Immediate civil war was averted when a group of dissidents were arrested by the regent Perdikkas, Alexander's ambitious second-in-command in Babylon. The conspirators heads were stomped by elephants in a public execution, as a gruesome deterrent to others. When

Roxanne gave birth to Alexander IV, the generals decided to settle things in place as they were, with Perdikkas as regent in Babylon, and Antipater (one of Philip II's most trusted generals) in Macedonia.

Jealousy and tensions over who would control Alexander's heirs, and even the body of Alexander soon broke down the tenuous status quo. Perdikkas attempted to send the corpse of Alexander to Pella (the capitol of Macedonia) and bury it at Vergina, the Royal tomb site. During the journey the enormous funeral carriage was hijacked by Ptolemy, who currently ruled Egypt. Perdikkas led the royal army and its elephants off to Egypt to deal with Ptolemy in person. He assigned

Above: Gripping Beast Argyraspides

Eumenes, a Greek who had risen to the post of Alexander's personal secretary, to hold Asia against an attack from Antipater. In Asia the Macedonian generals had either aligned with Eumenes, or fled from him. Antigonos Monophthalmos (one-eyed) the aging general who had governed Phrygia, first fled to Macedon, but returned with a fleet to attack the coast of Asia. Antipater sent an army under Craterus (one of Alexander's most charismatic generals) directly against Eumenes. Craterus was killed in battle, but most of his troops escaped from Eumenes and joined up with Antigonos.



While these dramatic events were unfolding in Asia, Perdikkas and the royal army struggled to break through the natural defenses of Egypt, and bring Ptolemy to justice. At one point, Ptolemy himself stabbed the eyes of an elephant while fighting at the walls of a fortress, single handedly turning back Perdikkas's assault. Perdikkas tried to force a crossing of the Nile further south, and used his elephants to try to reduce the river's current as his troops passed over. But the river surged and thousands of his troops were drowned or eaten by crocodiles as they fled back in panic across the swollen torrent. Seleucus, one of Alexander's boyhood companions, and other subordinates decided they had had

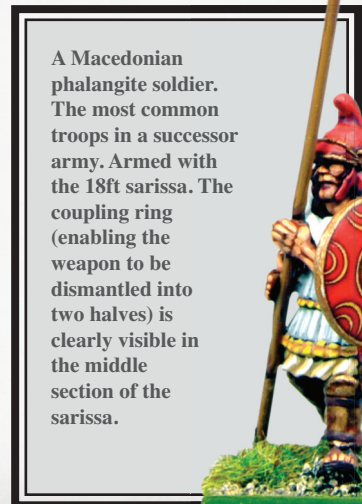
enough of Perdikkas and assassinated him the next morning.

Thus ended the first round of the Wars of the *Diadochoi*, which simply means the Successors, in Greek. The victorious generals sorted out who would be assigned new territories as spoils of war, and a new status quo was set-up. However this new peace was short-lived.

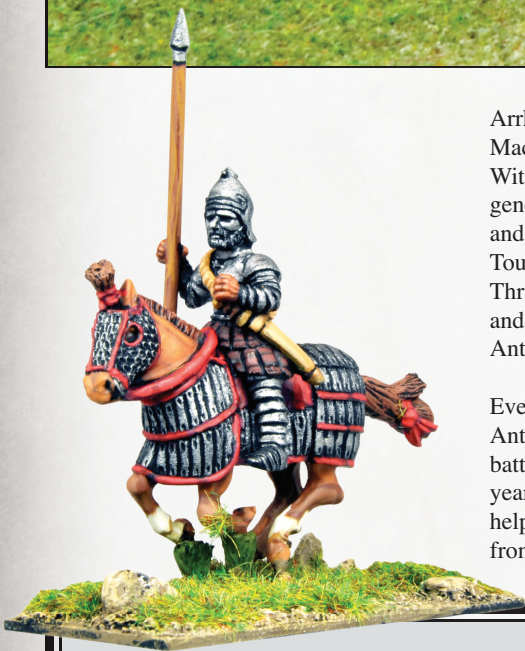
When rock-steady Antipater died in Macedonia, the relative peace once again broke down. Antigonos Monophthalmos chased down Eumenes and executed him after a number of famous battles and took over his army and lands. The imbalance of Antigonid power began to scare the

other generals, and they aligned against old One-eye. This rolling set of "Diadochian Wars" lasted another fifteen years as the generals fought back and forth over Alexander's former empire. During the campaigns, certain generals became ensconced on their turf. Ptolemy doggedly hung onto Egypt and Syria, while his sneaky ally Seleucus grabbed Babylon and most of the eastern realms. A nervous Cassander (son of Antipater) battled many other shady characters trying to take over Macedonia. This included fighting against Alexander's feisty mother, Olympias. Olympias was defeated and executed along with Alexander IV, and Philip

Below: The Hetairoi, meaning companions, the elite cavalry of the of the Macedonian armies.



A Macedonian phalangite soldier. The most common troops in a successor army. Armed with the 18ft sarissa. The coupling ring (enabling the weapon to be dismantled into two halves) is clearly visible in the middle section of the sarissa.



Above: Cataphract warrior wearing full barding.

In the 4th century the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus wrote this description of the sight of a contingent of massed Persian cataphracts "... all the companies were clad in iron, and all parts of their bodies were covered with thick plates, so fitted that the stiff-joints conformed with those of their limbs; and

the forms of human faces were so skillfully fitted to their heads, that since their entire body was covered with metal, arrows that fell upon them could lodge only where they could see a little through tiny openings opposite the pupil of the eye, or where through the tip of their nose they were able to get a little breath. Of these some, who were armed with pikes, stood so motionless that you would think them held fast by clamps of bronze."

Arrhidaeus, and the last heirs of the Macedonian Argead clan were gone. With Alexander's lineage destroyed, the generals declared themselves as kings, and thus began the Successor Empires. Tough as nails general Lysimachos in Thrace joined with Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy to gang up and surround Antigonos.

Eventually this alliance against Antigonos brought him to bay at the battle of Ipsus in 301 BC. The eighty year old general fell in battle with the help of Seleucus's elephants gathered from India. Later on, after a meandering

rise to power, Antigonos's grandson known as Antigonos Gonatos (knock knees) was able to take over Macedonia, and established the Antigonid dynasty. Seleucus founded his own Seleucid Empire stretching from Asia Minor to India, and Ptolemy solidified his position in Egypt, Cyrenaica, the Aegean and the Levant. These dynasties became the "Successor Empires" that fought each other for one hundred and fifty years, and then one-by-one succumbed to Rome. The Ptolemaic dynasty outlasted them all. It stood until 31 BC when Cleopatra VII committed suicide and Rome annexed Egypt, after the battle of Actium.

The Wars of the Successors can be grouped into three general phases. The initial Civil Wars resulted in the formation of the three major dynasties. The next phase would be the wars between the empires themselves and outside invaders and nomads. In the final phase, the empires were each in turn defeated by Rome.

During the initial Diadochian wars, the Successor armies were made up of soldiers that had followed Alexander, as well as local troops trained to fight in the



Macedonian style. The most common troops were phalangites, soldiers armed with pikes that fought shoulder to shoulder and formed the center of the battle array. Cavalry armed with a stout long spear called a xyston formed the bodyguards of the generals and would

appear mostly the same as Alexander's Companion cavalry. Mercenaries and light troops from Thrace and Crete were used by all armies, and local provincial cavalry often fought alongside the ethnic Macedonian forces. Median horse archers could ride with mercenary Tarentine

Above: Later Successor Phalangites (left) and Thorakites (right). Thorakites were armoured but mobile infantry which did not require a rigid formation to be effective in combat. Models by 1st Corps.

Below: Cataphracts. Models by 1st Corps.



cavalry from Italy. These Tarentines carried shields, and their tactics and shield use was copied by cavalry of the later Successor armies.

The Successor empires all attempted to use war elephants, either the Asian variety or the smaller breeds available in North Africa. Ironically, the Romans used elephants too, and often made better use of their elephants against the Successors. Seleucid armies were most notorious for use of elephants, and other gimmicky weapons such as scythed chariots, and even camelry, often with calamitous results to their own side. The Ptolemies raised a corps of North African elephants to keep up their stature in the elephant arms race. The Antigonids eventually were cut off from elephants and did not use them after their herd died out in the 260's BC.

Successor Empire armies were noted for their standing regiments of troops, identified mostly by shield style. The Seleucids had a regiment of pikemen called the Silver Shields (*argyraspides*), that harkened back to Alexander's own elite foot guards, the hypaspists. The Antigonids in Macedon, fielded two phalanx divisions, one with white shields (*leukaspides*), and one with bronze shields (*chalkaspides*). In Egypt some troops were levied from the Egyptian population and these *machimoi* phalanxes fought well against the Seleucids. Successor armies normally fielded a royal guard cavalry regiment, known as the Agema. Often these troops were lavishly equipped, and under the

Seleucids, they evolved into heavily armored cataphracts.

Styles of gear changed as time passed. Early Successor phalangites probably wore simple Thracian style helmets, which most likely would have been of non-standard design. Alexander's elite troops were issued uniform gear in India, but the great majority would likely be less well equipped. By the time of the Successor Empires, troops were outfitted with equipment provided by the Royal armories. Bronze shields were now embossed with the symbols of the current dynasty and monikers of the empire. Helmets were more ornate, with reinforced crowns, some in two tones. Red and black helmet colors are shown on one Macedonian tomb. We even have surviving details of what gear was assigned to an Antigonid soldier, and the fines for losing it!

Most miniatures that are available for the wars of Alexander the Great, can be easily used for the battles and campaigns of the early Diadochoi as well. However, as the Successor empires diverged and solidified their troops also took on a more uniform look that separated them from their adversaries and each other, most notably with their shield designs, armor, and helmet fashions. Thus Antigonid phalangites fighting Romans at Cynoscephalae in 197 BC, would have had the same basic gear that Alexander's phalanx used at Issus in 333 BC, i.e. pike, short sword, small shield on a shoulder loop, open faced helmet, tunic, linen torso

armor, and greaves. Later equipment would have looked subtly different. Contrary to popular belief, trousers were probably rare garb for phalangites. Trousers were likely only worn by levies, known as *pantodapoi* in the early wars, and maybe eastern levies in the Seleucid Empire or on its fringes. The Pontic bronze shield phalanx that fought the later Roman Republic, may have worn trousers since their background was a mix of Greek and Persian influence.

This distinction of styles of gear, and ethnic variety between the top three Successor empires is what leads to their interesting diversity. For too long the notion has been perpetuated that all Successor soldiers wore trousers, or that all Successor armies are Seleucids with cataphracts and elephants. The differences between the Ptolemaic *machimoi*, and the Antigonid *chalkaspides*, or even the Seleucid *argyraspides*, are those details that make collecting Successor armies an interesting challenge for collectors and gamers. Fortunately, some new ranges in 28mm are appearing to whet the appetite for gamers eager to field complete and diverse Successor Empire armies in the larger gaming scales. And, as always, we the gamers win when there are more models to choose from!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The figures seen in the accompanying photos are from Gripping Beast www.grippingbeast.com and 1st Corps. www.1stcorps.co.uk



Above: Argyraspides, Seleucids and Settlers. Models by Gripping Beast.