



Asia Education Foundation

Ashoka and the Mauryan Empire

Investigation 4. Greeks come to India

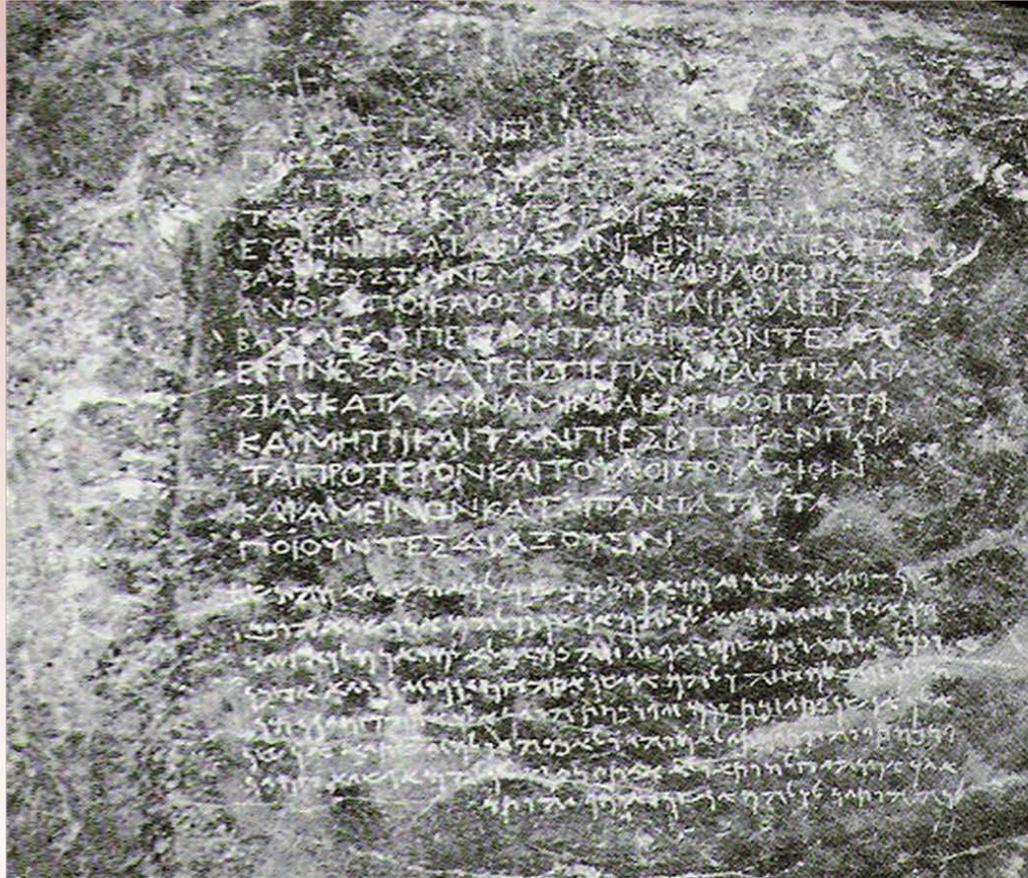
[4.1] Artist's impression of Ashoka



We've found out quite a lot about Ashoka from his inscriptions. We don't really know what he looked like, but here's how an artist sees him.

There are lots of other things we don't know about him as well, so we're going to look at those times from another angle.

[4.2] Ashokan edict at Kandahar



Here's one of Ashoka's inscriptions that you haven't seen before, from Kandahar (which these days is in Afghanistan). It's hard to see the inscription but the top part is in Greek and the lower part is in another language called Aramaic. Now why would Ashoka have used these languages?

[4.3] King Antiochus



Remember that in the edict from Khalsi, Ashoka told us about a Greek king called Antiochus beyond his borders. So perhaps the Kandahar edict was close to the border. Here's Antiochus on a coin.

[4.4] Map showing the Kingdom of Macedon in 336 BCE



On this map you can see the ancient Greek Kingdom of Macedon. You've probably heard of Alexander the Great, who was born in Macedon in 356 BCE, the son of King Philip II.

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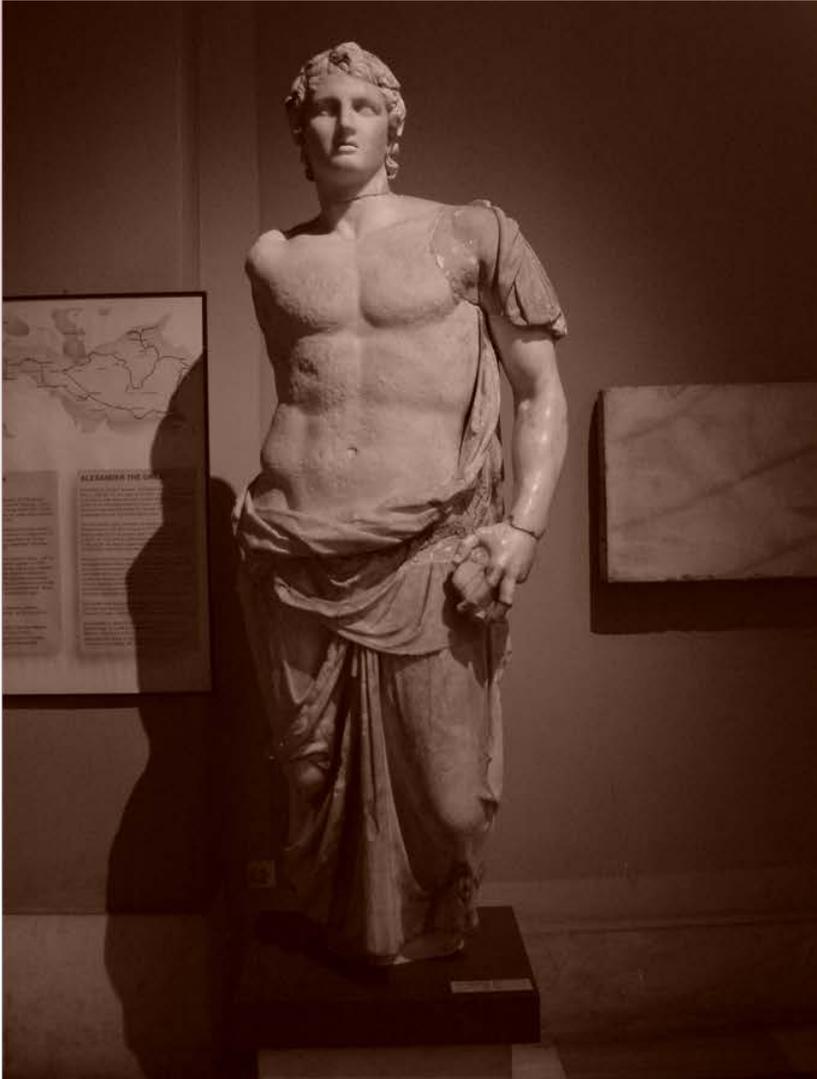
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[4.5] Bust of Alexander The Great



Alexander became king in 336 BCE, when he was only 20 years old. Almost immediately he started conquering other countries.

[4.6] Statue of Alexander the Great



In fact, Alexander spent almost all his adult life away from Macedon, creating a great empire. He and his army fought their way through what we call Turkey today, through Egypt and then through what was at that time the Persian Empire.

[4.7] Map of Alexander's empire



This map gives you an idea of how much territory Alexander conquered. All the way along, he established new cities (usually called 'Alexandria') and left his own soldiers to rule the countries he had conquered.

[4.8] The Khyber Pass



In 327 BCE, Alexander and his army came down through the Khyber Pass into India. Here's what it looks like these days. He had conquered almost all the world the Europeans knew about.

[4.9] The route of Alexander in India



This map shows details of where Alexander went when he reached India. (You can also see some of the 'Alexandrias' on it.) In India his troops became restless because they were a long, long way from home. They didn't want to go on.

[4.10] Mosaic showing Alexander



Here is Alexander in battle, as shown in a mosaic from Roman times. His generals warned that the troops might mutiny, so he and his army turned back towards home. Alexander died four years later when he was just 32.

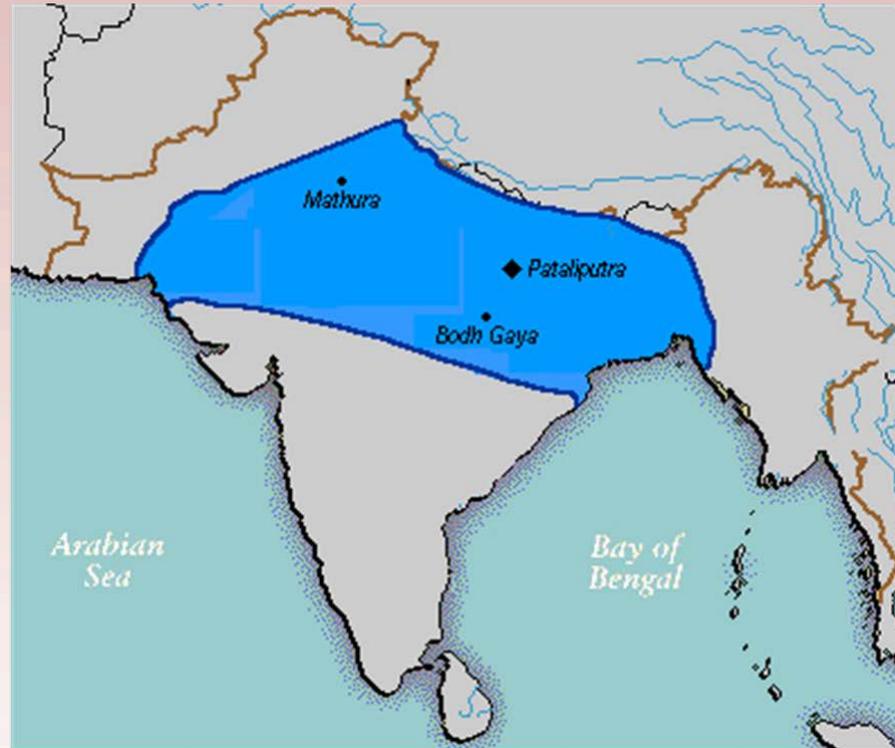
[4.11] Bust of King Seleucus



Alexander left Greek kings behind him in the countries he had conquered. This is Seleucus, who ruled beyond the borders of India.

At about the same time, Chandragupta Maurya became king in the state of Magadh, which had its capital at Pataliputra (now called Patna). He was Ashoka's grandfather.

[4.12] Map of Chandragupta's empire



This map shows Pataliputra and the area ruled by Chandragupta. When he tried to extend his kingdom he fought Seleucus in the north-west but they eventually made peace and Seleucus sent Megasthenes to Pataliputra as his ambassador. Megasthenes wrote a book called *Indika* about his experience. That book was lost, but many other authors later quoted from it.

We're going to look at fragments that remain, and try to work out what Chandragupta's empire was like. That should give us more idea about Ashoka's empire as well.

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