

Well before his accession, Philip II had realized the need for a reliable fighting force on which his country could depend. As king, he transformed his army into a tough, highly disciplined body of soldiers, which enabled him to turn Macedonia itself into a major military power.

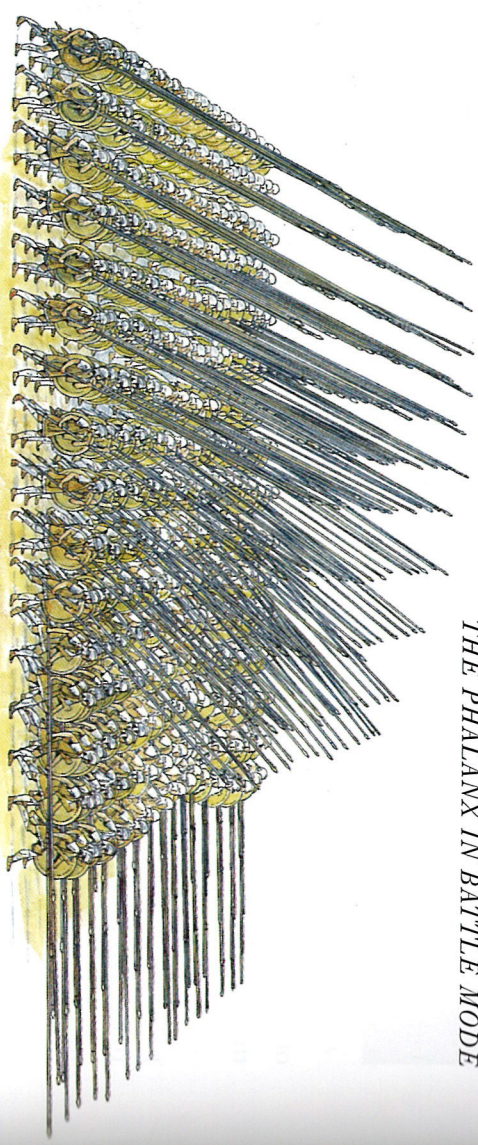
As a teenager, when he was a diplomatic hostage in Thebes, Philip had been inspired by the military genius of the great Theban general Epaminondas and the prowess of the élite Sacred Band (see page 27). However, when he was elected king in 359BCE, he inherited a force that was little more than a weak, undisciplined rabble. The new leader's methods for reforming his army are reported by Diodorus Siculus, "He improved their formations and equipped his troops with the appropriate weapons of war, holding frequent exercises under arms and competitions of physical fitness." Within months of his accession, Philip's new regime had produced a marked improvement in attitude and discipline.

As the king's ceaseless campaigning began to lay the foundations for a future empire, new wealth was used to fund military reforms, and prisoners

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The basic Macedonian phalanx was made up of 16 battalions of 256 pikemen arranged in ranks 16 men wide and 16 deep. The phalanx was dependant upon the ability of its well-drilled troops to move precisely together, and could only advance at a steady march.

THE PHALANX IN BATTLE MODE



standing army was seen as a sign of tyranny.

During his reign (359–336BCE), Philip increased the number of infantry soldiers in the standing army from 10,000 to 24,000. Leading infantry troops were given the title "Foot Companions," equal in standing to their counterparts in the cavalry. The best 3,000 infantry soldiers, known as "Royal Shield Bearers," formed the finest infantry force in the ancient world.

Macedonia's growing army was equipped with the latest weaponry, chief among which was the *sarissa*, an extremely long, cornel-wood pike tipped with an iron blade. Infantry soldiers, arranged in the massed ranks of the phalanx formation (see illustration, opposite), learned to wield the *sarissa* with deadly efficiency. The phalanx combination of spear and shield created a bristling, impenetrable wall which advanced into enemy lines to the war cry "Alalalal!" When deployed on level ground, the Macedonian phalanx proved unbeatable.

By the end of his reign, Philip had also increased the size of the from 600 to a 3,500-strong mounted force, 2,000 of whom were the Thessalian cavalry. Wearing helmets and light body armor, the cavalry were armed with fearsome thrusting spears and short sword light cavalry, equipped with blade-tipped javelins, were often deployed in reconnaissance, a crucial part of ancient warfare. The king also employed a corps of engineers, headed by Polyeidus of Thessaly, to develop methods of siege warfare, such as the 120-foot (36-meter) high tower. Philip revolutionized such techniques to successfully take Amphipolis, Pydna, and Pordaina in 357–356BCE.

All these developments would later be of immense significance to Alexander as he advanced into Asia. By creating such invincible and devising a strategy based on careful planning combined with a surprise attack, Philip gave his son the means of taking on the world.

