

swollen by the rains and the melting snows of the mountains, rendered fording impossible.¹⁰

About the place which Alexander finally chose for the intended crossing, we are told by Arrian: 'There was a headland (ἄκρα) ascending from the bank of the Hydaspes at a point where the river made a remarkable bend, and this was thickly covered with all kinds of trees. Over against it lay an island covered with jungle, an untrodden and solitary place. Perceiving that this island directly faced the headland, and that both places were wooded and adapted to screen his attempt to cross the river, he decided to take his army over this way. Now the headland and the island were 150 stadia distant from the great camp.'¹¹ Curtius's description of the place selected by Alexander for crossing states of the island that it was 'larger than the rest, wooded and suitable for concealing an ambuscade', and adds the important detail: 'A deep ravine (*fossa praealta*) moreover, which lay not far from the bank in his own occupation, was capable of hiding not only foot-soldiers but also men with horses.'¹²

Arrian records details of the dispositions made by Alexander to deceive the Indians as to his intended crossing. A portion of his forces under Krateros was left in the camp with orders to cross to the opposite bank as soon as Poros was seen to have withdrawn from it his formidable array of elephants. Another portion under Meleager was posted half-way between the island and the main camp, and ordered to cross in detachments as soon as the Indian army was seen fairly engaged in battle. Alexander himself with selected troops of horse and foot 'marched with secrecy, keeping at a considerable distance from the river that he might not be seen moving towards the island and the headland from which he intended to cross over to the other side'.¹³

There most of the boats previously brought across from the Indus in sections had been conveyed and secretly put together. Skin rafts carefully provided before were got ready during the night. A violent storm coming on during the night drowned the noise of the preparations with its thunder and rain. Towards daybreak the wind and rain ceased, and the troops on skin rafts and boats moved across in the direction of the island. 'They were not seen by the sentries posted by Poros till they had passed beyond the island and were not far from the bank.' Alexander himself had embarked on a thirty-oared galley with his bodyguards and other selected men.¹⁴

'As soon as the soldiers had passed beyond the island they steered for the bank, being now in full view of the enemy.' While the sentinels galloped off to carry the tidings, Alexander disembarked, himself the first, and at the head of

¹⁰ Cf. *Anabasis*, v. ix. 4.

¹¹ See *ibid.* v. xi. 1.

¹² Cf. Curtius, *Historiae*, viii. xiii. 17.

¹³ Cf. *Anabasis*, v. xi. 3; xii. 1, 2.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.* v. xii. 3, 4; xiii. 1.