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Greeks in India Immediately After Alexander: Seleucus Nicator

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Greeks in India Immediately After Alexander: Seleucus Nicator

Practice MCQs

At a glance

This lesson explains how Seleucus and Chandragupta settled the Indus frontier.

01 **500**Elephants given to Seleucus.
02 **3**Lands given up by Seleucus.
03 **305-301 BCE**Range of years given for the treaty.
04 **Indica**The lost book of Megasthenes.

- Seleucus gave up Paropamisadae, Arachosia and Gedrosia.
- Chandragupta gave five hundred elephants.
- Megasthenes came to Pataliputra as Greek ambassador.

Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator.

Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya.

SatrapA governor of a province.
DiadochiGenerals who split the empire of Alexander.
EpigamiaA Greek word for a marriage tie.
NicatorA Greek title meaning victor.
Alexander's old general Seleucus tried to hold the eastern lands. He met Chandragupta Maurya on the Indus frontier. A treaty ended the contest. This lesson follows that story.

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1. Seleucus and Chandragupta
2. The treaty terms
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Who was Seleucus, and why did he face Chandragupta?

He built a kingdom in the east. Then he met the rising Mauryan king.

1. Who was Seleucus I Nicator?

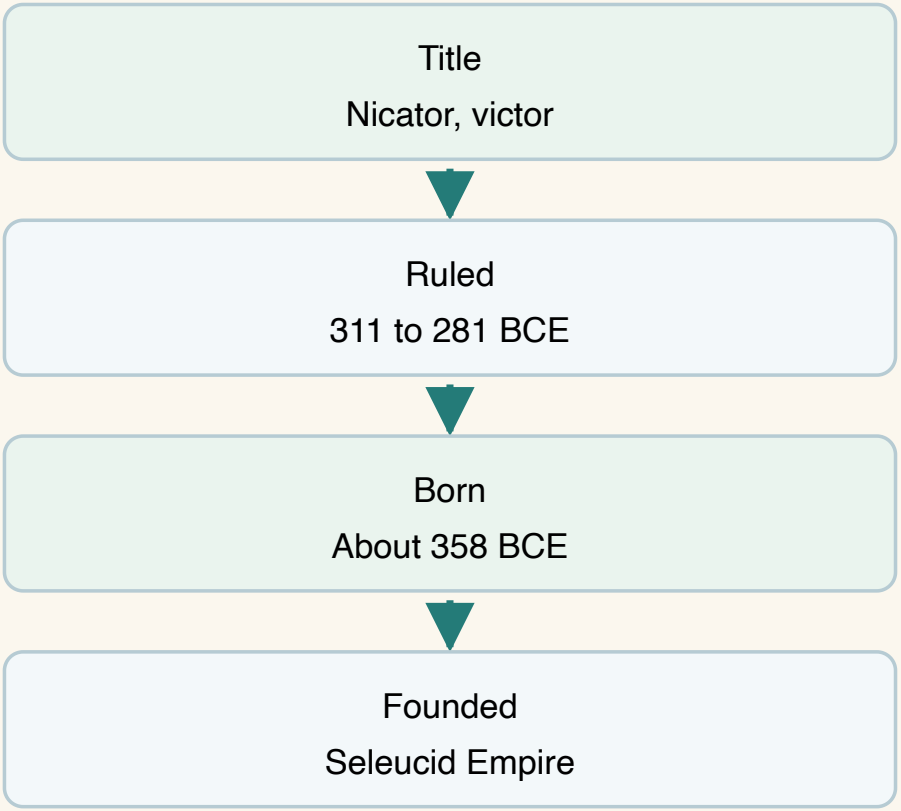
Seleucus I Nicator was one of the Diadochi. The Diadochi were the generals who divided Alexander's empire. Livius says he founded the Seleucid Empire and ruled from 311 to 281 BCE. His title Nicator means "victor".

Seleucus was born around 358 BCE in Europos in Macedonia. He joined Alexander and later became satrap of Babylonia. A satrap is a provincial governor.

In 311 BCE he took Babylonia back. Livius dates the start of the Seleucid Empire to 309 BCE.



Portrait of Seleucus I Nicator, 1st-2nd century CE, Louvre Museum. Photo by Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



Seleucus was one of Alexander's generals.

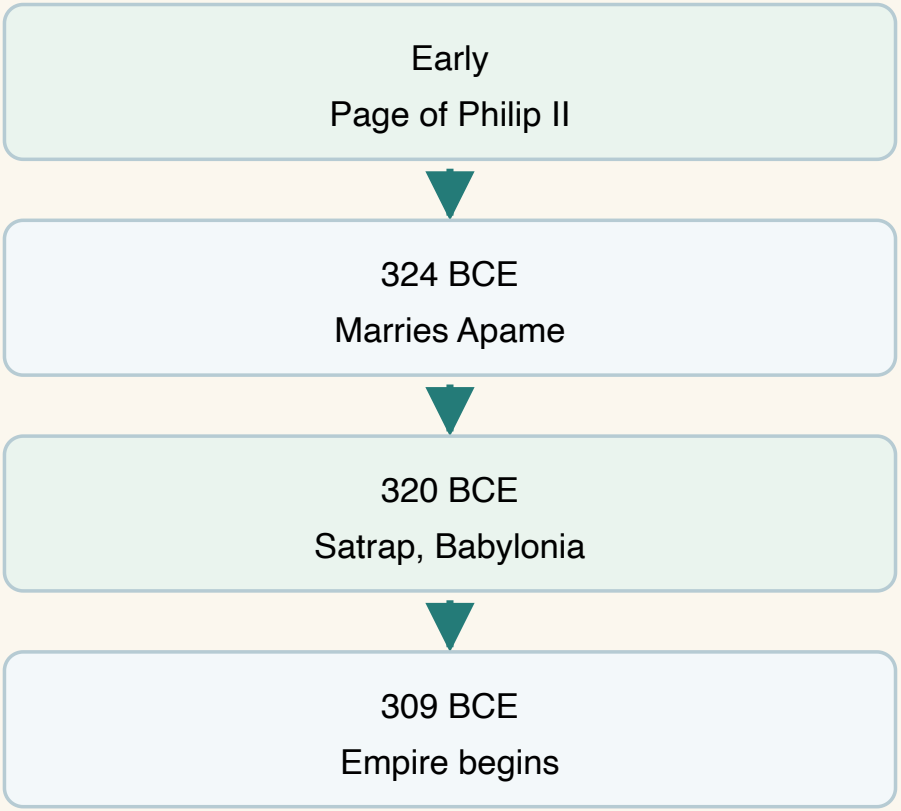
True or False: Seleucus I Nicator was one of the Diadochi.
Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator, item 1

2. How did Seleucus rise to power?

Seleucus joined Alexander as a young Macedonian. He began as a page of Philip II. In 324 BCE he married Apame at Susa.

Alexander died in 323 BCE. Around 320 BCE Seleucus became satrap of Babylonia. In 316 BCE he fled to Egypt when Antigonus tried to subdue him. He fought for Ptolemy there.

He won back Babylonia in 311 BCE and defeated Antigonus in 309 BCE. That year starts the Seleucid Empire in Livius's list.



Seleucus rose among the Diadochi.

Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator, item 2

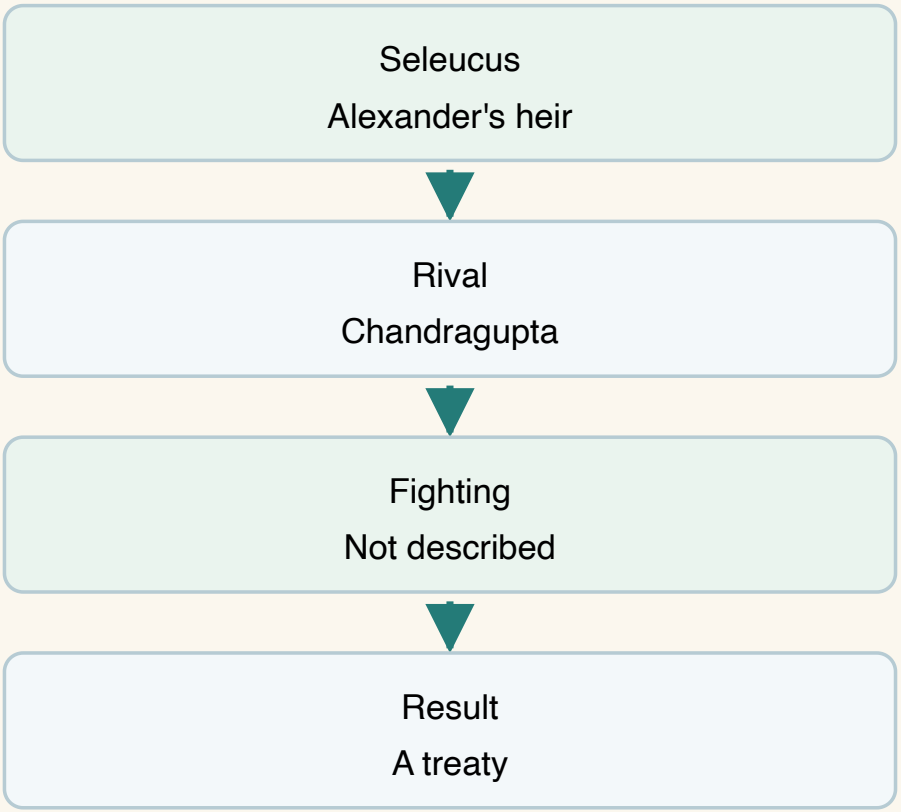
3. Why did he meet Chandragupta?

Alexander had held lands near the Indus. After his death, Chandragupta rose in India. World History says Chandragupta came into conflict with Seleucus, Alexander's heir in the east.

Plutarch says Androcottus, the Greek name for Chandragupta, overran and subdued all India. He is said to have used an army of 600,000 men.

Plutarch adds that Androcottus saw Alexander himself as a young man. He later said that Alexander nearly made himself master of the country. Its king was hated for his low birth.

Livius lists the campaigns in the east and the treaty with Chandragupta after 309 BCE and before the battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE. Our sources give few details of the fighting. The treaty is the clear event.



Only the treaty is clear in the sources.

Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya, item 3

Source: Plutarch, Alexander 62, item 3

Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator, item 3

What did the treaty say?

Seleucus gave up land west of the Indus. Chandragupta gave 500 elephants. A marriage tie sealed the deal.

4. Which lands did Seleucus give up?

Strabo lists the peoples along the Indus. They are the Paropamisadae, the Arachoti and the Gedroseni. Alexander had taken these lands from the Arians. Seleucus gave them to Sandrocottus, as Strabo spells Chandragupta.

World History names the same three lands in modern terms. Arachosia is the Kandahar area. Gedrosia is southern Baluchistan. Paropamisadai lies between Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent.

Ancient name	Modern area
Paropamisadae	Afghan border
Arachoti	Kandahar area
Gedroseni	S. Baluchistan

Seleucus gave these lands to Chandragupta.

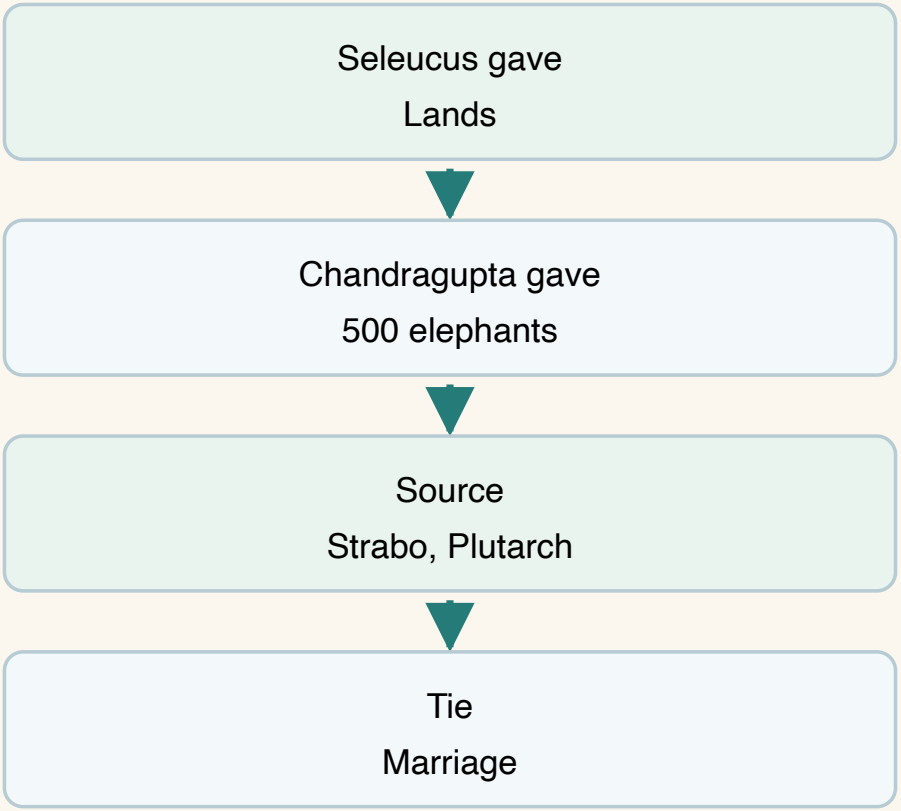
True or False: Seleucus gave Chandragupta lands west of the Indus.
Source: Strabo, Geography 15.2.9, item 4

Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya, item 4

5. What did Chandragupta give in return?

Strabo says Seleucus received five hundred elephants. Plutarch says the same. Livius repeats the figure and cites Strabo.

War elephants were a strong weapon in this age. The gift was valuable.



Lands went east and elephants went west.

True or False: Chandragupta received five hundred elephants from Seleucus.
Source: Strabo, Geography 15.2.9, item 5

Source: Plutarch, Alexander 62, item 5

Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator, item 5

6. Did Seleucus give his daughter in marriage?

Strabo says the lands passed on terms of intermarriage. The Greek word is epigamia. It means a marriage tie between two families.

Strabo does not name the bride. World History notes a legend that Seleucus gave his daughter Helena to Chandragupta. It says the historical evidence does not support this.

So treat the daughter story as a legend. Only the marriage tie is certain.

Certain	Legend
Marriage tie	Daughter Helena
Word: epigamia	No evidence

Strabo names no bride.

True or False: Strabo clearly names Seleucus's daughter as the bride.
Source: Strabo, Geography 15.2.9, item 6

Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya, item 6

7. When was the treaty signed?

Books give different years. The World History timeline says 305 BCE. Its article text says 301 BCE.

The year is not fixed. The safe range is about 305 to 301 BCE. Learn the terms of the treaty better than the date.



World History gives both years.

True or False: Every book gives the same year for the treaty.
Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya, item 7

Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator, item 7

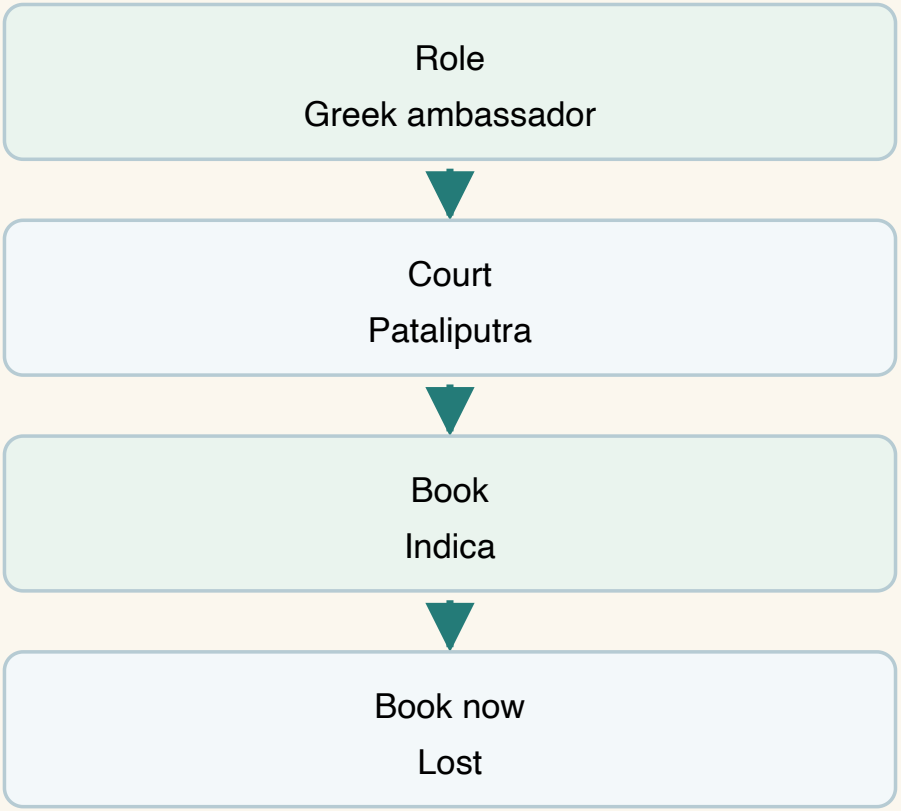
What followed the treaty?

Megasthenes came to Pataliputra, and Seleucus turned west to fight for Alexander’s empire.

8. Who was Megasthenes?

Megasthenes was the Greek ambassador sent to the Mauryan court at Pataliputra. World History says the treaty led to his appointment.

He wrote a book called the Indica. It described Mauryan rule. The book is now lost. Quotations from it survive in the works of several later Greek writers.



Only quotations of the Indica survive.

True or False: The Indica of Megasthenes survives in full.
Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya, item 8

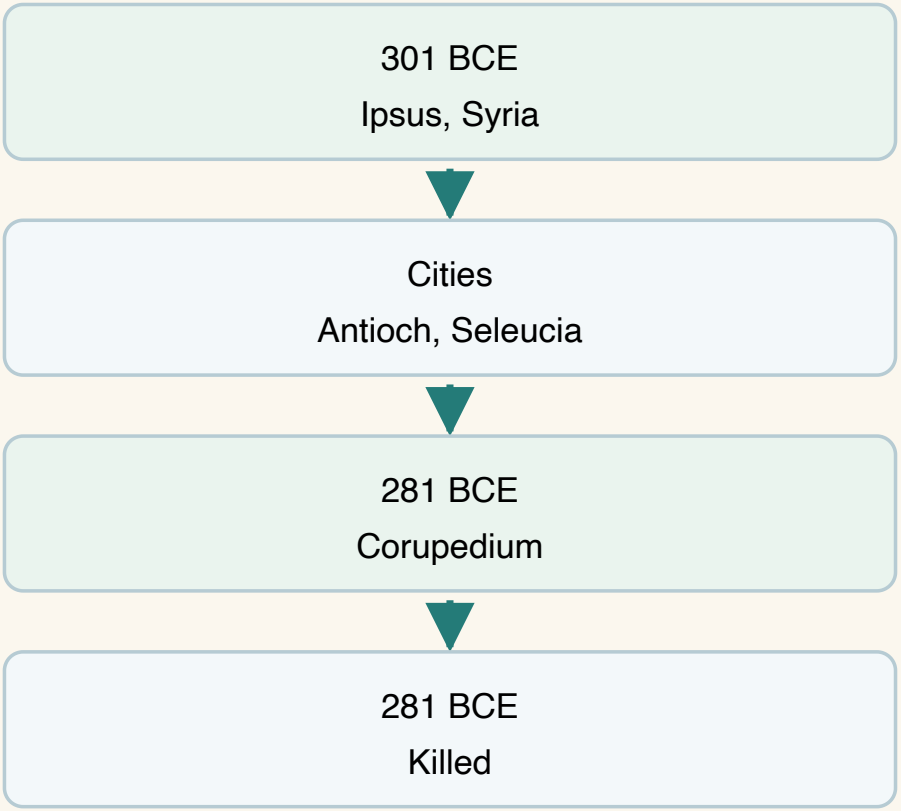
9. Where did Seleucus go next?

Seleucus turned west. At the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE, Antigonus was defeated. Seleucus then conquered Syria.

He founded Antioch and Seleucia, among other cities. In 281 BCE he beat Lysimachus at Corupedium. He was killed later that year as he crossed to Europe.



Silver tetradrachm of Seleucus I Nicator, c. 296-295 BCE, British Museum (BNK,G.808). Photo by ArchaiOptix, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.



Seleucus then fought for the west.

True or False: Seleucus founded the city of Antioch.
Source: Livius, Seleucus I Nicator, item 9

What should I remember for exams?

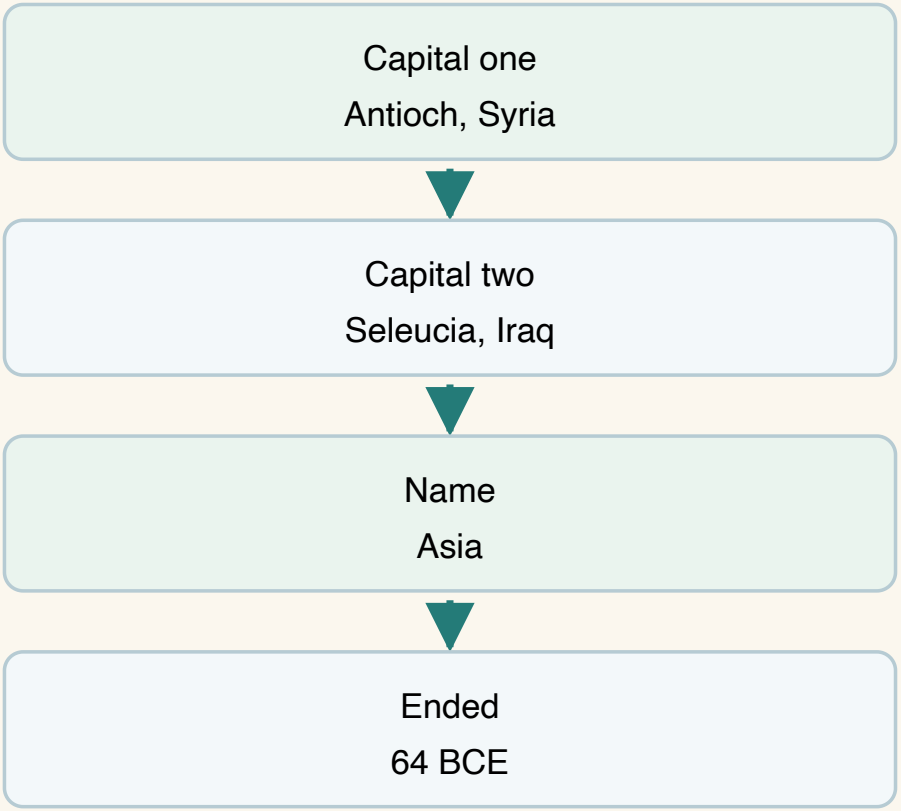
Remember three pairs: land and elephants, Seleucus and Chandragupta, Megasthenes and the Indica.

10. What was the Seleucid Empire?

Livius says Seleucus became king of the eastern provinces. These were roughly modern Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. They also took in parts of Turkey, Armenia and Central Asia.

The kingdom had two capitals, founded around 300 BCE. They were Antioch in Syria and Seleucia in Mesopotamia. Its official name was “Asia”.

The empire kept growing for a time. In the mid-240s BCE it began to lose land in the east. Parthia and Bactria broke away. The last Seleucid king was dethroned in 64 BCE.



Two capitals ruled a wide eastern kingdom.

Source: Livius, Seleucids, item 10

11. What is the quick comparison?

- **Seleucus:** gave up lands west of the Indus.
- **Chandragupta:** gave 500 elephants.
- **Lands:** Paropamisadae, Arachosia and Gedrosia.
- **Marriage tie:** certain. The daughter story is a legend.
- **Megasthenes:** ambassador at Pataliputra, author of the lost Indica.
- **Date:** about 305 to 301 BCE, books differ.

Seleucus	Chandragupta
Gave lands	Got lands
Got elephants	Gave elephants

The trap is who gave what.

Source: Strabo, Geography 15.2.9, item 11

Source: World History, Chandragupta Maurya, item 11

Four questions to think through

Why treat the daughter story as a legend?

Strabo mentions only a marriage tie. He does not name a bride. World History says the evidence does not support the story of Helena. So only the tie is certain.

Why do books give different years for the treaty?

The sources do not describe the war or date the treaty. Modern books infer a year. World History itself gives 305 BCE in one place and 301 BCE in another. Learn the range, not one year.

How do we know the Indica if it is lost?

Later Greek writers quoted it. Those quotations survive in their own books. Scholars collect them to rebuild what Megasthenes saw. So we know parts of the book, not the whole.

How do I remember who gave what?

Lands went east to Chandragupta. Elephants went west to Seleucus. A marriage tie joined the families. Say it in that order.

Check your understanding

Your 7 quick checks Answered 0 of · Correct
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Continue to the practice MCQs

✅ Test Yourself

Try practice questions on Seleucus Nicator and Chandragupta.

Practice MCQs

1. Seleucus I Nicator, who invaded India around 305 BCE, was a former general of which conqueror?

A. Alexander the Great

B. Darius III

C. Cyrus the Great

D. Philip II of Macedon

See answer ↓

2. According to Strabo, what did Seleucus Nicator receive in return for the lands he gave to Sandrocottus?

A. Five thousand soldiers

B. Five hundred horses

C. Five hundred elephants

D. Five hundred chariots

See answer ↓

3. Which of these lands did Seleucus give up to Chandragupta?

A. Magadha

B. Kalinga

C. Arachosia

D. Avanti

See answer ↓

4. Megasthenes was sent to the court of Chandragupta at Pataliputra in which role?

A. Greek ambassador

B. Army commander

C. Court physician

D. Tax collector

See answer ↓

5. Which book by Megasthenes now survives only in quotations by later writers?

A. Epigamia

B. Geography

C. Diadochi

D. Indica

See answer ↓

6. What is the Greek word Strabo uses for the marriage tie in the treaty?

A. Satrapy

B. Nicator

C. Epigamia

D. Diadochi

See answer ↓

7. After which battle of 301 BCE did Seleucus conquer Syria?

A. Ipsus

B. Gaza

C. Hydaspes

D. Corupedium

See answer ↓

8. What does the title Nicator, used for Seleucus I, mean?

A. Ambassador

B. Victor

C. Founder

D. Saviour

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The answer is Alexander the Great. Seleucus was one of the Diadochi, the generals who divided Alexander's empire. He founded the Seleucid Empire and ruled from 311 to 281 BCE. Darius III and Cyrus were Persian kings, not Macedonian conquerors. Philip II was Alexander's father. Memory hook: Seleucus served Alexander, then built his own empire. ↑ Q1
2. **C.** The answer is five hundred elephants. Strabo records this in his Geography. Plutarch gives the same number. Livius repeats it and cites Strabo. Horses, chariots and soldiers are not named in the treaty. Memory hook: lands went east, elephants went west. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** Arachosia is the answer. It is the Kandahar area. Seleucus also gave up Gedrosia and Paropamisadai. Magadha was the home of Chandragupta's own power. Kalinga and Avanti are not in the treaty lists. Memory hook: the treaty lands lie west of the Indus. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** Greek ambassador is the answer. World History says the treaty led to his appointment. He lived at Pataliputra, the Mauryan capital. He later wrote about Mauryan rule. He did not command troops or collect tax. Memory hook: the treaty sent an envoy east. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** The Indica is the answer. The book described Mauryan rule. It is now lost. Quotations survive in the works of several later Greek writers. Geography is the work of Strabo. Epigamia means a marriage tie, and the Diadochi were Alexander's successors. Memory hook: Indica means India. ↑ Q5
6. **C.** Epigamia is the answer. It means a marriage tie between two families. Strabo does not name the bride. The story of a daughter named Helena is a legend. Nicator means victor, and a satrapy is a province. Memory hook: epigamia is the in-law word. ↑ Q6
7. **A.** Ipsus is the answer. Antigonus was defeated there in 301 BCE. Seleucus then conquered Syria. Corupedium came in 281 BCE, when he beat Lysimachus. The Hydaspes was Alexander's battle against Porus in 326 BCE. Gaza was fought in 312 BCE. Memory hook: Ipsus opened Syria. ↑ Q7
8. **B.** Victor is the answer. Livius translates Nicator as victor. Seleucus won his titles by war against other generals. Saviour and founder are other royal titles. An ambassador is an envoy, like Megasthenes. Memory hook: Nicator is the winner. ↑ Q8

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