ALEXANDER IN AFRICA

Acta Classica Supplementum V

Classical Association of South Africa
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CONTENTS

PREFACE vii

DANIEL OGDEN, Alexander and Africa (332-331 BC and beyond): The Facts, the Traditions and the Problems 1

HUGH BOWDEN, Alexander in Egypt: Considering the Egyptian Evidence 38

FRANCES POWNALL, Callisthenes in Africa: The Historian’s Role at Siwah and in the Proskynesis Controversy 56

TIMOTHY HOWE, Founding Alexandria: Alexander the Great and the Politics of Memory 72

PAT WHEATLEY, Demetrius the Besieger on the Nile 92

SULOCHANA ASIRVATHAM, The Alexander Romance Tradition from Egypt to Ethiopia 109

CORINNE JOUANNO, The Fate of African Material in the Greek and Byzantine Tradition of the Alexander Romance 128

ADRIAN TRONSON, From Jerusalem to Timbuktu: The Appropriation of Alexander the Great by National Narratives 143

JOHN ATKINSON, Alexander and the Unity of Mankind: Some Cape Town Perspectives 170


In the major ancient sources, Alexander’s conquest of Egypt seems almost like an interlude between the key conflicts of the Macedonian’s Asian campaign. Sandwiched between the pivotal clashes of Issus and Tyre, on the one hand, and Gaugamela, on the other, he encountered virtually no resistance on African soil. On the contrary, Arrian reports that Darius’ satrap Mazaces, having heard of the outcome at Issus, ‘welcomed Alexander to the cities and the country’ (ἐδέχετο ταῖς τε πόλεσι φιλίως καὶ τῇ χώρᾳ Ἀλέξανδρον, *Anab.* 3.1). Also, when viewed geographically, Alexander’s African safari is an added-on loop to the south and west. The twenty-four-year-old and his mates sailed up and down the Nile, saw some interesting sites, and went on a desert dash or two. The combination of extreme adventure and self-discovery is by no means foreign to some touristic tastes, although one cannot help but feel that the party seriously underestimated their Sahara expedition. Still, they seem to have made the most of their stay, even bringing in celebrities and athletes from Greece for the winter’s entertainment. At the first sight of spring, Alexander was off again for more serious business. But, while Alexander’s famous *pothos* probably played a part in his decision to venture into this old and famed part of the world, his ambitions were, on closer scrutiny, not touristic. On the contrary, his brief stay was packed with activities of great political and symbolic significance.

To unpack this significance with due regard to historical and textual complexities was the purpose of a conference on ‘Alexander in Africa’, held in Grahamstown, South Africa, during the winter of 2011. A group of scholars, who together could boast broad expertise on Alexander the Great and his legacy, was invited to participate. Like Alexander, their aims were not touristic (a subsequent seminar in the Addo Elephant Park was a slightly different matter). The Alexander papers formed a running panel at the biennial Classical Association of South Africa Conference, which was hosted by Rhodes University that year, requiring the delegates to brace themselves against an Eastern Cape cold spell for a full two-and-a-half days. Their brief was broadly conceived as to deal with Alexander’s impact on the continent of Africa: not only the sojourn itself, but also its
aftermath and the reception of Alexander in subsequent history. Thus, as the organisers proudly envisaged it: the first conference about Alexander in Africa, and that on African soil.

The topic was not plucked from thin air, though: it follows in the train of conferences similarly focussing on particular aspects of the field covered by Alexander studies, including particular geographical areas. The narrowed focus allows for zooming in on aspects that scholars might want to engage with at greater length, but which are usually eclipsed by larger issues. Furthermore, it allows for the consideration of a quite remarkable tradition generated among inhabitants of the continent, whether political, religious, architectural, literary or scholarly. The articles that made their way into the collection cannot claim to cover all aspects of Alexander’s sojourn, nor of the reception of the stay (and, even less, of the figure of Alexander himself). To mention one deficiency mentioned by a reviewer, the collection glosses over current North Africa, Egypt in particular. Therefore, the topic is by no means exhausted and may also serve to draw attention to opportunities for further research and so – one might hope – act as an impetus for further investigation.

The articles can be grouped into four areas. The first deals with the historical events of the winter of 332/331 BC and the issues surrounding their recording. As the articles share the same body of sources, one may expect intersection in this group, but each contribution follows its own aim, angle and emphases to such a degree that they provide quite distinct takes on quite different topics. Even where overlapping, opinions among this group diverge, which the editor did not attempt to reconcile. Daniel Ogden (‘Alexander and Africa [332-331 BC and beyond]: the facts, the traditions and the problems’) maps out and sets the scene for the first group. In a survey rich with detail, he organises the material in the sources on Alexander into the topics of the annexation of Egypt, issues surrounding his relationship with Egyptian royalty, Alexandria’s foundation, the expedition to Siwah, the administration of the region, his westward plans and the eventual return of his body to Africa. He also ventures briefly into more obviously legendary material on Alexander’s sojourn, namely the stories surrounding his birth that connected him to the pharaonic dynasty, and those on his later travels into Ethiopia and his meeting with Candace.
Ogden does a sterling job of producing a very informative and readable introduction that not only sets the parameters of the articles to come, but also serves as a stand-alone road map for future research on this brief but vital period in Alexander’s career. The bibliography of Ogden’s article alone constitutes a valuable point of entry into this area of scholarship.

In his article (‘Alexander in Egypt: considering the Egyptian evidence’), Hugh Bowden urges that many issues surrounding Alexander’s African visit should be framed by information available on ancient Egypt. Alexander scholars, intrigued by the challenges of source analysis, tend to neglect the historical setting, forgetting that ancient Egypt set its own requirements on Alexander. On the question of whether Alexander was actually crowned as Pharaoh, Bowden points to the complex and extended nature of the Egyptian ritual, which typically started at the death of the previous Pharaoh, but culminated only months later after obligatory travels through the kingdom. Whether or not Alexander’s own travels can be linked to that is uncertain; what is clear, however, is that one should not look for a ceremony shortly after Alexander’s arrival, if the short span of this stay allowed for a ritual culmination at all. Secondly, it is evident that intricate local customs made for fertile ground for misunderstanding by the occupiers and their notary. Misunderstanding probably shaped the reporting of Alexander’s Siwah visit as well: how the events at the oracle were understood and reported in the early accounts on, for example, the oracle procession and Alexander posing his questions to the oracle. Bowden suggests that, in view of Siwah’s location and political functions, Alexander’s reasons for visiting were not primarily about his religiosity, but more about establishing lines of communication to the Egyptians themselves and to their neighbours further west.

Also connected to the Siwah visit, Frances Pownall (‘Callisthenes in Africa: the historian’s role at Siwah and in the proskynesis controversy’) focuses on Callisthenes’ role in subsequent reporting on the event. In the longest fragment we possess (Strabo 17.1.43), Callisthenes notes that Alexander was told by the oracle prophet that he was the son of Zeus. Scholars have found it strange that Alexander’s prime spin-doctor could, later on, be so vocally opposed to Alexander’s attempt at introducing the Persian practice of proskynesis to his Macedonian compatriots. Closer
analysis, Pownall argues, removes the apparent contradiction: Callisthenes, who always kept an eye on the tastes and preconceptions of his Greek audiences, distinguished between divine parentage and divinity: while Alexander could boast to be a descendant of Zeus, it remained unacceptable for the Greeks to deify a mortal during his lifetime. Callisthenes can therefore not be blamed for inconsistency. Where he did err, as it turned out fatally so, was to publicly link *proskynesis* to Alexander’s claim to divinity, while the king’s reasons were more probably political.

Timothy Howe (‘Founding Alexandria: Alexander the Great and the politics of memory’) wishes to turn the established view of the founding of Alexandria on its head. He argues that the port, which in centuries to come grew into such a major hub of power, commerce and learning, was not the embodiment of ambitions that Alexander himself harboured (pun intended). Rather, the city’s later significance infiltrated the stories of its foundation and so attained the close association with Alexander that the histories suggest. What is more, the infiltration was deliberately orchestrated among the early members of the Ptolemaic dynasty, who wished to feed off the glamour of its founder in their own power game. As such, these stories correlate very well with what Hobsbawm and others describe as invented traditions, the purposes of which are to establish or symbolise social cohesion, to legitimise institutions and power relations, and to influence beliefs, values and behaviour. Alexander, says Howe, was a conqueror who established outposts along the way, and Alexandria in all probability started humbly as a military fort. Alexander’s successors, on the other hand, were interested in cities to rule: Alexandria came to play that part late in the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, when he made it the capital of his kingdom.

The studies of Howe and Wheatley venture into an area of growing importance in Alexander studies, namely the impact of the Successors on the sources of Alexander and on the unfolding new world order often – but not necessarily correctly – ascribed to him. Pat Wheatley (‘Demetrius the Besieger on the Nile’) stays in Egypt to consider the struggle for supremacy between the Antigonids and Ptolemies in 306 BC: Demetrius, able son of Antigonus the One-Eyed, crushed Ptolemy’s fleet in Cyprus, but could not follow up on the victory in the subsequent invasion of Egypt.
a few months later. In a detailed re-evaluation of the evidence, he argues that the deficiencies did not lie so much with the son (Plutarch’s biography of Demetrius led us astray) as with the ageing father. Antigonus had centralist ambitions (i.e. he wished to unify the Macedonian conquests), but – rather surprisingly – lacked the generalship, vision and energy to properly act on them.

From the world of the Diadochs we move on to the rich and imaginative world of the Alexander legend. The prime document here is the *Alexander Romance*, which Richard Stoneman has tirelessly promoted as one of the most influential documents of Greco-Roman antiquity. The *Romance* tradition itself presents a diverse picture, which requires very particular skill sets and deft scholarly judgement. Two articles scrutinise different aspects of this fascinating legacy. Sulochana Asirvatham (‘The *Alexander Romance* tradition from Egypt to Ethiopia’) presents a survey of the surviving Ethiopic texts within the tradition which, although known to the scholarly world since the late 19th century through the translations of Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, are not on the everyday reading list of the average Alexander scholar – also, because they are mostly translations and reworkings of Syriac (through Arabic) versions of the Greek *Romance*. Particularly interesting are the religious infiltrations into the tradition and the emergence of a Christianised Alexander in these texts. Asirvatham concludes that though Alexander’s history had inherent interest value also to the Ethiopians, their consideration was kindled in particular by the presence of Egypt and Alexandria in the tradition, due to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church’s connection to the Coptic Church of Alexandria. Corinne Jouanno (‘The fate of African material in the Greek and Byzantine tradition of the *Alexander Romance*’) looks at how the same broad tradition was shaped by a different context. The African material in the early Romance tradition is a fascinating mix of history, fiction, legend and myth, and can be divided into material about Egypt, black Africa and northern Africa. Jouanno notes a steady disafricanisation in progressive recensions of the *Alexander Romance*. Already in the β recension, the redactor omitted a good amount of Egyptian detail on, for example, the foundation of Alexandria. Other changes betray a lack of either knowledge of or interest in the African contexts. The ε recension (from the later 8th
century AD) is particularly significant in this regard, with Alexandria and Memphis becoming the same, pre-existing city and the Egyptians a wicked people, as in the Bible. Candace is now in Asia and Meroe replaced by Paphlagonian Amastris. For these Byzantine-based redactors, Africa was gradually disappearing beyond even their imaginary horizon.

A recurring theme in this collection is the various means by which the ‘Alexander brand’ acted as a way to legitimise later political relationships. Howe argues that the stories about the foundation of Alexandria should be read in this light, and Adrian Tronson (‘From Jerusalem to Timbuktu: the appropriation of Alexander the Great by national narratives’) explores the influence of Alexander in countries with no demonstrable link to the historical figure: the story of Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem, as recorded by Josephus, and the story (or at least a version of the story) of Sunjata and the establishment of the Mali Empire in the 13th century. Tronson has long since noticed the striking parallels and explicit references to Alexander in Niane’s 1960 version of the Sunjata epic, which he sets out in an appendix to his article. Niane claimed that he transcribed a live, oral recitation of the story by a bard (griot) from the Keita line, which purportedly goes back to Sunjata himself. It has been noted that the epic’s publication all too obviously coincided with the establishment of the modern state of Mali in 1960, and Tronson is reluctant to accept the Alexander correspondences as indigenised recollections of Alexander going back to the historical Sunjata. Rather, the line seems to run from the French educational system: the University of Bordeaux, where Niane studied in the 1950s before he recorded the various recitations from members of the Keita clan into a seamless narrative, and the influential (among West African elite) École normale William Ponty in Senegal, where the future leaders of post-colonial West Africa were encouraged to explore their indigenous traditions. The establishment of an independent Malian state was thus ‘sold’ to the West by way of aligning its national hero with his Macedonian prototype.

The final contribution to the collection moves the focus down to the southern tip of the continent, where Cape Town hangs on, for better or for worse, and where Alexander figured in how intellectuals dealt with the ideological whirlpool that was the 20th century. John Atkinson (‘Alexan-
der and the unity of mankind: some Cape Town perspectives') considers briefly the work done on Alexander by three figures who spent periods of their careers in South Africa: Benjamin Farrington in the 1920s and 1930s, Harry Baldry in the 1930s to 1950s, and Mary Renault, who published her popular Alexander trilogy from the late 1960s and who died in Cape Town in 1983. Atkinson opts for how the theme of integration of Macedonians and Persians in the Alexander histories played out in each case, in contexts of nationalism, communism and racial segregation. His article, written almost in memoir style, shows – above all – the degree to which scholarly work, with all its rigour, gains as much from historical context as do the topics of its scrutiny.

A final word of gratitude must be expressed to all who made this volume possible. First of all, the scholars who expended the time and cost to travel to South Africa, participated enthusiastically in the proceedings and were willing to subject their articles to review and reworking. The Alexander scholars are truly a special group and it is small wonder that they so easily become lifelong friends. The University of South Africa contributed to the expenses of several of the conference participants and has, over the years, supported the Unisa Classics Colloquium in many ways. Ann and Bill Henderson again lent their vast experience to the finishing touches of the manuscript, and the Acta Classica Editorial Board gracefully gave their approval for the publication of the collection in the Supplementa series. John Atkinson notes that Alexander studies have only attracted serious engagement in South Africa since the 1980s. I can only hope that this volume will become one of many landmarks along the journey of the study of this remarkably versatile history.

Philip Bosman
University of South Africa
Pretoria
This survey lays out the main facts and problems of Alexander’s principal associations with Africa, in life, in death and in the imagination of the later ancients (it does not venture into the realm of so-called Reception Studies). Of the themes inevitably treated here two above all, the foundation of Alexandria and the visit to Siwah, are well established chestnuts of Alexander scholarship, and will be handled rather more circumspectly than they might otherwise be. The shadow of Ptolemy, both as a rival actor and as a re-packager of the deeds of Alexander, in the development of political propaganda and the writing of history alike, hangs over much of the discussion.

The annexation of Egypt

Alexander recognised that he could achieve nothing against the large and powerful Persian fleet by sea, and so his strategy was to fight it by land, that is, by securing the ports on the Persian Empire’s Mediterranean seaboard and denying the fleet access to them. This was the reason for the drawn-out sieges of Tyre, with the best port of the eastern Mediterranean, and then of Gaza, on Egypt’s doorstep. Egypt’s own ports were the end-point of this strategy. Although the Persian fleet disintegrated in the course of the siege of Tyre, the danger of reconstitution remained so long as the empire retained control of good ports.1

Economic considerations may also have played a part from the first. Hölbl holds that Alexander had to integrate Egypt into the east-Mediterranean empire he had hitherto constructed simply in order to retain its economic coherence. This may well be, but Alexander may more simply

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have looked upon Egypt's famed wealth as a desirable prize in itself for his war fund.\textsuperscript{2}

He also had every reason to suppose that Egypt would fall to him easily once he had reached it, as indeed proved to be the case. The original satrap, Sauaces, had been killed at Issus, together with the bulk of the Persians' Egyptian garrison, and one Mazaces was now satrap in a land denuded of troops.\textsuperscript{3} He may not have been Darius' first choice to take over. In 333 BC, the year before Alexander's march upon Egypt, the rebel Macedonian and mercenary leader Amyntas, son of Antiochus, had brought a force of 4,000 Greek mercenaries who had fought on the Persian side at Issus to Pelusium and captured it. He had claimed that Darius had dispatched him to Egypt as general (strategos) to take command of the country in place of Sauaces. The native Egyptians had initially welcomed him enthusiastically and then helped him destroy such Persian troops as remained in their country, but he forfeited sympathy when he allowed his troops to plunder Memphis, and both they and he were consequently annihilated.\textsuperscript{4} Whether or not Amyntas' initial claim, evidently soon abandoned, to carry Darius' authority had been genuine, his experiences in the land were promising for a Graeco-Macedonian force of so much greater numbers and such superior discipline.

The lengthy siege of Gaza gave Alexander time to prepare for the march into Egypt across the 200 km of most difficult terrain that separated Gaza from Pelusium (Port Said), the fortress at the first, eastern-most branch of the Delta. This was the zone of desert, bog and quicksand that ever constituted Egypt's superb natural defence barrier, and was the graveyard of its would-be invaders many times before and afterwards. When the occasion for the march came, it was accomplished, seemingly without let or hindrance, in seven days, and Alexander arrived in Egypt in November 332 BC. How did he manage it? He had probably directed his Macedonian fleet to lay supply dumps along the coast in advance and then had the fleet keep pace with his army and rendezvous with it to supply it with water.\textsuperscript{5}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Hölbl 2001:9.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Arr. \textit{Anab.} 2.11.8; Diod. Sic. 17.34.5, 48.3; Curt. 3.11.10, 4.1.28.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Diod. Sic. 17.48.3-5; Curt. 4.1.27-33, 7.1-2; Arr. \textit{Anab.} 2.13.2-3. Heckel 2006: 23-24 (Amyntas [2]) and 2008:70 believes Amyntas' claim. For the restive state of Egypt at this time, as exemplified also by the revolt of Chababash, see Lane Fox 1973:194-95; Lloyd 1994:344-45; Burstein 2000.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} Curt. 4.7.2; Arr. \textit{Anab.} 3.1.1; cf. Lane Fox 1973:194-95; Engels 1978:60; Bosworth 1980:261, 1988:69-70.
\end{itemize}
When Alexander arrived, the native Egyptians welcomed him as a liberator. Mazaces, with no means with which to resist, ordered Egypt’s cities to receive him in friendly fashion, and he may also have given orders for Alexander’s fleet to be admitted to the harbour of the Pelusium fortress. It is usually assumed that he had been in touch with Alexander prior to his arrival; the siege of Gaza would have offered ample opportunity for negotiations. If Alexander had doubted the financial advantage of appropriating Egypt, his anxieties will have been assuaged when Mazaces met him in person before Memphis and in the course of his formal surrender made the 800 talents in the local treasury over to him.

Alexander in Memphis and the question of his coronation

It is much debated whether Alexander was actually formally crowned Pharaoh at Memphis. Only a single source, the maverick and often highly fictive Alexander Romance, asserts that he was: ‘When he arrived in Memphis, they [sc. the Egyptian prophets] enthroned him on the sacred throne of Hephaestus and dressed him as an Egyptian king.’ Certainly, Alexander accepted the formal royal titulature of the pharaohs, such as ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt’, ‘Son of Ra’, ‘Beloved of Amun’, and in hieroglyphic inscriptions his name was enclosed in the royal cartouche: such are the texts we find in Amun’s Luxor temple. He also took on the role of the Pharaoh in making sacrifice to the Apis bull amid lavish Greek festivals. In light of this, one has to wonder with what purpose Alexander would have avoided the crown.

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7 Cf., e.g. Bosworth 1994a:810.
8 Curt. 4.7.4.
9 Alexander Romance 1.34.2 (all references to the Romance are to the α recension, MS A, except where otherwise indicated). As Bosworth 1988:70-71 observes, the immediate context does not give cause for confidence: before the enthronement the prophets proclaim Alexander the new Sesonchosis; after it Alexander recognizes his father in a statue of Nectanebo.
10 For the texts see Abd El-Raziq 1984, esp. 11-22; cf. Collins 2009:200-03.
11 Arr. Anab. 3.1.4; cf. Ehrenberg 1926:17-20; Bosworth 1988:70.
In order to cast the ostentatious act of Egyptian piety that the sacrifice constituted into deep relief, the myth was developed that Artaxerxes III, the Persian conqueror of Egypt a mere eleven years previously, had killed and eaten the Apis bull of his own day. It is hard to imagine that Alexander did not visit the Apis bull itself in its Memphite temple in connection with the sacrifice. He may also have travelled to Saqqara to visit the mortuary temple of the former Apis bulls. It was the Apis of the mortuary temple, Osiris-Apis, that was to morph into Sarapis, the god that was to play such an important role from the first in the Alexandria of the Ptolemies, and eventually throughout the Greek and Roman worlds (see further on Sarapis below).

As to travels further afield from his Memphis base at this initial stage, Curtius (alone, but not implausibly) says that Alexander visited ‘the interior’ of Egypt from there, perhaps the Thebaid.

The foundation of Alexandria

One of the major problems of Alexander’s African sojourn is the question of which came first, the foundation of Alexandria or the visit to Siwah. The tradition is split. Arrian and Plutarch place the foundation of Alexandria before Siwah, whereas Diodorus, Curtius, Justin, the Alexander Romance, the Itinerarium Alexandri and Orosius place Siwah before the foundation. The problem might seem partly soluble. Given that Alexander passed through the site of Alexandria, adjacent to the Canopic mouth of the Delta, its western edge, en route to Siwah (from Memphis) and – almost certainly – passed through it again on his way back from Siwah to Memphis, he may well have engaged in foundational reflection or activities both before and after Siwah, as Bosworth has noted.
But the first difficulty that then remains lies in Arrian’s observation that whereas Aristobulus took Alexander back from Siwah the way he had come, along the coast and therefore through the site of Alexandria, Ptolemy took him back to Memphis directly through the desert. It seems unlikely that Alexander would have attempted such a long desert-bound route, especially after his difficulties with the shorter desert-bound route on the way coming (although such difficulties might, in theory, have been so irksome that they persuaded him to try a different route of any kind on the way back).\textsuperscript{18} Borza has noted, however, that Arrian may contradict himself on what Ptolemy said when he observes, of the miraculous snakes of the Libyan desert that saved Alexander \textit{en route} to Siwah, that Ptolemy claimed that they had also led him back again \textit{opiso authis}, which does indeed seem to imply a return the same way.\textsuperscript{19} And Bosworth has argued strongly that Arrian has misinterpreted an elliptical statement on Ptolemy’s part that referred to Alexander returning from Siwah to Memphis without going into the actual details of the route taken.\textsuperscript{20} But even on this reasonable line of interpretation, we must conclude that Ptolemy, by far the best placed of all our sources to know the truth about the foundation of Alexandria and its relationship to Siwah, should he be minded to impart it, placed the foundation of Alexandria prior to Siwah.\textsuperscript{21}

The second difficulty we then face is that Alexandria’s formal foundation date, 25 Tybi, is equivalent to 7 April (331 BC). It therefore falls in the early spring, shortly before Alexander left Egypt to return to the Persian campaign, and so on that basis must have come after Siwah. Why would Ptolemy pass over the occasion of the formal foundation of the city,


\textsuperscript{18} Arr. \textit{Anab.} 4.5, incorporating Aristobulus \textit{FGrH} 139 F15 and Ptolemy \textit{FGrH} 138 F9.

\textsuperscript{19} Arr. \textit{Anab.} 3.3.5 = Ptolemy \textit{FGrH} 138 F8; Borza 1967.


\textsuperscript{21} Welles 1962:280 does well to ask whether Ptolemy actually accompanied Alexander to Egypt or to Siwah. We have no proof that he did either, but sight of Egypt at any rate would explain his determination to grab the land for himself at Babylon; cf. Cohen 2006:361. Howe in this volume contends that Ptolemy did indeed seriously misrepresent the circumstances of Alexandria’s foundation in order to magnify the importance for Alexander and, more to the point, himself.
however cursorily it was performed?22 The city was not built on virgin land, or in a spot the significance of which Alexander was the first to perceive. The harbour at Pharos had already been praised in the *Odyssey*, in a passage which, Plutarch tells, inspired Alexander in his choice.23 Prior to Alexander, the Egyptians had been maintaining a settlement of some sort there with a fortified port, which, Strabo claims, they had been using to deter illegal imports, from Greeks in particular.24 Carbon 14 dates the remnants of a wooden jetty to c. 400 BC. The meagre amounts of pre-Alexander Greek pottery associated with the site are insufficient to demonstrate either the presence of Greeks at the port or indeed the port’s specialisation in trade with Greece. The Egyptian development, together with the advantages of the adjacent lake Mareotis, must have done much to establish the location’s potential for Alexander. Strabo and others tell us that the site had previously been named Rhacotis. However, it is now often contended that the Egyptian base of this term, Raqote, signified ‘building site’ and so was in fact the term used by local members of the indigenous population to denote the massive construction site that constituted early Alexandria, a conclusion perhaps also pointed to by the earliest attested use of the Egyptian term in connection with the Alexandria site, which is on the Satrap Stele of 311 BC.25

The city’s function appears to have been primarily commercial: a means of converting Egypt’s vast natural wealth more efficiently into cash. Several have suggested that Alexander intended to divert the trade that had gone through the now destroyed Tyre through Egypt, but was disappointed by the relatively inaccessible Greek trading post of Naucratis and so determined to build a replacement for it on the seaboard.26 Bosworth appealingly suggests that the main motivation for the creation of the city may have come not from Alexander himself, but from the Greeks long

24 Strabo, C792 (= 17.1.6); on this text see Alston 1998; Rutherford 2000.
25 Strabo, C792 (= 17.1.6); Plin. *HN* 5.62; Paus. 5.21.9; *Alexander Romance* 1.31, etc. The Satrap Stele: Cairo, Egyptian Museum no. 22182; text at Sethe 1904:14. For the technical evidence alluded to in this paragraph see Fraser 1972:1.5-6, 2.9 n. 22; Lorton 1987; Green 1996:11; Bosworth 1988:72, 246; Goddio 1998:29-31; Chaveau 1999; Depauw 2000; Hölbl 2001:10, 29 n. 2a; Baines 2003; Cohen 2006:363 n. 6; McKenzie 2007:37-38, 40, 382 n. 4.
established in Egypt and restless under the legal and zonal trading restrictions placed upon them by the Egyptians and indeed the Persians. The *Alexander Romance* tells that Alexander ordered all those that lived within thirty Roman miles (i.e. roughly 45 km) of the city to leave their homes and take parcels of land in it. But whatever the motivation, the foundation of Alexandria was a momentous act for Alexander and yet more so for the Near East, for it was the first of many such Hellenic city-foundations by Alexander himself and his Successors across the region, and the first great act in pushing Hellenism out beyond its traditional borders.

Alexander himself ordained the path of its circuit walls and appointed the sites for the agora and the temples (mainly for Greek deities), though it was Dinocrates of Rhodes that was given the task of making the new city a reality. The traditions surrounding the foundation boast a number of romantic high-points. First, the omen of the barley. The story is preserved in quite a range of variations. According to the canonical one, the architects fell short of chalk when marking out the circuit of the city for Alexander, and so they used barley instead. A huge flock of birds from lake Mareotis then descended upon it and gobbled it down. On the basis of this omen, it was then predicted, either by Alexander himself or by Greek or Egyptian prophets, that the city was destined to be a rich one that would feed many. In Arrian’s version, which he introduces in such a way as to suggest that he derives it from sources other than Ptolemy or Aristobulus, the birds do not appear. Rather, Aristander of Telmessus makes his prophecy on the basis of the accidental use of the barley alone.

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28 *Alexander Romance* 1.31.

29 In founding the city Alexander may also have wished to compete with the legacy of his father, who had founded Philippi: so Lane Fox 1973:198; Bosworth 1988:247.

30 Vitruvius 2 *preface* 4; Val. Max. 1.4 ext. 1; Solinus 32.41; Plin. *HN* 5.11.62, 7.37.125; *Alexander Romance* 1.31.6; cf. Bosworth 1980:265, 1988:74, 246; McKenzie 2007:40; Yardley *et al.* 2011:90-91. Tac. *Hist.* 4.83.1 seems to imply that the job of completing the walls largely fell to Ptolemy, as one might have expected; cf. Fraser 1972:1.12.

31 The sources, in approximate chronological order, are: Strabo, C792 (= 17.1.6), Val. Max. 1.4 ext. 1; Curt. 4.8.6; Plut. *Alex.* 26.5-6; Arr. *Anab.* 3.2.1-2; Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀλεξάνδρεια (incorporating Jason of Argos); Amyntianus, *Fragmentum Sabbaticum, FGrH* 151 §11; *Alexander Romance* 1.32.4; *Itinerarium Alexandri* 49;
We have no way of dating this tale (irrespective of variants) prior to its first attestation in Strabo, though the general breadth of its attestations suggests that it came into existence at a fairly early point. Bosworth opts plausibly for Clitarchus.\footnote{Bosworth 1980:265-66. Unfortunately, the tale is not given by Curtius’ frequent Cleitarchan partner: Diod. Sic. 17.52.3 would have been the place.} Perhaps it too might be taken as evidence for trade having been the city’s primary purpose.

The second highpoint is Alexander’s indirect encounter with the Agathos Daimon serpent. The Alexander Romance tells how this serpent repeatedly interrupted the work of the builders as they were beginning to construct Alexandria. Alexander gave orders that the serpent be killed (we sense a relic of a more full-blown dragon-slaying story here), but also that it then be given a heroon and worshipped, inaugurating the shrine on the same day as the city. The Romance implies that the serpent’s cult was in some way associated with that of Alexander himself.\footnote{Alexander Romance 1.32.5-7 and 10-13 ~ Armenian 86-88 Wolohojian 1969. For Agathos Daimon’s domestic avatars, see Phylarchus FGrH 81 F27 = Ael. NA 17.5 and Plut. Mor. 755e. For Agathos Daimon in general see Harrison 1912:277-316; Cook 1914-1940:2.2, 1125-29; Ganszyniec 1918 and 1919; Jakobsson 1925:151-75 and passim; Rohde 1925:207-08 n. 133; Tarn 1928; Taylor 1930; Fraser 1972:1.209-11 with associated notes; Quaegebeur 1975:170-76 and passim; Mitropoulou 1977:155-68; Dunand 1969, 1981, with bibliography; Pietrzykowski 1978; Le Roy 1981; Sfameni Gasparro 1997; Hillard 1998, 2010; Jouanno 2002:75-76, 105-08; Stoneman 2007:532-34, 2008:56-58. Ehrenberg 1926:26 took the Romance seriously and held that the cult was indeed founded by Alexander himself.} The cult of the Agathos Daimon serpent itself, at any rate, was almost certainly established during the reign of Ptolemy Soter, since the serpent was integrated into the Alexander Aegiochus statue-type that was developed in Alexandria as early as 320-300 BC, and that eventually came to decorate Alexander’s tomb there.\footnote{Schwarzenberg 1976:235 with fig. 8; with Stewart 1993:247; Stoneman 2007:533.}

The third highpoint is Alexander’s supposed foundation, or rather refoundation, of the cult of Sarapis. The a recension of the Romance tells...
how Alexander searched for the ancient and long-lost Sarapeum in accordance with an oracle given him by Ammon. As he made a lavish sacrifice on a great altar of his own construction a huge eagle flew down, snatched the victim’s entrails and deposited them upon an abandoned altar, which turned out to belong to the lost temple.\textsuperscript{35} It is believed, however, that the historical Alexander had nothing to do with the development of the cult of Sarapis. Rather, the cult, and perhaps the Alexander-themed mythology to go with it as well, were developed by Ptolemy.\textsuperscript{36}

The Siwah expedition

Alexander’s visit to the oracle of Ammon (whom the Macedonians identified with Zeus) at Siwah, where he held an anomalous direct consultation with the god, is one of the most celebrated, but also mystifying and contentious episodes of his campaign.\textsuperscript{37} Its initial purpose is occluded by the layers of mythology relating to the messages given to Alexander about his paternity. But he ought to have had a good reason for undertaking the journey. As Fredericksmeier observes, ‘Alexander took six weeks and several hundred miles to visit the oracle. We should think that his reasons were compelling.’\textsuperscript{38} Let us consider the visit’s possible original purposes in approximate order of practicality.

\textsuperscript{36} The earliest extant inscription to mention Sarapis is \textit{OGIS} 21 of 277-278 BC. Plut. \textit{De Is. et Os.} 361-62 offers a tale in accordance with which it is indeed Ptolemy that establishes the cult, following a prophetic dream in which he sees an image of the god’s statue.
\textsuperscript{38} Fredericksmeier 2003:270.
The most practical potential purpose is one that goes unmentioned in any of the ancient sources: Siwah was not, after all, the primary goal of the expedition that struck out from the site of Rhacotis-Alexandria. The primary goal was rather surveying and securing the coast as far as Paraetonium (Mersah Matruh), some 300 km to the west. A number of considerations might be cited in support of this notion. On first principles, any major action undertaken by Alexander – at any rate the early Alexander – should have had a purpose that was either military in itself or ancillary to the military. That Paraetonium may have been a goal in its own right may be indicated by the fact that it is situated 15 km beyond the usual turn-off point for Siwah on the coastal route. Furthermore, Alexander met with Cyrenean envoys halfway along the coastal route to Paraetonium, as Diodorus stipulates, and formed an alliance with them: this indeed looks like an attempt to secure the coast as far west as their city. As we will see below, Alexander may have declared war on Carthage in the course of the siege of Tyre. These actions could be seen as taking Alexander’s sphere of influence almost, as it were, up to Carthage’s front door. It is inconceivable – isn’t it? – that Alexander may originally have set off along the coast with an unrealistic notion of the distance to Carthage and the ambition of attacking it there and then, until undeceived by the Cyreneans. If it were conceivable, Siwah might then have served as a revised, face-saving destination.

Now, if security (or aggression) were the primary goals of the western expedition, then one would still need to find a reason for the digression to Siwah (on the probable assumption that Siwah itself could not also be regarded as security goal), and for this one must turn to the possibilities lower down this list. But in that case, the degree of digression involved was rather less (for all that the oracle remained a further 300 km distant inland), and less need have seemed to be at stake in the making of the

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39 Thus Lane Fox 1973:204. Of course, it may well have been worth the detour to replenish supplies, and Diod. Sic. 17.49.3 does stipulate that Alexander took up water supplies before leaving the coast and heading inland.
40 Diod. Sic. 17.49.2-3. Curt. 4.7.9 says, rather more cursorily, that Alexander had met the envoys already at Lake Mareotis (i.e. the Alexandria site). See Wilcken 1967:123 (with Borza’s note at 335); Bosworth 1988:72. Ptolemy’s first act as satrap of Egypt was to bring Cyrene directly under his control (322-321 BC): Diod. Sic. 18.21.6-9; Arr. Succ., FGrH 156 F9.17-18; Parian Marble, FGrH 239 B10-11; SEG ix.1 (the diagramma of Cyrene); cf. Hölbl 2001:14-15. The Cyrenean angle holds some appeal for Bowden in this volume.
decision to embark upon the digression (Alexander did not know he was going to get lost in the desert).

(2) Alexander had already determined upon the foundation of Alexandria and went to the oracle to seek divine validation for the foundation, just as the *Alexander Romance* asserts. In this case the Ammon oracle will have been chosen for its great authority, despite its remoteness.41

(3) Alexander wished to be endorsed as the true Pharaoh of Egypt and to have the god guarantee, in his own voice, the official titles that the Egyptians had already bestowed upon him at Memphis, in particular, it might be thought, that of ‘Beloved of Amun’.42

(4) Alexander wished to reassure the Macedonian aristocracy that the destabilising issue of Philip’s murder was now closed and that they need no longer live in fear of purges, and hence, according to Diodorus, Curtius and Plutarch, asked if he had revenged himself upon all his father’s (i.e. Philip’s) murderers.43 If this or the following reason was the primary one for Alexander’s visit to Ammon, then the motivation for choosing the Ammon oracle must have been because Ammon had some special appeal for Alexander and the Macedonians. The Macedonians were indeed already familiar with the oracular Ammon much closer to home, at Aphytis.44

(5) As Diodorus, Curtius and Plutarch (and Justin too) also indicate, Alexander wished to secure the validation of the oracle for the remainder of his Asian campaign and the reassurance of destined success in it.45 In the course of his subsequent description of Alexander’s Indian campaign,


42 So Hölbl 2001:10-11; Heckel 2008:72; cf. also Bowden in this volume.

43 Thus Diod. Sic. 17.51.2-3; Curt. 4.7.27; Plut. *Alex.* 27; Justin 11.11.9; cf. Heckel 2008:73.


Arrian states that Alexander was in the habit of making sacrifices to the gods that Ammon had advised him to, inevitably to achieve success.\(^\text{46}\)

(6) Alexander did from the first wish to inquire into the matter of his divine birth or, as Arrian carefully stipulates, his dual paternity.\(^\text{47}\) Perhaps, more particularly, he wished to confirm the lesser oracle at Branchidæ’s assertion that he was born of Zeus, if he had been informed of this before starting the Siwah expedition.\(^\text{48}\) It is also possible that, as an Argead (Old Macedonian) king, Alexander felt a special affinity with the ram-god Ammon, given the role of ‘lesser flocks’ in the Herodotean version of the Argead dynasty’s foundation myth (which is attested in a number of variant forms).\(^\text{49}\) The source tradition focuses most strongly upon the theme of Alexander’s quest for his paternity, and the oracle’s confirmation of it, but it is impossible to know how much of this is retrospective. Diodorus, Curtius and Plutarch (after Cleitarchus?) famously tell that the prophet of Ammon addressed Alexander, on behalf of the god, as \emph{o pai} (‘O son’) or \emph{o pai Dios} (‘O son of Zeus’) and that Alexander took this as a meaningful omen for himself.\(^\text{50}\) But this tale must be compared with Zeus’ portentous words in the fragment from the prologue of Euripides’ tragedy \emph{Archelaus} of 408/407 BC. Here, as it seems, Zeus tells the infertile Temenus that he has somehow contrived to sire a son for him, the Macedonian founder Archelaus to be: \emph{o pai} (‘O son’), again. The Ammon story therefore seems to appeal to a Macedonian tradition established long before the king’s birth. We must conclude either that it was untrue or that the prophet had been most carefully primed before he spoke.\(^\text{51}\)


\(^{47}\) Callisthenes, \emph{FGrH} 124 F14a; Curt. 4.7.25; Plut. \emph{Alex.} 27; Arr. \emph{Anab.} 3.3.2; Justin 11.11.1-8; \emph{Itinerarium Alexandri} 50.


\(^{50}\) Diod. Sic. 17.51.1-2; Curt. 4.7.25; Plut. \emph{Alex.} 27 (the most elaborated account). Cf. Callisthenes, \emph{FGrH} 124 F14a.

\(^{51}\) Eur. \emph{Archelaus} F228a \emph{TrGF} = \emph{P.Hamburg} 118a, with Ogden 2011:77-78. Justin 11.11.6 speaks not merely of priming, but actually of bribery.
(7) Alexander wished to make the trip to project himself into the footsteps of the heroic ancestor of the Argeads, Heracles.\textsuperscript{52} Callisthenes asserted that Alexander went to Siwah in emulation of both Heracles and Perseus.\textsuperscript{53} Heracles’ fabled encounter with Ammon, albeit at his temple in Egyptian Thebes, not at Siwah itself, is spoken of at length by Herodotus.\textsuperscript{54} There is no sign of a tradition of Perseus’ visit to Ammon at Siwah (or indeed Thebes) prior to Alexander, and Callisthenes may well have invented it retrospectively because of Perseus’ usefulness as a figure for bridging east and west: born in Argos, the heart of old mythical Greece, he had contrived to become the eponymous ancestor of the Persians.\textsuperscript{55}

(8) The importance of Alexander’s encounter with Ammon may ultimately have lain in its mode rather than in the questions asked or the answers given. Callisthenes specified that Alexander was admitted to the god’s inner sanctum for a direct encounter with the god, implying that he did not have to make do just with the usual public divination method, which depended upon the ‘automatic’ veering of a bejewelled omphalos that embodied the god as it was born in a litter by tottering priests.\textsuperscript{56} As such, Alexander seems to have achieved a goal aspired to by the magicians of Egypt’s Greek magical papyri and by Egyptian priest-sorcerers and their clients in later Greek literature: a systasis, a direct, one-to-one encounter with the god in which he exposes his mysteries to a privileged mortal. So it is that Lucian’s Egyptian sorcerer Pancrates (the sorcerer of his original tale of the Sorcerer’s Apprentice) received personal instruction from Isis in a crypt (adyton) for 23 years; so it is that Thessalus of Tralles received similar, albeit briefer, personal instruction on the astrologically determined medicinal powers of plants on a one-to-one basis from Asclepius, whilst sealed into a chamber with him by an Egyptian chief-priest; and so it was

\textsuperscript{52} Lane Fox 1973:200; Bosworth 1980:269-70, 1988:71, 1994a:810; O’Brien 1992:88; Fredericksmeier 2003:270-71; Cartledge 2004:267-68; Bloedow 2004; Worthington 2004:116-17. Lane Fox notes that Alexander had already demonstrated his preparedness to digress from his route for the sake of his interest in heroes: he had done so to visit Troy. Bloedow goes so far as to contend that this was Alexander’s reason for entering Egypt, let alone travelling to Siwah.

\textsuperscript{53} Callisthenes, FGrH 124 F14a.

\textsuperscript{54} Hdt. 2.42.

\textsuperscript{55} So Lane Fox 1973:201; Bosworth 1980:270; Ogden 2008:114-15.

\textsuperscript{56} Callisthenes, FGrH 124 F14a; for the normal divination method at Siwah see Diod. Sic. 17.50.6-7 and Curt. 4.7.23-24. Cf. Lucian Syr. D. 36 for a similar divination method at Hierapolis. Cf. Hölbl 2001:11 and Bowden in this volume.
that Alexander’s own mother, Olympias, according to the Alexander Romance, sought a one-to-one encounter with Ammon under the tutelage of Nectanebo.\(^{57}\) It is entirely compatible with these texts that the subjects of Alexander’s actual conversation with the god should have remained unknown, just as Arrian stipulates that they did.\(^{58}\)

The story of Alexander’s troubled journey to Siwah was enlivened already in Callisthenes (whom Timaeus accused of flattery in the matter), by the tale that he and his army had been rescued from the desert and brought back to the path by a pair of crows.\(^{59}\) Arrian tells us that Ptolemy, in his account, replaced the crows with a pair of talking serpents: no doubt his purpose was to salute at once the Agathos Daimon cult with which he had graced Alexandria (discussed above), and also Alexander’s serpent sire, which had conveniently saved his own life too, when he lay dying in India.\(^{60}\)

The organisation of Egypt

Arrian outlines the arrangements Alexander left in place for the administration of Egypt after his departure.\(^{61}\) He observes that Alexander ‘is said’ to have distributed the government of Egypt between many officers because he marvelled at the nature and defensibility of the land, and for that reason did not think it safe to give into the charge of a single man. Whether the unattributed observation derived from Ptolemy or not

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\(^{57}\) Systasis in \textit{PGM}: e.g. \textit{PGM} 4.778-829, 930-1114; 7.505-28; cf. \textit{PGM} Vol. 3 s.vv. συνίστημι Β and σύστασις. The literary sources: Lucian \textit{Philops.} 34; Thessalus of Tralles, \textit{De virtutibus herbarum} 21-25; Alexander Romance 1.6-7.

\(^{58}\) Arr. \textit{Anab.} 3.4.5.

\(^{59}\) Polyb. 12.12b.2 (incorporating Callisthenes, \textit{FGrH} 124 T20 and Timaeus, \textit{FGrH} 566 F155); Strabo, C814 (= 17.1.43, incorporating Callisthenes, \textit{FGrH} 124 F14a and Timaeus?); Plut. \textit{Alex.} 27 (incorporating Callisthenes, \textit{FGrH} 124 F14b); Arr. \textit{Anab.} 3.3.4-6 (incorporating Ptolemy, \textit{FGrH} 138 F8 and Aristobulus, \textit{FGrH} 139 F13-15); Diod. Sic. 17.49.5; Curt. 4.7.15; \textit{Itinerarium Alexandri} 21.

\(^{60}\) Diod. Sic. 17.103.4-8; Curt. 9.8.22-28; Cic. \textit{Div.} 2.135 (the last for the healing snake’s identity with Alexander’s siring snake); discussion in Ogden 2011:29-56. Alexander scholars tend to insist that the desert around Siwah is genuinely infested with crows and snakes alike; e.g. Lane Fox 1973:205-06; Bosworth 1980: 272-73, 1988:72.

\(^{61}\) Arr. \textit{Anab.} 3.5; cf. Curt. 4.8.4-5. Discussion at Ehrenberg 1926:42-54; Lane Fox 1973:525; Bosworth 1980:275-78.
(Brunt doubts it), he was certainly to heed the lesson of it.\textsuperscript{62} And the observation, which also explains many of Alexander's dispensations outside Egypt too, is indeed borne out by the details Arrian supplies. The military organisation remained firmly under the control of the Companions: they were appointed to be generals of the armies, commanders of the garrisons at Pelusium and Memphis and admiral of the fleet. An Aetolian Greek, Lycidas, was appointed commander of the mercenaries, presumably the mainly Greek mercenaries that had been employed by the Persians, but he was fenced around with Companions: he had two Companion 'overseers' (\textit{episkopoi}) and a Companion secretary.\textsuperscript{63}

Given full Macedonian control of the armed forces, the civilian administration could safely, Alexander may have initially thought, be relinquished to other ethnicities. The two central kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt were given into the hands of native Egyptians Doloaspis and Petisis with the titles of (higher) nomarchs.\textsuperscript{64} Arrian tells that Petisis gave up the office and that Doloaspis thenceforth took over charge of both Egypts. Both events may suggest that little real power attached to the roles. The outer territories to the west and the east were given into the hands of Egypt-based Greeks, the Libyan zones to Apollonius son of Charinus, and the Arabian zones to Cleomenes of Naucratis.\textsuperscript{65}

But the wily Cleomenes managed to triumph over the rest of the team, and was perhaps permitted to do so because, as a mere bourgeois, he could

\textsuperscript{63} Bosworth 1980:276, 1988:234-35 reads Arrian to mean that the overseers exercised oversight rather over the work of the higher nomarchs Doloaspis and Petisis. His arguments carry some force, but his objection that four officers were too many for the mercenaries might be countered with the point that the mercenaries had hitherto, as it seems, been in the employ of Persia and that mercenaries were in any case dangerously volatile by nature. Lane Fox 1973:525 makes the interesting suggestion that Lycidas may have needed a secretary because he was illiterate, but it was surely a waste of a Companion to assign him to the role of a mere amanuensis.
\textsuperscript{64} Lane Fox 1973:525, followed by Stewart 1993:90 and Höbl 2001:12, holds, in contradiction of Arrian's explicit affirmation, that Doloaspis was a Persian, on the basis of the -\textit{asp}- element in his name, and therefore a remnant of the former administration.
\textsuperscript{65} For Cleomenes and his career see Van Groningen 1925; Berve 1926:2.210 n. 431; Ehrenberg 1926:50-54; Seibert 1969:39-51; Vogt 1971; Le Rider 1997; Burstein 2008; Yardley, Heckel & Wheatley 2011:90-1.
never aspire to establish a power-base independent of the king. He was also given the job of collecting and disbursing the tax from Egypt’s 42 constituent (lesser) nomes. This was work in which he excelled, and by 323 BC it had allowed him to make himself the most powerful individual of all those embraced in the settlement, with Alexander eventually appointing him satrap. When Ptolemy subsequently returned to Egypt to take over the role of satrap himself, he found that Cleomenes had been able to store up 8 000 talents in the treasury, as Diodorus tells. This had evidently been accrued by means of some reprehensible practices that were brought to an end, Diodorus implies, by Ptolemy’s more compassionate conduct. The Aristotelian Economics tells of Cleomenes making a monopoly of the Egyptian grain supply, paying the farmers what they asked, but then charging the merchants three times over the odds for it; it tells of the measures he would take to avoid having himself similarly swindled by his own intermediate agents; it tells of the swingeing duties he imposed on grain exports (admittedly in a time of relative scarcity within Egypt); it tells of the money he extorted from the priests and residents of Canopus so as not to transfer their market to Alexandria, before doing precisely that; it tells of the money he extorted from priests across the country by threatening to close down their temples; it tells of how he extorted gold from the priests of an unnamed nome by threatening to hunt down all their sacred crocodiles after one of them had killed one of his slaves. The numismatic record tells us what the literary sources do not, namely that Cleomenes also established his own mint. This was almost certainly in Alexandria.

A notorious and strikingly informative document of Alexander scholarship is a letter written by Alexander to Cleomenes shortly before his death.

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67 The combination of offices may initially seem an improbable one, but it is paralleled in Ptolemaic Egypt: see Dittenberger at OGIS 2 n. 570 and Bosworth 1980:277.
68 Paus. 1.6.3 and Dexippus FGrH 100 F8.2 explicitly assert that he had been appointed satrap by Alexander. He is satrap, too, at [Arist.] Oec. 1252a, whilst Dem. 56.7 applies the term arxantos to him. I am uncertain why Heckel 2006:89, with n. 223, should doubt that Cleomenes became satrap in Alexander’s lifetime.
70 [Arist.] Oec. 1252a-b. The monopolisation of the grain is also referred to at Dem. 56.7.
in 323 BC, which is cited and quoted by Arrian. At this point Arrian re-introduces Cleomenes as a wicked man (aner kakos: the phrase is used twice) who had perpetrated many acts of injustice (adikemata) in Egypt. In the letter Alexander asks Cleomenes to build hero-shrines for the deceased Hephaestion, one in the city of Alexandria and one of particular magnificence on the Pharos island (at the point where the lighthouse was subsequently to stand). Hephaestion’s name was also to be written into all trade contracts. Alexander then stipulates that if he finds the temples of Egypt, and in particular the shrines to Hephaestion, in good condition, he will pardon Cleomenes’ former crimes and overlook his future ones. The letter tells us that by now Cleomenes was in full control of Egypt; that he was exercising direct control of the building programme in Alexandria, unsurprisingly so if he controlled the purse upon which it depended (the Economics’ story of his transfer of the Canopus market indicates the same and Justin describes him in lapidary fashion as ‘the man who built Alexandria’); that he exercised ultimate control over trade contracts, compatible with his fiscal brief; and that Alexander valued efficacy in administration rather more than its just conduct.

In the carving of the cake at Babylon after Alexander’s death, Ptolemy seized for himself the satrapy that Cleomenes had worked so hard for, whilst Cleomenes was demoted to the role of his hyparch. He did not live long to enjoy the demotion, however, as Ptolemy soon killed him on the suspicion that he was working for Perdiccas’ cause, as well he might have been, under the circumstances.

Alexander’s ambitions for Carthage

Almost certainly, Alexander imagined that he would one day return to Africa in life, and possibly quite soon. As we have just seen, the assumption underlies his letter to Cleomenes. Did he cherish ambitions to conquer more of Africa, Carthage in particular?

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72 Arr. Anab. 7.23.6-8. Most accept that the letter is genuine: see Hamilton 1953:157; Vogt 1971; Bosworth 1988:235. The alternative is that the document originates in Ptolemy’s black propaganda designed to support or justify his elimination of Cleomenes in 323 BC. Cf. Tarn 1948:2:303-06; Seibert 1972b.
73 Justin 13.4.11.
74 Arr. Succ., FGrH 156, 1.5; Justin 13.4.11.
75 Paus. 1.6.3.
Carthage and its people must have first seriously impinged upon his consciousness when a Carthaginian delegation became caught up in his siege of Tyre, their mother city, in 332 BC. Arrian tells that they had come to pay homage to Tyre’s Melqart and were spared by Alexander. Curtius, in more detail, tells that the envoys urged the Tyrians to hold out on the basis that help would soon come from Carthage, and so fired them up to resist. Subsequently, a second embassy arrived from Carthage with the unfortunate news that she could do nothing for the Tyrians after all, being fully occupied with her own war against Syracuse. However, the Carthaginians were able to evacuate at least some of the Tyrians’ wives and children for them. When Tyre fell, Alexander spared the (original) envoys, but added to his pardon a declaration of war upon their city, inevitably to be deferred in light of more pressing considerations. The second embassy’s apparent revelation of its city’s weakness, genuine or not, may have pricked Alexander’s ears, but it would seem to have been a strategic mistake to declare war if one not only had no immediate intention of acting on the declaration, but was also committed to striking off inland in the near future, leaving the Phoenician seaboard exposed to one’s newly declared enemies.

We have noted that a chief, and possibly the main, purpose of Alexander’s expedition west from the site of Alexandria may have been to secure the North African coast up to the border of the Carthaginian realm.

Arrian, Diodorus and Justin report that amongst the many embassies Alexander received in Babylon in 324-323 BC to congratulate him on his victories, there came ones from Carthage, the Libyphoenicians and all the peoples that inhabited the North African coast as far as the Straits of Gibraltar. The Carthaginians and others, Justin notes, came out of a fear that they might in the future fall prey to Alexander’s ambition. He draws attention again to their anxiety about Alexander’s sack of Tyre, and also to their concern that Alexandria might come to rival Carthage. Together with Frontinus, Justin further reports an undated story of a Carthaginian agent, Hamilcar Rodanus (or Rodinus), infiltrating Alexander’s camp to find out his plans by pretending to be an exile and joining the ranks.

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76 Arr. Anab. 2.24.5; Curt. 4.2.10-12, 3.19-20, 4.18. On the evacuation see also Diod. Sic. 17.41.1-2; Justin 11.10.14.
Was Alexander indeed planning to attack Carthage at the time of his death? Diodorus, in material probably taken over from Hieronymus of Cardia, tells how Perdiccas discovered a series of grandiose plans in the king’s notebooks (hypomnemata) after his death in Babylon in 323 BC. He laid them before the army assembly in order to have them set aside for their impracticality, and perhaps too, as Badian contends, to forestall rivals such as Craterus in producing spurious last plans of their own, and perhaps again to liberate his own rule from daily objections of the ‘Alexander would have done it this way’ variety. Of these plans, the greatest was to construct a thousand ships, bigger than triremes, in Phoenician Syria, Cilicia and Cyprus, with which to campaign against the Carthaginians and the others that lived along the coast of Libya and against those that lived on the coast of Iberia and against Sicily, in other words, against Carthage itself and its broader sphere of influence. He also planned to build a coast road along the length of Africa’s Mediterranean seaboard right up to the Pillars of Heracles and to build ports and shipyards where needed to support such an expedition. It is also of African interest that he proposed to build a pyramid tomb for his father Philip on the scale of the Egyptian ones. Though they have been doubted in the past, the consensus of current Alexander scholarship is that these plans should be taken in all seriousness, and the Tyrian episode at least lends them some plausibility.

Alexander’s return to Egypt in death

The tale of Alexander’s final return to Egypt is beset by intriguing and insoluble mysteries. Control of Alexander’s body and its fate upon his death at Babylon initially fell to Perdiccas, who emerged from the initial settlement as regent for Alexander’s incapacitated half-brother Philip III.
Arrhidaeus and his as yet unborn child, the future Alexander IV. At this precarious, consolidatory time Perdiccas had everything to gain from being seen to be the defender of the Argead blood and the upholder of cherished Argead traditions. One can well imagine, therefore, that Pausanias is right when he tells that the body’s intended (sc. by Perdiccas) destination, when it finally left Babylon, was the ancient and traditional Argead royal cemetery at Aegae (Vergina) in Macedon, where Alexander would have rested alongside his father.\(^\text{81}\) Justin tells that Perdiccas I had prophesied that his descendant successors must be buried at Aegae or else the throne would be lost to the Argead family.\(^\text{82}\) This tale may have been concocted after the extermination of the Argeads, but it is also possible that it originated in Perdiccas’ propaganda at this time.

Alexander’s body had been embalmed by Egyptians and ‘Chaldaeans’,\(^\text{83}\) but it did not leave Babylon until two years after his death, whilst a most elaborately decorated hearse was constructed for it, so heavy as to require 64 mules to draw it.\(^\text{84}\) One suspects that the delay was not due simply to artistic perfectionism: Perdiccas might also have been waiting for what he felt to be the safest opportunity to release the body on its inevitably slow and painstaking journey home, or he might have been waiting for the point at which he felt he could give it to a reliable escort. If so, he was deceived.

Four sources tell broadly reconcilable stories about what happened next. Strabo speaks of Ptolemy ‘diverting’ the body to Egypt out of greed and his desire to appropriate the land. Pausanias speaks of Ptolemy ‘persuading’ the escort to hand the body over to him. Arrian rather focuses the responsibility for the diversion of the body onto the commander of its escort, the satrap Arrhidaeus (not to be confused with Philip III Arrhidaeus): it was he that left Babylon with the body without Perdiccas’ leave, and (if he had not done so from the first) resolved to take the body to Egypt, once through Damascus. Perdiccas sent Polemon and Attalus to give chase. Although they were able to delay Arrhidaeus, they could not prevent him from achieving his goal. Perdiccas then attacked Egypt in person shortly afterwards with the aim of replacing Ptolemy as satrap with a man of his own and of recovering the body. He was to die in the attempt. Aelian preserves a marvellous, but heavily fictive, tale in which

\(^{\text{81}}\) Paus. 1.6.3.  
\(^{\text{82}}\) Justin 7.2.1-4.  
\(^{\text{83}}\) Curt. 10.10.13.  
\(^{\text{84}}\) Diod. Sic. 18.26-28; the rich description is probably derived from Hieronymus of Cardia; discussion at Müller 1905; Stewart 1993:215-21.
Perdiccas and Ptolemy take the places of their respective agents: here Ptolemy steals the body from Babylon in person, and Perdiccas himself gives chase. He catches up with him, fights for the body and recovers it in its Persian carriage, or so he thinks. Only too late does he discover that Ptolemy has substituted a dummy: Ptolemy is by now too far ahead on the road with the real body to be caught again.85

The remainder of the relevant source tradition may be ascribed to the retelling of the Ptolemies and their proxies. Curtius reports that the dying Alexander expressed the desire to be buried at Siwah (not wholly implausible in itself).86 Diodorus asserts that Alexander’s cortège left Babylon with Siwah as its goal from the first, with Ptolemy coming in person to Syria (Damascus?) to receive it as a mark of respect, and then subsequently changing his mind about Siwah and retaining the body in Alexandria instead. Justin speaks of King Arrhidaeus (confusing the satrap with Philip III Arrhidaeus) being instructed (no agent supplied) to take Alexander’s body from Babylon to Siwah.87 These claims do not, of course, serve as a justification for the (ultimate) housing of the body in Alexandria, as they might have been expected to, but they may reflect an argument provisionally deployed by Ptolemy to get the body into his own sphere. The *Alexander Romance* speaks of a debate in Babylon, in which ‘the Macedonians’ wished to take the body back to Macedon, but tells that Ptolemy persuaded them to consult the oracle of Babylonian Zeus on the matter, which duly gave instruction that the body was to be taken to Memphis where Alexander was to be worshipped as the ‘horned king’. As in Aelian’s tale, it is then Ptolemy in person that escorts the body from Babylon itself. But once he has brought the body to Memphis, the chief

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86 Badian 1968:186 believes that Perdiccas did initially intend to send the body to Siwah, but changed his plan two years later when the hearse was ready because Ptolemy was no longer an ally. Hölbl 2001:12 also takes Alexander’s wish to be buried at Siwah seriously. Cf. Waterfield 2011:48 for the notion that Siwah was a fantasy constructed by Ptolemy. Perhaps the strongest indication that Alexander himself aspired to and was originally destined to receive an Egyptian burial is the fact that his corpse was mummified.
87 Curt. 10.5.4; Diod. Sic. 18.3.5; Justin 13.4.6. Pollard & Reid 2006:21 follow Justin in confusing Arrhidaeus the satrap with King Philip III Arrhidaeus.
prophet commands him to take it rather to Alexandria because the body is destined to attract war and battles wherever it rests. Comparing the Romance story with the Curtian and Diodoran traditions, one suspects that Memphis may have supplanted an original Siwah as the initial destination.88

Such a supplanting of Siwah with Memphis may actually derive from something rarely associated with the Romance: a historical correction. Whilst Strabo, Diodorus and Aelian elide Memphis and simply assert that Ptolemy took the body to Alexandria,89 Curtius tells that Ptolemy first took the body to Memphis and then, a few years later (paucis post annis), transferred it to Alexandria.90 The Parian Marble speaks of Soter’s burial of the body in Memphis, but has nothing to say – in its remaining portions at any rate – of its transfer to Alexandria.91 But Pausanias asserts that Soter placed the body in Memphis before his successor Philadelphus transferred it to Alexandria.92 Whichever Ptolemy actually made the transfer, it is possible that they had planned to deposit the body in Alexandria from an early stage, but had retained it in Memphis until the Rhacotis building site had become sufficiently presentable and was able to offer accommodation appropriate to the king’s dignity.93

We learn from Strabo that Ptolemy placed Alexander’s body in a golden sarcophagus in Alexandria, but that the sarcophagus was hacked up and melted down in 89 BC by Ptolemy X Alexander, one of the less impressive of the later Ptolemies, in order to pay the mercenaries he had hired to restore himself to power in defiance of the will of his own army and the population of Alexandria. The outraged Alexandrians thereupon expelled him again, this time for good, and an ignominious death soon followed. Alexander was then re-encased in a new sarcophagus of glass or alabaster.94 But before this there had been a change in Alexander’s outer accommodation. From Zenobius we learn that Ptolemy IV Philopator

88 Alexander Romance 3.34.
89 Strabo, C794 (= 17.1.8); Diod. Sic. 18.28.3-4 and Aelian, Varia Historia 12.64.
90 Curt. 10.10.20.
91 Parian Marble, FGrH 239 B11.
92 Pausanias 1.6.3 and 1.7.1
94 Strabo, C794 (= 17.1.8). Alexander Romance 3.32.16 (Liber de morte) also anticipates Alexander’s enclosure within a golden coffin. Further details of the reprehensible Ptolemy IV’s behaviour are to be found at Porphyry, FGrH 260 F2 and Justin 39.5.1. Discussion at Fraser 1972:1.15, 123.
constructed an elaborate burial complex for Alexander and the Ptolemies alike: the message of association and legitimation was clear. As Strabo asserts that Alexander’s site of burial had remained constant since he was brought to Alexandria by Ptolemy, we may assume that the bodies of the Ptolemies were brought to join him in his original position, and that he therefore only ever had one tomb-site in the city (it is hard to believe that the Ptolemies had ever been far distant). It was in this burial complex that Alexander’s body was famously viewed by Octavian in 30 BC: he disdainfully refused to look at those of the Ptolemies surrounding Alexander (he had come to see a ‘king’, not ‘corpses’), before carelessly breaking off part of Alexander’s nose. Strabo, who knew Alexandria in the 20s BC, describes the complex: he tells that it was known as a whole as the Sōma, literally ‘Body’, a synecdoche appropriately focusing on its most important constituent, and that it was located within the palace district. The Neronian Lucan offers allusive descriptions of the tomb-complex: the Macedonian himself lies in a ‘sacred cave’ and an ‘excavated cave’, whilst the Ptolemies are enclosed in ‘pyramids’ and ‘mausolea’ of which they are unworthy. It is difficult to know how far one may press Lucan’s scornful, colourful words. The plurals may be poetic. As such, Lucan may indicate that Alexander and the Ptolemies were enclosed together beneath a pyramid mausoleum, or a mausoleum of which a pyramid was the central feature, and that within this Alexander’s resting place, at any rate, was in a subterranean vault.

Strabo’s information that Alexander’s tomb lay within the palace district should be taken seriously and deserves the attention of the fantasists who continue to hunt for it in the basements of Alexandria’s

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95 Zen. 3.94.
96 Suet. Aug. 18; Dio Cass. 51.16.5 (nose).
97 Strabo, C794 (= 17.1.8). Manuscripts of various authors indicate that the tomb(-complex) may also have been known as the Sēma, ‘Burial Memorial.’ In any case, the distinctive usage of the term Sōma may have developed under the pull of this second term. Discussion at Fraser 1972:2.7, 15-16, 2.32-33, 220-21; and Erskine 2002:164, 166-67.
98 Luc. 8.692-99, 10.19. Cf. Fraser 1972:2.35 n. 83; Saunders 2006:72-78. The pyramid design had the virtue not only of saluting the local idiom, but also Alexander’s own aborted last plan to build a full-scale pyramid tomb for Philip, as mentioned above (Diod. Sic. 18.4). McKenzie 2007:64-65 is strangely reticent on the form of the burial complex.
mosques. With the bulk of the palace district, the site of the tomb now most probably resides beneath the waves of Alexandria’s harbour, whether subsidence, earthquakes and tsunamis have delivered it. Incredible as it may seem, however, the tomb may already have been lost and its location forgotten before the end of antiquity. The last secure reference to it comes in Herodian’s account of Caracalla’s visit in 215 AD. Perhaps the tomb-complex was destroyed in the riots under Aurelian in c. 273 AD, which, according to Ammianus, left large tracts of the city desolate. In c. 400 AD, John Chrysostom could ask ‘where is Alexander’s tomb?’ We may never have Alexander’s tomb, but it is likely that we already have what we would most have wanted from it, namely a selection of Alexander’s treasures. Just about all now accept that Vergina’s Tomb II belonged to Philip III Arrhidaeus, not Philip II, who resided rather in Tomb I with its fine Persephone fresco. It is surely more probable than not that some at least of the grave goods buried with Arrhidaeus were inherited directly from Alexander when he succeeded him at Babylon.

The body had work to do in Alexandria. It was not unusual for a founder’s tomb to become a protective hero-shrine for his city. Libyan Cyrene, along the coast, was famous for the tomb of its founder Battus, for example. The only incontrovertible evidence for a founder-cult for

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99 Zenobius’ vague reference at 3.94 to the tomb being ‘in the middle of the city’ should not be over-read, as Erksine 2002:164-66 correctly appreciates; cf. also Saunders 2006:72. It is not clear to me that Achilles Tatius 5.1 refers to Alexander’s tomb in any shape or form; Saunders 2006:68-69 agrees, but Stoneman 2008:197 takes a different view.

100 For a review of some of these fantasies, see Fraser 1972:1.16-17, 2.36-41 n. 86; Seibert 1972a:115-16; Saunders 2006:147-75; Goddio & Fabre 2008:196-98. The impact of subsidence and earthquakes on the royal quarter: Fraser 1972:1.8-10; Goddio 1998; Saunders 2006:71, 101-02; Goddio & Fabre 2008 passim.

101 Herodian 4.8.9.

102 Amm. Marc. 22.16.15; Chrysostom Or. 26.12 at PG 61:581. Cf. Fraser 1972:1.10, 2.24 n. 47, 34-36 nn. 82, 84; Lane Fox 1973:478; Erskine 2002:178-79; Saunders 2006:104-06. It is not clear to me that Libanius’ rhetorical flourish at Or. 49.11-12, in which he speaks of Alexandria’s corrupt public officials putting Alexander’s corpse on display, should be pressed for literal or contemporary (c. 390-391 BC) significance. Erskine 2002:165 doubts that the body was ever on public display.


104 Catull. 7.6.
Alexander is found in an inscription as late as 120/121 AD.105 But the notion of a founder-cult for him thrives in the later and more fictive literary tradition. First, in Aelian’s largely invented story of Ptolemy’s theft of Alexander’s corpse from Babylon, his action is prompted by the prophet Aristander of Telmessus’ prediction that whatever city received the body of this fortunate man would be fortunate in all regards and unsackable throughout the ages.106 This notion is wittily (and not inaccurately) inverted by the Alexander Romance’s native-Egyptian Memphite prophet, who asks for Alexander’s body to be shipped out of Memphis to Alexandria on the basis that it is destined to bring carnage to the city in which it lies.107 The latter sentiment is akin to that expressed in the Oracle of the Potter by the historical native Egyptians of the early Ptolemaic period: the oracle looks forward to the demise of Alexandria and the resurgence of Memphis as Agathos Daimon abandons the one for the other.108 Secondly, the Alexander Romance speaks, obscurely, of sacrifices being made to Alexander in Alexandria as a ‘serpent-born hero’, seemingly in connection with the killing of Agathos Daimon at the time of the foundation.109 At a much earlier stage, some point between 320 and 300 BC, the establishment of a statue-type for Alexander as founder also seems to speak of an underlying founder-cult: this was the Alexander Aegiochus, which incorporated the Agathos Daimon serpent coiling around an adjacent tree-trunk.110 Almost certainly, the founder-cult was instituted by Ptolemy. And it certainly was Ptolemy that initiated the (separate) dynastic cult for Alexander, first attested in papyri of 285/284 BC, which indicate that it had been in existence since at least 290/289 BC.111 This dynastic cult was subsequently expanded, much like Alexander’s mausoleum, to embrace the dead Ptolemies too, and then again to embrace also the living ones.112

106 Ael. VH 12.64.
107 Alexander Romance 3.34.
109 Alexander Romance 1.32.
111 P.Eleph. 2; P.Hibeh 84a-b.
112 Fraser 1972:1:213-46, with associated notes; cf. also Heinen 1995. In the background, of course, lies the complex debate about Alexander’s aspirations to
Alexander’s legend in antiquity: Nectanebo and Sesonchosis

The earliest form of the traditional *Alexander Romance* that is directly accessible to us, that of the α recension, found its form c. 200 AD, though it incorporates material of much greater antiquity, and some even originating in the years directly after Alexander’s death. The opening chapters strive to appropriate Alexander for Egypt. The last native-Egyptian Pharaoh, Nectanebo, flees Egypt as it falls to invaders, comes to Macedon and uses a combination of astrology, genuine magic and con trick to seduce Olympias whilst Philip is away on campaign. He then impregnates her, in the guise of Ammon, with the child that will grow to be Alexander, and return to Egypt to take his rightful place as Pharaoh. Ammon must have been working through him, despite his disreputable behaviour, for the remainder of the *Romance* is happy to regard Alexander as child of the god *tout court*. This wonderful conceit is usually thought to have emerged from the early Ptolemaic dynasty, as part of these kings’ attempts to legitimate their own rule in Egypt before both the Graeco-Macedonians and the native Egyptians alike. The *Romance* appropriately closes the circle with the dying Alexander’s dictation of his will, in which he bequeaths the rule over Egypt, to which he has acquired such strong title, to Ptolemy, by declaring him satrap.113

Native Egyptian literature of the early Ptolemaic period projects Nectanebo in ways that exhibit strong resonances with his role in the *Romance*. The prophecies of the *Demotic Chronicle* seemingly look forward to his return to Egypt in some form.114 The *Dream of Nectanebo*, an originally Egyptian text that survives only in a fragmentary second-century BC Greek translation found at the Memphis Sarapeum, tells how Nectanebo prays for a divinatory dream and sees all the gods of Egypt gathered around an enthroned Isis in a papyrus boat. Onuris charges Nectanebo before Isis for failing to complete his temple at Sebennytus. Upon awakening, Nectanebo orders his best sculptor, Petesis, to complete the work, but instead of getting on with it he drinks and pursues a


113 *Alexander Romance* 1.1-14 (Nectanebo), 1.30 (Alexander as son of Ammon) and 3.32 (Ptolemy declared satrap of Egypt). For the roots of the *Romance* in Ptolemaic Alexandria, see Stoneman 2008:12.

beautiful girl. At this point the papyrus breaks off, but presumably events culminated in the fall of Egypt to the Persians.\textsuperscript{115} And the central motif of the Romance’s Nectanebo tale is reminiscent, in a kaleidoscopic way, of the old Egyptian conceit that Pharaohs-to-be were sired upon the existing Pharaoh’s queen by the god Ammon adopting his shape, whilst flooding the palace around with a divine fragrance.\textsuperscript{116} The Romance uses other techniques, too, to pull Alexander into the Egyptian past, not least his repeated identification with Sesonchosis, the legendary Egyptian Pharaoh who had himself once, supposedly, conquered the world. This is the figure known to Herodotus as Sesostris and to Diodorus as Sesooasis, and is vaguely reflective of the great Rameses II of the 13th century BC, whilst the name is probably borrowed from the Senwosret Pharaohs of the 20th and 19th centuries BC. In the early Ptolemaic period he became the subject of a Greek romance of his own, the so-called Sesonchosis Romance, which survives in papyrus fragments. In the Alexander Romance it is Sesonchosis’ inscriptions that direct Alexander to honour Sarapis; the prophets of every Egyptian city proclaim Alexander ‘the new Sesonchosis, world-conqueror’; Alexander encounters Sesonchosis in a divinised form in the Cave of the Gods, where he tells him that, unlike himself, he will be remembered; and the people of Memphis greet Alexander’s corpse as it turns to Egypt as ‘the semi-divine Sesonchosis’.\textsuperscript{117}

**Alexander’s legend in antiquity: Ethiopia and Meroe**

Curtius alone tells us that Alexander sailed up the Nile from Memphis to dispose matters in the interior of Egypt. If so, he cannot have gone far, or

\textsuperscript{115} P.Leiden i 396 = P. d’Anastasy 67 = UPZ i 81. Translation at Maspéro 1967: 239-42. See Koenen 1985; Spalinger 1992. The inconstant Petesis: surely no connection with the inconstant Petisis, who, eleven years after the fall of Nectanebo, abandoned his position as nomarch in Alexander’s administration, in mysterious circumstances (Arr. Anab. 3.5: see above, note 61).

\textsuperscript{116} This narrative is inscribed in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut (r. c. 1479-1458 BC) at Deir-el-Bahari and the Temple of Amenhotep III (r. c. 1386-1349 BC) at Luxor; see Stoneman 2008:20.

have spent much time in doing it. He subsequently tells us that upon his return to Memphis, after the foundation of Alexandria, Alexander conceived the desire to travel down the Nile to visit not only the Egyptian interior but also Ethiopia, but that the demands of the Persian war held him back (perhaps some dittography here). Another indication of Alexander’s interest in Ethiopia may be found in the supposed Aristotelian mission he dispatched to Ethiopia to investigate the sources of the Nile. A fragment of Aristotle tells that Alexander sent such a mission at the behest of the philosopher. A fragment of Callisthenes, who was cousin (of some sort) to Aristotle, and, like Alexander, a pupil too, has him declaring that he had visited Ethiopia in person during Alexander’s campaign: he was thus able to pronounce that the Nile was created by the mountainous Ethiopia’s abundant rainfall. However, Strabo may imply rather that Callisthenes derived his knowledge of the sources of the Nile from Aristotle, and one must wonder why Alexander was content that several weeks’ worth of his Egyptian adventure should go unobserved by his court historian. Arrian tells that amongst the many ambassadors that greeted Alexander in Babylon in 324-323 BC, some came from Ethiopia. He also tells us of the claim, which he does not himself explicitly endorse, that amongst Alexander’s last plans was a project to circumnavigate Africa, going through the Straits of Gibraltar and taking in the coasts of the ‘Nomads’ and the Ethiopians (not necessarily for purposes of conquest).

The historical Alexander never did get to Ethiopia, but the fictional Alexander did manage to get as far as Meroe. The historical Meroe, situated at the Nile’s sixth cataract, close to Khartoum in the modern Sudan, was the capital of the Nubian kingdom of Kush, but the Greeks from Herodotus onwards usually imagined it to belong to Ethiopia, always a

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119 Curt. 4.8.3.
120 Aristotle, F246 Rose (= Photius, Bibliotheca cod. 249 [the key text here] + Proclus on Plato, Timaeus 37d + Strabo, C786).
121 Callisthenes’ relationship with Aristotle: Callisthenes, FGrH 124 testimonia, passim.
122 John Lydus, De mensibus 4.107 = Callisthenes, FGrH 124 F12a.
123 Strabo, C790 (= 17.1.5), incorporating Callisthenes, FGrH 124 F12b.
124 Scepticism about the reality of this mission: Bosworth 1980:263, with references.
125 Arr. Anab. 7.15.4.
126 Arr. Anab. 7.1.2.
semi-mythical place for them with ill-defined boundaries. One of the glories of the third book of the *Alexander Romance* is the tale of Alexander and Candace, the queen of Meroe. The tale is an elaborately complex one, but its principal arc is as follows. Queen Candace offers Alexander ample tribute, and as it is handed over by her courtiers she has one of them secretly paint Alexander’s likeness, which she then conceals. Subsequently, Alexander infiltrates Candace’s court disguised as his bodyguard Antigonus, but is, of course, recognised by the queen on the basis of the portrait. She declares that, although he has conquered the whole of the east, she, a mere woman, has captured him without battle. Alexander eventually returns to his camp with more royal gifts and an escort from Candace. As Richard Stoneman has observed, the wealthy kingdom of Meroe reflected in the *Romance* is that of the central Ptolemaic period, the time of the ‘Meriotic miracle’ reflected in Agatharchides of Cnidus’ account of the place, preserved for us by Diodorus.

The historical peoples of Ethiopia, in due course, repaid the *Romance’s* interest in them, confused though it was, by composing an Ethiopic version of the narrative on the basis of a lost Arabic model, in which the Candace episode is included. The single surviving manuscript of the Ethiopic version derives from the 14th century AD, but is thought to represent a much older tradition.

**Abbreviations**

FGrH  Jacoby *et al.* 1923.


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129 For text and translation see Budge 1896 and 1933 (a repaginated reprint), with the Candace episode at §11; see also Stoneman 2008:272 n. 19, with further bibliography.
OGIS  Dittenberger 1903-1905.
P.Oxy  Grenfell et al. 1898-.
SEG  Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
SB  Preisigke et al. 1915-.
UPZ  Wilcken 1922-1937.

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ALEXANDER IN EGYPT: CONSIDERING THE EGYPTIAN EVIDENCE

Hugh Bowden
King’s College London

Introduction

Egypt was the first of the major kingdoms of the ancient Near East to fall to Alexander. Taking control of the territory was rather different from anything he had experienced in his campaign so far, which had mainly involved dealing with city-states or small territorial states in Anatolia and the Levant. The differences are, however, not immediately apparent in the accounts of the surviving Alexander historians. They are disguised in a number of ways, some of which relate to long-established conventions of Greek historiography and traditions about the relationship between Egypt and the Greek world. Beyond this, however, the historians can be seen to have obscured the extent to which Alexander was in Egypt taking on the role of a Near Eastern, rather than a Macedonian king. In this article I will consider two much-discussed issues: the question of Alexander’s coronation as Pharaoh, and his visit to the temple of Amun at Siwah. I will show how the use of evidence from Egyptian sources can offer ways of re-evaluating the evidence from the Greek and Roman authors, and perhaps present a fuller picture of Alexander’s time in Egypt.

Before examining the accounts of Alexander’s actions, we should briefly consider the way in which a number of Greek authors, who were influential on the Alexander historians, wrote about Egypt. The land is mentioned in the Iliad and Odyssey, and Plutarch (Alex. 26.3) draws a direct link between Menelaus’ visit to Egypt on his return journey from Troy and the foundation of Alexandria, when he describes a dream of Alexander’s in which an unnamed old man (whose description suggests that he is Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea) appears and recites to Alexan-

1 This is not to underestimate the extent to which Macedonian kingship had already been influenced by Achaemenid court practices, on which see Archibald 1998:79: ‘The satrapal courts of the western provinces of the Persian empire, miniature versions of the royal courts at Susa, Persepolis, and Ekbatana, were the most prestigious and impressive models for aspiring dynasts of the fifth century, whether east Greek, Macedonian, or Thracian’; see also Spawforth 2007:92.
der Menelaus’ description of the island of Pharos from the *Odyssey* 4.354-55. Herodotus devotes the whole of the second book, the longest of his *History*, to a description of Egypt. The relationship between Greece and Egypt, stretching back into a distant past, is a recurrent theme in the book.² Herodotus makes claims of Egyptian origins for a number of Greek heroes, including Perseus (2.91), and through him Amphitryon and Alcmene, the parents of Heracles (2.43.2). As will be discussed later, Callisthenes, according to Strabo 17.1.43 and Arrian 3.3.1-2, identify Perseus and Heracles as the heroes whom Alexander had a desire to emulate in his visit to Siwah. But these Egyptian origins were themselves represented as Greek in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* 274-326, where the Egyptian Danaus, ancestor of Perseus, claims descent from the Argive Io.

These accounts, while emphatically acknowledging the differences between Egyptians and Greeks,³ at the same time make claims for a shared identity that elides those differences.⁴ Amongst other things, Herodotus initiates a tendency to obscure the impact of the use of different languages.⁵ In particular, when it comes to several of the accounts of Alexander’s visit to Siwah, it is assumed by the ancient authors that all the participants are speaking the same language (i.e. Greek).⁶

A further feature of Greek (and Roman) practice which influenced the way non-Greek societies were perceived is the use of Greek names for non-Greek gods. In particular, we find the name *Zeus Basileus* (Zeus the King) being used to refer to the chief gods of non-Greek communities.⁷ Xenophon uses the title when he describes sacrifices performed by Cyrus in Media and Babylon.⁸ Arrian refers to sacrifices to *Zeus Basileus* at Gordium (2.3.4) and Memphis (3.5.2). In the latter case, it has been

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² Harrison 2003.
⁴ E.g. Hdt. 2.50.1: σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ πάντων τὰ οὐνόματα τῶν θεῶν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐλήλυθε ἐς τὴν Ἑλλάδα (‘The names of nearly all the gods came to Greece from Egypt’); cf. on this Harrison 1998:26-29.
⁵ Harrison 1998:9: ‘Herodotus is also generally not sensitive to the question of the language in which his non-Greeks speak.’
⁶ Plut. *Alex.* 27.5 consciously imagines the priest speaking Greek affected by *barbarismos*, although in order to make a particular pun work.
⁸ Xen. *Cyr.* 2.4.19; 3.3.21; 7.5.57. In *An.* 6.1.22 and 7.6.44, when on campaign in Anatolia, he also describes himself as sacrificing to *Zeus Basileus*: this was on advice of the Delphic oracle, but the name will have been taken to refer to the chief god of whatever region Xenophon was in; see Bowden 2004:239.
suggested that the sacrifice was to ‘Amon-Re’, although the major temple in Memphis was that of Ptah. The identification of the god of the temple at Siwah with Zeus was established by the first half of the 5th century. The sanctuary had links with the Greek city of Cyrene by this time, as we will see, and the god is referred to by Greek historians sometimes simply as Zeus, or, to give more precision, Zeus Ammon. But the Hellenisation of the name should not obscure the fact that the temple was set up by Egyptians in honour of the Egyptian god Amun. It is generally accepted that the Siwah temple was founded from Thebes in the Third Intermediate Period. Although Greek writers might write as if the god of Siwah was Greek, the experience of visiting his temple and taking part in its rituals would have been predominantly Egyptian. With these issues in mind, we can turn to Alexander’s actions.

Coronation

We can start with the question of Alexander’s coronation. Badian has put what is now the prevailing view most succinctly:

[W]e have no justification for suggesting that he was crowned Pharaoh according to Egyptian ritual, either before or after his visit to Ammon. Such a striking and colourful event, had it taken place, could not be missing in the whole of our tradition. The reason for the omission of a formal coronation was no doubt political: his Macedonians would not have relished such a ceremony.

Badian’s assumption that Alexander would be more concerned with the views of his Macedonian companions than with the attitude of the population of one of the richest parts of his new empire surely needs some justification, but his argument from silence is in any case not strong. A better understanding of what such a coronation would entail, throws some light on the issue.

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9 Bosworth 1977:54-55.
10 Bosworth 1977:52.
11 Thus Callisthenes in Strab. 17.1.43.
12 E.g. Pi. P. 4.16. For the Romans, it was Jupiter Hammon; e.g. Cic. N.D. 1.82; Val. Max. 9.5 ext.1.
13 Hdt. 2.42.4-5; Černý 1962:38; Kuhlmann 1988:50-61.
14 Badian 2012:367; also Bosworth 1988:71; Burstein 1991; Ogden in this volume, p. 4 n. 12.
The accession of Egyptian Pharaohs was an extended process. The rituals began on the morning after the death of the previous Pharaoh, with the proclamation of the new ruler’s royal names. The coronation would take place some months later, ideally at the New Year, or another symbolically important festival time. The intervening time was taken up with travelling through Egypt:

Much of this liminal period, it seems, was occupied by a ceremonial journey known as ‘The Creation of Order in all Provinces’. During the course of this royal progress the king would travel throughout Egypt, visiting various temples, receiving regalia and endorsements from the deities, and propitiating the gods (and their priesthoods) in return.

For this journey the Pharaoh remained on his barge, at a distance from the people. The accession of a new Pharaoh also required office holders to renew their oaths of office, and foreign states to renew their alliances, and some of the period before the coronation might be taken up with asserting the new ruler’s authority.

Alexander’s accession did not follow the death of the previous ruler, but Arrian describes a religious festival on his arrival at Memphis (3.1.4), and a second, shortly before his departure (3.5.2). Curtius states that from Memphis, Alexander sailed up the Nile into the interior of Egypt (4.7.5). This statement is generally ignored by historians, as such a voyage is not mentioned by any other author, but the sequence of an initial ceremony at Memphis followed by a journey upstream by barge would be what was expected of a new Pharaoh. Both Arrian and Curtius associate Alexander’s administrative settlement of Egypt closely with these Memphite rituals, although they place it at different points. None of our sources provides any clear chronological detail about Alexander’s time in Egypt, and indeed, they are inconsistent about the order of the various incidents they describe and the routes taken by Alexander in Egypt. Arrian (3.6.1) says that Alexander left Egypt at the very beginning of spring, but what he meant by this and what the source of his information was, are not clear. From

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16 Morris 2010:205.
18 Morris 2010:205.
19 The foundation of Alexandria is generally dated to April and Arrian places the visit to Siwah, Alexander’s return to Memphis, his reception of embassies, the
there he went first to Tyre and then turned east to meet Darius at Gaugamela. The date of the Battle of Gaugamela is certain, on the basis of Babylonian evidence (1 October 331), but how long Alexander spent at Tyre and on the march is not stated. It would have been possible for Alexander to have stayed in Egypt until the New Year celebration in late June. This was considered to be the best possible time for a coronation. Whether or not Alexander delayed his departure until the early summer, it is likely that the second of the two festivals mentioned by Arrian, which he says was held in honour of \textit{Zeus Basileus}, included rituals of kingship in which Alexander was formally crowned as Pharaoh. Arrian mentions the rather Greek inclusion of athletic and artistic competitions as part of the festival (as at Soli, Tyre, and the previous festival at Memphis), but this does not mean that the event was primarily Greek in character; it was usual in the Pharaonic period for coronations to be associated with other festivals, and the flexibility of the ceremony would allow for such innovations. 

We may compare the case of Egypt with Alexander’s situation in Babylon. None of the surviving sources state that Alexander was crowned King of Babylon, but events suggest that he certainly was. A number of stories about omens warning of his approaching death have been convincingly interpreted as misrepresentations of the Mesopotamian substitute kingship ritual. This ritual, which involved placing a criminal on the throne for a period in place of the true king, could only have been carried out if Alexander had himself previously been formally crowned as king, and further evidence indicates that this took place at the time of his original entry into Babylon in late 331. Curtius’ account of Alexander’s entry (5.1.17-23) has been identified as a depiction of the Babylonian New Year Festival, and thus of the formal acknowledgement of Alexander as King of Babylon. It is likely, too, that the stories about Alexander sitting on the throne in the palace at Susa, with his feet on a footstool, also reflect a celebration of an athletic festival and the reorganisation of the administration of Egypt, after this.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{BM36761} BM36761: Van der Spek 2003:297-99.
\bibitem{Morris} Morris 2010:206.
\bibitem{Arr} Arr. \textit{An.} 2.5.8, 24.6; 3.1.4; Bosworth 1980:262. Games were not a normal feature of Egyptian festivals; cf. Hdt. 2.91.5.
\bibitem{Troy} Troy 2006:146.
\bibitem{Smelik} Smelik 1978/79; Van der Spek 2003:338-40.
\bibitem{Kuhrt} Kuhrt 1990; Fredricksmeyer 2000:146-47.
\end{thebibliography}
formal coronation.\textsuperscript{26} The fact that we have stories that imply that Alexander was indeed formally crowned at Babylon and Susa, suggests that either these ceremonies were misunderstood by eyewitnesses upon whom later writers based their accounts, or that either the surviving writers or their sources suppressed the facts of the coronations and redescribed Mesopotamian rituals to fit the pattern of Greek stories about omens. If we read the accounts of Alexander's time in Egypt from this perspective, we may see that, far from Alexander not having a coronation, it was the requirements of the accession and coronation rituals that determined the pattern of his activities there.

Siwah: the oracle

Egyptian evidence can also cast light on Alexander's visit to the oracle of Amun at Siwah. The sanctuary, in the Libyan Desert and many days march distant from the Nile, is unlikely to have been a usual station on the route of 'The Creation of Order in all Provinces', even though it could conceivably have been added. But a journey to the west would have been appropriate for other reasons, mainly associated with Alexander’s formal assertion of his position.

The visit to Siwah has been the subject of so much scholarly attention over the years that the ancient accounts need to be examined in some detail in order to determine what can be said about it.\textsuperscript{27} The evidence appears at first sight very rich. Not only do we have accounts from all five of the principle Alexander historians, but we also have Strabo’s discussion of Callisthenes’ narrative of events, composed only a short time after the event.\textsuperscript{28} Furthermore, the site of the sanctuary at Siwah has been surveyed and excavated within the last 30 years, with a full publication produced in 1988.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} Curt. 5.2.13-15; Diod. Sic. 17.66.3-8: the authors explain the footstool as required because of the shortness of Alexander's legs, when, in fact, enthroned Near Eastern kings are generally depicted with a footstool. In both stories Alexander accepts his use of the footstool as an omen of his success.

\textsuperscript{27} Main discussions: Larsen 1932; Brunt 1976:467-80; Bosworth 1977; Fredricksmeyer 1991; Cartledge 2004:265-70.

\textsuperscript{28} Arr. An. 3.3-4; Diod. Sic. 17.49-51; Plut. Alex. 26.6-27.5; Curt. 4.7.5-31; Justin 11.11.1-13; Strabo 17.1.43.

\textsuperscript{29} Kuhlmann 1988; see also Fakhry 1973, Osing 1984.
Callisthenes’ narrative is generally accepted to lie behind all the later versions. Whether Arrian got his version directly from Callisthenes, or by way of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, there is nothing in his account of Alexander’s actions that cannot be derived from Callisthenes.\textsuperscript{30} When Arrian comments that Alexander was hoping to obtain more information about his birth — or, at any rate, to say that he had obtained it — we may suspect that Arrian is reading this into Callisthenes’ statement that the priest told Alexander he was son of Zeus.\textsuperscript{31} Even if Ptolemy and Aristobulus were his sources here,\textsuperscript{32} their accounts some fifty years after the events were unlikely to have contained much of significance in addition to Callisthenes’ version of events, even if they, too, had been eyewitnesses. The reliability of Arrian is therefore dependent on the reliability of Callisthenes’ account, in so far as we have that in Strabo.

So what does Callisthenes say? First, is the question of Alexander’s motives. According to Callisthenes, he was inspired to visit the oracle because his ancestors, Heracles and Perseus, had done so before him. The reference to Perseus, the eponymous ancestor of the Persians, would have been more to the point if written after Alexander’s claim to be Persian King, which makes his wish to emulate Perseus in this context \textit{a post eventum} explanation.\textsuperscript{33} Less doubt has been expressed about Alexander’s desire to emulate Heracles, since the connections between Alexander and Heracles are much more obvious. But it should be noted that no other evidence exists of a tradition that Heracles visited Siwah; Herodotus 2.42 only relates a story of Heracles seeing Zeus (i.e. Amun) wearing a ram’s head at Thebes. Could Callisthenes have invented the associations of both Perseus and Heracles with Siwah? At \textit{An.} 4.28.2 Arrian is sceptical about the story linking Heracles to the Rock of Aornos, because there was no tradition of Heracles

\textsuperscript{30} The description of the miraculous spring, if not based on more recent observation, can be found in Herodotus 4.181.3-4.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Arr. An.} 3.3.2. The comment \textit{ὅ φήσων γε ἐγνωκέναι} would be Arrian’s own, intended to excuse Alexander of the \textit{hybris} of really claiming divine descent. It points to Arrian’s suggestion at the end of the work that Alexander’s advertisement of his divine origins ‘may have been a device for inspiring reverence in his subjects’ (7.29.3). Bosworth’s comment that Arrian does not query Alexander’s claim to the son of Zeus, but places the general claim to oracular knowledge in doubt (1980:272), is not quite right: Arrian does not commit himself on the truth or falsity of Alexander’s claim to divine descent — his concern in Book 7 is the propriety of advertising it publicly.

\textsuperscript{32} As assumed by Brunt 1976:467 and Bosworth 1980:269.

\textsuperscript{33} As pointed out by Cartledge 2004:267-68; cf. Bosworth 1980:270.
going to India; in the case of Siwah he is less worried, since he knows the story of Heracles and Busiris set in Egypt. But we should probably take the more sceptical road here too. Callisthenes, following Pindaric practice, is creating a tradition that has Alexander’s heroic ancestor preceding him on his journey.

When considering Callisthenes’ description of the consultation of the oracle itself, we can make use of Egyptian evidence. Callisthenes says that the oracular response was not given in words, ‘but mostly by nods and tokens’, and either he or perhaps Strabo adds a Homeric reference to Zeus nodding to give assent with the *prophetes* playing the role of Zeus. Here the attempt to grant authority to the oracle by Homeric invocation causes unnecessary confusion, since clear evidence exists on how Egyptian oracles worked. The image of the god was placed in a boat on a litter and carried along a processional route by a number of priests. Petitioners could either speak to the god as he passed or put down written texts along the way. The movement of the boat could be interpreted as positive or negative responses to the petitions; Egyptian accounts of these oracular processions refer to the god as ‘nodding’. The temple of Amun at Thebes was a particularly important oracular shrine, and the cult practices and cult image at Siwah were clearly modelled on those of Thebes.

The excavation of the site at Siwah has made it possible to establish more detail about the procedure there. There were two temples at the site, referred to as the Umm Ubeida temple and the Agurmi temple, aligned with each other and linked by a *dromos* about 400 metres long. As Kuhlmann recognised, this would have been not only the most obvious, but also the only practical site for the procession. When Callisthenes refers to the god nodding to give his oracular responses, it must have taken place on the course of a procession from Umm Ubeida to Agurmi. There are two problems with Kuhlmann’s discussion of the Ammoneion that need to be taken into account. The first is that, like Fakhry before him, he tends to interpret what he finds at Siwah in the light of the accounts of the

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34 It might have made more sense to link the visit to Heracles’ fight with Antaeus in Libya; cf. Pl. I. 4.
36 E.g. BAR 4 §§654-58.
39 Diod. 17.50.6-7 and Curt. 4.7.24 both describe such a procession-oracle at Siwah; we will return to their accounts.
Alexander historians. The second, perhaps more problematic, is that he adopts an approach to the operation of the oracle at Siwah that was once applied also to Greek oracles, but has now been superseded. Kuhlmann assumes that the priests, who he thinks controlled the oracle, were mainly concerned with preserving its reputation for infallibility, and therefore any mechanism of consultation must have allowed them to learn in advance what the petitioner wanted to know so that they could come up with an appropriate answer. Here is not the place for a detailed rebuttal of this approach; most recent discussions of oracular consultations, drawing on rich comparative material from anthropology, recognise that Greek oracles functioned on the basis that all those involved normally acknowledged the authenticity of the process. Suffice it to say that it is inconceivable that Alexander, or anyone else, would have been taken in by the kind of procedure imagined by Kuhlmann.

Kuhlmann argues for the existence of a second oracle procedure, known as the ‘Royal Oracle’. This involved the king entering the inner chamber of the temple, where the cult image stood, addressing the image directly, and then receiving a spoken response. This theory is based on a literal interpretation of accounts from the New Kingdom where the god’s words are said to have been spoken from the inner chamber. On the basis of such texts, Fakhry suggested the possibility that at Siwah a priest could have hidden in a corridor that ran beside the inner sanctuary, and spoken a response as if he were the god speaking. Kuhlmann has a more elaborate vision of a priest hiding in the ceiling of the inner sanctuary, to hear the questions asked by the king, and then hurrying off to find the head priest, who would concoct a suitable answer, write it down in hieroglyphics, and then bring it to Alexander as representing the god’s response. That this is not what happened seems certain. Černý points out that all depictions of a Pharaoh consulting an oracle show the processional method. Furthermore, he compares the role of the god in the oracular process with the role of the Pharaoh himself. When the Pharaoh is in public, he may be approach-

41 E.g. Kuhlmann 1988:134, describing the ‘Royal Oracle’, mentions that petitioners at the processional oracle were seeking advice, so that the oracle’s reputation was not at stake in the same way.
43 Kuhlmann 1988:133-34, 144-45.
44 Fakhry 1944:156.
ed by petitioners; but when he retires into the innermost part of his house, he is not to be disturbed, and to petition him there would be importunate, to say the least.\footnote{Černý 1962:35-36.} On this basis we can reject the notion of a ‘Royal Oracle’ at Siwah – the procession-oracle was the only one.\footnote{Bosworth 1988:73, writing before the publication of Kuhlmann’s work, correctly identifies the form of the consultation, but follows Callisthenes in locating it within the temple.}

If there was no ‘Royal Oracle’, how do we explain Callisthenes’ statement that ‘all heard the oracles from outside except Alexander, but he within’? One answer is that Callisthenes is writing as if it were a Greek oracular consultation, and specifically a consultation of Delphi. At Delphi the consultation took place within the temple, and literary accounts of consultations of Delphi give a significant role to a \textit{prophetes}.\footnote{Hdt. 8.36; Eur. \textit{Ion} 413-16; Fontenrose 1978:216-19; Bowden 2005:16, 21.} This would be another example of a Greek historian misrepresenting non-Greek ritual. Whether Callisthenes is consciously adapting the procedure to fit the expectations of a Greek audience, or whether he genuinely misunderstood what was going on, is not clear. It is, of course, quite possible that Alexander did indeed enter the temple – and quite possibly he alone. As the new Pharaoh he would have been expected to receive honours from the god and the priests, and to have offered gifts to propitiate them in return, as happened during ‘The Creation of Order in all Provinces’. Such rituals would have been distinct from any consultation of the oracle, although Callisthenes and any other bystanders may not have appreciated the distinction.

That leaves Callisthenes’ statement that the priest told Alexander that he was the son of Zeus. And although the issue of ‘divine sonship’ has frequently been taken to lie at the heart of the whole episode, this is the easiest to address. Alexander was recognised as Pharaoh as soon as he entered Egypt. This is accepted even by those who reject a formal coronation. Alexander’s royal titles are spelled out in an inscription in the temple at Karnak as ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Setepenre Meryamun, the son of Re, possessor of the crowns, Alexander’: ‘Son of Ammon’ or ‘Son of Zeus’ are, as has been recognised, attempts to render this in Greek terms.\footnote{Sethe 1904:2.7; translation from Blyth 2006:225.} For Callisthenes to say that the priest described Alexander as son of Zeus, is to say nothing more than that he...
addressed him as he would a Pharaoh. Given Callisthenes’ tendency towards what Strabo describes as kolakeia (flattery), we should read nothing significant into an expression that would have bothered Strabo’s Roman readers far more than it would have concerned anyone in Alexander’s party.

Significantly, Callisthenes has nothing to say about what Alexander asked the oracle. Arrian follows him in this when he notes that Alexander ‘heard, as he said, the things that his heart desired.’ Instead, Callisthenes uses the story of the expedition as a display of Alexander’s heroic power: it was the journey and the welcome his hero received from the god that mattered. The account brings out that Alexander was following the footsteps of his great predecessors, that he came through an ordeal in the desert, and that he was welcomed as son of Zeus. Callisthenes adds to Alexander’s glory by mentioning at this point the prophecies about his future campaigns and his eugeneia that supposedly came flowing in from Didyma and Erythrae. The message of the episode is that the whole world spontaneously acknowledged his greatness.

The accounts of Diodorus, Curtius, Justin and Plutarch have two elements not mentioned by Callisthenes. The first is the description of the oracle procession and the god’s image. Diodorus claims that the image was carried by eighty priests, an unlikely number given the depictions of the procession of the god at the more important site of Thebes, where it appears that twenty-four priests are shown carrying the god’s barque in

\[50\] Bosworth 1988:73, ‘This may have been a Greek interpretation of the Pharaonic titulature (as king of Egypt Alexander was by definition son of Amun, the Egyptian manifestation of the god of Siwah).’

\[51\] Arr. An. 6.19.4 says twice that Alexander claimed to have offered sacrifices he had been advised to by Ammon: θύει τοῖς θεοῖς Ἀλέξανδρος ὅσοις ἐφασκέν ὅτι παρὰ τοῦ Ἄμμωνος ἐπηγεγελμένον ἣν θυσαι αὐτῷ … καὶ ταύτας δὲ κατ’ ἐπιθεσπισμὸν θύειν ἐφασκέ τοῦ Ἀμμωνος. The repetition of ἐφασκέ, as suggested by Brunt, emphasises that Arrian does not know what Alexander asked the god. Arr. Ind. 18.11 refers to Alexander sacrificing to both ancestral gods and those he had been advised to by an oracle (ἐθεί τοῖς θεοῖσιν ὃσοιτε πάτριοι ἢ μαντευτοι). It was standard practice for the leader of a military campaign to consult an oracle beforehand, and to include the question ‘to what gods should I pray?’ It would not be surprising then if Alexander had asked this question at Siwah, although it would be safe to assume that he consulted an oracle before setting off, quite possibly Delphi; cf. Plut. Alex. 14.4.

\[52\] The natural world spontaneously yielding to Alexander is a theme that appears to have run through Callisthenes’ history; cf. FGrH 124 F31.
Curtius adds, uniquely, that the image of the god is not like the usual run of cult statues. The notion of an aniconic cult statue has been taken seriously by scholars, but is hard to accept: the overwhelming evidence points to the image being ram-headed, or else human-headed with ram’s horns. There is no space in the temple for two separate cult statues, even if the idea were conceivable. A more obvious explanation is that Curtius, describing the cult object as like a large umbilicus, that is to say an omphalos, shows a Roman lack of seriousness about non-Roman divinatory practices by inserting the symbol of Delphic authority into an account of Egyptian divination.

The other element, found in Diodorus, Curtius, Justin and Plutarch, is the series of questions asked by Alexander and his companions. Given the silence of Callisthenes and Arrian on the matter, scholars have understandably doubted its veracity. The reliability of this tradition is not helped by the lack of consistency about how these questions were asked. Callisthenes sets the pattern that it was the prophetes, and not the god, who addressed Alexander as son of Zeus. Diodorus indicates that it was only after this greeting that the oracle was set in motion, but the other accounts suggest that the greeting and the questions were all part of a single conversation: there is little attempt to relate the questions and answers to the rituals Diodorus and Curtius describe. Although the accounts vary a little, they contain two basic questions asked by Alexander. One is about whether his father’s murderers have all been punished. While it is possible to link this to the various suspicions – mostly modern – about Alexander’s involvement in Philip’s death, it can be read simply as setting up the answer that Alexander’s father was not mortal. Perhaps some Roman writers wanted to hint at suspicions about the death of Philip, but this can tell us nothing about the events themselves.

53 Foucart 1924: pl. XI. Eight bearers are shown in an oracle scene of Amenhotep I in a Theban tomb: Černý 1962:42 and fig. 9.
54 Hdt. 4.181.2, cf. 2.42; the evidence of coins from Cyrene as well as those minted by Alexander’s successors is also clear; cf. Classen 1959:351 n. 12.
55 Bosworth 1988:73 talks of ‘the cult image, not the familiar Ammon with his characteristic ram’s horns but an archaic omphalos-shaped stone studded with emeralds’, but no source mentions two cult statues. Nor is there any evidence for an an-iconic statue being used in the oracle procession at Thebes, the model for the oracle at Siwah.
56 Justin 11.11.9-10; Plut. Alex. 27.3-4; Arr. An. 4.7.26-27; Diod. Sic. 17.51.2.
The other question was whether Alexander would rule the world.\textsuperscript{58} Given that Alexander did not, in fact, ever become ruler of the whole world, the idea that he would ask this and get a positive result is puzzling. It can, however, be connected to another feature of the question-and-answer session. Diodorus 17.51.3 has the prophets claim that ‘[t]he proof of his divine birth will reside in the greatness of his deeds; as formerly he has been undefeated (\textit{aeteton}), now he will be unconquerable (\textit{aniketon}) for all time.’ Curtius 4.7.27 has the god say that ‘Alexander would be unconquerable till he departed to join the gods’ (\textit{invictum fore, donec excederet ad deos}). Prophecies that Alexander would be unconquered appear several times in the Greek sources. Plutarch (\textit{Alex.} 3.5) recounts how Philip, just after his capture of Potideia, was informed of Alexander’s birth on the same day that he got the news of his Olympic victory and a victory of Parmenio over the Illyrians, and how the \textit{manteis} interpreted this to mean that Alexander would be \textit{aniketos}. Plutarch later describes (14.4) how Alexander demanded an oracle from Delphi on a day it was not functioning. As he began to drag the Pythia to the temple she exclaimed, ‘you are \textit{aniketos},’ which Alexander took for the god’s response and went on his way. The account is of course not historical, but one of those stories told about powerful figures. Diodorus 16.27.1 tells more or less the same story about the Phocian general Philomelus, where the priestess says ‘you may do as you wish.’ Diodorus is also aware of the tradition that the Delphic oracle told Alexander he is \textit{aniketos} (17.93.4). Curtius is not impressed with prophecies, but nevertheless uses the word \textit{invictus} no fewer than eleven times about Alexander, a further eight times about his forces, and twice about his soon to be defeated opponents.\textsuperscript{59} Clearly, the adjective had a life of its own, and we can in this case trace its birth. Hypereides’ first speech mentions, in a context which is not entirely clear, a statue to King Alexander \textit{Aniketos Theos} that was, or was to be,

\textsuperscript{58} Diod. Sic. 17.51.2: εἰ μοι δίδωσι τὴν ἁπάσης τῆς γῆς ἀρχήν (‘if you give me rule over all the world’); Curt. 4.7.26: \textit{an totius orbis imperium fatis sibi destinaretur} (‘whether rule over the whole world was destined for him by the fates’); Plut. \textit{Alex.} 27.4: εἰ πάντων αὐτῶν δίδωσιν ἀνθρώπων κυρίω γενέσθαι (‘if it was given to him to be lord of all men’); Justin 11.11.10: \textit{victoriam omnium bellorum possessionemque terrarum dari respondetur} (‘he was told that victory in all wars and possession of all lands was given to him’).

\textsuperscript{59} Of Alexander (and his character) 3.12.18-19; 4.7.27; 5.3.22; 6.5.11, 7.1; 7.6.22-23; 9.2.28, 6.12, 8.7, 9.23; 10.1.42; of Alexander’s men 3.2.16; 7.7.11-12; 8.8.16; 9.1.18, 2.28, 2.23, 6.7; 10.3.8-9; of opponents which Alexander has gone on to defeat 7.9.17, 11.8.
erected in Athens.\(^{60}\) That statue, or perhaps others like it in other Greek cities, probably erected in 324, stands behind all these references to Alexander as unconquered. But the title, whether it was chosen by Alexander or by the Athenians, is not a bald assertion of Alexander’s personal claim to be a god. *Aniketos* was a title used of Heracles,\(^{61}\) and the Athenians are therefore identifying Alexander, back in Babylon after his epic journey to India, with his ancestor. *Invictus* has the same association: Hercules Victor, whose temple was in the Forum Boarium in Rome, was equally called Hercules Invictus. And when Curtius adds to the prophecy the qualification *donec excederet ad deos*, he is using a phrase that Velleius Paterculus (1.2.1) had used about Hercules. Directly or indirectly, Heracles and Alexander’s identification with him that developed over the course of his campaign stand behind the stories later writers told about Siwah.

All of this makes clear that the accounts of the visit to Siwah cannot be easily rationalised. In the longer accounts we have, as with the descriptions of Alexander’s coronation at Susa and the substitute kingship ritual in Babylon, a non-Greek ritual recast as the occasion for omens about his future: as at Susa, we have foreign officials behaving oddly and Alexander’s friends involved in emphasising his future fortune. Bosworth has pointed out that ‘the association of Alexander the Great with Ammon, the desert god of the oasis of Siwah, was one of the favourite themes of antiquity’;\(^{62}\) it is one of the consequences of that popularity, that getting back to the actual events is more than usually difficult.

**Reasons for visiting the oracle**

There are a variety of possible reasons why Alexander chose to visit Siwah.\(^{63}\) But here, too, recognition of the broader context can help make sense of his actions. Alexander was not the first ruler of Egypt to make the journey to Siwah. Best known is Herodotus’ account of Cambyses’ expedition, which ended up buried by the desert sands.\(^{64}\) Herodotus’ story clearly had its impact on Callisthenes, who may have exaggerated the troubles en-

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\(^{60}\) Hyp. 1: στῆσαι εἰκό[να] Ἀλεξάνδρου βασιλ[έως τοῦ ἀνικήτου θε][οῦ...]. Cf. Dio 43.45.3 for a statue of Julius Caesar as *theos aniketos*.

\(^{61}\) Tyrtaeus, Fr. 11 West: ἀλλ’ Ἡρακλῆος γὰρ ἀνικήτου γένος ἑστε, | θαρσεῖτ’: οὖπω Ζεὺς αὐχένα λοξὸν ἔχει; cf. Diod. Sic. 8.9.

\(^{62}\) Bosworth 1977:49.

\(^{63}\) See Ogden in this volume, mainly in terms of Alexander’s immediate interests.

\(^{64}\) Hdt. 3.26; cf. Strab. 17.1.54; Seneca, QNat. 2.30.2; Justin 1.9.3. Spalinger 1979.
dured by Alexander to point up the contrasts. But before Cambyses there were the Saite dynasty Pharaohs, Apries and Amasis. Herodotus describes how Apries’ attempted invasion of Cyrenaica triggered a rebellion in Egypt, which put Amasis on the throne (2.161.4); soon after this, Amasis made an alliance with Cyrene (2.181.1). Now this is significant because it was Amasis who built the Agurmi temple at Siwah.\(^65\) It is not clear what, if anything, was there before the time of Amasis, and it is certain that the temple was further developed under the Ptolemies, but it is tempting to associate this building at a sanctuary on the edge of Libya with Amasis’ relations with the people of Cyrene. Pindar’s fourth Pythian ode, written just over a century later, reflects the links between Amun and Cyrene (Pyth. 4.16). We can then see greater significance in Alexander’s meeting with envoys from Cyrene on his way to Siwah, described by Diodorus (17.49.2) and Curtius (4.7.9). There is a tendency to interpret Alexander’s visits to temples in terms of his personal religiosity – most obviously in the cases of Troy and Tyre. But sanctuaries were good places for communication. Hence the dedication of the temple of Athene at Priene, where the dedicatory inscription stood above a series of decrees demonstrating the beneficence of Alexander and his successor Lysimachus to the people of the area. So, too, Alexander sacrificed to Artemis at Ephesus, and later used an embassy to Olympia during the Olympic games to display his clemency in restoring exiles to their homes.\(^66\) Siwah was not as hard to reach as Callisthenes suggests, and according to an Attic inscription the Athenians sent a sacred embassy in the 370s or 360s.\(^67\) No doubt this was not a unique event, and Alexander’s presence at Siwah would have linked him into the network of communication and shared charis that theoriai represented.

One further point to note about the sanctuary at Siwah is that the smaller of the two temples, at Umm Ubeida, was built by Nectanebo II, the last Pharaoh of the 30th dynasty, and the man who the Alexander Romance claims to have been Alexander’s real father.\(^68\) It can at least be suggested that by visiting a site associated with Nectanebo, Alexander was asserting continuity with the last Egyptian dynasty.

Alexander then had reasons to visit Siwah that were unconnected with the oracle itself, but were significant for his relationship with the Egyp-

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\(^{65}\) Kuhlmann 1988:31-37.

\(^{66}\) Diod. Sic. 17.109.1; 18.8.3-5; Justin 13.5.3.


\(^{68}\) Kuhlmann 1988:37-41.
tians and their western neighbours. It was as far west as Alexander was prepared to go, but it brought him into contact, in a valuable way, with Cyrene and the other Greek cities of the region. In earlier periods, changes of regime in Egypt triggered friendly approaches from Cyrenaica: this was the case not only with Amasis, but also Cambyses. For the new Pharaoh to renew his relationship with the neighbouring powers to the west would fit both with Alexander’s strategic requirements and also with the Egyptian tradition of the new Pharaoh renewing alliances.

Alexander’s time in Egypt is usually considered for what it can tell us about Alexander the individual. Hence the focus on the question of his claim to ‘divine sonship’. It is taken for granted that a desire to consult the oracle for this purpose was the driving force behind Alexander’s journey to Siwah, if not his whole invasion of Egypt. But this runs the risk of ignoring the fact that Egypt placed its own requirements on Alexander. An approach that starts from consideration of Alexander as Pharaoh, such as I have attempted here, produces rather different conclusions.

**Bibliography**


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69 Hdt. 3.13.3-4. But cf. 4.203 for Darius’ reign and Bosworth 1988:72, 291-92 for events at the time of Ptolemy’s seizure of Egypt.

70 E.g. Bosworth 1988:71, ‘Far more important [than Memphis] was the sanctuary of Ammon in the oasis of Siwah’; Worthington 2004:113, ‘More importantly [Egypt] was home to the oracle of Zeus Ammon, situated in the Oasis of Siwah.’


CALLISTHENES IN AFRICA: THE HISTORIAN'S ROLE AT SIWAH AND IN THE PROSKYNESIS CONTROVERSY

Frances Pownall
University of Alberta, Edmonton
Visiting Researcher, University of South Africa

One of the most discussed episodes in modern studies of Alexander is his pilgrimage to the oracle at Siwah, in which Ammon, equated by the Greeks with Zeus, is alleged to have acknowledged his paternity of the young conqueror.1 Discussion has often centred around the question of the extent to which Alexander himself believed in his own divinity. Earlier scholarship preferred to view Alexander as entirely ‘rational’ 2 (adopting an apologetic view originally found in Plut. Alex. 28.6 and Arr. An. 7.29.3), refused to accept that Alexander actually thought of himself as a god, and argued that he promoted his divine filiation only for political reasons.3 The more recent communis opinio, however, has been that Alexander did indeed think of himself as a living god and actively promoted his own deification.4

Whatever Alexander himself may have intended vis-à-vis the oracle at Siwah’s proclamation, the issue of his divinity recurs in an equally notorious episode: Alexander’s attempt in 327 BC to introduce the Persian ceremonial custom of proskynesis to his court.5 Because both episodes have

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3 This basic viewpoint is found in various forms in Hogarth 1887; Meyer 1924 (cf. the explanation by Bosworth 1996a:131 n. 151 of the genesis of Meyer’s essay); Robinson 1943; Tarn 1948:1:140-41 and 2:347-74; Balsdon 1950; Atkinson 1973; Cawkwell 1994.


received a large amount of attention, I do not intend to discuss them in
detail here. Instead, I propose to examine them from another angle,
namely, the role of Callisthenes, who plays a major role in promoting
Alexander’s divine filiation confirmed by the oracle at Siwah, but
subsequently sabotages the king’s attempt to impose proskynesi
upon his
court. One issue which has not yet been satisfactorily resolved in previous
discussions of either episode is why Callisthenes, who showed himself
more than willing to propagate and enhance his royal patron’s alleged
divine paternity, eventually refused to perform ceremonial proskynesi
to Alexander, an act of defiance which ultimately cost him his life. Callis-
thenes’ refusal to conform to Alexander’s expectations is often represented
as a change in attitude, ‘an amazing volte-face’ as Tarn put it.6 While some
objections to Tarn’s statement have been voiced in passing,7 a thorough re-
examination is required both of what Callisthenes actually claimed for
Alexander as the result of the Siwah pilgrimage and of what he is alleged
to have said and done in relation to the proskynesi controversy. As I shall
argue, this supposed contradiction is more apparent than real. Further-
more, Callisthenes himself was responsible for the misinformation
propagated among Alexander’s entourage that proskynesi was tantamount
to divinisation.
Callisthenes’ status as official court historian of the expedition entails
that Alexander personally endorsed his history of the expedition,8 and his
(necessarily) panegyric account is generally agreed to have been the ulti-
mate source of the Siwah episode in the later tradition.9 With that in

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change of heart’). This apparent contradiction was also observed in antiquity; cf.
Philodemus, On Flattery (P.Herc. 222) (= Callisthenes, FGrH 124 T 21): ‘In his
history he deified Alexander (ἀπεθέου τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον), but opposed the
performance of proskynesis to him.’
8 There is no reason to deny the common consensus among modern scholars,
recently challenged by Milns (2006-2007), that Callisthenes accompanied the
indicated otherwise, translations of ancient texts are my own.
9 Strabo 17.1.43 (= FGrH 124 F 14a); Diod. Sic. 17.49-51; Plut. Alex. 26.11-27.11
 (= FGrH 124 F 14b); Arr. Anab. 3.3-4; Curt. 4.7.5-30; Just. Epit. 11.11.2-12; It.
Alex. 21-22.1. On Callisthenes as the ultimate source of the literary tradition, see
Pearson 1960:33-35; Lane Fox 1973:200-16; Bosworth 1980:1.269 and 272;
Golan 1988:110; Rubinsohn 1993:1317-20; and Bowden in this volume.
mind, let us examine what is extant from Callisthenes’ narrative of what transpired at the oracle of Ammon.

The only extant fragment from Callisthenes’ account of Alexander’s consultation of the oracle is preserved by Strabo: 10

This, however, the man told the king explicitly: that he was the son of Zeus (τοῦτο μέντοι ῥητῶς εἶπεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ὅτι εἶ θεοῦ υἱός). Callisthenes adds to this in the exaggerating language of tragedy that although Apollo had forsaken the oracle among the Branchidae since the time when the sanctuary had been plundered by the Branchidae when they sided with the Persians during Xerxes’ invasion, and although the spring had also ceased to flow, at that time the spring reappeared and the Milesian ambassadors conveyed to Memphis many oracles concerning the birth of Alexander from Zeus (περὶ τῆς ἐκ Διὸς γενέσεως τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου), his future victory near Arbela, the death of Darius, and the revolutionary attempts in Lacedaemon. And he says also that the Erythraean Athenaïs proclaimed his divine heritage (εὐγενεία); she, he adds, resembled the ancient Erythraean Sibyl.

According to Callisthenes, the essence of the message that the oracle at Siwah conveyed to Alexander was that he was the son of Zeus, a divine filiation later confirmed by the oracles of Apollo at Didyma (in the territory of Miletus) and Erythrae. The word γένεσις can refer either to descent or birth, but the Milesian oracle’s confirmation of the oracle of Ammon’s proclamation suggests that it refers to Alexander’s divine parentage, rather than to his Argead descent from Zeus through Heracles; similarly Athenaïs at Erythrae’s proclamation of his εὐγενεία refers to his recognition as the son of Zeus rather than to his royal heritage. 11 Just as Callisthenes emphasises the expeditious confirmation of the African oracle by the Greek oracles, so, too, does he draw attention to the parallel between the portents that confirmed Alexander’s divine filiation at both Siwah and Didyma. Thus, the miraculous portents of the sudden rain shower in the desert and the crows who guide Alexander on his journey to Siwah are mirrored by the equally miraculous reappearance of the spring at the oracle of Apollo at Didyma.

Callisthenes’ evident concern to Hellenise Siwah’s confirmation of Alexander’s divine sonship can be seen, also, in his statement that the

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10 Strabo 17.1.43 = FGrH 124 F 14a.
oracle proclaimed him ‘the son of Zeus’, whereas Ptolemy, in his account, refers to him as ‘the son of Ammon’. The switch in titles is significant, to be explained by the two historians’ different aims and audiences. Callisthenes was writing for a Greek audience and therefore rendered Alexander’s divine sonship in terms which would be acceptable to it, whereas Ptolemy had an eye to his own dynastic aspirations and his new Egyptian subjects. Callisthenes also ‘Hellenises’ his narrative of the journey to Siwah by claiming that Alexander’s purpose in visiting the oracle was to emulate the journey of his heroic ancestors, Perseus and Heracles. As there is no evidence elsewhere for a Siwah connection for either Perseus or Heracles prior to Alexander’s expedition, it is likely that Callisthenes invented both traditions. Perseus, the eponymous ancestor of the Persians, and Heracles, the legendary ancestor of the Macedonian Argead dynasty, were both sons of Zeus. Alexander’s desire to emulate them thus provides indirect confirmation, in the most Hellenic of ways, of his own divine filiation, as do the specifically Homeric resonances of the passage.

The deliberately Homeric and Hellenising tenor of Callisthenes’ narrative suggests, of course, that he is not making any claim for Alexander that would have been considered impious, improper, or in any way alien to his intended Greek audience. Importantly, in Strabo’s citation Callisthenes claimed divine parentage for Alexander, but not that Alexander himself was a god, as some scholars have claimed. Nevertheless, although Callisthenes went no further than divine filiation, it is easy to see how the

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12 FGrH 138 F 8 = Arr. Anab. 3.3.5.
13 Howe 2013:62 and n. 22, as well as Howe and Ogden in this volume.
14 On Alexander’s actual political and military reasons for visiting Siwah (superseded by the ‘mystical’ overlay emphasised by our mostly Roman-era sources), see Bowden and Ogden in this volume.
15 Cf. Bowden and Ogden in this volume.
17 Cf. Howe 2013:63: ‘Whatever the oracle may have pronounced, Callisthenes’ Alexander did not seem to think it made him markedly different from other Homeric heroes. His conquests allowed him to surpass Heracles and Perseus, not his divine connections, and with that he seems to have been content.’
mistaken assumption could have arisen. As Strabo emphasises, Callisthenes was criticised for his supposed flattery of Alexander, and this critique appears to have been embroidered by Timaeus and Philodemus, who both claim that his flattery extended to the conferral of divinity upon Alexander.\textsuperscript{19} This allegation by later sources should probably be dismissed as forming part of a hostile source tradition upon Callisthenes after his disgrace and death.\textsuperscript{20}

Plutarch’s citation of Callisthenes before the Battle of Gaugamela (incidentally, the last episode attested from Callisthenes’ history) offers further confirmation of what he actually claimed for Alexander:

On this occasion he made a long speech to the Thessalians and the other Greeks; when they had encouraged him with shouts to lead them against the barbarians, he transferred his lance into his left hand and with his right he appealed to the gods, praying, as Callisthenes says, that if he really was Zeus-descended (εἴπερ ὄντως Διόθεν ἐστὶν γεγονώς),\textsuperscript{21} they should defend and strengthen the Greeks.\textsuperscript{22}

The Homeric context of the narrative suggests that Callisthenes, following Alexander’s own wishes, wished to present the king in ‘the role of epic hero with direct links of paternity with Zeus.’\textsuperscript{23} What is more, Plutarch’s aim in the \textit{Life of Alexander} of portraying a Hellenised Alexander corresponds with Callisthenes’ own intentions;\textsuperscript{24} this coincidence of purpose implies that his citation accurately represents what Callisthenes actually

\textsuperscript{19} Timaeus, \textit{FGrH} 566 F 155a (= Callisthenes, \textit{FGrH} 124 T 20) = Polybius 12.12b.2–3: ‘He (Timaeus) says that Callisthenes was a flatterer, rather than a philosopher, for writing in the way that he does about crows and frenzied women … and praises Demosthenes and the other contemporary orators as worthy of Hellas because they opposed the conferring of divine honours upon Alexander, while he claims that the philosopher who invested a mortal with the aegis and the thunderbolt received his just reward from the divinity.’ Cf. Timaeus, \textit{FGrH} 566 F 119a = Polybius 12.23.4: ‘He wished to deify Alexander’ (ἀποθεοῦν Ἀλέξανδρον ἔβουληθη) and Callisthenes, \textit{FGrH} 124 T 21 = Philodemus, On Flattery (\textit{P.Herc.} 222) (quoted at n. 6).

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. Bosworth 1995:2.74-76.

\textsuperscript{21} As Badian emphasises (1975:52 = 2012:216; cf. 1981:63 n. 61 = 2012:281 n. 61), the tone suggested by the use of the particle εἴπερ is one of confidence.

\textsuperscript{22} Plut. \textit{Alex.} 33.1 = \textit{FGrH} 124 F 36.

\textsuperscript{23} Bosworth 1977:60.

\textsuperscript{24} Asirvatham 2001:122.
wrote. Thus, Plutarch’s citation, with its attribution to Alexander himself the statement that he was ‘Zeus-descended’, confirms that Callisthenes, at most, propagated the claim of Alexander’s divine parentage and in no way confers divinity upon Alexander himself. Instead, the statement, if indeed, as is likely, it is a verbatim citation of Callisthenes, is deliberately and masterfully ambiguous, referring not only to Alexander’s divine sonship, as proclaimed by the oracle at Siwah, but also hinting at Alexander’s divine ancestry through Perseus and Heracles (both sons of Zeus themselves), for whom Callisthenes apparently invented consultations of the oracle at Siwah to serve as heroic precedents for Alexander’s own journey.

Nor is this interpretation, that Callisthenes claimed for Alexander only divine descent (both as the son of Zeus and through descent from Heracles and Perseus), inconsistent with Arrian’s attribution to Callisthenes, the arrogant and grandiose boast (in the context of the proskynesis episode) that he had arrived on the scene, not to make his own reputation from Alexander, but to facilitate Alexander’s renown; thus, the king’s ‘participation in divinity’ (τοῦ θείου την μετουσίαν Ἀλεξάνδρωι) did not depend on the lies that Olympias spun about his birth, but rather upon the reports that he himself would make to the world at large. This remark is often rejected as inauthentic on the grounds that Callisthenes could not have included so offensive a remark in his official history, but there is no need to assume that he did so: it could well have been a spoken remark, originally made in a private context, and as such entirely in keeping with a number of tactless and arrogant statements made at this time which resulted in his loss of favour with Alexander. Furthermore, the references to Olympias and Alexander’s birth indicate that by ‘participation in divinity’ Callisthenes was referring once again to his divine sonship.

Thus, there is no inconsistency with Callisthenes’ position in his narrative of Alexander’s journey to Siwah and the remarks attributed to him by both Arrian and Curtius in the famous proskynesis debate. While the

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25 On the ambiguity of the Greek, see Bosworth 1977:58-59. Callisthenes could also have been referring to the alleged descent of the Argead dynasty from Heracles, the son of Zeus; but cf. Brunt 1976:475-76: ‘The words Διόθεν γεγονώς are more naturally construed to mean ‘son of Zeus’ than ‘descendant of Zeus’.

26 Arr. Anab. 4.10.2 = FGrH 124 T 8.

27 E.g. Bosworth 1995:2.76.

28 So Collins 2012:5-9; cf. e.g. Plut. Alex. 53-54 and Arr. Anab. 4.12.6-7.
The historicity of this debate has often been called into question, the consistency of the sentiments expressed by Callisthenes as a historical character in both sources with what is extant from his own narrative, suggests, on the contrary, that some sort of debate on the introduction of proskynesis did, in fact, take place and that Callisthenes spoke out against it. The issue has most likely been clouded in the mostly Roman-era sources by contemporary attitudes towards autocratic rulers and their own claims to divinity, but the speeches attributed to Callisthenes in this debate do appear to contain an historical kernel.

According to both Arrian and Curtius, Alexander, wishing to have the Macedonians and Greeks in his entourage, as well as his Persian subjects, perform ceremonial obeisance to him, arranged ahead of time for the topic to be brought up at a dinner party. In Arrian, the speaker who justifies the king’s proposal is the philosopher Anaxarchus, with whom Callisthenes is attested to have had words on an earlier occasion; in Curtius’ version the speaker is the otherwise unknown Sicilian Cleon. The discrepancy in the sources on the identity of the first speaker is, however, not important, as his function in the narrative is only to serve as a straw man in order to throw into relief Callisthenes’ effective (and ultimately fatal) opposition to Alexander’s proposal. Both Arrian and Curtius record Callisthenes’ reply in direct speech, and the two versions are similar in their general lines of argumentation. In Arrian’s version, Callisthenes lists the honours appropriate for humans and those reserved for the gods (the most important of which is proskynesis), and warns against the impropriety of deifying a living man, pointing out that even Heracles did not receive divine honours from the Greeks while he was alive. Callisthenes concludes his speech by

32 Arr. Anab. 4.10.6-7; cf. Plut. Alex. 52.7-9. On Anaxarchus and his role at Alexander’s court, see Borza 1981:73-80 and Heckel 2009:27.
33 Curt. 8.5.10-12.
emphasising the difference between Greeks and barbarians, and requesting that Alexander refrain from imposing this dishonour on the Greeks and Macedonians (proskynēsis being acceptable from his Persian subjects), and receive from them only honours of the human and Greek type (ἀνθρω-πίνως τε καὶ Ἑλληνικῶς τιμᾶσθαι). In Curtius’ version, Callisthenes is less concerned with the difference in customs between Greeks and barbarians and his objections to the imposition of proskynēsis are purely secular. Instead, he emphasises the impropriety of offering Alexander divine honours while he is still alive. As the Curtian Callisthenes says, ‘divinity sometimes overtakes a human, but never accompanies him’ (hominem consequitur aliquando, numquam comitatur divinitas), and objects that not even Hercules and Pater Liber (i.e. Dionysus), examples of human recipients of divine status, were deified as living mortals, but only after their deaths. Although, as Bosworth has observed, Curtius’ version is imbued with the rhetorical and ideological baggage of the early Empire, his Callisthenes essentially offers the same arguments against proskynēsis as he does in Arrian’s version, namely that ceremonial obeisance to rulers (as opposed to gods) was a barbarian Persian custom, and that the apotheosis, even of great leaders, should occur only after death.

Thus, the speeches attributed to Callisthenes in the proskynēsis debate by both Arrian and Curtius are fully compatible with the content from Callisthenes’ history that is extant on Alexander’s filiation and divinity. Therefore, it is highly likely that Arrian and Curtius preserve the main lines of the arguments Callisthenes actually made in opposition to Alexander’s proposed introduction of proskynēsis. In both speeches attributed to Callisthenes, he accepted the notion of divine paternity for human heroes, but not the divinisation of living mortals. Explicitly in Curtius’ citation and strongly implied in Arrian’s, Callisthenes had no objection to bestowing divine honours if done posthumously, as in the case of Alexander’s ancestor Heracles. While these references to the posthumous divinity of the ruler have been dismissed as a rhetorical topos of the early Empire when the imperial cult was in full swing, the allusions to the deification of Heracles in both Arrian and Curtius, particularly when taken in tandem with the emphasis on Alexander’s emulation of his heroic ancestor, suggest that Callisthenes did indeed mention the post-

35 Arr. Anab. 4.11.2-8.
humous divinisation of Heracles in connection with the *proskynesis* episode.\(^{39}\)

Callisthenes’ association of the assumption of divine honours with the custom of *proskynesis* needs further scrutiny. Modern scholarship is divided on whether *proskynesis* was a social custom of homage to the Persian king in recognition of his absolute power, or whether it was considered an act of worship to a divine being, with most scholars adopting the compromise viewpoint that *proskynesis* represented court protocol to the Persians, but suggested divine worship to the Greeks and Macedonians.\(^{40}\) It appears, however, that this distinction is anachronistically applied to Alexander’s attempt to introduce *proskynesis*.\(^{41}\) The historical context was Alexander’s attempts to unify his Persian and his Macedonian subjects following his conquest of Persia, which suggests that he intended *proskynesis* as a symbol of homage to his absolute power along the lines of the Achaemenid kings, that is, as another means of unifying his subjects through court ceremonial; it was not about recognition of his divinity *per se*.\(^{42}\) This conflation of the issue in later sources (and eventually modern scholarship) happened thanks to Callisthenes, who propagated the misinformation among Alexander’s entourage that *proskynesis* was tantamount to divination. As Arrian’s Callisthenes says:

> But the most important distinction between human honours and worship of the gods is the practice of *proskynesis*. For humans greet one another with a kiss, but that which is divine, I suppose because it is seated on high and is forbidden even to be touched, for that very reason is honoured with *proskynesis*.\(^{43}\)

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\(^{41}\) Cf. Brown 1949:240: ‘… two quite different issues have been confounded more or less completely in our sources – the *proskynesis* and the question of deification.’ Cf. Badian 1996:22 (= 2012:374-75) and Spawforth 2007:103-04; Bowden 2013:56-62. The earlier references to *proskynesis* in Greek authors – Hdt. 7.136; Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.35 and *Anab.* 3.2.13; Isoc. *Paneg.* 151 – suggest that the Greeks considered it servile rather than blasphemous; cf. Lane Fox 1973:536. So, too, with the Macedonians; Spawforth 2007:105-06.


\(^{43}\) Arr. *Anab.* 4.11.2-3.
If we accept that Arrian, or his source, reproduces the main lines of Callisthenes’ arguments, then he is the first explicitly to associate *proskynesis* with the assumption of divinity, particularly if the figures of Anaxarchus or Cleon are intended as straw men whose arguments only serve as foils to highlight Callisthenes’ opposition. The arguments of Callisthenes were preserved, particularly because this incident led to the rift with Alexander that resulted in his death; those of his opponent (whoever he actually was) were only constructed by later sources to offer a suitable context for Callisthenes’ own speech. The main point at issue in the speeches of Anaxarchus/Cleon and Callisthenes was not the deification of Alexander, but rather the unification of court ceremonial.\(^44\) The issue of divinity was most probably not even part of the debate until Callisthenes brought it up, which is why the later sources unanimously attributed to him the arguments against the divinisation of a living person and the conflation of deification and *proskynesis*.

In the light of the argument above, how should the famous passage attributed to Callisthenes on the Pamphylian Sea’s *proskynesis* before Alexander be explained? Eustathius mentions that

> Callisthenes, at least, says in his description of Alexander’s passage along the Pamphylian Sea, that even if the sea did not part before him gladly, as if opening up a road, it did rise up from the depths, perceiving his march in some way, and did not at all fail to recognize its ruler, so that it seemed somehow to offer him ceremonial obeisance (πως δοκῇ προσκυνεῖν) in its curving up.\(^45\)

First of all, Callisthenes would have written this passage before the issue of *proskynesis* had become politicised, as his downfall occurred shortly after the debate. Second, if we can trust Eustathius’ wording, Callisthenes appears to qualify the *proskynesis* allusion.\(^46\) Third, this image of the sea offering obeisance to Alexander is clearly intended as a direct allusion to the *Iliad* 13.26.30, in which the sea recognises the sovereignty of Poseidon


\(^{46}\) Pearson 1960:37 suggests that the entire purpose clause may be an explanation of Eustathius rather than the actual words of Callisthenes; cf. Atkinson 1973:327 and Prandi 1985:98. But there is no reason to doubt that Callisthenes used the term *proskynesis* here; cf. Bosworth 1980:165-66.
by ‘parting before him gladly’. This deliberately Homeric resonance is in keeping with Callisthenes’ presentation of Alexander as the new Achilles, in accordance with Alexander’s own wishes, and himself, therefore, as the new Homer.47 Fourth, as Bosworth observes, the very elements marked Alexander’s assumption of sovereignty as the new and legitimate king of Persia, as Alexander passed the boundaries of the Persian Empire: the sea, as a Persian subject, then offered the ceremonial act of homage required of his subjects by the Persian king.48 Finally, the sensationalist account of the miraculous behaviour of the Pamphylian Sea mirrors the miraculous rainstorm and the crows who guided Alexander to Siwah, and the sudden reappearance of the spring at the oracle of Didyma, thus confirming Alexander’s divine favour. The portents of natural phenomena paying homage to Alexander as its ruler do not, however, in any way suggest that he himself is a god, especially as Callisthenes claims the sea did not in fact exhibit the same behaviour as it did to Poseidon in the original Homeric passage.49 Therefore, Callisthenes’ account of the Pamphylian Sea’s alleged proskynesis does not contradict his later opposition to Alexander’s attempt to impose what was considered an offensively servile barbarian custom upon his Greek and Macedonian entourage.50

Callisthenes’ arguments against Alexander’s efforts to foist proskynesis upon the Greeks and Macedonians were extremely effective, precisely because he equated proskynesis with divinisation and spread this tactical bit of misinformation among Alexander’s entourage.51 The sources agree that he exercised a great deal of influence among the pages, and was especially friendly with Hermolaus, the leader of the pages’ conspiracy, an association which contributed to his downfall when he was alleged to have

47 An arrogant attitude that was not well received by his royal patron, if we can believe Arrian’s testimony, Anab. 4.10.1-2. On this passage, see Bosworth 1995: 2.75. On Alexander’s self-identification as the ‘New Achilles’, see Ameling 1988; Stewart 1993:78-86; Cohen 1995; Carney 2000:275-85. See, however, Heckel 2008:42 and 149, who argues that Alexander’s imitation of Achilles is a later construct, certainly post-dating Callisthenes.

48 Bosworth 1990:8; 1995:2.75.


50 Müller 2003:150-52 distinguishes between Callisthenes’ flattery of the king in his panegyrical history and his personal opinion of proskynesis as a humiliating practice.

51 For the extent of Alexander’s adoption of Achaemenid court ceremonial, and a similar misrepresentation by a Greek source of Alexander’s monarchy in Asia, see Spawforth 2012.
been complicit.\textsuperscript{52} Callisthenes’ arguments apparently also passed through
the rank and file to the Macedonian troops, causing irritation at Alexander’s
divine pretensions.\textsuperscript{53} Ingeniously, Callisthenes recognised that the
most effective way to prevent this odious and blatantly servile initiative
was to associate it with divinity, knowing perfectly well that this was not
Alexander’s intent, but seemingly unconcerned with the embarrassment
that he was bound to cause to the king. Thanks to Callisthenes’ brilliantly
effective opposition, the king was forced to drop the matter of \textit{proskynesis}
for the Macedonians and Greeks,\textsuperscript{54} and it is not surprising that Alexander
found an excuse to have him executed shortly thereafter when he was
implicated in the pages’ conspiracy.\textsuperscript{55}

I have argued that there is no contradiction between Callisthenes’
promotion of Alexander’s divine paternity, particularly in his rendition of
the Siwah episode, and his later campaign to sabotage the king’s attempt to
introduce \textit{proskynesis} at his court. These two episodes, Alexander’s consul-
tation of the oracle at Siwah and the \textit{proskynesis} fiasco, are often discussed
together in modern scholarship as offering evidence for Alexander’s
growing religiosity. They should, indeed, be treated together, but not as
evidence that Alexander began to think of himself as a living god (until
thwarted by the opposition of his headstrong court historian), but rather
to demonstrate Alexander’s efforts to be recognised as a legitimate ruler by
his new Egyptian and Persian subjects, and Callisthenes’ effective role in
expressing his royal patron’s initiatives in strictly Hellenising terms. While
Alexander’s (purely political) aim remained the same, Callisthenes, keenly
aware of the sensibilities of his audience in both instances, portrayed

\textsuperscript{52} Arr. \textit{Anab.} 4.13.2 and 14.1; cf. Plut. \textit{Alex.} 55.3-4; Curt. 8.6.25 and 8.7.3. Plut.
\textit{Alex.} 53.1 says that Callisthenes was very popular with the young in Alexander’s
retinue in particular because of his eloquence; cf. 55.1. Curt. 8.6.24-25 claims that
Callisthenes served as the Pages’ confidante, particularly when they were
criticising Alexander.

\textsuperscript{53} Attested by Arr. \textit{Anab.} 7.8.3 and foreshadowed by Curt. 4.7.31.

\textsuperscript{54} Arr. \textit{Anab.} 4.12.1; Curt. 8.5.21; Plut. \textit{Alex.} 54.3; Just. \textit{Epit.} 12.7.3.

\textsuperscript{55} There is a conflict in the source tradition as to whether Callisthenes was
tortured and summarily executed after a trial (Ptolemy, \textit{FGrH} 138 F 17 = Arr.
\textit{Anab.} 4.4.13; cf. Plut. \textit{Alex.} 55.9 and Curt. 8.8.21), or was imprisoned and later
died of natural causes (Aristobulus, \textit{FGrH} 139 F 33 = Arr. \textit{Anab.} 4.4.13; Chares,
\textit{FGrH} 125 F 15 = Plut. \textit{Alex.} 55.9; cf. the embroidered version offered by Just.
\textit{Epit.} 15.3.4-6). The attempts of Chares and Aristobulus to absolve Alexander
from blame in Callisthenes’ death can be dismissed as clearly apologetic: Badian
Alexander's divine filiation proclaimed at Siwah as a natural extension of his heroic ancestry, but associated proskynesis with actual divinisation in order to prevent the king's imposition of an offensive barbarian custom upon his Greek and Macedonian entourage. As even his own relative Aristotle is said to have commented, Callisthenes was a powerful speaker, but lacked common sense.\(^56\)

**Bibliography**


\(^{56}\) Plut. *Alex.* 54.3.


FOUNDING ALEXANDRIA:
ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

Timothy Howe
St Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.
Visiting Researcher, University of South Africa

What exactly Alexander did during his five months in Africa (December 332-April 331 BCE) has puzzled experts since antiquity. The surviving ancient sources report various motives for the conqueror’s engagement with his most famous civic foundation, Egyptian Alexandria, and this has facilitated numerous modern interpretations. But because of Alexandria’s later significance, ancient and modern authors have assigned an importance, even prescience, to Alexander’s actions in Africa that may be unwarranted. For example, Jean Bingen argues that Alexandria mattered to Ptolemy as a political and cultural centre because it had mattered to Alexander. Ptolemy chose Egypt because ‘he realised that Alexandria, Alexander the Great’s prestigious city foundation, enabled him to obtain immediately [emphasis added] the prestige linked with the recollection of the conqueror.’ A.B. Bosworth asserts much the same:

Alexander himself had strong personal motives to found an Alexandria which would surpass his father’s Philippi, and he seems to have taken a strong personal interest in its development such as is not attested for any of the eastern settlements. His desire for glory, in this case to be honoured in perpetuity as founder, may have been the fundamental factor.

1 Ancient and modern authorities up to this point take Alexander’s involvement in the founding of the city of Alexandria as a given, with debate centred round the specific date of foundation, 25 Tybi 321 BCE, as in Pseudo-Callisthenes 1.32.10; Jouguet 1940, Welles 1962 and Bagnall 1979 argue for 1 April 321; Wilcken 1928:579 n. 3, Fraser 1972:1.3-4, Green 1996:23 n. 98 and de Polignac 2000:34 for 20 January 321. Alexandria’s founding is overshadowed in the sources and scholarship by the visit to Siwah and Alexander’s engagement with his personal divinity, with Alexander’s return route from Siwah also receiving some attention; cf. Borza 1967; Bosworth 1976.
2 Pace Ogden in this volume.
Both Bingen and Bosworth assume much about Alexander’s priorities, and their emphasis illustrates just how Alexander-centred the discussion has become. I would suggest that Alexandria did not become prestigious, and Alexander was not honoured as founder, until some time after Ptolemy I made it his capital. Ongoing archaeological excavations of the area have so far failed to yield conclusive evidence for Alexander’s personal involvement in Alexandria; indeed, all analyses of the physical evidence suggest that Ptolemies I and II were responsible for Alexandria’s planning and growth as a city. One could even argue that Alexandria did not become properly famous until after Ptolemy II Philadelphos and the establishment of the great Museion complex and the Pharos Lighthouse.

Why, then, has Alexandria the great metropolis become inextricably linked to Alexander the great conqueror and civic founder? The answer seems to be because Ptolemy I Soter wanted it that way. In what follows, I hope to show that, at least with respect to Alexander’s actions in Africa, the historiographical character of ‘Alexander the Founder’ was generated by the cultural politics of the Ptolemies. In much the same way as Diana Spencer has demonstrated that our view of Alexander’s story is skewed by a Roman perspective, that ‘[t]hinking about Alexander the Great means thinking about a character generated by the cultural politics of the Roman world’, I would like to show that thinking about Alexander’s Egyptian story, especially Ptolemy I’s own account of it, requires us to think about Ptolemaic agendas. As Bosworth observed some time ago, the Successors to Alexander regularly appropriated Alexander’s image and story when they saw fit, especially when it came to finding precedents to justify current actions. Alexander Meeus describes the dynamic well: ‘The history of Alexander the Great did not end with his death. His generals, striving for personal power in the vacuum he left, immediately saw the benefit of exploiting his name.’ Indeed, Ptolemy was the most blatant in

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8 Bosworth 1971. For a detailed discussion of Diadoch manipulation of symbols, see Goukowsky 1978:75-147.
manipulating Alexander’s memory at the expense of rivals such as Antigonus and Perdiccas, going so far as to steal the great man’s corpse. From this perspective, the most interesting aspect of the founding of Alexandria becomes why Alexander’s connection to Alexandria was important to authors writing in Ptolemaic Egypt, and in what ways, and at what times, was Alexander’s connections to Alexandria important.

There are four main accounts of Alexander’s expedition to the Delta and the foundation of Alexandria, all credited to the first or second generation authors: Callisthenes, nephew of Aristotle and Alexander’s official historian; Ptolemy I Soter, Aristobulus, an engineer who accompanied Alexander on his campaign, and Cleitarchus, an Alexandrian academic who worked in the famous library of Alexandria under Ptolemaic patronage, most likely in the time of Ptolemy II.

With Callisthenes we have the earliest contemporary account of Alexander’s actions, as he seems to have been writing official dispatches

14 Parker 2009 argues persuasively that Cleitarchus was a competent, library-based historian, writing after 280, who used the works of all first generation writers, especially Aristobulus and Callisthenes. Parker 2009:36 further suggests that ‘Cleitarchus is demonstrably working after the publication of those works, after the first generation of Alexander-Historiker.’ For discussions and reviews of scholarship on dating Cleitarchus, see Seibert 1972a:17-18; Goukowsky 1978:136-41; Schachermeyr 1973:658-62; Prandi 1996:66-71; Hazzard 2000:7-17 and Goukowsky 2002:xix-xxxii. P. Oxy. LXXI 4808 reports that Cleitarchus was tutor to Ptolemy IV Philipator (born c. 244 BCE), thus supporting a mid-third-century floruit; Hatzilambrou et al. 2007:27-36. Prandi 2012 warns against rejecting the traditional chronology too readily.
for a Greek-speaking audience, ‘as events happened’. And since Alexander commissioned Callisthenes, the Macedonian king was certainly not hostile to the information he disseminated. Indeed, once Callisthenes began to critique Alexander’s policies, his actions were circumscribed and his reporting stopped. Consequently, we may assume that Callisthenes’ narrative reflects Alexander’s policy as he wished others to know it. Unfortunately, Callisthenes does little to help us understand the founding of Egyptian Alexandria. The long passage quoted by Strabo focuses primarily on the journey to Siwah and consultation of the oracle. The passage does not mention Alexandria directly, nor Alexander’s desire to consult the oracle about the founding of Alexandria, as would be traditional in the Greek world for the founding of a Greek polis. Indeed, given Strabo’s reliance on Callisthenes for his discussion of Siwah – instead of, for example, Cleitarchus’ much fuller account – I find it especially telling that he does not use this same source at all when describing Alexandria’s founding. Seemingly, since Callisthenes is either silent or not worth quoting about Alexandria, Strabo chooses to rely on a dramatic story known both to Arrian and to Plutarch from Heraclides of Lembos, which recounts how Alexander’s architects, while marking out the lines for the harbour fort, ran out of chalk and had to switch to barley-meal:

But when Alexander visited the place and saw the advantages of the site, he resolved to fortify the harbour. Writers record, as a sign of the good fortune that has since attended the city, an incident

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16 Lane Fox 1973:95.
17 Strabo 17.1.43 = FGrH 124 F 14; cf. Pownall in this volume.
19 Cf. Arr. Anab. 3.2.1; Plut. Alex. 26.
which occurred at the time of tracing the lines of the foundation: when the architects were marking the lines of the enclosure with chalk, the supply of chalk gave out; and when the king arrived, his stewards furnished a part of the barley-meal which had been prepared for the workmen, and by means of this the streets also, to a greater degree, were laid out. This occurrence, then, they are said to have interpreted as a good omen. (transl. Jones).

In Strabo’s account, however, unlike Arrian and Plutarch, Alexander is involved only in the planning of the harbour fort. Strabo clearly draws a distinction between the fort and the streets of the rest of the town, implying that the streets of the city proper were laid out at a later date in the symbolic, now traditional, manner, larger and greater than they had been previously.

Tacitus suggests as much in his account of the origins of the cult of Serapis, where he describes Ptolemy I Soter as ‘he who first of the Macedonians established the wealth of Egypt, when he added [to Alexandria] walls, temples and cults’ (Hist. 4.83.1: Ptolemæo regi, qui Macedonum primus Aegypti opes firmavit, cum Alexandriæ recens conditae moenia templaque et religiones adderet.)

The fact that no fragments or testimonia of Callisthenes even allude to Alexandria is curious and probably indicative of Egyptian Alexandria’s relative insignificance to Alexander’s official Greek record. And yet, this silence seems to fit a wider pattern: Alexander’s official policy in Egypt seems to be focused on engaging New Kingdom traditions and places rather than investing in and inventing new ones. For example, when he arrived in Memphis, Alexander took care to honour the Apis cult; he also officially engaged traditional pharaonic titutalure, including Horus and Nebty Names, and finally commissioned the beautiful representations of Alexander as Pharaoh on the Shrine of the Barque in Luxor, a temple dedicated to the cult of the royal ka. These carvings and inscriptions at the Amon-Ra temple in Luxor, the traditional religious centre of the New Kingdom, clearly demonstrate the legitimation of Alexander’s rule by the Theban priests and Alexander’s policy of acknowledging New Kingdom ideology.

While Alexander and his official historian Callisthenes might not have

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found new institutions like Egyptian Alexandria politically significant, Ptolemy certainly did: Alexandria became the public space where Ptolemy could weave a royal narrative around Alexander's memory. Consequently, Ptolemy’s history has Alexander recognise the significance of Alexandria as a major imperial centre. Immediately upon his arrival at Canopus, Alexander thought a city in that location was bound to be prosperous (καὶ γενέσθαι ἂν εὐδαίμονα τὴν πόλιν, Arr. 3.1.5), and was therefore filled with an overwhelming desire to get to work (πόθος οὖν λαμβάνει αὐτὸν τοῦ ἔργου, Arr. 3.1.5). So important was the city that he himself marked out the ground plan (καὶ αὐτὸς τὰ σημεῖα τῇ πόλει ἔθηκεν, Arr. 3.1.5). I find it significant that in Ptolemy’s account Alexander personally located both the market-place and the religious centres, going so far as to decide how many temples were to be built, and in honour of which gods, Greek and Egyptian. Then, once his task at Alexandria was done, an overwhelming desire again befell Alexander to move on and consult the oracle of Ammon (ἐπὶ τούτοις δὲ πόθος λαμβάνει αὐτὸν ἑλθεῖν παρ’ Ἀμμωνα ἐς Λιβύην, Arr. 3.1.5). It seems that Ptolemy uses πόθος as a way to introduce the founding of Alexandria and the visit to Siwah as equally important, but unrelated events. By reiterating Alexander’s desire, Ptolemy shows Alexandria as meaningful to Alexander in its own right, rather than as a stopover along the way to Siwah.

Once away from the coast, Alexander and his companions become lost on their way to Siwah. Here, Arrian notes that his main sources disagree: in Aristobulus, Alexander was led by crows, but in Ptolemy by snakes. After consulting the oracle, Alexander returned to Memphis, in Aristobulus by the same way, but in Ptolemy by another, more direct way. Welles solves this Aristobulus-Ptolemy source discrepancy by simply rejecting Ptolemy’s account as patently untrue: Ptolemy did not accompany Alexander on the expedition and thus had no knowledge as to what had happened.

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22 Arr. *Anab.* 3.1.5. See Howe 2008 for a discussion of how Ptolemy uses his narrative of Alexander’s actions in India to justify and contextualise his own claims as a Successor.

23 Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.1. Nowhere in Arrian nor in any surviving fragments does Aristobulus assert that Alexander founded Alexandria after the consultation at Siwah, contra the common opinion that Aristobulus agrees with the Vulgate; cf. Welles 1962:279-82; Bosworth 1976:136; Borza 1967:369. Since Arrian notes other instances of disagreement in his main sources along the journey, one might assume he would have done the same on the founding of the city.

Bosworth, on the other hand, suggests that Arrian misunderstood his sources, as he was often prone to do; Ptolemy did not disagree with Aristo-
bulus; rather Arrian.\textsuperscript{25} I would rather suggest a different solution to the conflicting sources, by following the source criticism advice offered many years ago by Ernst Badian: ‘given two contradictory accounts, we must start by asking: “If one of them is true, how and why did the other come into being?”’\textsuperscript{26} The question becomes not ‘who is right’, but rather ‘why did Ptolemy craft his story in this way?’ If Welles is correct, and Ptolemy’s account is historically untrue, why did Ptolemy choose to alter the facts?

The motive seems to be Alexandria: Ptolemy altered the Siwah story in order to provide a context and a backstory for its founding. In Ptolemy’s account, Alexander \textit{personally} plans the city, deciding where to place the temples, marketplaces and walls. Alexander’s genius and blessing thus underpin Alexandria’s religious, economic and political infrastructure. In all senses, Alexandria is Alexander’s city, sprung Athena-like from his imagination. In order to underscore this fact, Ptolemy needs to separate out the founding of Alexandria as a unique event, an event not connected in any way with the consultation of the oracle at Siwah: a god-like, prescient Alexander should not need advice on how to plan his most famous city.\textsuperscript{27} Consequently, Alexander \textit{cannot} retrace his steps after he has consulted the oracle. But by shifting the route back, Ptolemy has to enhance the credibility of his story, which he does by giving it superhuman features.\textsuperscript{28} So, Ptolemy’s Alexander returns to Memphis across the desert in emulation of Herodotus’ Cambyses, but unlike Cambyses who lost 50,000 men, Alexander has no trouble.\textsuperscript{29} By choosing to echo the Cambyses story, Ptolemy may well be appealing to both Egyptian and Greek audiences in order to demonstrate that the new ‘restorers’ (Alexander and his heirs) are better than the Persian occupiers. Thus, Alexander and his

\textsuperscript{25} Bosworth 1976:136.
\textsuperscript{26} Badian 1958:147.
\textsuperscript{27} Alexander’s foundation of Alexandria certainly deviates from the traditional Greek norm (cf. Hall 2008), though it is in keeping with his other military foundations in the East. Cohen 2013:56, 93, 109, 117, 121, 123, 124, 181-83, 203, 221, 244-69, 291-301.
\textsuperscript{28} As Lincoln 1999:147 argues in his study of myth, narrators give their stories superhuman, mythological accomplishments so that the audience will invest in the tale; strangely enough, by making the story outrageous, storytellers thereby inspire belief.
\textsuperscript{29} Hdt. 3.25.3-7; see Dillery 2005 for a discussion of the Cambyses tradition both in Herodotus and among Egyptians.
army are favoured, rather than punished, by the Egyptian and Greek gods. What makes this story particularly unbelievable to a modern audience is the fact that neither Callisthenes nor any other ancient authority reports it. If Alexander had marched across the desert in emulation of Cambyses, such a Herodotean parallel would certainly have appealed to a Greek propagandist like Callisthenes (and Alexander), and thus have attracted Strabo’s notice, if only as another example of Callisthenes flattering Alexander with an outrageous tale. Moreover, if Alexander had emulated Cambyses, such a story would certainly have attracted the attention of the Vulgate authors, or at least Plutarch.

By attributing a prehistory to Alexandria as glorious as it was imaginary, Ptolemy wove a mythology for his new capital far beyond anything intended by Alexander, who had merely planted a military base in the western Delta that, together with Pelusion, effectively bolted the door to Egypt. Unlike his eponymous Asian foundations, he settled neither troops nor civilians there. Egyptian Alexandria remained at best a minor military base, even for some time after Alexander’s death. Even the Aristotelian *Oeconomica*, which provides the only connected narrative of Ptolemy’s satrapal predecessor, Cleomenes of Naucratis, is clear that Alexandria is merely a staging area for grain exportation and was not yet a major urban or cultural centre. Moreover, it should be noted that after hijacking Alexander’s body, Ptolemy buried the king not in Alexandria, but with great ceremony in a specially prepared tomb at Memphis, the ancient and traditional capital of the Pharaohs. Indeed, the fictitious and pro-Ptolemy

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30 Indeed, Callisthenes seems to have taken advantage of the parallels between Alexander’s battle with Ariobarzernes at the Persian Gates in 331 and the famous defeat of the Spartans at Thermopylae in 480. Poly. Strat. 4.3.27; Heckel 1980:171; Zahrnt 1999:1387.
31 Plut. Alex. 26 alludes to Cambyses only in the context of Alexander’s outbound journey to Siwah.
32 See Cohen 2013:56, 93, 109, 117, 121, 123, 124, 181-83, 203, 221, 244-69, 291-301, for Alexander’s Asian foundations and Cohen 2006:355-60 n. 3 for Egyptian Alexandria; also de Polignac 2000:34-35.
34 Alexander’s tomb in Memphis is said to have been placed next to a temple built by the last Egyptian Pharaoh, Nectanebo II; cf. De Polignac 2000:39. Cf.
Liber de morte reports that Alexander, in his will, commanded that his body be taken to Egypt to be prepared there by the Egyptian priests according to traditional Egyptian rites; no mention is made of either Alexandria or Siwah.\textsuperscript{35} If Bosworth is right and the Liber de morte dates to 308/307, Ptolemaic propaganda had no place yet for Alexandria in its royal mythology.\textsuperscript{36}

Only years later, around 304 or perhaps even as late as the reign of Ptolemy II, was Alexander’s body relocated to the newly built Alexandria.\textsuperscript{37} It is significant that the Stele of the Satrap, written in early 311 to commemorate and celebrate Ptolemy’s governance of Egypt, describes Egyptian Alexandria as only a ‘fortress of King Alexander’ rather than as a polis like Memphis.\textsuperscript{38} The year 311 BC seems to have been a life-altering year for Ptolemy I; given his recent military losses and withdrawal from Syria, as well as the resulting peace treaty between all of the remaining Successors, Ptolemy had to face the fact that his realm would not be a global one.\textsuperscript{39} Consequently, post 311, it would make sense that Ptolemy focuses his attention on preparing a new capital. Indeed, De Polignac, for example, argues that the transfer of Alexander’s body from Memphis to Alexandria reflects a shift in Ptolemaic policy, away from a direct link to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Liber de morte 108, 117-19. Many scholars accept as genuine the curious letter in Arr. Anab. 7.23.6-8 purportedly sent by Alexander to Cleomenes to build hero shrines for Hephaestion in Alexandria and on Pharos Island; cf. Hamilton 1953:157, Vogt 1971, Bosworth 1988:235, Ogden in this volume; cf. also Tarn 1948:2.303-06, Seibert 1972b. With its origins in Diadoch propaganda, I agree with Burstein 2008:188-89 that the letter provides little accurate information about policy or Alexander’s plans for Egypt at the time of his death. Given the lack of archaeological evidence for any settlement in Alexandria by 323 (note 5, above), Burstein’s conclusions seem all the more noteworthy.
\item See McKenzie 2007:40-41 and Hazzard 2000:3-17 for Ptolemy II’s role in, and propaganda surrounding, the transfer. Alternatively, Swinnen 1973:116 n. 2, 120 and Fraser 1972:1.7; 2:12 n. 28 date the transfer earlier, to 320/319.
\item Stele of the Satrap 1.4, Cairo, Egyptian Museum, Cat. Gén. 22181. For a translation, see Bevan 1927:28-32; Ritner 2003. For further discussion, see Lorton 1987; Krasilnikoff 2009:31; de Polignac 2000:35.
\item See Meeus 2014:284-301 for a discussion of the chronology and Ptolemy’s territorial goals.
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the Egyptian past and towards the creation of a uniquely Ptolemaic mythology. Thus, when in 304 BC Ptolemy decided to take up the *basileia* on the anniversary of Alexander’s death, Alexandria, the outpost established by Alexander himself, and used by Cleomenes for his ‘grain games’, acquired new significance as the royal capital of the *new* Ptolemaic Egypt. As Krasilnikoff puts it, ‘the narrative of the transformation of the Canopus vicinity as *space* to the city of Alexandria as *place* – was a dominant and powerful ingredient of the city’s mythology.’ Ptolemy’s stress on Alexander’s role as founder also sets up the independence and exclusiveness of Alexandria: ‘the tradition insists on the fact that the citizenry [of Alexandria] and its adjacent political institutions emerged at Alexander’s initiative.’

Now, late in the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, begins the Alexandria so famous in history. Now begins the Alexandria of the museum, the library, and that wonder of the world, the Pharos lighthouse. Now, also, begins the Ptolemaic investment in politicising Alexander’s memory. Ptolemy I Soter made Alexandria a capital, and in order to do this he misrepresented Alexander’s role in the history of that capital. And nothing could better signify the status of Alexandria as a world centre than Alexander’s tomb, because, as De Polignac argues, ‘the dynasty and the capital, built upon such a prestigious relic, could, more than any other, claim to hold up and preserve the universal vision that attached to a royalty inherited from the deceased.’

It certainly worked. The Greek and Egyptian audiences in Alexandria seem to have accepted and invested in Ptolemy’s story: all of the subsequent literary sources present the move of Alexander’s body as completely natural because, as De Polignac explains,

… the brilliance and renown of the Ptolemaic capital was such that

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42 Krasilnikoff 2009:30.
44 The dating of Ptolemy’s literary manipulation of the tradition is uncertain: Badian 1971:40 thinks of the period between the theft of Alexander’s body and 308 BCE; Errington 1969:241 of shortly after 320 BCE; Roisman 1984:385 considers the date irrelevant; Dreyer 2009 accepts the traditional c. 280 BCE, in my view still the most likely date.
45 De Polignac 2000:41.
nobody could doubt that, from the first, the town had been *fated* to become an imperial city, protected by its founder. Moreover, it became quite *normal* to view the Memphis burial as simply a provisional solution while the Alexandrian tomb was constructed [my emphases].

Myths, especially foundation myths, acquire a life of their own as audiences introduce their own innovations and invest in different portions of the original narrative. So it should not surprise us that the succeeding generations of authors, Alexandrian scholars like Cleitarchus and Heraclides, fleshed out the Alexandrian narrative to a much greater degree, in an attempt to contextualise their city’s history and understand the reasons for its greatness. In Cleitarchus’ narrative, for example, the foundation of Alexandria has been moved to *after* the visit to Siwah. By this placement, Cleitarchus seems to suggest that Alexander was divinely inspired by Ammon to found Alexandria. Although this seems exactly what Ptolemy sought to deter, it is not uncommon to see traditions evolve in new directions. Even though Cleitarchus has invested in some of the Ptolemaic inventions, he is now building his own narrative backstory.

Boris Dreyer argues that Cleitarchus often elaborates the frameworks constructed by his predecessors. Writing in the time of Ptolemy II,

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46 De Polignac 2000:36.
47 Cf. Lincoln 1999:149 on the nature of historical misrepresentations of this type, involving the narrator’s preferences, but also those of the audiences, who can both resist innovations or introduce their own.
48 Dreyer 2009:63 suggests that the sections of Cleitarchus preserved in Diod. 17.49.2-52.1 are the most authoritative; Justin and Curtius have embellished the original narrative with much extraneous Roman-era material. For further discussion see Prandi 1996:17-18, 86-93; Goukowsky 2002:xix-xxxii; Ambaglio et al. 2008:23-34.
49 Of all the early sources, only Cleitarchus places the founding of Alexandria after Siwah; cf. Curt. 4.8.1-3; Just. 11.11.13.
50 Cleitarchus comes from what Ton Otto 2009:46 identified as the pivotal ‘new generation’ in the evolution of traditions. According to Otto, ‘[i]t is not enough for the new generation simply to grow up in the institutional context created by the parent generation. The latter wants to ensure the continued validity of their social world by means of legitimations that “explain” and “justify” the institutional order and therefore help the new generation internalize these patterns.’
51 Dreyer 2009:66, who sees such pro-Ptolemaic embellishments as common in Cleitarchus’ work, the most prominent of which is Ptolemy and his consort Thais’ role in the decision to burn Persepolis. Indeed, the destruction of the symbolic,
Cleitarchus transposed Ptolemy I’s chronological order of events in order to show a divine connection between Ammon and Alexandria and in so doing confer divine approval on a new generation of Ptolemies and their rule from Alexandria. It seems probable, now that Alexandria had become accepted as Alexander's city, that Ptolemy II did not mind the linkage between Siwah and Alexandria.\(^52\) Alexander’s memory can be politicised in a new way.

But what about Plutarch? He seems to contradict Cleitarchus and corroborate Ptolemy’s account by assembling new evidence placing the founding of Alexandria before the journey to Siwah. He begins his narrative with Alexander’s dream about Homer (\textit{Alex.} 26). This dream inspired Alexander to plant a great city in Canopus, which he then marked out with chalk and grain, as reported by Strabo and Arrian. But before we move too far down this path, it is important to note that Plutarch’s information does not come from an eyewitness in Alexander’s entourage: it hinges on the word of a certain Heraclides, as reported 'by the Alexandrians'. This is most likely Heraclides of Lemnos, an Alexandrian historian and important diplomat working for Ptolemy VI Philometor, with whose works Plutarch was certainly familiar.\(^53\)

By Heraclides’ time in the 2nd century BC, Alexandria had become a great city and the traditions begun by Ptolemy I had been given more than a century in which to evolve. During those decades traditions connecting Homer and Alexander began to emerge. Indeed, during the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator, Alexandrians witnessed a renewed interest in Homer. Philopator sponsored new cult activities and a new temple com-

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\(^52\) Krasilnikoff 2009:38 argues that Pseudo-Callisthenes and other Roman-era sources ‘recycle’ features of archaic Greek colonisation and civic foundation in order to understand Alexander’s founding of Alexandria. Cleitarchus seems to have started this trend.

\(^53\) See Lazenby 1995:89-91, Fraser 1972:1.514-15 and Bloch 1940. Heraclides’ longest fragment, at Athen. 98d-e concerning a bizarre story about Alexarchus, mad brother of Cassander, indicates that the historian was interested in both the Successors and ‘marvels’; see Tarn 1933:141-44 for further discussion of the Alexarchus story. Fraser 1972:1.515 holds a particularly dim view of Heraclides as a source, noting that, in all of his works, he seems preoccupied with marvels in an attempt to satisfy ‘the demands of a popular market, concerned to avoid the study of serious histories and textbooks.’
pound for Homer in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{54} Surely it was under Philopator’s patronage that Homer and Alexander became linked. But why should a Ptolemy choose Homer? What is his use in the politics of Alexandria’s memory? Krasilnikoff suggests that the use of Homer as guide and inspiration for Alexander is an attempt by the Ptolemies not just to separate Alexandria from any mother polis in regions other successor kings controlled, but also to underscore its wholly Greek antecedents for a Greek audience. From Philopator onward, largely due to some rather violent Egyptian rebellions, there was greater stress on Alexandria’s Greek, rather than Egyptian, heritage.\textsuperscript{55} As Krasilnikoff puts it, ‘Homer was the safe choice for a less troublesome future.’\textsuperscript{56}

With Heraclides and the \textit{Alexander Romance} of Pseudo-Callisthenes, we have the mature Alexandrian \textit{mythos}: Alexander, in connection with his transformational experience at Siwah, founded Egyptian Alexandria as a world-class imperial capital.\textsuperscript{57} But this is only an invented tradition, much twisted by the passage of time. The truth is much less satisfying: Alexander the Great did not found a great city in Africa. He founded a small fort in Egypt, one of many that he placed along his route as he set about conquering the Persian Empire. Ptolemy I Soter founded a great city in Africa and his heirs ensured that it became even greater, both in myth and reality. Alexander built outposts to conquer, his successors built cities to rule. It should come as no surprise that it was not Alexander, but the second and third generation of Macedonians who built the new \textit{metropoleis} of the Hellenistic period: Antioch, Pergamum, Ctesiphon, Egyptian Alexandria and Ai-Khanum.

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\textsuperscript{54} Ael. \textit{VH} 13.22; see Fraser 1972:1.611; 862 n. 432.
\textsuperscript{55} Hölbl 2001:152-73.
\textsuperscript{56} Krasilnikoff 2009:25.
\textsuperscript{57} De Polignac 2000:34: ‘This, at least, is what the Alexandrians believed or wanted to believe, and nowhere is this more evident than in the tissue of legends gathered together by an author as mediocre as he was informed – Pseudo-Callisthenes.’
Bagnall, R.S. 1979. ‘The date of the founding of Alexandria.’ *AJAH* 4:46-49.


Jouguet, P. 1940. ‘La date alexandrine de la fondation d’Alexandrie.’ *REA* 42:192-197.


DEMETRIUS THE BESIEGER ON THE NILE

Pat Wheatley
University of Otago, New Zealand

The year 306 BC was perhaps one of the most momentous in the history of Alexander’s Successors. It was the year in which the deadlock that had existed between the dynasts since the famous Peace of 311 was broken in stunning fashion, and the reverberations were profound. The year began with a monumental clash between Demetrius the Besieger, the young and brilliant son of Antigonus the One-Eyed, and Ptolemy Soter, for control of the island of Cyprus. This campaign culminated in a great sea battle at Cyprian Salamis in June, in which Demetrius smashed Ptolemy’s fleet and crippled Egypt’s naval power through clever tactics, and energetic leadership and fighting. For the Antigonids the victory was total. Ptolemy did not linger in Cyprus long enough even to rescue his entourage, but fled without delay to Egypt. Our sources, Plutarch’s Life of Demetrius and Diodorus Siculus’ Library Book 20, disagree on the number of Ptolemaic ships destroyed. Plutarch asserts that Ptolemy escaped with only eight ships, losing the rest of his fleet, both transport ships and warships, in its entirety,1 but Diodorus’ figures seem more realistic, and one might estimate that Ptolemy escaped with perhaps one fifth of his warships, and at least a proportion of the supply ships.2 Whatever the real tallies, the

1 Plut. Demetr. 16.2-3. Plutarch asserts that 70 warships were captured with their crews, and the rest destroyed; Diod. Sic. 20.52.4 and 6 has 40 warships. On the casualty figures, see Seibert 1969:200-02; a detailed treatment of the Cypriot campaign in Wheatley 2001.

2 But Plut. Demetr. 16.3 is emphatic: … τοῦ δὲ ἐν ὁλκάσι παρορμοῦντος ὄχλου θεραπόντων καὶ φίλων καὶ γυναικῶν, ἔτι δὲ ὀπλῶν καὶ χρημάτων καὶ μηχανημάτων ἀπλῶς οὐδὲν ἔξεφυγε τὸν Δημήτριον, ἀλλ’ ἐλαβε πάντα καὶ κατήγαγεν εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον (… but of the throng of attendants, friends, and women which lay in the cargo ships close at hand, and further, of all Ptolemy’s arms, money, and war-engines, absolutely nothing escaped Demetrius, but he took everything and brought it safely into his camp; transl. Perrin 1920, modified). Diodorus’ breakdown of the casualties seems more believable, however, accounting as he does for both ships and soldiers. At least 2 000 troops are unaccounted for; these may have escaped with their master, leaving the baggage and military equipment (and the court retinue) to fall into Demetrius’ hands, as Plutarch relates. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that the same proportion of both troopships and warships escaped (c. one fifth = 40+). Some of these may have straggled back to Egypt from other parts of the island in the days following the battle.
price was a high one for the Lagid, who had lost at least 120 warships and 100 supply ships, with 8,000 soldiers, many of his friends, court officials, attendants and perhaps one of his sons who was on board.\(^3\) Demetrius' own losses had been minimal and the cost of the engagement extraordinarily lopsided, so that the victory at Salamis drastically altered the balance of power between the rival dynasts. Certainly, Ptolemy was shattered, but an even more significant outcome of the victory in the overall context of Hellenistic history was Antigonus' public assumption of the royal title and rank of basileus. The sources agree that when he officially received the news of the victory (after an elaborate and theatrical charade),\(^4\) he also bestowed the title on Demetrius, signifying his dynastic intent, and they became the first of the Hellenistic kings.\(^5\)

The matter the present paper seeks to address is how, in the face of this overwhelming military and propaganda setback, Ptolemy was able to hold Egypt against a vigorous Antigonal invasion attempt in October/November of the same year. Indeed, the circumstances of this surprising failure on the part of Antigonus and Demetrius to follow up their stunning victory and deliver the knockout blow merit further scrutiny. My intention, then, is to provide a summary of the invasion attempt, some

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\(^3\) Justin 15.2.7 names Leontiscus, a son of Ptolemy and Thaïs, as one of the prisoners returned by Demetrius to Egypt; on this individual, see Peremans & Van’t Dack 1950:6 no. 14528, with further bibliography. Whether he was already stationed in Salamis with his uncle Menelaus or arrived in his father’s armada is impossible to tell; see also Hill 1940:165 n. 2.

\(^4\) Plut. Demetr. 17.2-6 scathingly relates how Demetrius despatched Aristodemus, the arch-flatterer (πρωτεύοντα κολακείᾳ), in reality his senior diplomat, statesman and one of his father’s friends, with the news. The Milesian staged an elaborate pantomime, landing at the Orontes alone and proceeding mutely on foot towards the new capital, gathering a large crowd of worried citizens en route. Antigonus, deeply perturbed, sent numerous courtiers to learn the outcome, but to no avail. Finally, he came to meet the messenger in person: he was hailed as king, and informed that Ptolemy was defeated, Cyprus taken, and 16,800 prisoners held. Testy, but elated, he was acclaimed by the crowd, and an impromptu coronation was staged by his friends.

\(^5\) Sources for the assumption of the kingship: Plut. Demetr. 17.2-6; Diod. Sic. 20. 53.1-2; Appian, Syr. 54 with Brodersen 1989:110-12; Justin 15.2.10; Heidelberg Epitome = FGrH 155 F 1.7, with Bauer 1914:54-59 and Wheatley 2013; P. Köln 247 col. I, 1.18-27, with Lehman 1988; Oros. 3.23.40; Nepos, Eum. 13.2-3; 1 Macc. 1.7-9. See also Ritter 1965:79-82. Whether this chain of events represented the realisation of a master plan rather than an opportunistic exploitation of good fortune is, of course, highly debatable.
comments on the historiography, an appreciation of the military strategic considerations and theories, and finally, for our understanding of Alexander’s Successors and their time, some analysis of the wider implications of Demetrius the Besieger’s only intrusion into Africa.

The course of the invasion

It would seem that the news from Cyprus invigorated Antigonus, who had been quietly building his new capital at Antigoneia-on-the-Orontes in northern Syria, and he decided to follow up the victory with a determined effort to crush completely his arch-rival Ptolemy. Accordingly, he summoned Demetrius and his fleet and gathered an enormous army, intending to pursue a double-pronged attack on Egypt by land and sea. He was evidently delayed by the death of his younger son Philip, and the preparations and march to Gaza may have taken as long as three months, but Diodorus preserves good chronographic indicators here and the actual attack commenced in the last week of October 306 BC. From the beginning there were problems for both the naval and land forces. Near Raphia, about halfway to Egypt, a storm scattered Demetrius’ fleet, wrecking some transports and driving others back to Gaza; nevertheless, he appears to have led most of his warships on to Casium (Casius Mons), some 54 km east of Pelusium on the shore of the spit enclosing the Sirbonian lake. However, this coast is harbourless, and heaving to off the lee shore they were soon in dire straits: three quinqueremes were lost and the whole fleet

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7 Diod. Sic. 20.73-74.1; cf. Plut. Demetr. 19.2. Two indicators are given: the campaign is placed in the new archon year of Coroebus (306/305) and thus occurred after August; the astronomical phenomenon of the setting of the Pleiades, which unsettled the ships’ pilots, coincided with the march from Gaza. The Pleiades are commonly thought to set on 1 November and usher in the stormy winter season.

8 Modern Ras Qasrun, near Katib el-Gals in the centre of the Lake Bardawil sandbar in Egypt; see Stern et al. 1993:4:1393-94 map 70, C3; Verreth 2006. The site was known to Herodotus, cf. 2.6.1, 158.4 and also later writers: Diod. Sic. 1.30.4; Pliny, HN 5.14.68; Jos. BJ 4.11.5 661; cf. Milton’s Paradise Lost 2.592-94; for the dangerous nature of this coast, see Strabo 16.2.26 C758.
was barely saved from disaster by the abatement of the storm and the arrival of Antigonus with the army. The latter had also suffered difficulties in the infamous Barathra region of quicksand and swamp, but the expedition forged on and encamped about 400 metres from the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. At this point, they encountered the enemy.

Despite his catastrophic losses at Salamis, Ptolemy’s preparations had been thorough. He occupied the west bank of the river, garrisoned all strategic points, and had equipped a vast number of river boats with soldiers and ordnance to repel any attempts by Antigonus to cross. He also deployed a clever stratagem by inveigling Antigonus’ mercenaries to change sides with promises of rich rewards for those who would come over to him. This strategy met with some success, as Antigonus was forced to take drastic steps to stem the erosion of his army.

Meanwhile, Demetrius was despatched with his reassembled fleet to land troops in the delta and turn the defences, evidently with the plan that he could divert the Ptolemaic forces and give his father the opportunity to cross the river with the main army. He sailed as far as Pseudostoma, one of the so-called ‘false mouths’ of the Nile, some 105 km west of Pelusium, but found that landing strongly defended, and retraced his steps some 27 km by night to the Phatnitic mouth of the Nile. However, numerous ships had lost contact with the flagship in the night, and whilst Demetrius attempted to round up the stragglers, Ptolemy was able to draw up his army on the beaches and make any landings again unfeasible. Stymied by the vigorous and efficient defences, Demetrius was left with little choice but to retrace his course to Antigonus’ camp. Even so, he was caught again by a strong north wind and three more quadriremes and some transports were wrecked on the lee shore. The tactics had failed, and Antigonus found himself locked out of Egypt, with supplies for his huge army failing and morale ebbing. He was, doubtless, mindful of Perdiccas’ fiasco some 15 years earlier and, rather than force the issue and risk catastrophic losses,

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9 On the dangerous Barathra (‘Pits’) region between the Sirbonian lake and the sea, see Diod. Sic. 1.30.1-9; 16.46.4-5; Strabo 17.1.21 C803.
10 Diod. Sic. 20.73.1-3. Some would-be deserters were tortured as a deterrent to others, and the riverbank had to be guarded by archers, slingers and catapults to drive off Ptolemy’s boats. Apparently a large number of men did take Ptolemy’s offers: Diod. Sic. 20.76.7.
11 On the location of this channel, see Barrington Atlas, map 74 F2, with Toussoun 1922:43-44; Yoyotte & Charvet 1997:108-09.
12 Diod. Sic. 20.75.4-76.1.
called a council of his generals and put the choice to them of prosecuting the war further or withdrawing to Syria, with the promise of returning even better prepared and at a more felicitous time. The choice of retreating seems to have been embraced with enthusiasm, and the Antigonid forces returned to Syria without incident, probably during December.\(^{13}\)

**Historiographic comments**

The most striking feature of the sources is the minute detail preserved in Diodorus’ text (20.73-76) and there can only be one inference. The narrative, as is commonly thought, must derive from an eye-witness account by Hieronymus of Cardia himself, who is quite likely to have actually been with Demetrius and the fleet ever since the battle of Salamis.\(^{14}\) I have hypothesised elsewhere that sections of Diodorus’ book frequently appear to be first-hand.\(^{15}\) For example, the ‘live’ battle scenes of Paraetacene, Gabiene, Gaza and Salamis are described in very similar fashion, probably deriving from Hieronymus’ standard battle description blueprint.\(^{16}\) The description of Demetrius’ voyage and landing attempts correspond closely to these, and it is reasonable to suggest he was with the Besieger and transmitted the details in his lengthy memoirs. Other characteristics also reinforce this analysis. An astronomic pointer, the setting of the Pleiades, with its effect on the sanguinity of the helmsmen, is reiterated and Plutarch echoes this unease with the anecdote of Medius’ dream.\(^{17}\) The employment of such astronomical phenomena, both to set tone and to provide chronographic pegs, is a typical Hieronymean device, evident throughout Books 18-20 of Diodorus.\(^{18}\) The minute detail of the voyage is also striking. Precise information regarding sailing times, the itinerary, weather, sea conditions, navigation and seamanship, hardships, shipwrecks, proximity of the fleet to shore and the army to the Nile, and details of the

\(^{13}\) Samuel 1962:9 asserts that the withdrawal could not have been accomplished before the end of January 305, keying the events of the campaign to Ptolemy’s assumption of the kingship. However, this seems too late, considering Antigonus’ problems with supplies and the speedy nature of the retreat; cf. Diod. Sic. 20.76.4, 6; it seems more reasonable to suggest Antigonus had already left Egypt by January; cf. Seibert 1969:221-22.

\(^{14}\) Hornblower 1981:220.

\(^{15}\) Wheatley 2001:146-47.

\(^{16}\) Diod. Sic. 19.30, 42.1-43.2, 83.3-84.8; 20.51.1-52.2.

\(^{17}\) Diod. Sic. 20.73.3-74.1; cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 19.2.

\(^{18}\) See, for instance Diod. Sic. 19.18.2, 37.3, 56.5; 20.5.5; cf. Justin 22.6.1.
resistance encountered are all provided, along with some unique cameos such as the torture of would-be deserters, the night return from Pseudostoma and the wait for stragglers at the Phatnitic mouth of the Nile. Finally, the outcome of the army’s council deliberations are tell-tale ‘inner sanctum’ snippets, reminiscent of the stormy leadership meetings held by Eumenes with the Silver Shields and the eastern satraps during the Second Diadoch war, and in the same vein as the descriptions of life incarcerated with Eumenes in the fortress at Nora in 319/318, the ‘Alexander tent’ stratagem, or the Nabataean expeditions in 312/311. The only hiccup in the narrative is the failure to change subject at 20.75.4, giving the impression that Antigonus himself sailed to Pseudostoma with the fleet, but this must surely be attributed to carelessness in Diodorus’ abbreviation of Hieronymus.

As for the peripheral sources, Plutarch and Pausanias supply only a bare-bones summary, perhaps gleaned from Diodorus himself by the first century AD. Plutarch has embellished things – probably from another genre of writing – with the anecdote of Medius’ dream, but is mainly concerned to continue justifying his portrait of Demetrius as the flawed character, eminently comparable to Antony, with another example of the fruitlessness of his endeavours and their consequences in human terms:

Πολλὰς δὲ τῶν νεῶν ἀπολέσαντος, ἐπανῆλθεν ἄπρακτος

Losing many of his ships, he returned without accomplishing anything.

19 Time: Diod. Sic. 20.74.1; itinerary: 20.74.1-2, 75.4-5, 76.1; weather: 20.74.1, 76.2; sea conditions: 20.74.3, 76.2; navigation and seamanship: 20.74.3, 76.2; hunger and thirst: 20.74.3, 76.4; shipwrecks: 20.74.5, 76.2; positions of fleet and army: 20.74.3 and 5; resistance: 20.75.4; torture of deserters: 20.75.3; night return and wait for stragglers: 20.75.5.


21 So Billows 1990:164 n. 3.

22 Plut. Demetr. 19.1-3; Paus. 1.6.6. If Dion. Hal. De Comp. Verb 4.30 is correct in asserting that Hieronymus’ history was virtually unreadable on account of its length and detail; possibly by the time of Plutarch scholars were already using Diodorus’ transmission rather than the original.

23 Summed up in the Synkrisis 4.6: συνελόντι δὲ εἰπείν, Ἀντώνιος μὲν ἑαυτὸν διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν, Δημήτριος δὲ ἄλλους ἥδικησε (In a word, Antony wronged himself
Plutarch is also, of course, delighted to showcase one of his recurrent themes in the Demetrius/Antony pairing here: the mutability of human fortune. At one moment Demetrius is at his peak with unprecedented military success, resulting in the ultimate reward of the royal title, and next he is floundering at the edge of calamity off the harbourless coast of the Nile delta. Plutarch loves this, and his joy is evident at being able to include this fiasco in the litany of critical observations that comprise his parallel biographies of Demetrius and Antony.

Analysis: the ramifications of the campaign

The failure of the Antigonid attempt on Egypt is quite puzzling, even amongst the anomalies of the Diadoch wars. How is it possible that a dynast, so comprehensively beaten and lucky to escape in June, could resist invasion by an overwhelming force five months later? I believe we can consider this a case-study, which can be applied to deepen our understanding of the Diadoch era. Two matters need to be addressed.

1. The centralist-separatist model

The so-called centralist-separatist model is the usual vehicle for an understanding of the Diadoch era. It has generally been thought that some of Alexander’s successors aspired to re-forging the Macedonian conquests into a single entity and establishing themselves as a new ruling dynasty over an ‘Über-Macedonian Empire’ (so to speak), while others were satisfied to carve a slice of the dominions and rule a separate self-contained kingdom – usually on the periphery. Retrospectively, the dynasts sort themselves quite naturally into this model: Lysimachus, Peithon, Peucestas and especially Ptolemy fall into the separatist category. However, Perdiccas, and especially the Antigonids, always appear to have

by his excesses, Demetrius wronged others’; transl. Perrin 1920); cf. Diod. Sic. 19.80.1-2, the pursuit of Ptolemy’s forces to Cilicia in 313-312, with Wheatley 2009:331-32; Plut. Demetr. 40.3-4 on the siege of Thebes in 291-90. For discussion of this topos, see Hornblower 1981:226-32; Pelling 1988:19-20; and the scathing summation of Billows 1990:164.

aimed for unification and to inherit fully Alexander’s hegemony. We might say that Antipater, and later Cassander, were special cases, as rule of the Macedonian homeland itself carried its own peculiar advantages, prestige and also problems, yet if the centralist-separatist model is adhered to, they also must certainly be placed in the latter category. Now, this traditional model has been challenged more recently, with some newer scholars such as Strootman, Meeus and Lund vigorously questioning its validity. However, I would argue that the Antigonid attempt on Egypt in late 306 actually refutes the traditional mode of analysis. The discussion is essentially geographical. Antigonus held the heartland — Anatolia, the Levant and Greece, and his strategy would seem quite simple: isolate and eliminate his peripheral rivals one by one, and bring the separatist dominions back into the fold. The initial mobilisations were stunningly successful: Demetrius took Athens and truncated Cassander’s influence in Greece after his expedition of 307. In the following year he sliced off Cyprus, a traditional and vital sphere of Ptolemaic influence, and established a thalassocracy in the eastern Mediterranean. The scene was set to deliver a knockout blow to one of the rivals. It failed miserably. The separatist Ptolemy, though at a terrible disadvantage, adroitly defended his satrapy against overwhelming force and turned it into a kingdom in the aftermath. The reservoir of ordnance, finance and strategic advantage of the centralist Antigonids came to nought. How to explain this? The answer, I believe, comes under the aegis of the second matter that I want to discuss, and here I (somewhat perversely) move from traditional scholarship to revisionism myself.

2. Antigonus’ generalship

In studies of the Antigonids, traditional wisdom has it that Demetrius the Besieger is the weak link in the chain of command. He is the flawed character, at once a lush in his personal life, and showy, but without

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25 Nepos, Eum. 2.3-4; Plut. Eum. 12.1; Diod. Sic. 18.50.2; cf. 20.37.4. This perception of Antigonid ambitions has been strengthened by the discovery of a papyrus from Köln no. 247, col. I lines 18-27, on which see Lehman 1988; Billows 1990:351-52; Bosworth 2002:246-47.

26 Cassander hopes just for the Macedonian kingdom: Diod. Sic. 19.52.1.

substance in his professional life.\textsuperscript{28} We have plenty of data. His career began inauspiciously, well beaten at the battle of Gaza late in 312 by the experienced Ptolemy and Seleucus and shortly afterwards outsmarted, first by the Nabataean Arabs and then by Patrocles in Babylonia.\textsuperscript{29} He has a successful period from c. 309-306, but then come the futile efforts on the Nile delta we have been examining. From here it is downhill: the wasteful fiasco at Rhodes from 305-304, the erratic behaviour in Athens from 304-302, a puzzling failure to overrun Cassander in 302, and the crowning moment: the debacle at Ipsus, where received wisdom has Demetrius’ intemperate pursuit of Antiochus’ cavalry directly responsible for losing the greatest battle of the age since Gaugamela, and getting his father killed to boot.\textsuperscript{30} But this whole litany of events may be debated, and pitched another way. We must look to the source, and it is my belief that we are snowed by Plutarch. Plutarch’s \textit{Demetrius} is a carefully assembled document, designed not so much to pervert our perceptions of Demetrius as to compile a portrait of the Besieger that quietly amplifies the pernicious construction of \textit{Antony}! It must be remembered that these are \textit{Parallel Lives}. Plutarch bequeaths to us a distorted Demetrius, whose flaws are amplified, yet understandable within the context of his own culture and time, in order to present an utterly reprehensible and derelict Marc Antony, for whom, being a Roman, there is no excuse whatsoever. But we must not be misled: Plutarch loves neither Antony nor Demetrius, and his pairing here should probably be viewed in an even wider context as a set of lives to offset the laudatory Alexander-Caesar pair, or the ironic Sertorius-Eumenes pairing. The trouble for the historian is that it is too easy to swallow Plutarch. The analysis of this paper, which has coalesced out of scrutiny of the Egyptian expedition, is that the ultimate failure of the Antigonids actually comes not so much from the bungling of

\textsuperscript{28} Plutarch chronicles this with considerable finesse; see, for instance, the sequence of \textit{Demetr.} 23-29; cf. 19.10; 42. The portrait is embedded in the sources, as is evident from Diodorus 20.92. There are no specific treatments of Demetrius’ life in recent scholarship, though his exploits are entwined with works on Antigonus; see, for instance, Wehrli 1968:137-220; Billows 1990:136-86.

\textsuperscript{29} Diod. Sic. 19.97; 100.3-7.

Demetrius, but from the lacklustre generalship and questionable strategic vision of Antigonus himself.\footnote{Hornblower 1981:219-21 arrives at similar conclusions, while Billows 1990:164 follows the traditional line of blaming Demetrius; but see now Champion 2014:128-29.}

Consider this: Antigonus never learns, but thinks force majeure is the answer. When on top, there is little subtlety. In 319 he maltreats the body of Alcetas and imprisons Attalus, Polemon and Docimus; and after the great victory over Cleitus the White on the Hellespont in 318, he is deemed a military genius.\footnote{Diod. Sic. 18.45.3, 47.3, 73.1; 19.16.} As soon as the Argyraspides turned Eumenes over to him in January 316, he wasted no time in burning Antigones alive in a pit, deposing Peucetas, executing Eumenes and Eudamus, and soon after Peithon, son of Crateuas, and finally forcing even Seleucus to flee.\footnote{Diod. Sic. 19.46.1, 3; Polyaenus, Strat. 4.6.14.}

But this is the point at which he is on top of his game. From 315 on, I would suggest, it was all downhill for Antigonus. He handled his talented nephews, Polemaeus and Telesphorus, very badly in 313-312, and eventually the former defected to Ptolemy.\footnote{Diod. Sic. 20.27.3. Polemaeus probably felt insecure in the preferment of his cousin Demetrius from 312 onwards; either way, Antigonus managed the family clumsily.} His shadowy campaign in Babylonia against Seleucus from 310-308 ended ignominiously with his defeat and withdrawal in similar circumstances to the Egyptian campaign.\footnote{On this campaign, see Wheatley 2002.} The attack on Rhodes, ordered by Antigonus in 305, was a strategic blunder and a tremendous propaganda setback, as was the recall of Demetrius from Thessaly in 302 and the arrogant demand for Cassander’s unconditional surrender.\footnote{Diod. Sic. 20.106.2.} His final campaign against Lysimachus, prior to Ipsus, though fought with determination and vigour, was well countered by his equally determined, wily, younger and lucky opponent.\footnote{Diod. Sic. 20.109.} As for Ipsus itself, well, obviously on that field Antigonus was fatally outsmarted.

This brief catalogue surely demonstrates that the powers of Antigonus were in decline from 315, and an excerpt from Polyaenus’ Strategems 4.6.5 is insightful in contrasting his genius, when fighting against the odds, with his relative lack of energy when fielding strong forces. I would suggest, in fact, that we should not be so hasty to judge Demetrius as incompetent,
but should look behind him to assess the strategic thinking and execution of Antigonus; perhaps we should have in mind the paradigm of Philip and Alexander in reverse. Indeed, the Egyptian expedition should be regarded as a prime example. Antigonus’ preparations are meticulous, but his huge force is inappropriate for this sort of task, or for crossing the legendarily difficult terrain separating Egypt from Idumaea, unless of course he hoped his show of force would simply intimidate the Lagid into surrender. But, given his track record in the treatment of captured enemies, as we have seen, this would seem a forlorn hope. And the large mass of troops proved a logistic burden, even when he reached the river. Antigonus would have been well aware that his other rivals, Cassander and Seleucus, were fully occupied elsewhere (one in the far eastern satrapies, and one attempting to reassert hegemony over Greece), and while one might observe that ‘striking while the iron is hot’ is a good policy, the lateness of the season for campaigning – remarked on by all the sources – coupled with the high level of the Nile, was a serious risk factor, especially for the naval arm, which Antigonus probably considered to be his trump card. Also, he had not reckoned with Ptolemy’s clever stratagem of enticing deserters: it is likely that the Antigonid forces included a good proportion of soldiers and sailors who had been captured in Cyprus a few months earlier, and may have been glad of an opportunity to return to Ptolemy’s service and their lives in Egypt.

Finally, we might observe that Antigonus had never travelled far with Alexander. Ptolemy had. Alexander circumvented difficulties with exceptional skill and energy, including the crossing of large rivers: the Danube in 335, the Granicus in 334, the Tigris (though undefended), the Oxus, the Jaxartes and, of course, most famously the Hydaspes. Some crossings required special equipment, such as jury-rigged flotation devices – skins stuffed with grasses (Danube, Oxus, Jaxartes), one (the Granicus) a kamikaze squad, and some, such as the Hydaspes, an elaborate stratagem. At the Nile Antigonus appears to have deployed no innovative tactics, nor even a determined assault. Why, for instance, did he not attempt an opportunistic crossing while Ptolemy was facing Demetrius at the Phatnitic mouth? Of course, the horrific memory of Perdiccas’ expedition in 321 or 320, where 2000 troops were lost in the river crossing and

38 Billows 1990:163.
39 Though Hornblower 1981:220 makes a good point that Antigonus may have reasoned that the high level of the Nile would actually facilitate the passage of Demetrius’ large warships.
eaten by crocodiles and hippopotamuses, will have weighed on him; some veterans from that disaster may well have still been in his army. In fact, one might further speculate on Antigonus’ whole *plan de campagne* at the Nile. Seibert asserts that he planned a direct assault by land across the delta on Alexandria itself, as opposed to the more traditional strategy of besieging Pelusium or following the east bank of the Pelusiac Nile south to Memphis. While Pelusium was known to be heavily fortified by land and sea, it seems quite incredible that no assault at all was attempted, though perhaps Antigonus had thought to emulate Pharnabazus and Iphicrates’ strategy against Nectanebos in 374/373 BC, and seek ingress to Egypt through another mouth. At the very least, it seems lethargic of the One-Eyed to stake success solely on Demetrius’ naval endeavours. Again one wonders: why did he not attempt a crossing or assault on Pelusium while Ptolemy was defending the delta further west? The successful four-pronged assault by Artaxerxes III in 343 springs to mind as a precedent. Of course, our sources may be incomplete and there is much we cannot know, but by any measure, Antigonus’ actions seem unimaginative if not lacklustre. As to the question of whether seagoing vessels could be successfully deployed in the delta, this is comprehensively answered by historical precedent: triremes are recorded operating in the rivers and canals of Egypt during various invasions in 460, 374, 343 and 332 BC. Both Hauben and Billows have attempted to clarify Antigonus’ strategy, and convincingly ruled out Seibert’s hypothesis that Antigonus intended to cross the delta direct to Alexandria. At any rate, mindful of Perdiccas’ fate – and this is perhaps the cleverest thing Antigonus did here – he consulted his council for a consensus before deciding to withdraw, and at

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40 Diod. Sic. 18.33-6; Frontinus 4.7.20; Strabo 17.1.8 C794.  
41 Seibert 1969:210-11; see also the map at 223. Cf. Thuc. 1.104.2, 109.4 and Diod. Sic. 11.77.2-3 on the 460 BC Athenian expedition to aid Inaros in his revolt against Artaxerxes II; Diod. Sic. 15.42 on Pharnabazus and Iphicrates’ campaign against Nectanebos in 374/373 BC; Diod. Sic. 16.49.1-6 on Lacrates the Theban’s siege of 343 BC; Arr. *Anab*. 3.1.3-4 on Alexander’s garrisoning Pelusium and sending a fleet up to Memphis in 332 BC; Hauben 1975/1976:269. On the later expedition of Antiochus IV in the Sixth Syrian war in 168 BC, cf. Livy 45.12.1-2; Polyb. 29.27; Diod. Sic. 31.2; and Mithridates I of Pergamum’s expedition to relieve Caesar in 48/47 BC. For an exhaustive analysis of attempts to invade Egypt from the seventh to fourth centuries BC, see Kahn & Tammuz 2008.  
42 Diod. Sic. 15.42.1-4, in that case the Mendesian.  
43 Diod. Sic. 16.44.3-6, 46.4-51; with Kahn & Tammuz 2008:64-65.  
least extricated himself without major losses. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Plutarch completes his treatment of the Egyptian expedition with sharp observations on Antigonus’ advancing age, obesity, and declining health and fitness for active campaigning.45

This leads us back to the centralist-separatist theme: how can the events at the Nile in November 306 inform us on this matter? In the ruck (or should we call it a rolling maul?) at Babylon, of the marshals present, only Perdiccas wanted the whole pie. Cornelius Nepos tells us:

Cogitabat enim, quod fere omnes in magnis imperiis concupiscunt, omnium partis corripere atque complecti.

It was his design to do what almost all who hold great power aspire to, namely, seize the shares of all the others and unite them.46

The others, aside perhaps from Leonnatus, were initially pleased with just a satrapy, which they viewed as a just reward for services rendered to the crown; some (Ptolemy) were pickier than others, but in general the more powerful marshals received the plum satrapies.47 By the time of the second satrapy distribution at Triparadeisus in 321 or 320, the field had thinned slightly, or at least, three major players had been eliminated: Perdiccas, Leonnatus and Craterus.48 It is at this point that Antigonus became noticeable and received his first powerful commission: as strategos autokrator to mop up the Perdiccan party.49 The aged Antipater was dead by 319, and in the aftermath of the Second Diadoch War, only three rivals to Antigonus’ power remained: Cassander, Lysimachus and Ptolemy.50 It seems to me that the old model of the Antigonids holding the central ground, and trying to pick off their rivals piecemeal, while the other dynasts consolidate and fortify their satrapies, still holds true, and there is strong evidence for this.51 Certainly, the separatists made occasional

46 Nepos, Eum. 2.3, transl. Rolfe.
47 Aside from Ptolemy, Peithon took Media, Lysimachus Thrace, Leonnatus Hellespontine Phrygia, Peucetas Persis. See, most recently, with earlier bibliography, Yardley, Wheatley & Heckel 2011:86-119.
49 Diod. Sic. 18.39.7; cf. 18.50.1-2.
50 Diod. Sic. 19.57.1; at this stage we may ignore the fugitive Seleucus and the defeated Polyperchon.
51 Above, note 25; but cf. note 27.
expedient incursions, and attempted to establish buffer zones, but they always retreated at the spectre of major confrontation: Cassander from Caria and Lysimachus from Hellespontine Phrygia in 313/312, Ptolemy from Coelê-Syria in 311, and from Greece in 308. Their underpinning strategies were reactive and defensive. By the same token, Antigonus was never able to deliver a fatal blow to his rivals individually: Babylonia was defended in 310-308, and Egypt, as we have seen, in 306, Macedonia, barely, in 302. Resolution was only ever to come in this stalemate when the separatists formed a coalition. Even so, the first coalition of 315 only eventuated in a draw by the Peace of 311; but the second coalition of 302 was startlingly successful, as was the third coalition against Demetrius in 289/288, which led to his expulsion from Macedonia and eventual demise.52

I must put a rider on my assertion of the validity of the centralist-separatist model, though, by observing that it must not be frozen in time, but allowed to evolve. Those who, in 323 and 321, were junior players in the game had developed somewhat by 306, 301, 287 and 282. The ranks of the ‘second-class generals’ (as Hornblower terms them) had been drastically thinned, but surviving knights had become rooks; pawns had become queens. It cannot be denied that putative ‘separatists’ such as Seleucus, Lysimachus and Ptolemy were themselves eventually seduced by the Antigonid dream, and for them, also, it morphed into nightmare just as quickly.

The foregoing short analysis of the sole incursion the Antigonids made into Africa has attempted to demonstrate that they followed a pattern that is irreversibly embedded in our conceptions of the Diadoch period. Here I reify the traditional. But, in so doing I have surprised myself by reaching – reluctantly (and inadvertently) – the conclusion that the much-vaunted Antigonus was not the brilliant general and strategist scholars have thought him to be: in fact, for the last twelve years of his life, quite the reverse. The corollary is how then shall we evaluate the supposedly flawed, erratic and incompetent Demetrius? Perhaps here I must become the revisionist.

52 Plut. *Demetr.* 44.
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THE ALEXANDER ROMANCE TRADITION
FROM EGYPT TO ETHIOPIA*

Sulochana Asirvatham
Montclair State University, New Jersey
Visiting Researcher, University of South Africa

Introduction

Among the very many tentacles of The Alexander Romance tradition is an Ethiopian tradition represented by a set of seven texts written in Ge’ez, a Semitic language that was the lingua franca of Medieval Ethiopia and is still used today in Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy. These texts appear in manuscripts dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries, and were translated into English in 1896 by Sir Ernest Budge. This paper asks why the figure of Alexander the Great attracted Ethiopian writers and translators from the Medieval period. The historical Alexander had not visited Ethiopia and the word itself appears only twice in the corpus. The texts do, however, show an interest in another African country, Egypt, and in particular the city of Alexandria with which Medieval Ethiopia had strong religious ties. In his recent study of the most important Ethiopic Alexander-text, the Ethiopic Alexander Romance or Zēnā Eskender (‘History of Alexander the Great’), Peter Kotar points to the dependence of Ethiopic literature from the 13th century onwards on the Christian-Arabic literature of the Coptic church in Egypt, as well as to the particularly religious

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* I thank Philip Bosman for his gracious invitation to present this paper at the Classical Association of South Africa meeting in July 2011 at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa.

1 Budge 1896:Vol. 2. As a non-specialist without knowledge of Ge’ez, I am dependent on Budge’s translation. That caveat aside, the general character of Ethiopian writing, which is late and largely made up of translations – sometimes more than one language away from the original source or sources – creates problems for specialists as well; cf. Wright:1877:iv. Naturally, the limitations on how we can use these texts necessarily determine how closely we can read them, but it seems possible to make conjectures concerning the Ethiopic Alexander-tradition based on the surface content of the texts and the circumstances of their production.
The present paper attempts to extend this understanding to the rest of the corpus by suggesting that the existence of an Ethiopic Alexander tradition is as much a function of the historical relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church of Alexandria as it is of the inherent interest value of Alexander’s history, mythical or otherwise.\(^3\)

The seven texts in question are: (1) the *Ethiopic Alexander Romance* referred to above, also known as *Zēnā Eskender* or the Ethiopic Pseudo-Callisthenes; (2) *The History of Alexander* by Abū Shāker; (3) *The History of Alexander* by al-Makin; (4) *The History of Alexander* by Joseph ben Gorion; (5) *The History of the Death of Alexander* by an anonymous writer; (6) *The Christian Romance of the Life of Alexander*; and (7) *The History of the Blessed Men who lived in the Days of Jeremiah the Prophet and the Account of the Vision of Abbâ Gerâsimus*. All but (6), the *Christian Romance*, are translations from Arabic rather than original works of Ethiopian literature.\(^4\) Texts (1), (5), (6) and (7) are all anonymous, freestanding works, while texts (2), (3), (4) and (5) are excerpted from Universal Histories and have known authors and dates/approximate dates: Abū Shāker (1257), al-Makin (1262-1268), and Joseph ben Gorion (953), respectively.\(^5\) The texts of Abū Shāker and al-Makin are largely identical (with an important addition by al-Makin, as we shall see) and it seems that al-Makin was influenced by Abū Shāker rather than the other way around,

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\(^2\) Kotar 2011:157. My conclusions were found independently of and differ from Kotar’s, but are clearly bolstered by them.

\(^3\) I am not arguing here for a distinction between Alexander-traditions that write about him because they find Alexander ‘intrinsically interesting’ vs. those who have an external motivation. Writers like Plutarch, Arrian and Quintus Curtius were, centuries after his death, preoccupied specifically with his qualities as a ruler, while Diodorus included Alexander of necessity in his history of a world where Rome now reigned supreme. The historical and geographical distance between Alexander the Great and Ethiopia makes Ethiopian interest in him seem less self-evident than that of Roman-era writers.

\(^4\) The Arabic sources have been translated from Syriac or Hebrew sources, which were themselves vulnerable to modifications of various kinds.

\(^5\) In Ethiopia, shortened versions of the author’s names like Abū Shāker are typically used as the title of the work itself; cf. Witakowski 2006:290. The name ‘al-Makin’, however, does not appear in Ethiopic and seems to come from the Latinised form of his name, Almacinus, from Thomas Erpenius’s 1625 partial edition (Witakowski 2006:293).
even though the latter was the younger of the two.\(^6\) Joseph ben Gorion, sometimes called Pseudo-Josephus, is also identified with a work (or author) named ‘Josippon’, the name given to a popular history of the Jews from Adam to the emperor Titus.\(^7\)

This paper first studies the four anonymous free-standing texts, whose content speaks more fully than the Universal Chronographies to both the Christianizing character of Alexander as well as his ideological connection to Egypt. A shorter second section considers the Universal Chronographies, which are of a completely different nature. In these latter texts, the connection between Ethiopia and Egypt is decidedly not ‘about’ Alexander, who is just one historical figure of very many; for the most part, it is the Egyptian provenance or Coptic interest in these authors that has determined the existence of this body of Alexander-texts. That said, there are some interesting internal features of these texts, including an Ethiopic addition that suggest a possible desire to ‘Egyptianise’ Alexander’s story albeit on a smaller scale than the free-standing texts.

The free-standing anonymous Ethiopic Alexander texts

The \textit{Ethiopic Alexander Romance}

The most important and most studied of the Ethiopic Alexander corpus is the \textit{Ethiopic Alexander Romance}.\(^8\) It was found in a nineteenth-century manuscript which is a fourteenth-century Ge’ez translation of the Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes (itself a translation of a Persian version) via an Arabic intermediary.\(^9\) It is by far the longest of the texts, its length equalling the

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\(^6\) Budge ordered his texts with al-Makin preceding Abû Shâker, but Uhlig 2003:57 points to a note in the Ethiopic manuscript stating that Abû Shâker’s work was finished in 1257, and Witakowski 2006:297-98, 293 posits that al-Makin wrote his work between 1262 and 1268.

\(^7\) Descriptions of the manuscripts can be found in Budge 1896:Vol.1 and in the earlier editions of the texts; see Wright1877.

\(^8\) Weymann 1901 remains essential.

\(^9\) The manuscript (like the one containing al-Makin), was found in the treasury of King Theodore of Makdalâ (Amba Mariam); Budge 1896:ii posits that this and other texts were meant for a church library Theodore had intended to build. He was campaigned against and defeated by the British in 1867-1868; hence the British Library’s possession of these manuscripts. Budge mistakenly thought that the Syriac version was based on an Arabic text; Nöldeke 1890:11-17 believed this was a seventh-century Pahlavi source, but more recently Ciancaglini 1998:61-90
total length of the other six texts combined, and the only one that can be fruitfully compared and contrasted with a Greek text: its forebear Pseudo-Callisthenes, otherwise known as the *Greek Alexander Romance*. It can also be compared to the Syriac translation of which it is a translation (and which happens to be the basis for all eastern versions of the *Romance*). Useful plot comparisons between the Greek and the Syriac, and between the Syriac and Ethiopian Romances, can be found in the introduction to Budge’s translation of the *Syriac Alexander Romance*. Rather than repeating these comparisons, I refer below to some of the contents and to the general character of the pagan *Greek Alexander Romance*, pointing to similarities with the (only implicitly Christianising) *Syriac Alexander Romance* and contrasting both the Greek and Syriac romances with the highly Christianised *Ethiopic Alexander Romance*.

The *Greek Alexander Romance* maintains contact with the basic outlines of Alexander’s story as told by the Greco-Roman historians, but with fanciful variations and additions. We have, for example, references to Alexander’s relationship with Aristotle, his taming of Bucephalas, his fighting with Philip, his reception of Persian ambassadors, his campaigns in Greece and Persia, his visit to Egypt and the foundation of Alexandria, his conquest of Tyre, the murder of Darius by his satraps, Alexander’s marriage with Roxana, his campaign against Porus, his men’s revolt, and his death in Babylon. The chronology and geography can be quite confused, however: one manuscript of the *Greek Alexander Romance* (L, from the β recension) gives two descriptions of the sack of Thebes, both before Alexander’s defeat of Darius, where it belongs historically, and after it. The text contains certain fictions that suggest a desire to compress the historical narrative: for example, it has Darius seeking help from the Indian prince Porus and presents Roxana as Darius’ daughter. It contains events that are quasi-historical, but at which Alexander was not present, like the

has posited a Middle Persian one. The Arabic intermediary was considered lost until its recent identification by Doufiker-Aerts 2010:58-73 as a text that she refers to with the copyist’s name, ‘Quzmān’.

10 Budge 1889:lvii-lxvii and xc-cix. For the Syriac/Ethiopic comparison see also Kotar 2011:168-73.

11 For the formation of the *Greek Alexander Romance* and its complicated transmission history, see Stoneman 1991:8-17, 28-32. Since there is no definitive Greek text of the *Romance*, which exists in three major recensions plus variants, Stoneman’s composite translation must suffice.

meeting with the Brahmins, as well as pure fictions such as Alexander’s meeting with the Amazons and his conquest of Italy after a second conquest of Greece. Of the greatest significance for us, as it is a recurring feature in the Syriac and Ethiopic romances, the Greek romance tells the story of Alexander’s parentage from Nectanebo, the last Egyptian Pharaoh of Egypt, who seduced Olympias in the guise of Ammon in the guise of a snake. Another set of fantastic episodes extend the notion of Alexander’s famous pothos, his longing to conquer lands beyond those which anyone had previously conquered, to include a trip below the sea in a diving bell, his travel through the Land of Darkness into the Land of the Blessed, and an attempt to reach the heavens, at which point he is turned back by a flying man (the latter perhaps based on the Mesopotamian Etanna legend). This is followed by tales of ‘India’ in the form of the (inauthentic) ‘Letter to Aristotle’, which includes a visit to Candace of Meroe (considered Ethiopian here, in contrast to the Ethiopic Alexander Romance, on which see below) and a warning of his death by the Pharaoh Sesochonosis. This is again followed by a visit to the Amazons and another unauthentic ‘Letter to Olympias’ which describes his visit to the City of the Sun and the Palace of Cyrus. In particular, stories such as the visit to the Island of the Blessed, or Paradise, are most significant for connecting various aspects of Alexander’s legacy over various religious traditions. Richard Stoneman in his Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, encapsulates their overall tone as a tragic and universalising one for the Everyman, whose message is that even the greatest conqueror and king in the world cannot escape death.

The Syriac Alexander Romance follows the three-book structure of the α recension of the Greek Romance as well as its Latin translation by Julius Valerius, and contains much of their content. It cannot, however, be a direct translation of the Greek and Latin texts known to us, since it contains some elements that appear only in the Greek and others that appear only in the Latin version. The Syriac also includes a ‘Letter from Aristotle’ of the type that came from the Hebrew tradition through Arabic. Budge believed the Syriac translator was a Christian priest due to late interpolations such as Darius’ use of biblical language on his death, ‘In

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13 Onesicritus met them and may himself be responsible for some of the philosophical content, although this cannot be known for certain. See Stoneman, 1995:99-114.
14 Stoneman 2010:1-3 and infra.
15 Budge 1889:1viii.
16 Monferrer-Sala 2011:58 and bibliography in nn. 78 and 79.
thy hands I leave my spirit’, an echo of Luke 23:46, but he was more likely a Nestorian monk.\textsuperscript{17} Reinink has proposed that the composition of the Syriac Alexander Romance had propagandistic purposes in the wake of Byzantine Emperor Heraclius’ triumph against the Persian Sassanids (628), a time when Alexander was also featured as a saviour in a number of Syriac Christian Apocalyptic texts.\textsuperscript{18} In terms of content, however, while the Syriac romance’s interest in Alexander the conqueror king is clearly inspired by the figure of the Christian emperor, his Christianity is not explicit; only in the Syriac Christian Legends does this become apparent.\textsuperscript{19}

The Ethiopic Alexander Romance, by contrast, is strewn with religious references. Like the Greek and Syriac romances, the Ethiopic Alexander Romance is what Kotar calls a ‘historical romance’, containing a ‘stratum of historical fact mixed with a lot of fiction’, as opposed to a ‘fabulous history’, that is, a work of ‘pure imagination’ like the Christian Romance we will examine in the next section.\textsuperscript{20} Unlike the Syriac romance, the Ethiopic Alexander Romance does not follow the three-book structure of the Greek Alexander Romance, although, in places, the text follows the Syriac very closely. By comparing the Syriac and the Ethiopic romances we can detect the presence, throughout the latter text, of monotheistic language. Some of this language comes directly from the Arabic tradition or is syncretic. Rather than beginning directly with Nectanebo, as do the Greek and Syriac romances, the Ethiopic version starts with a version of a typical Arabic prayer to God for mercy and aid in telling the story of Alexander as told by the sages, after which the Nectanebo story is taken up in similar terms to the Greek and Syriac.\textsuperscript{21} Alexander is also, in the Ethiopic text, frequently referred to as Dhu’l-Qarnayn, or the ‘Two-

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\textsuperscript{17} Budge 1889 lviii-lix; Nöldeke 1890:17 and Baumstark 1968:125. For additional bibliography see Monferrer-Sala 2011:42 n. 9. \\
\textsuperscript{18} Reinink 1985:263-81; 2003:150-78. \\
\textsuperscript{19} For example, Budge 1889:144-58. On the Christianising Syriac Alexander texts, see Monferrer-Sala 2011:50-51. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Kotar 2011:163. \\
\textsuperscript{21} Budge 1896:1. This prologue is interesting in its emphasis on Alexander as the man who rules over and travels beyond all other men, that is, on the logical result of his \textit{pothos}: ‘we write on the authority of the sages who have recorded … his reign over [all] the earth and his marches unto the very limits thereof; and his voyages on the sea which had never [before] been crossed [by any man], and his travels through the air, and his arrival in the [Land of] Darkness, and his journeyings into places whither God gave him knowledge to go, and his chief acts and deeds.’
\end{flushright}
Horned One’, using the Quranic designation of Alexander, and towards the end of the romance he is accompanied by El-Khidr.\textsuperscript{22} Other items appear in Jewish, Christian and Muslim scripture alike, such as the Empire of Nimrud (as being under Dari’s (Darius’) rule)\textsuperscript{23} and the story of the hemming in of the Unclean Nations, Gog and Magog.\textsuperscript{24}

While it is not always easy to determine whether a particular reference is quranic or biblical, the text contains enough clearly Christianising references, that is, references that cannot have been in the Arabic intermediary, to point to Christian authorship.\textsuperscript{25} Very striking, for example, is the build-up to Alexander’s conversion: his initial pledge of faith to God at the beginning of his travels; his appointment of a Christianised Aristotle as counsellor,\textsuperscript{26} and his admonition to his new subjects to fear, serve and help God who created him, and to stop worshipping ‘Satan and other [false] gods’, to which they offer a lengthy, prayerful reply in the affirmative.\textsuperscript{27} This is followed by Alexander’s two coronation speeches, in the second of which he announces his conversion: ‘I have changed myself from what I was by works and doctrine, with which things God Almighty benefiteth every man, and He hath exalted my bones above all desire through the excellence of my flock.’ Then comes a series of epistles by the ‘Two-Horned’ to the officers of his kingdom, exhorting them to worship God and abolish idolatry, to his army, and to ‘all the kings’ containing again the

\textsuperscript{22} References to Dhu’l-Qarnayn are found evenly throughout the text: Budge 1896:46 (p. 24), 51 (p. 27), 61 (p. 32), 64 (p. 34), 65 (p. 35), 67 (p. 36), 71 (p. 39), 104 (p. 58), 117 (p. 65), 125 (p. 70), 155 (p. 85), 170 (p. 95), 174 (p. 98), 188 (p. 106), 195 (p. 110), 196 (p. 111), etc. For El-Khidr, see Budge 1896:263-71 (p.151-56).

\textsuperscript{23} Budge 1896:33 (p. 16). References in the present essay to Budge’s Ethiopic texts include the page number of the English translation (Budge 1896:Vol. 2) followed in parentheses by the page number of his Ethiopic text (Budge 1896: Vol. 1).

\textsuperscript{24} Budge 1896:279-80 (p. 161). On the Dhu’l Qarnayn tradition in Arabic Alexander literature, as well as the Arabic strand of Gog and Magog Alexander stories, see Doufikar-Aerts 2010:135-94.

\textsuperscript{25} See Budge 1896:xxv–xxvii.

\textsuperscript{26} Aristotle is described as a man whose ‘belief was that of the [Christian] philosophers who say, ‘The heavens declare the work of the Creator, Who made everything, and Who is the king of everything, Who killeth, and Who maketh alive, Who promoteth [man] to honour, and Who bringeth [him] down into the dust, in Whose hand is everything, and from Whom are all things.’ Budge 1896:39 n. 2 notes the Biblical echoes: Ps. 19:1; Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6-8.

\textsuperscript{27} Budge 1896:40-43 (p. 20-22).
urge to worship God, his own personal prayer to God, and his demonstration of God's power and Satan's evil in leading men astray', followed by a letter to Tiberius Caesar.\textsuperscript{28} Within this speech Alexander indicates a belief in the Trinity: 'His persons being three, and His Godhead one.'\textsuperscript{29} Other interesting Christianising references, which continue throughout the Romance, are to the Four Apostles in the shape of angels with the faces of a bull, a lion, an eagle and a man, and to Alexander giving money to the churches of Egypt before his death.\textsuperscript{30}

This last reference brings us to the presence of Egypt in the \textit{Ethiopic Alexander Romance}. Alexandria, indeed, appears to have a special place in this text, and in Christianising ways. When the city is first mentioned early on in the text, we are told that Alexander 'captured it' before offering a prayer to God.\textsuperscript{31} The idea that it was captured rather than founded by Alexander, gives the city a greater antiquity than it actually has and aggrandises it as a place worthy to be conquered. Alexander is then referred to as 'king of Alexandria' as he takes Aristotle on as (Christian) advisor. Later we also read of him \textit{founding} Alexandria after coming into Egypt.\textsuperscript{32} Alexander goes on to inscribe a Christian prophecy on a pillar at Alexandria and learns from an angel that Adam, once having been driven out of Paradise, lived in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{33} It should not surprise to find some well-placed references to Alexandria in a romance devoted to the singular figure of Alexander the Great, especially since the city appears prominently in the \textit{Greek Alexander Romance} and in the work of the Arab historian al-Masudi, known for his unusual interest in non-Islamic history.\textsuperscript{35} But its status first as a conquest of and then as being founded by Alexander is noteworthy, and Alexander's inscription of a Christian prophecy there and the association of Adam with Alexandria are parti-

\textsuperscript{28} Budge 1896:46-60 (p. 24-32).
\textsuperscript{29} Budge 1896:48 (p. 25).
\textsuperscript{30} Budge 1896:247 (p. 141), 345 (p. 200).
\textsuperscript{31} Budge 1896:38 (p. 19).
\textsuperscript{32} Budge 1896:71 (p. 39).
\textsuperscript{33} Budge 1896:238-41 (p 136-37), 250 (p. 142).
\textsuperscript{34} There is also reference to a 'second' Alexandria, or 'Alexandria the Less' that he founded; cf. Budge 1896:171, 181 (p. 96, 102).
\textsuperscript{35} Lengthy descriptions of the foundation of Alexandria can be found in the \textit{Greek Alexander Romance} 1.31-33 (Stoneman 1991:62-68) and in the Mas’ûdî de Meynard & de Courteille 1861-1877:2.420ff; reference in Budge 1896:71 n. 3. On Mas’ûdî’s interest in non-Islamic peoples, see Shboul 1978.
cularly striking, putting the city squarely within the context of Christian belief.

We have, however, not yet dealt with the most recognisably Egyptian feature of the Ethiopic romance: as in the Greek and Syriac romances, Alexander's father is not Philip, but the Egyptian Nectanebo. Unlike the references to Alexandria, this feature has a twist of negativity in its current Christian context: when Alexander kills the magician, he calls him ‘priest of idols’, a Christian expression which tends to emphasise the impiety of pagan Egypt. Nonetheless, the Ethiopian translator's maintaining an Egyptian context for the story of Alexander's birth and childhood tells us something about his priorities. Scholars have long argued that the Nectanebo story in the Greek romance is Egyptian, since the return of Alexander to Egypt is 'related to Egyptian nationalist beliefs in the return of a king to Memphis'. Stephens more recently suggested that the story probably emerged at the start of Greco-Macedonian rule when the new rulers wished to stress continuity between the old and the new regime. Whatever the case may be, it seems evident that some sort of 'quasi-nationalist' impulse lies behind Nectanebo's entry into the Alexander story. The fact that the Syrian romance as well as the Arabic intermediary Quzmān contain versions of the Nectanebo story suggests its passive entry into the Ethiopic romance, although an 'Ethiopian' birth-story by an inventive translator cannot be ruled out altogether. After all, a 'Persian' birth-story does exist: Firdausi, in his famous Shahnameh (10th/11th century) made Alexander the son of King Darab, and thus a half-brother of Dara (Darius), in order to maintain the notion that the Persians had never been conquered by non-Persians before the Arabs.

In contrast to the interest in Alexandria and the retention of an Egyptian birth-story for Alexander, there is a notable absence of Ethiopian-centred material in the Ethiopic romance, even where we would most expect it. For instance, its treatment of the Greek romance's

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36 Budge 1896 (p. 16).
37 See Stoneman 1991:11, 24 n. 24 for bibliography. Budge 1896:xi-xviii believes that Nectanebo's magical practices, e.g. the use of waxen figurines, are connected to historical Egyptian practice and thus points to a writer of Egyptian origin; Kotar 2011:95-103.
38 Stephens 2003:68-69. Jasnow 1997:100 suggests that the Nectanebo/Alexander story came from an originally Demotic text, with errors implying not a Demotic Egyptian scribe, but rather a Greek or Hellenised Egyptian one.
encounter between Alexander and Candace, Queen of Meroe, is illuminating.\textsuperscript{41} First, the \textit{Ethiopic Alexander Romance} is the only text of the seven Ethiopic texts that includes the Candace episode, but it does not in any overt way emphasise Ethiopia and is, in fact, Egypt-centred. As in the Greek and Syriac romances, Alexander tells Candace he wishes to meet her because she was once the queen of Egypt and demands that she return the gods and other spoils on pain of vengeance.\textsuperscript{42} Most significantly, whereas in the Greek romance Candace calls herself ‘Queen of Meroe’, the Ethiopic text has ‘Queen of Šâmēr’. This can only be the Ethiopic transliteration of a slip made by the Syriac translator: there the name of Candace’s ancestor, Semiramis (whose kingdom, the Greek Romance tells us, Alexander desires to see), has become transformed into the name of the queen’s people, the ‘Šamrâyē’; this in turn was transformed by the Ethiopic translator into a town named ‘Šâmēr’. The important point here is that Candace does not in any way seem to ring a bell with the translator as related to Meroe, let alone Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{43} Ethiopia itself is mentioned only once, in the context of Egypt: when Alexander goes to Egypt after he has ordered the founding of Alexandria, we learn that the ‘countries of Egypt and Nubia and Ethiopia were opened to him without fighting’.\textsuperscript{44}

\textbf{The Christian Romance}

Perhaps an even better test case for the importance of Christianity, especially in relation to Egypt, is the \textit{Christian Romance}, the original creation of an Ethiopian writer and the best representative of Kotar’s ‘fabulous history’. Inspired (as Budge points out) by Arrian’s description of his restraint towards women, the text begins with a long prayer and

\textsuperscript{41} Meroe was considered by Greco-Roman tradition to be the capital of Ethiopia (cf. Hdt. 2.29; Strab. 7.2; Heliod. \textit{Aeth.} 10.5), but actually in present-day Sudan and known to Africans as Nubia; see Perkins & Woolsey 1854:383. ‘Candace’ was in fact not a name, but the title used for all the queens of Kush.

\textsuperscript{42} A misreading of the Greek and Syriac, where Alexander wishes her to bring the image of Ammon to the borders so that they can worship together; cf. Budge 1896:188-89 (p. 106-07).

\textsuperscript{43} Presumably, he would anyway have associated Meroe with Nubia. Missing from the Ethiopic text is a list in the Greek text containing, among other things, a reference to 500 Ethiopians given to Alexander by Candace; the reference to the Ethiopians is already mistranslated in the Syriac. See Budge 1896:190 n. 3; cf. Budge 1889:119.

\textsuperscript{44} Budge 1896:71 (p. 39).
depicts a 'chaste' Alexander whose life and history are Christianised almost beyond recognition.\(^{45}\) For example, Alexander is compared to the prophet Elijah, John the Baptist and the Emperor Honorius, and becomes a prophet himself.\(^ {46}\) The typical romantic Alexander death-scene would contain (in the Ethiopic as well as the Arabic and other traditions) elements such as his poisoning, his last will and testament, a list of his accomplishments, and lamentations by Roxana, Olympias and/or philosophers. Here, however, we see Alexander engaging in long discussions on the resurrection before being lifted into the sky by an unseen hand, preceded by an unseen voice.\(^ {47}\) The depiction of Philip II is also interesting: here he appears as Alexander's father, but is given the power of magic that Nectanebo possesses in the Greek, Syriac and Ethiopic romances. Most strikingly, Philip commits suicide when he discovers that Christ died for our sins and is martyred as a result.

While the Egyptian references are not many, they are significant. Alexandria is founded twice: the first foundation comes after Alexander's destruction of the impure nations (including Gog and Magog) and is depicted as an important and holy act. Having received counsel and having founded the city, Alexander

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\text{put away every one who used divination and idols, for he was a foe unto the priests of false gods and unto augests and soothsayers. And he stablished (sic) in righteousness the kingdom of God Almighty in everything which he saw and which he heard, and God Almighty stablished his kingdom in righteousness ... [and] Alexander kept his body pure from the pleasures of lust}.\(^ {48}\)
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The second foundation comes after Alexander is made a prophet and makes an anachronistic return to Macedon and then to 'Babylon' in Egypt (= old Cairo).\(^ {49}\) This return to Egypt contains the second (and sole remaining) reference to Ethiopia in the Ethiopic Alexander corpus: the author suggests that the water of Alexandria comes from a river that has

\(^{45}\) Arr. \textit{Anab.} 4.19.8; see Budge 1896:li.
\(^{48}\) Budge 1896:449 (p. 267-68).
\(^{49}\) Budge 1896:471 (p. 284). On the archaeology of Babylon in Egypt/Old Cairo, see Sheehan 2010.
been diverted from Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, the sole possible expression of ‘Ethiopic pride’ is tied up in association with Alexandria.

Two more mentions of Alexandria are significant. First, when Alexander learns he is about to die he goes to ‘his city’ and gives away his worldly possessions, demonstrating the close association among Alexander, Alexandria and Christian piety.\textsuperscript{51} Finally, we see two quotations attributed to Philo, in one instance called the ‘Archbishop’ of Alexandria.\textsuperscript{52} Since there are no known men with this title, the reference can only be to the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who, as David Runia points out, was more popular in posterity among Christians (who were responsible for transmitting his works) than among Jews who rejected his ‘concessions to Hellenism’.\textsuperscript{53} In the first instance, Philo is quoted for a tract he purportedly wrote and which he ‘found … inscribed in a work written upon brass among the archives of the kings of Macedonia’; what follows is a brief comment on Alexander’s chastity, his abolishing of idols, honouring of God and warring against those who rebelled against Him.’ A second quote explains that Christ died for men’s sins. Given the odd and anachronistic labelling of a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher as an ‘archbishop’, not to mention the fact that Philo did not write of scripture beyond the books of Moses and had probably not heard of Jesus,\textsuperscript{54} what we seem to see here is the author’s attempt to forge a connection between Alexander and the office of the Archbishop of Alexandria via reference to an ancient figurehead who was widely respected amongst Christian thinkers.

\textit{The History of the Death of Alexander}

\textit{The History of the Death of Alexander} is the briefest of the free-standing texts, consisting of an account of Alexander’s life and death and the declamation of twenty sayings over his body by wise men. The motif of the deathbed sayings, which occurs in al-Makin as well as in the \textit{Christian Romance}, looms large in Arabic wisdom literature, although there is some indication of Christianisation in the form of two references to God

\textsuperscript{50} Budge 1896:472 (p. 286).
\textsuperscript{51} Budge 1896:503 (p. 311).
\textsuperscript{52} Budge 1896:527 (p. 330).
\textsuperscript{53} Runia 1995:144.
\textsuperscript{54} Runia 1995:156, 143.
Almighty.\textsuperscript{55} As with the three universal chronographies, the context in which this text was found is of the greatest significance. It formed part of an 18th century manuscript containing numerous Christian texts.\textsuperscript{56} The text also contains a few choice references to Alexandria that point to its centrality to Alexander’s image. It begins with Alexander’s conquests and achievements, and (as we will see in Abû Shâker and al-Makin) Alexandria is the sole Alexander-foundation mentioned by name, although, as in al-Makin, it is among two hundred cities. The text then moves on to the typical account of Alexander’s poisoning by a Macedonian and the consolation letter to his mother, after which we learn that Alexander’s coffin was marched to Alexandria where he was to be buried. Then follow the twenty pronouncements over the coffin by Aristotle and other Greek philosophers ‘who dwelt in Alexandria’, and some words by Roxana, the ‘daughter of Darius’.

\textit{The History of the Blessed Men}

The last of the free-standing texts is \textit{The History of the Blessed Men who lived in the Days of Jeremiah the Prophet and the Account of the Vision of Abbâ Gerâsimus}. Like the \textit{Christian Romance}, the \textit{History of the Blessed Men} is a fabulous history with little in common with Alexander-history. The text attempts to trace the history of the Blessed Men or Saints who, with Jeremiah’s help, were (lest they see the destruction of Jerusalem) transported by angels to the Island of the Blessed at God’s command. We are told that seventy years later Alexander meets the saints, and this encounter transforms the king, a slaughterer of the priests of Jerusalem who dons a scarlet cloak in presumed unwitting mockery of the humiliation of Christ (Matt. 27:28), from sinner to devout Christian. The monk Gerâsimus is, in turn, inspired by reading about Alexander’s travels to meet the saints himself. Alexander’s presence here is clearly inspired by the stories of his meetings with the Brahmans, but may also be connected to early Egyptian Christianity. It seems to have something in common with the \textit{Lausiac History} of the 4th to 5th-century writer Palladius of Galatia, at one time himself a monk in Alexandria. This was a compendium of

\textsuperscript{55} Budge 1896:430-31 (p. 254).
\textsuperscript{56} Add. 24 990 from the British Museum. Wright 1877:11-12 puts this manuscript in the category of ‘Biblical Texts’ under the subheading of ‘Old Testament and Apocrypha’. Wright’s collection contains only a small proportion of non-religious texts; similarly Zotenberg 1877.
information on the monks who lived in the Egyptian desert; the interpolated Syriac version was translated by Budge as *Paradise of the Holy Fathers*.\(^{57}\) While this is admittedly highly speculative, if Palladius was indeed the author of a work called *On the Life of the Brahmans* (as Stoneman thinks is possible),\(^{58}\) a later writer (either in Syriac or Arabic) could perhaps have created the story about Gerâsimus using both Greek and early Christian stories about ascetics.

### Alexander and the Alexandrian background and content of the Universal Chronographies

As noted above, to the extent that the Macedonian conqueror is a figure in ‘universal’ history, his presence in the three Universal Chronographies of Abû Shâker, al-Makin and ben Gorion must be seen as ‘incidental.’ However, the circumstances of the production and translation of these texts point to an Ethiopic interest in the Alexandrian Church. To this extent we can say that the appearance of Alexander in Ethiopic literature, even if incidental, is a function of this sense of religious connectedness between Ethiopia and Alexandria.

For example, while all three universal chronographies contain elements that made them appealing to Christians, Jews and Muslims alike, both Abû Shâker and al-Makin were Copts. Abû Shâker was a civil servant as well as a Church deacon in Old Cairo, and wrote works on Christology and church life, among other things.\(^{59}\) His largely computistic chronography only has one real ‘universal history’ section, namely Chapter 48, while he devotes one chapter (Chapter 50) to Coptic patriarchs. Chapter 51, on the Melkite patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople, was apparently added in Ethiopia. Al-Makin’s text has a Christian part and a Muslim part, with the Christian part consisting of a pre-Christian history which includes the section on Alexander, a section on the nativity and New Testament, and a section on the succession of Roman emperors up to Heraclius. Inserted after the Heraclius section is an anomalous section on the history of the patriarchs of Alexandria through Gabriel, starting with the reign of Lebna Dengel (1508-1540), which is when the text was first translated into Ethiopic (at which point it must have been updated), and

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\(^{57}\) Budge 1907.

\(^{58}\) Stoneman 2010:97-98.

\(^{59}\) For this and what follows on Abû Shâker and al-Makin, see Witakowski 2006:290-98; on ben Gorion, see Witakowski 2006:287-88.
an account of the councils of the Church. It is not implausible that at least part of what attracted Ethiopic translators to these works was its Alexandrian content – which was apparently enhanced by them. As Witakowski puts it,

a need was … felt [among Ethiopians] for such a historiography, for knowledge of the history of the surrounding world. This could hardly be satisfied by Ethiopian historians themselves, and thus it had to be imported. Given the long dependence of the Church of Ethiopia on the Coptic patriarchate of Alexander and the cultural influences reaching Ethiopia from Christian Egypt, it was natural that such works would be translated from originals known to the Copts.60

As a history of the Jews, ben Gorion is naturally a different kind of text from Abû Shâker and al-Makin, but it was popular among Jews, Christians and Muslims alike; indeed, ‘in the Coptic Church it reached an almost canonical status.’61

In addition to the external reasons for the presence of these Alexander- extracts in the Ethiopic corpus, there are some interesting internal features of the texts that suggest an ideological link between Alexander and Alexandria within a religious context. Alexandria appears in all three as Alexander’s major foundation and is taken for granted as his burial place: as in the free-standing texts (whether historical romances or fabulous histories), there is no mention of Ptolemy’s transfer of the body to Memphis and its subsequent delivery to Alexandria. Ben Gorion does not mention Alexandria specifically, but we are told that Alexander founded ‘places for unloading ships … on the shore of the sea’ on his way to Syria.62 Abû Shâker and al-Makin are a bit more interesting. Abû Shâker places the foundation of Alexandria towards the end of the text, in his final assessment of Alexander’s career, making it Alexander’s final act before heading back to Babylon where he is poisoned and where twenty philosophers of Alexander’s kingdom make pronouncements over his dead body (in *The History of the Death of Alexander* [text 5] this scene happens in Alexandria). The text ends with Olympias’ command for him to be buried, his burial in Alexandria, and the words ‘Blessed be all Christian

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60 Witakowski 2006:289. Indeed, this dependence existed until 1959.
61 Witakowski 2006:287.
62 Budge 1896:406 (p. 239).
folk for ever and ever, Amen."⁶³ Al-Makin also places the founding of Alexandria in his final assessment of Alexander’s accomplishments, attributing two hundred city foundations to Alexander but mentioning only Alexandria by name.

There is a more curious way in which Abû Shâker and al-Makin allude to Egypt: their substitution of the figure of the pagan magician Nectanebo with the figure of a Christian magician, that is, Aristotle, who, as Alexander’s advisor, uses talismans and amulets to make him invulnerable not only to the elements and to his enemy’s weapons, but also to lurking demons and his soldiers’ potential to sin by fornication.⁶⁴ These types of stories about Aristotle and Alexander, who himself can take on magical properties, seem to reflect the general Medieval interest in Aristotle.⁶⁵ But al-Makin makes an explicit connection between Egypt and Aristotle in a long praise of Aristotle’s intellectual contribution which he inserts at the end of his narrative, after the final assessment of Alexander (until which point al-Makin follows Abû Shâker quite precisely). Indeed, al-Makin ends with Aristotle’s death, leaving the impression that Alexander is not necessarily the most important figure in this ‘Alexander-account’ otherwise dominated by Aristotle’s counsel. Within the praise of Aristotle, al-Makin includes a section taken from an Arabic Hermetic work called al-Istamakhis, which claims that the Greek philosopher translated the texts of Hermes, ‘an ancient sage of the country of Egypt, out of the Egyptian into the Greek language’.⁶⁶ The motif of Aristotle passing on Hermetic knowledge to Alexander is, in fact, a feature of many pseudo-Aristotelian texts in the Arabic tradition,⁶⁷ but in the hands of a Coptic author like al-Makin, the addition of Hermetic material may be interpreted as a way of linking Aristotle, and Alexander along with him, to Egypt and to Christianity.

⁶³ Budge 1896:401 (p. 236).
⁶⁴ As mentioned above, the Christian Romance substitutes Nectanebo with Philip, who uses the astrolabe for prophecy, just as Nectanebo was said to be versed in the use of astrolabes and other prophetic arts; cf. Budge 1896:3 (p. 2), 445-46 (p. 265).
⁶⁵ See for example Thorndike 1922:229-58.
⁶⁶ Budge 1896:384 (p. 224).
Conclusion

Given the complexities of the different literary traditions that form the background to the Ethiopic Alexander corpus, not to mention the complexities of the Alexander tradition itself, it is impossible to isolate a definitive ‘reason’ for Alexander’s presence in Ethiopic writers. However, I hope to have shown that, within this relatively limited number of texts in which Alexander appears, there is a combination of religious content and both internal and external connections to Egypt and Alexandria (and sometimes specifically the Alexandrian Church) that point to a Christianised Alexander that is a product of Egypt. The concomitant lack of interest in Ethiopia proper which, in the inventive world of Alexander legend, should not be taken as a given, gives a sense of the priorities of Ethiopian translators. As Kotar puts it, the ‘Ethiopians have formed a religious and theological outline of Alexander … mainly driven by the Ethiopian preference for religious literature.’ To my mind, this is partially driven by the inclination to see Alexander as part of the glory of Alexandria, even if Egypt itself could still occupy a negative ‘pagan’ space (as with Nectanebo): consider Alexander’s inscription of a prophecy on a Church pillar in Alexandria, and the exiling of Adam there in the Ethiopic Alexander Romance, the double foundation of Alexandria and the reference to ‘Philo the Archbishop of Alexandria’ in the Christian Romance, the specifically Alexandrian death-bed philosophers in The History of the Death of Alexander, and the possibility that the History of the Blessed Fathers was inspired by stories of the desert fathers. It seems most significant that, even in the kind of writing in which Alexander should simply have been swept along, such as al-Makin’s Universal History, we see an Ethiopian hand adding a Hermetic Aristotle.

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68 Kotar 2011:175.
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A survey of the oldest version of the *Alexander Romance*, the so-called a recension, shows the importance of African material in this fabulous story of Alexander’s adventures – a fact not very surprising in a text written (or compiled) in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. A first set of materials is indeed Egyptian: it is to be found in the novella of Nectanebo (Alexander’s natural father in the *Romance*) and in the episode of Alexander’s sojourn in Egypt, mostly in the passage devoted to the foundation of Alexandria. To this Egyptian set can perhaps also be added the short notice, inserted in 2.9, about the flow of the Nile (and its supposed influence on the flow of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates).  

A second set of materials is connected with black Africa and features in the story of Candace, queen of the Ethiopian kingdom of Meroe, who in this first version of the *Romance* is clearly presented as a dark-skinned person, as is her son Candaule. The α recension also contains scattered references to North Africa (ancient Libya) and to Erythraea, the border-land between Africa and Asia. The author speaks of Alexander’s encounter with the inhabitants of Carthage, and in Alexander’s fantastical letters to Aristotle and Olympias in 3.17,
and to Olympias in 3.28, some of the strange peoples Alexander meets during his travels on the margins of the world appear to be peoples in ancient geographical writings usually connected with Africa: that is the case for the Ichthyophagi and the Troglodytes. Moreover, in the letter to Olympias, Alexander says he extended his exploration as far as the Atlas river, in the extreme west of Libya, a country which in antiquity was reputed to be the place of all kinds of marvels.

This African material shows a bewildering mixture of realistic and mythical elements. The description of Alexandria is full of details the authenticity of which is indisputable, and in the portrait the author draws of the Ethiopians, several items are undoubtedly historical, and show him to be well-informed on the history of a people bordering on Egypt. It is perfectly true that Ethiopians once exerted domination over Egypt, from 715 to 664 BC, during the twenty-fifth dynasty, and it is equally true that they were devoted worshippers of Ammon; their being ruled by a queen echoes the growing power of the kings' mothers from the 3rd century BC onwards, and the abundance in their country of precious stones, ebony

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3 On the Ichthyophagi, see Agatharchides, *On the Erythraean Sea*, in Phot. Bibl. cod. 250:31-49 (449a-451b); Diod. Sic. 3.15-20; there are also several references to the Ichthyophagi in the anonymous *Periplus on the Erythraean Sea*, written in the first century AD (§ 2, 20, 27, 33). On the Troglodytes, see Agatharchides *op. cit.* 61-63 (454a-b); Diod. Sic. 3.32.

4 Cf. Hom. *Od.* 4.85-89; Hdt. 4.191. Plin. *HN* 8.17.42 alludes to the ‘common saying of Greece that Africa is always producing some novelty.’ Strabo 17.3.3 finds it convenient to express polemical remarks at the beginning of his description of Western Africa: he complains that historians have forged numerous ‘fabrications in regard to the outer coast of Libya’, and asks his lector’s pardon for perhaps ‘introducing marvellous stories’ into his own picture of this poorly known area.

5 On echoes of Ethiopian history in the *Alexander Romance*, see Cracco Ruggini 1974:143-50 and 1993:457. Some of the Ethiopian elements to be found in the *Romance* seem to refer to the situation of Ethiopia in late antiquity; in 3.19.24, for instance, the mention of local dynasts could point to the weakening of the Meroitic kingdom at the time. But the main set of information might be of Hellenistic origin; Desanges 1978:377-78 notes that the reign of Ptolemy II was a golden age for the writing of *Aethiopica*, aimed to enrich an old stock of knowledge going back to Herodotus.

6 In fact Nubians, but ancient writers indistinctly called them Ethiopians.

7 About the history of the Kushite Empire, see Leclant 1980. First localised at Napata, the capital of the Kushite Empire was transferred to Meroe during the 6th century BC. The kingdom was at its height during the Christian era.

and ivory, cannot be contested either. But Candace’s kingdom is described as such a marvellous place that the mythical element in this section undeniably takes precedence over the realistic: Ethiopians in the *Romance* are eventually closer to the fabulous people described by Herodotus than to the historical people an Egyptian author such as Pseudo-Callisthenes could have been acquainted with. Such a mixture of the mythical and the realistic could be due to the complicated textual history of the *Romance*, a multilayered work whose Alexandrian author reused pre-existing material, not always, it seems, concerning himself with harmonising the different pieces that made up his text. The impression left by the oldest version of the *Romance*, heterogeneous as it is, is nevertheless that of an author interested in and familiar with African matters.

My main focus in what follows will be to explore the treatment of African material in the successive rewritings of the *Alexander Romance* – which in effect means tracing the story of a progressive disafricanisation. In the first, proto-Byzantine, rewriting of Alexander’s life, the β recension, the reduction of Egyptian material is striking. The censorship exerted by the author is especially apparent in the chapters devoted to the foundation of Alexandria, where a great number of Egyptian details have been left out; not being himself an Egyptian, and not writing for an Egyptian audience, the redactor must have found the abundant Alexandrian details of his model without interest, so he decided to eliminate them. Similarly, the description of queen Candace’s links with Egypt is less precise than it was in the original version: we find in his text only a brief allusion to the former domination of the Ethiopians over Egypt, and nothing is said of

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9 Hdt. 3.17-25 (Macrobioui Ethiopians) and 3.114. While broadly following Herodotus in his description of the Meroitic Ethiopians, Diodorus also mentions other Ethiopian tribes of a very different kind, living a wretched existence; cf. 3.2-7, 18; 3.31.4: ‘The most distant tribes of those peoples who live to the south have indeed the form of men, but their life is that of the beasts.’ A similar, demythologised image of the Ethiopians appears in Strabo; see for instance 17.1.3: ‘The Aethiopians have for the most part a nomadic and resourceless life, on account of the barrenness of the country and of the unseasonableness of its climate and of its remoteness from us’; 17.2.1: the Aethiopian tribes ‘live a hard life, go almost naked and are nomads.’ On this new kind of miserabilist approach, reflecting the ideology of Roman domination, see Sall 1998.

10 An exception is the atypical λ recension, where the episode of Alexander’s visit to Candace was influenced by the mythical cycle about Salomo and the African queen of Saba.

their devotion to Ammon, nor about the part played by the god in the foreign policy of the country. The very name of Candace’s capital has been altered, and Meroe has become Beroe, a distortion which testifies to the poor familiarity of the author of the $\beta$ recension with African history.\textsuperscript{12}

But, on the whole, the physiognomy of the Romance has not been profoundly altered in this first, proto-Byzantine rewriting, and the major components of the narrative are still clearly recognisable.

Things are very different in the $\epsilon$ recension, on which the analysis will centre: it indeed constitutes an important stage in the textual history of the Alexander Romance, and is nevertheless a version neglected too often. Richard Stoneman, for instance, did not include it in his recent, and otherwise most valuable synoptic edition of the Romance,\textsuperscript{13} preferring to edit the $\gamma$ recension, which is a later, derivative compilation. Yet, the $\epsilon$ recension is a significant work both in itself, for it offers an innovating, Christianised version of Alexander’s adventures, and because of its posterity: it has been used extensively by the author of the $\gamma$ recension, who combined the texts of $\beta$ and $\epsilon$ to create a kind of ‘omnibus’ (hold-all) version, and it is also the source of the late Byzantine $\zeta$ recension, ancestor of the popular neo-Hellenic Phyllada.

In the $\epsilon$ recension, composed in the second half of the 8th century or at the beginning of the ninth, and thus roughly contemporary with the crisis of iconoclasm,\textsuperscript{14} Alexander is still presented as Nectanebo’s son, although with some moralising attenuation, but the story of his conquest of Egypt has been profoundly modified. First of all, the author has combined Alexandria and Memphis into one and the same place, which he names the ‘city of Egypt’.\textsuperscript{15} The evident consequence of such confusion is that a foundation of Alexandria becomes impossible: the city already exists when Alexander arrives in Egypt, and after conquering it, he must be content

\begin{enumerate}
\item It may also be a sign of the quick oblivion of the Meroitic kingdom, destroyed by the Axumite king Ezana in the first half of the 4th century AD.
\item Stoneman 2007.
\item The terminus post quem is established by the use of Ps.-Methodius’ Revelations, composed (in Syriac) at the very end of the 7th century and translated into Greek at the beginning of the 8th century; the date of 862, which appears in the Mosquensis 436, S. Synod. 298 (K), a manuscript containing a contaminated version of the Romance with many passages interpolated from $\epsilon$, gives a terminus ante quem. Information generously communicated by J. Trumpf.
\item In the Ethiopic Story of Alexander ch. 7, ‘Babylon of Egypt’, the medieval Cairo, situated near ancient Memphis, is similarly confused with Alexandria. On this text see below, p. 139 and note 39.
\end{enumerate}
with embellishing the place with columns, new towers and statues of
himself and his companions (24.1). The attitude ascribed to the Egyptian
people is also very different: in the oldest version of the Romance, they
welcomed Alexander as a new Sesonchosis (A, 1.34.2); in the ε recension,
they decide to resist him and he has to lay siege to the city. But when they
see the Macedonian army taking the offensive, they feel so frightened that
they no longer think of fighting; their wisdom disappears (22.2) and, not
knowing what to do, they consult the oracle of Apollo, who urges them to
surrender to Alexander. Two things are noticeable in this revised version.
First, the name of the god consulted by the Egyptians is not Egyptian but
Greek, and the detail is revealing of the paucity of genuine Egyptian
material to be found in this supposedly Egyptian section. Secondly, the
Egyptian people are denigrated. They are described as unwise (they are
mad enough to oppose Alexander), as cowardly (they are eventually too
frightened to fight against the Macedonian troops), and also as treacherous:
the author of the ε recension has displaced the episode of Alexander’s bath
and illness from Persia to Egypt, and has pictured the Egyptians as trying to
corrupt Philip the physician to poison the Macedonian king besieging
them. Philip naturally refuses, and the Egyptians then write a deceitful
letter to slander the physician and accuse him of planning Alexander’s
death, thus assuming the role played by treacherous Parmenion in the
former versions (2.8).

In choosing to draw such a negative portrait of the Egyptians, the
author of the ε recension may have been influenced by the picture of
Egypt available in the Bible, where the oppressors of the Hebrew people
are usually presented in rather unflattering terms. The prophets often insist
on the Egyptians’ deceitfulness, and Isaiah, in his oracles against Egypt,
describes them ‘as women, in fear and in trembling’, for the Lord has
turned into folly’ the mind of Pharaoh’s wise counsellors, so that ‘their
heart shall faint within them’ and their spirit ‘shall be troubled within
them.’ The ε recension is a Christianised version of the Alexander
Romance, and the influence of the Septuagint is pervasive throughout the
narrative, not only in episodes with a specifically religious content such as
Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem, but also in the very style of the whole text
and its vocabulary and syntax, both of which are marked by the Greek of

16 See, for instance, Is. 36.6 (LXX): ‘Behold, thou trusted on this bruised staff of
reed, on Egypt: as soon as a man leans upon it, it shall go into his hand, and pierce
it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt and all that trust in it.’
17 Is. 19.1-16 (LXX).
the Septuagint. The probable influence of the Bible on the ε recension’s image of the Egyptians suggests that in the Egyptian chapter literary models prevailed over realistic features: the ε rewriter seems to have known little about the real Egypt, lost by the Byzantine Empire more than a century ago, when he composed his revised version of the Romance.\footnote{18 After occupying North Africa for around 150 years (from Justinian’s reign to the end of the 7th century), the Byzantines had to withdraw before the Arabs: Egypt was lost in 646, Carthage in 697; the last bastion of Byzantine presence in Africa, Septem (Ceuta), fell into Arab hands in 711; see Diehl 1896; Kaegi 2010. After conquering Egypt, Amr ibn al-As chose Babylone-Fustat as his new capital, and Alexandria became a city of second rank until the Fatimid period; cf. Bianquis 1990:191. This may have contributed to its near oblivion in the ε recension.}

Significantly, when speaking of Sesonchosis (27.2; 46.4), he never presents him as a Pharaoh, but very vaguely as a *kosmokrator* who once wanted to compete with God and was punished for his impiety; one wonders whether he even realised he was speaking of an Egyptian king! Another sign of his ignorance is to be found in his using the name of the Egyptian city of Heliopolis to designate the Indian sanctuary of the oracular trees, an episode alluded to in a much abbreviated and confused manner in the ε recension (35.1).\footnote{19 In the α-β recensions, Heliopolis was described in Alexander’s letter to Olympias in 3.28; the priest in the sanctuary of Helios was said to be an Ethiopian.}

As for the other parts of Africa, they become almost invisible in the ε recension: Africa itself is never named, neither are Libya, Carthage or Erythraea; even Ammon, who is mentioned only three times in the whole work, is not presented as a Libyan god, as he was in the previous versions of the Romance. This near absence of African toponyms may be connected with the usual paucity of geographical indications in the ε recension: as far as the setting of Alexander’s adventures is concerned, this Byzantine version of the Romance is akin to a fairy tale, and the geography of the hero’s travels most of the time remains extremely imprecise.\footnote{20 See Jouanno 2005.} For instance, in 13.4 the author speaks of Alexander’s wandering ‘in the southern regions (τοῖς τοῦ νότου μέρεσιν), where he subordinated numerous and various peoples’; he then mentions his march throughout the ‘uninhabited world’ up to the Ocean; Alexander himself, in a letter to his mother (19.1), tells her that he went over ‘all the western world’ (τὴν ἄπασαν γαῖαν δυσμῶν) and, on his way back, subjected ‘the southern principalities’ (τὰς νότου ἀρχὰς). Even Ethiopia, so important in the former
versions of the *Romance*, is named only once in the ε recension, in a letter of Darius to Alexander, where the Persian king alludes to Alexander’s travels throughout the world, and says he went as far as Rome, ‘the Western interior kingdoms’ (ταῖς ἐνδοτέραις βασιλείαις δυσμῶν), the Ocean, the ‘Barbarian countries’ (Βαρβαρίαις), ‘the interior Ethiopia’ (ταῖς ἐνδοτέραις Αἰθιοπίαις) and all the countries formerly submitted to Persian rule (15.2). Darius’ enumeration is both imprecise and confused, and it would be futile to use such a travelogue to reconstruct Alexander’s itinerary.

But the most surprising thing in the ε recension is that the Candace episode has lost its connection with Ethiopia. Candace is not described as an African queen and any reference to her black skin has been erased from the text; the episode has been transferred from Africa to Asia, and Meroe is replaced by Amastris, a Paphlagonian city, located in the Pontic area (40.1-2; 43.1; 45.3). The presence of various ambiguities in the α recension (the Lydian name of Candaules, Candace’s eldest son, the Indian wife of her youngest son) probably paved the way for such a transfer, as well as the Beroe slip in the β recension. As a matter of fact, in the Byzantine world chronicles, where the Candace episode often finds a place in the chapter devoted to Alexander, Candace’s kingdom is usually not called Ethiopia either, although the chroniclers were undoubtedly familiar with the famous passage in the Acts of Apostles related to the conversion of Philip, eunuch of Candace, queen of Ethiopia (8.27-40). In their Alexander chapter, Malalas and George the Monk present Candace as queen of ‘the interior Indians’ (τῶν ἐνδοτέρων Ἰνδῶν);21 John of Antioch locates the episode in India, and Kedrenos ‘in the surroundings of India’ (εἰς τὰ πρόσω τῆς Ἰνδίας).22 Homer’s mention of a double Ethiopian country in Book 1 of the *Odyssey* generated long-lived confusions between Ethiopia proper and India (supposed to be the Homeric eastern part of

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21 Malalas 194 (ed. Thurn 2000); George the Monk 1:33 (ed. De Boor & Wirth 1978). According to Malalas, Alexander goes to Ethiopia after visiting (and seducing) queen Candace; according to George the Monk, he then travels to Egypt.

22 John of Antioch fr. 28 (ed. Mariev 2008); Kedrenos 1:266 (ed. Bekker 1838). On the other hand, Candace is properly defined as queen of the Ethiopians in the *Souda* (K, no. 301), and John Tzetzes, following the oldest version of the *Romance*, calls her τὴν Μεροήτιδα Κανδάκην (*Chiliades*, 3.102-11, v. 888).
in ancient and medieval geographical writings, frequent confusion is to be found in the description of both lands, their flora, fauna, population and marvels, as testified by Schneider’s authoritative book, *L’Éthiopie et l’Inde. Interférences et confusions aux extrémités du monde antique*. An Indian location for Alexander’s visit to Candace therefore hardly seems surprising. The ε recension’s transfer of the story into a Paphlagonian surrounding makes a much more radical change, and is, as far as I know, unprecedented. Perhaps the main reason for this innovation was a desire to improve the geographical coherence of Alexander’s adventures and bring the location of the Candace episode closer to that of the preceding episodes: Alexander’s encounter with the Amazons, supposed to be living in the neighbourhood of the Thermodon river in a Cappadocian vicinity (38), and Alexander’s fight against the impure nations, situated in the northernmost part of the world (39). The mention of the king of the Bersiles shows that the author located the story of Gog and Magog in the Caucasian area: he explicitly says that Alexander, after enclosing these evil peoples in a tenebrous land behind the Northern Mountains (39.4), comes back to the inhabited world, following the shore of the Northern sea (45.3).

The episode of the impure nations did not appear in the former recensions of the *Romance*; the story is borrowed from the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius. Paradoxically enough, in this source text of the ε recension, Ethiopia is given an important position, strongly connected with Alexander. Conceived as a response to the Arabic expansion, Pseudo-Methodius’ apocalyptic work was written in Syriac in the 690s and translated into Greek soon afterwards, at the beginning of the 8th century; a Latin version was circulating in Western Europe by 725. In the first,

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23 Hom. *Od.* 1.23-24: Αἰθίοπας, τοὶ διχθὰ δεδαίαται, […] οἱ μὲν δυσομένου Ὑπερίονος, οἱ δ’ ἀνιόντος (‘the Aethiopians who dwell divided in two […] some where Hyperion sets and some where he rises’). The validity of Homer’s representation of Ethiopia is carefully discussed in the preface to Strabo’s *Geography* 1.2.24-28.
24 Schneider 2004.
25 The Bersiles must probably be identified with the Khazars, a Caucasian people; cf. Trumpf 1971.
26 The expression τὴν παράλιον πόντου βορείου appears in Alexander’s version of the episode, narrated in a letter to Olympias; in the main story, the author more vaguely mentions τὴν παράλιον τῆς θαλάσσης ὁδόν; 39.8.
27 There are four different redactions of the Greek version: the following analysis is based upon the first redaction, edited by Aerts & Kortekaas 1998.
historical half of the text, the author summarises the history of the world from Adam to the Arabic conquest and describes the confinement of Gog and Magog as Alexander’s main achievement (8.4-10). He also presents him, through rather unexpected genealogical manipulations, as the ancestor of the Byzantine Empire: Alexander, he maintains, was born from Philip and Cuseth, daughter of Phôl, king of Ethiopia (8.2); after her son’s death, Cuseth remarries Byzas, the founder of Byzantium, and begets Byzantia, mother-to-be of the kings of Rome, Byzantium and Alexandria (9.2-6). The Byzantine Empire thus appears to have Ethiopian roots: the kingdom of the Macedonians, Romans and Greeks originates ‘from the seed of Ethiopians’ (ἐκ σπέρματος τῶν Αἰθιόπων; 9.7) – a situation which, according to the author, is alluded to by the Psalmist, saying: ‘Ethiopia shall hasten to stretch out her hand readily to God’ (Αἰθιοπία προφθάσει χεῖρα αὐτῆς τῷ θεῷ, 67 [68].31). In the second, apocalyptic part of the Revelations, the author announces that, at the end of time, ‘the king of the Romans’ (i.e. the Byzantine emperor), after extending his rule over the whole world, will surrender the empire to God, thus opening the way for the eschatological domination of Christianity; then David’s prophecy, Αἰθιοπία προφθάσει χεῖρα αὐτῆς τῷ θεῷ, will be accomplished, for the empire born ‘from the semen of the sons of Cuseth, daughter of Phôl, king of Ethiopia’, will stretch out its hand to God, under the figure of the βασιλεύς of the Romans (14.5). In this political manifesto serving the interests of Byzantine imperial ideology, the author, while describing the emperor of the last times as a son of Cuseth and as a new Alexander of Ethiopian origin, perhaps intended to win the support of the Monophysite populations of Africa, prone to collaborate with the Muslim enemy.28 The same genealogical construct was reproduced in another apocalyptic text composed sometime in the 9th century, the Visions of Daniel.29

29 Visio Danielis (Ps.-Chrysostom redaction) 33-34; Vassiliev 1893:33-34. Alexander 1985:61-95 defines the Visions of Daniel as a reworking of Revelations, where Ps.-Methodian excerpts are combined with material of more recent origin. For a comprehensive overview of the rich corpus of apocryphal Daniel apocalypses, see DiTommaso 2005:87-230. The abbreviated Ps.-Chrysostom redaction may have been composed at Constantinople in the mid-9th century: Alexander 1985:72-77; DiTommaso 2005:155-58 (more doubtful). The TLG does not mention any other reference to Cuseth apart from Ps.-Methodius and the Visions of Daniel.
It is impossible to decide whether the author of the $\varepsilon$ recension had read all of Pseudo-Methodius' *Revelations*, or whether he knew only the passage relating to the impure nations. If he was acquainted with the whole text, he chose to ignore the link so insistently established by Pseudo-Methodius between Alexander and Ethiopia, and even suppressed the traditional visit of the *Romance* hero to the African kingdom of Candace; he might have found such a connection irrelevant at a time when Ethiopia, now isolated from the Byzantine Empire by the establishment of Arabic dominance over Egypt, was more and more becoming a remote country, with interest in African stories consequently decreasing in Byzantium.\(^{30}\) He also may have thought it improper to stress the links of a hero whom he wished to depict as a perfect Christian emperor, with a country devoted to the heresy of Monophysitism.\(^{31}\) Moreover, as an author well acquainted with Biblical or pseudepigraphical literature, he might have considered Ethiopia a most unfitting place for Candace's wonderful kingdom, for in the distribution of the world among Noah's sons, Ethiopia does not belong to Sem's inheritance which, being the best one, is characterised as a spacious, temperate and blessed region, where everything according to the *Book of Jubilees* is very pleasant; instead, Ethiopia is part of the torrid region given to Cham.\(^{32}\) But the argument must not be overestimated, for the curse on Cham, often alluded to by Western authors to explain their perception of the African peoples' inferiority, does not seem to have been so consistently worked out in the Byzantine world,\(^{33}\) perhaps because of the persistent influence of Homer’s seminal

\(^{30}\) Devisse 1979:51.

\(^{31}\) Ethiopia was converted to Christianity during the 4th century, cf. Mekouria 1980; its Monophysite church was under the spiritual authority of the Alexandrian patriarchate. After a period of decline between the 7th and the 11th century, the Ethiopian kingdom experienced a brilliant revival under the Solomonid dynasty in the 13th-15th centuries; cf. Tamrat 1985. Nubia became officially Christian during the 6th century, and remained a Christian kingdom until the 13th century; the country experienced profound Byzantine influence on administrative, political and artistic levels in spite of little direct contact; cf. Michalowski 1965; Freud 1968; Demicheli 1978; Jakobielski 1990.

\(^{32}\) *Jubilees* 8. For Ethiopia as part of Cham’s lot, see also Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, 2.26 (Wolska-Conus 1968), without any negative connotation.

\(^{33}\) According to Western theologians, Cham’s sons were part of Noah’s descent into evil; the curse uttered against Cham’s sons forced them to emigrate to the least favourable places of the world. In Byzantine illuminated manuscripts, on the
description of Ethiopia as a blessed country, the abode of the god’s banquets.\textsuperscript{34}

The late Byzantine \(\zeta\) recension, derived from \(\varepsilon\), is very faithful to its main source as far as the African material is concerned. One of its most important innovations in this matter is the reintroduction of the episode of the founding of Alexandria, though in a very compressed form. The author of \(\varepsilon\) alluded to a series of cities founded by Alexander and his companions at their arrival in Asia Minor; Alexandria of Cilicia was mentioned among these cities; in the \(\zeta\) recension, the Cilician Alexandria becomes Alexandria of Egypt.\textsuperscript{35} The author consequently narrates two successive visits of Alexander to Egypt, for he has faithfully reproduced the Egyptian episode of his model, with the story of Alexander’s illness and the siege of the ‘city of the Egyptians’.\textsuperscript{36} Secondly, he has inserted at the end of the \textit{Romance} a note about Alexander transferring the bones of Jeremiah to the city of Alexandria; the prophet’s relics were supposed to protect the inhabitants from venomous snakes – an anecdote popularised in Byzantium by the \textit{Life of the Prophets} and well suited to contribute to the ‘sanctification’ of Alexander himself.\textsuperscript{37} A third and intriguing innovation of the \(\zeta\) redactor is the double name given to Candace, now queen of the ‘Amastridones’ (or, with an aphaeresis typical of vernacular Greek, of ‘Mastridonia’): for she is named either Katarkia/Kantarkia, or Kleopha(n)/Kleophanê, a name probably derived from that of Cleophis, queen of the Assacenes, an Indian tribe, who in Curtius and Justin had a brief affair with Alexander.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, in the \(\zeta\) recension, the queen, visited by Alexander, becomes doubly removed from the Ethiopian Candace of the oldest version of the \textit{Romance}.

It is worth recalling that the original, now lost text of the \(\zeta\) recension was probably composed in the first half of the 14th century, more or less

\textsuperscript{35} F 48.3: Alexander arrives in Egypt ‘where the golden river Nile flows’, and he founds a city in his name, Alexandria. The mention of the golden river seems to be borrowed from a world chronicle; cf. \textit{Chron. Paschale} 53 (ed. Dindorf 1832).
\textsuperscript{36} F 53.
\textsuperscript{37} F 126:2-3.
\textsuperscript{38} Cf. Curt. 8.10.22 and 34-36; Justin 12.7.9-11.
at the same time as the figure of Alexander was being exalted as a model of Christian kingship in the Ethiopian Story of Alexander (Zêna Eskender), translated from an Arabic original, probably written in Alexandria.\(^{39}\) This Ethiopian rewriting of the Alexander Romance is roughly contemporaneous with the Kebra Nagast, or Glory of Kings, a national epic composed at the beginning of the 14th century, to exalt the Ethiopian Salomonid dynasty supposed to be descended from Menelik, son of Makeda, Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon – a forged genealogy thanks to which Ethiopia could pretend to be Verus Israel.\(^{40}\) The Zêna Eskender, too, was apparently intended to celebrate the Ethiopian kingship, for Alexander in this text is credited with the conquest of the Erythraean seashore, achieved in 1332 by King Amda Seyon, with whom the Romance hero thus seems to be assimilated.\(^{41}\) This Ethiopian Alexander is undeniably an heir of the paradigmatic Christian basileus Alexander of the Byzantines. But at this late stage of the Alexander Romance history the road between Byzantium and Ethiopia has become a one-way street.

Bibliography

Editions of the Alexander Romance


\(^{39}\) On this text, see Lusini 1994:101-18 and Asirvatham in this volume. The French translation (Colin 2007) is based on the text edited in Budge 1896:259-353. The Zêna Eskender puts emphasis upon Alexander's chastity: he is presented as a pious, ascetic king, conversing with the Holy Spirit and the prophets (Henoch, Elias). After establishing his rule 'with justice', he begins fighting against God’s enemies and destroying their idols. He also practises charity, and distributes his kingdom’s wealth to the poor. His mother is called Kuestibâr, a name probably derived from that of Cuseth, used in Ps.-Methodius’ *Revelations*.

\(^{40}\) French translation by Beylot 2008.


Literature


FROM JERUSALEM TO TIMBUKTU: THE APPROPRIATION OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT BY NATIONAL NARRATIVES*

Adrian Tronson
University of New Brunswick, Fredericton

In all cultures and ages the heroes of myths, and even outstanding historical figures, are represented as paradigmatic agents of political unification and ethnic or political identity. Some have served political groups or dynasties as models for justifying their dominance, or as objects of emulation for aspiring political and military leaders. Such were Achilles and Heracles for Alexander the Great, and the latter for Pompey, Julius Caesar and many others. In the abstract sense, their image or related narratives function as epistemological paradigms for political ideologies, even for religious or philosophical doctrines.¹ In recent years Alexander’s image and reputation continue to be the disputed symbol for legitimising the respective political identities of Greece and the Republic of Macedonia.² Alexander the Great has fulfilled this role for millennia, ever since his relics, corpse, possessions, family connexions and image were contested after his death and appropriated for their own advancement by his marshals and their Hellenistic and Roman successors.³ Even in countries and among populations with whose cultures and institutions he had no proven relationship, had never visited, and of which he had little or no knowledge, the ‘Alexander brand’ has served a variety of political purposes.

Alexander’s alleged visit to Jerusalem, as much as the influence of his legend on Sunjata (the forms S[o]undjata, Sunjara and [Mari-][D]jata also occur), the great Mandinke king, founder of the Mali Empire in the 13th century, are topics that have not found a place in the mainstream discourse of Alexander studies. Nevertheless, his alleged encounter with the Jews in 333 BC, related in Josephus, in the γ (gamma) recension of the Greek Alexander Romance 2.22-24, and in rabbinical sources, including the

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* I am much indebted to Mr Guy Tombs of Montréal for his kind loan of his 1978 MA dissertation, notes and offprints and discussions, which afforded me invaluable assistance in navigating the complexities of West African oral traditions.

¹ Cf. Stoneman 2003a, especially 335-36.

² The so-called FYROM; For an overview of this ongoing controversy, see Danforth 2003:347-48.

Talmud, is a much-debated subject in Judeo-Hellenistic studies. This episode, however, is not attested in any of the canonical Alexander histories (Diodorus, Justin, Curtius, Plutarch, Arrian). The same principle also holds true of Sunjata’s alleged admiration of Alexander, which, in one source at least, played a role in the foundation of the greatest of the medieval West African empires. The story of Sunjata, which the older standard works on African history regard as fact, has generated a copious literature among Africanists and specialists in oral narrative; yet his admiration for and emulation of Djoulou Kara Naini (the Mandinke name for Dhu al-Quarnain, the Arabic ‘Alexander the Great’) and its effect on his childhood and military career are unmentioned or overlooked. It is an aspect of the story that, like the episode of Alexander in Jerusalem, is not supported in the canonical source-tradition. These two radically different manifestations of the Alexander-paradigm are therefore connected by their absence from the mainstream of scholarship. While the meaning, origin and likely historical and political context of the story of Alexander in Jerusalem have a place in specialised discourse, this is certainly not the case with Sunjata’s alleged Alexandri aemulatio. Nevertheless, I would argue that the methodology that has been adopted to explain the Jerusalem episode may profitably be used for elucidating the Alexander motif in the Sunjata narrative.

5 See Marcus 1951, ‘Appendix C’, for discussion of the earlier studies; more recently, Tcherikover 1961:42-50; Gruen 1998:293; Schäfer 2003:5-7; Rajak 2007:55-56, 191-93. Apart from Lane Fox 1973:213, who treats the story virtually as fact, the episode has been ignored in the standard histories of Alexander, although it poses some interesting problems in historiography, transmission and Quellenkritik.
6 The definitive and most comprehensive written account is that of Niane 1960 (translated into English by Pickett 1965), which formed the basis of standard histories by, e.g. Cornevin 1962:1.348, who refers to Niane’s work as ‘a magnificent reading of African History’; Levtzion 1973:64-65 and 1977:3.376-85; as well as other popular works subsequently published. From the late 1970s, however, specialists have adopted a more critical approach to the early history of Mali.
7 Critical studies and analyses of a multitude of oral traditions regarding Sunjata, published in the late 1970s and 1980s, have led to the view that the revered founder of the Mali Empire belongs in the world of myth; cf. Miller 1990: chapters 1 and 3, and the collection of articles in Austin 1999.
Our initial point for comparison is the story of Alexander in Jerusalem. The core of Josephus’ many-stranded account is as follows. While Alexander was besieging Tyre, he wrote to Jaddous, the high-priest of the Jews, to demand the surrender of Judah. Reluctant to desert the king of Persia, yet desperate for survival, Jaddous was prompted by a dream, sent from Jahweh, to comply. When he and the priests and people marched out to meet their conqueror, Alexander, surprisingly, greeted the priest, prostrated himself before the name of Jahweh inscribed on his mitre, and acknowledged the God of Israel. He then went up to the temple in Jerusalem to sacrifice and was shown the prophecy of his victory over Persia in the Book of Daniel; as a result, he granted fiscal privileges to the Jews of Palestine as well as to those in Babylon and Media, permitting them also to live according to their traditional laws. He then departed on his way to defeat Darius at Gaugamela. The rest is history.

This story probably originated in or postdated the Maccabean period, when the book of Daniel was written, and had some political purpose relating to the period. Erich Gruen observes that it has less to do with history than with appropriation, and, in an earlier work, plausibly suggests that the invention of Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem made ‘the Jews both of Palestine and the Diaspora an integral part of the Macedonian [Seleucid] empire’, thus allowing them to capitalise on his charisma. This political strategy well fits the context of the Hasmoneans’ overtures to Sparta and Rome in the 140s, since the myth provided the Jews with an argument for later Greek and Roman rulers to grant the same privileges as Alexander supposedly had. Jewish isolation from the mainstream of Mediterranean

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8 This is a recurring gesture of surrender, or homage, among the nations of the Near East on the arrival of a foreign conqueror or benefactor. It bears comparison with the narrative on the ‘Cyrus Cylinder’ of the king’s entry into Babylon and the Babylonians’ reception of him as their saviour (cf. Pritchard 1955:2:315-16); also with Alexander’s entry into Memphis in Arr. Anab. 3.1.4; and Curt. 4.7.2; and into Babylon in Curt. 5.1.17-23. In John 1.19 the Jews ‘sent priests and Levites’ to meet John the Baptist, as though he were the Messiah. On such occasions the ‘liberator’ reciprocates by paying homage to the local deity.


11 1 Macc. 8 (Rome), 12.1-23 (Sparta). Cf. 13.33-42 referring to Demetrius II’s treaty with Judea following Jonathan’s surrender, which approved the latter’s
civilisation in the pre-Hellenistic age thus gave way to a more integrated role in the wider oikoumene. Mutatis mutandis, Alexander’s Nachleben in the West African narrative may similarly be applied to the international political context of the mid-20th century.

In an article published some thirty years ago, I pointed out explicit references to Sunjata’s admiration for Alexander and to what appear to be deliberate and striking parallels between Alexander’s life and deeds, as reflected in the ‘canonical’ Alexander historians and those recounted in Niane’s 1960 version of the Mandinke national epic.\(^{12}\) At the time, the only other English translation available was three transcribed oral recitations of the epic, edited and translated by Gordon Innes.\(^{13}\) None of the latter mentions Alexander the Great or Sunjata’s emulation of the Macedonian. Notwithstanding the considerable amount of work which has been done on Sunjata since the publication of Niane’s canonical account, my suggestion about the Alexander-motif was never raised in the context of classical reception studies or discussed in relation to the contemporary historical and political context of Niane’s translation. After a generation, and in the light of a proliferation of readily accessible studies, translations, recordings and films about Sunjata in the English-speaking world,\(^{14}\) it is time to revisit this theme.

The extensive repository of Mandinke oral epic has been discussed by anthropologists and specialists in African, mostly francophone oral traditions since the beginning of the colonial era, but the Sunjata epic of Mali only came to the attention of the wider general public at the time of independence, with Niane’s French edition. This work claims to be the transcription of a recitation over several weeks by Mamadou Kouyaté, a local bard (a djeli or griot) who was, by his own admission in the proem of

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\(^{12}\) Tronson 1982.

\(^{13}\) Innes 1974.

\(^{14}\) For instance, the two volume scholarly edition and translation by Johnson 1978, his 1986 second edition of the translation, and his major analytical study of 2003; there is a popular recording, Soundiata by Salif Keita reissued on Wrasse Records [1968] 2001, and an important film by Dani Kouyaté, Keita! L’heritage du griot, Burkina Faso 1994. It is interesting that members of the Keita clan and the Kouyatés, their ancestral griots, are still responsible for these recent high profile versions of the Sunjata epic (see below, p. 149-50).
the epic, associated with the Keita descent group, his family's ancestral patrons, of whom the epic's hero, Sunjata Keita was the founder. Niane quotes him thus:

Since time immemorial the Kouyatés have been in the service of the Keita princes of Mali; we are the vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old … I derive my knowledge from my father Djeli Kedin, who also got it from his father.\(^{15}\)

In the course of the narrative we hear much about Balla Fasséké, the young man whom Sunjata's father appointed as personal *griot* to his son who was still a child:

In Mali every prince has his own griot. Doua's father was my father's griot, Doua is mine and the son of Doua, Balla Fasséké here, will be your griot. Be inseparable friends from this day forward. From his mouth you will hear the history of your ancestors, you will learn the art of governing Mali according to the principles which our ancestors have bequeathed to us.\(^{16}\)

At the end of the epic, after Sunjata conquers Mali's enemies and establishes his empire, he addresses the liberated nations and assembled subjects and entrusts the preservation of its origin and history to his *griot*. Niane's *griot* – whether a real person or a composite of multiple versions recited by various members of the Kouyaté clan\(^{17}\) – validates the authenticity of his function and that of his clan as the official custodian of Mali's history:

When Sogolon's son had finished distributing lands and power he turned to Balla Fasséké, his griot, and said: ‘As for you, Balla Fasséké, my griot, I make you grand master of ceremonies. Henceforth the Keitas will choose their griot from your tribe and from among the Kouyatés.'\(^{18}\)

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\(^{15}\) Niane (transl. Pickett) 1965:1. All citations from the epic, unless otherwise indicated, are from this version.

\(^{16}\) Niane 1965:17.

\(^{17}\) As suggested by Tombs 1978:6; see note 36 below.

Modibo Keita, the first president of Mali (1960-1967) belonged to the same descent-group as Sunjata, whom he regarded as his ancestor. Some have concluded that it was no coincidence that the French text was published to coincide with Mali’s independence, and that it was aimed at the West, to lend prestige and status to the new West-African state and to integrate it among the Western powers.\textsuperscript{19} The pertinence and significance of the Alexander-motif in the propaganda were neither raised nor discussed at the time, nor have been since. They should now be addressed, particularly when the political existence of Mali as well as its ancient history and traditions are in dire peril. Since the beginning of 2012, radical Islamist groups allegedly affiliated to al-Qaida have gained ascendancy over the northern regions of Mali, vandalised the famous 800 year-old Sufi mosque at Timbuktu, and introduced strict shariah law among the local inhabitants, whose religious beliefs, both traditional and Islamic, have peacefully coexisted.\textsuperscript{20} The prospect of large-scale Western intervention in the north further jeopardises the country’s rich cultural heritage, if not its very identity. Jacques Delcroze observes that the ideal of peaceful ethnic cohabitation, supposedly enjoyed among the peoples of the medieval Sudanese empires of the Mandinke (Gao, Songhai and Mali) and promoted by ‘the fathers of independence’ in the sixties (e.g. Sekou Touré, Keita and Senghor), has been disrupted by ‘a trend towards ethnic identity and surly nationalism’ and the notion that ‘the achievement of Sundiata Keita, now regarded as myth rather than history, has been overplayed.’\textsuperscript{21}

This devaluation of the historical authenticity and political potency of the Sunjata story was certainly not the case fifty years ago, when Niane published what amounted to a panegyric of the new republic and its president.\textsuperscript{22} The timely appearance of Niane’s \textit{Soundiata} in France and then in Pickett’s English translation five years later in Britain and North America as a historiographical narrative, a Malian ‘national epic’ written by a Western-educated Mandinke historian, was more than simply a gesture to the former colonial powers that Africa, too, had a noble history. It was also the articulation of a political myth, perhaps even constructed by Modibo Keita, in collaboration with the ancestral ‘historian’ of his clan, Mamoudou Kouyaté, and directed as much to the Francophone African world. As a lifelong Marxist, pan-Africanist and champion of social justice,

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Tombs 1978:44; Tronson 1982:41.
\textsuperscript{20} Delcroze 2012.
\textsuperscript{21} Delcroze 2012.
\textsuperscript{22} See note 7 and accompanying text.
liberation and peace (he won the Lenin Peace Prize in 1963), Keita wanted to establish Mali, in particular, as a model for a post-colonial, federally united, Francophone Africa based on cooperation, democracy and religious toleration – a reputation it has maintained up to the present. The character of Sunjata, as represented in this ‘official version’ of Mali’s early history, embodied the role to be played by his descendant in post-liberation French Sudan (present-day Mali).

The Sunjata myth is reinforced by regular public recitations every seven years, at Kangaba, also known as Ka-Ba, or Kaaba, the home of the Keita clan, and this practice is associated with the ceremonial re-roofing of the Kamoblon, the sacred hut believed by the Mande people to be the site of Sunjata’s first ‘parliament’. According to Christopher Miller, representatives of the Mande from across the borders express a kind of ‘national unity’ by attending the ceremony. This particular oral version of the epic, according to Seydou Camara, is jealously guarded by the griots at Kela, near Kangaba and ‘in the opinion of numerous scholars, it is the official version from which all performances of Sunjata have been created.’ Western researchers, however, have never had access to anything that can be called an authentic Ur-version, if indeed such a thing even existed.

Because of its epic structure and compatibility with familiar tales of ancient heroes in Western culture, Niane’s version of the story captured the imagination of the West. Pickett’s English translation became the canonical account of the African hero’s life and of his foundation of the medieval Malian Empire. It was prescribed throughout North America in the 1970s as a textbook for African, and Afro-American Studies in schools

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24 Cf. Schachter-Morgenthau & Creevy Behrman 1984:637: ‘Yet Modibo Keita also emphasized ties to great leaders of the past, and paid homage to selected living neo-traditional leaders who claimed descent from pre-European Sudanic rulers.’
26 Miller 1990:75.
27 Camara 1999:60, especially 67: ‘The collective past was drawn up by the Keita into a tradition that is thought to explain the foundation of Mali … [T]o avoid being erased and forgotten, to mark their leadership in history, the old Keita chiefs and their retainers demonstrate and confirm the established hierarchies of the society though dramatic presentations staged at regular intervals … Considered an initial charter, the narrative … constitutes a model for the Mande.’
and universities, and influenced Alex Haley’s bestseller, *Roots*, and the iconic 1977 TV miniseries based on it. It was also reworked as a book for children. In 1991, it appeared as a graphic novel and in 1995 was adapted by Disney for the popular cartoon feature, *The Lion King*, its title being Sunjata’s byname, Mari Jata, according to Ibn Khaldoun.\(^{29}\)

The gist of the Sunjata epic, according to ‘Mamadou Kouyaté’s’ version, begins with a prophecy that the king of Mali would have a son who would be the seventh conqueror of the world and founder of the Mali Empire, more mighty than Djoulou Kara Naini (Dhu’l-Qarnain, ‘the Two-Horned’),\(^{31}\) if he took a second wife, Sogolon Kondé, a monstrously ugly woman with mysterious magical powers. She produced a son, whose birth was heralded by a flash of lightning and clap of thunder, as is Alexander’s in the *Romance*.\(^{32}\) The boy was born lame, but at the age of seven used an iron bar to lift himself onto his feet; he bent it into a bow. He then showed superhuman strength and intelligence and in some versions, skill in sorcery. The king died and his first wife, jealous for her own son’s succession, exiled Sunjata and his mother. After being rejected by many of the peoples whom they approached for asylum, they found refuge in the kingdom of the Kissi, at Mem in Ghana, an Islamised community, supposed to be descended from Djoulou Kara Naini.\(^{33}\) Meanwhile, the new king, Sunjata’s half-brother Dankaran Touman, had surrendered his kingdom to the powerful sorcerer-king of the Sosso/Sussu tribe, Sumanguru (or Soumaoro), who oppressed the people of Mali and the surrounding communities. Having performed many heroic deeds, Sunjata returned to Mali and after three major pitched battles against the Sosso, defeated Sumanguru and liberated his own people and others subjected by Sumanguru. After a triumphal procession into Niani, the ancient capital of Mali, he held a great assembly of all the neighbouring nations, pledged an everlasting alliance with his former enemies and became the *mansa* of an Islamic empire based on justice and tolerance. The united Mandinke Mali Empire which included all populations, both Islamic and traditionalist,


\(^{30}\) See Appendix C 4, below. The fact that Sunjata had many names, including Mari Jata, Sogolon Djata, or Djata, attests to the fluidity of the hero’s historical identity. In Niane 1965:42 he is referred to as ‘the man of two names’.

\(^{31}\) Niane 1965:2. See below, p. 153 and Appendix C 1, p. 165.

\(^{32}\) See Appendix A 3.

\(^{33}\) Niane 1965:32.
flourished from the 13th to the 15th centuries and was prominently featured on contemporary European maps. Sunjata’s life therefore conforms to the conventional heroic pattern, which also underlies that of the early life of Alexander in Plutarch’s *Life of Alexander*, and in the *Alexander Romance*.

Scholars who have done comparative analyses of oral recitations by over twenty *griots*, indicate that Niane’s redaction of Mamadou Kouyaté’s version is unique. Not only are his references and allusions to Alexander unparalleled, but also Sunjata’s Muslim affiliation enjoys unique emphasis. Episodes shared by many other versions and some unique to a single tradition occur together only in the Niane-Kouyaté version. Stephen Bulman’s recent investigation of local versions, recited *in situ*, still prove, as Tombs’s earlier survey does, that Niane’s version is unique. Neither Tombs nor Bulman, however, investigate the Alexander motif. Some versions of the saga based on Arabic sources even mention Sunjata as a descendant of Djoulou Kara Naini, although most regard the Keitas as descended from Bilal, the prophet Muhammad’s retainer. Niane’s version, moreover, not only places an unparalleled emphasis on Sunjata’s admiration of Alexander and on the correspondence between them, but also its structure is much more historical and ‘classical’ than African. Piecemeal, the following factors may be considered as coincidental but when considered *in toto*, they suggest contrivance on the part of the reciter or of his redactor.

Niane’s quasi-novelistic version of Kouyaté’s recitation is, as some have observed, an archaising construct that simplifies a complex, ritualised performance which included responses, repetitions and instrumental interludes stretching over many days, into a compact narrative of 37,000

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34 Cf. Tronson 1982:40.
35 See Appendix, Group A.
36 Tombs 1978 compares twenty-six of the published versions and tabulates the variants of the key episodes in each; he concludes that there are too many variants in each of the accounts to allow for the existence of a single *Ur*-account that could serve as the basis for regular transmission of the oral text; each version emphasises different episodes and different aspects of the main character, whether as a primary or secondary figure in the story. Cf. above, note 17 and accompanying text.
37 See Austen 1999:76.
words, without overtly altering the mood and idiom ‘to fit the expectations of modern readers’. It incorporates ‘subgenres of song, praise-poem, proverb and riddle to give [the reader] some entrée into either a culturally pluralist world or the historic forms of their own culture.’ It is also unique in its Islamic slant, its emphasis on Sunjata’s political settlement and on his creation of a unified, inclusive Mandinke federation with a common constitution. After his victory, Sunjata toured the region and appeared in villages dressed in the garb of the traditional hunter-magician king and in a mansa’s robes at his procession and assembly, thus emphasising his dual role as champion of both Islam and traditional religious beliefs. Sunjata’s dual identity is reflected in (or reflects) Modibo Keita’s transnational, tolerant ideals. The frequent references to Alexander the Great are, as noted above, also unique to Niane’s version and are more sophisticated than mere comparisons. The parallels between Sunjata and his classical prototype therefore reflect on his modern counterpart by enhancing not only the achievements and ideals of Sunjata, but those of his modern successor; in this way the figure of Alexander the Great as the former’s supposed model and the exemplar of conqueror and unifier in both Islamic and Western culture also incorporates Modibo Keita into the heroic narrative as a co-facilitator of Mali’s greatness.

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40 Austen 1999:81; cf. Bulman 1999:243; also Tombs 1978:15. Conrad 2004, in an abridged English translation, includes the repetitions, extended genealogies, formulas and the line-by-line responses of the original performance; he also continues the narrative after the great assembly, which in Niane-Kouyate’s version forms the politically charged finale celebrating the hero’s achievement and glorifying Mali. The scholarly edition of the epic by Johnson (2003) also differs from Niane’s in this respect.

41 See Austen 1999:81 n. 24: ‘The fact that Niane’s text lacks the extensive digressions, the omission or compression of major episodes and other ‘warts’ of normal oral epic performances may be the result of his editing (even fusing multiple performances).’

42 Tombs 1978:39 shows that of all the versions he studied, Niane’s refers more to Sunjata’s Muslim affiliations than any other; also that his alone refers to Niani (Sunjata’s capital) as ‘on the road to Mecca’ – suggesting a direct, physical link between Mali and Mecca (Niane 1965:82).

43 Niane 1965:81.

44 Niane 1965:80, 73.
The correspondences in the Alexander and Sunjata narratives fall into three groups. The first (Appendix, Group A) comprises the conventional *topoi* of heroic literature, such as prophecies, portents at the birth of the hero, instances of precocious intelligence and curiosity, and a period of exile (as in the narratives of, for instance, Moses, Cyrus, Jesus and Alexander). The second (Appendix, Group B) highlights the explicit authorial references to Sunjata’s admiration and emulation of Alexander the Great. Most striking, however, are the correspondences in Niane’s version to the career-trajectories of the two heroes. That these references and allusions to Alexander are more than coincidental or conventional can be argued as follows.

Firstly, Niane’s narrative adheres to that of the historical ‘Western canon’, rather than to the Arabic tradition or the *Romance*. Alexander does not appear as he does in the Qur’an, as the apocalyptic figure who builds the iron wall at the edge of the civilised world to keep out the forces of Gog and Magog. The motif of Djoulou Kara Naini as world conqueror and ‘King of Gold and Silver’, however, reflects the Arabic tradition of the *Alexander Romance*, which Arab traders would have made familiar to the populations of the Maghreb, as also would the iconography of the coinage. Niane’s narrative does not allude to any of the better-known stories of the *Romance*. Moreover, the Western versions of the *Romance* are unspecific in the details of the tactics, strategy, sequence or outcomes of battles that underlie the canon of the Alexander historians. In Niane’s redaction, Sunjata, like his prototype, fights the three major battles against an adversary who is depicted explicitly as a ‘barbarian’ and, as a sorcerer and tyrant, an enemy of Allah. Alexander’s role corresponds as champion of Hellenic civilisation against barbarism. In tactical, strategic and, occasionally, even topographical details Sunjata’s three battles correspond

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45 References to the epic’s allusions and parallels to Alexander’s life and career are collected and categorised in the Appendix below; cf. Tronson 1982: *passim*.
46 Qur’an, Shura 18.92-99 (below, Appendix C 2); cf. the context of Ezek. 38.1-3; Rev. 20.7-8, where Dhu al-Qarnain is not mentioned explicitly, although possibly alluded to in Dan. 7.2-7 – the ten-horned beast. For other references to Dhu al-Qarnain in early Arabic sources, see Stoneman 2003b.
47 Cf. above, p. 150, note 31 and text.
48 For example, his dealings with Amazons, the queen of Ethiopia, his fantastic voyages to the bottom of the sea or outer space. However, Alexander’s visit to a sacred ‘spring of life’ (*Romance* 2.39) finds a possible echo in Sunjata’s visit to the pool of the Djinn, where he ‘drank the water and radiated like a star’; Niane 1965:71-72. Cf. The Epic of Gilgamesh (Pritchard 1955:2.74, lines 270-80).
closely to Alexander’s (Appendix B 5, 7 and 9: Battles 1, 2 and 3). Only Niane’s version mentions three major battles, with Sibi Krina as the last of ‘a climactic triad’.\(^{49}\) This would correspond with Alexander’s climactic battle at Gaugamela. All three battles contain striking reminiscences of or allusions to Alexander’s main battles against Darius. In the first encounter (Tabon/Granicus) the enemy king is not the adversary, but his subordinate (note 73, below); moreover, Sunjata, like Alexander, disregards his generals’ advice to attack the next day and leads the charge immediately (Appendix B 5. Battle 1). Similarly, both narratives single out the conspicuousness of the leaders’ dress: Alexander, ‘conspicuous by his helmet’s crest,’ with its white plumes suggests Sunjata’s prominent white turban (Appendix B 7, Battle 2; cf. p. 162, Extract 6). Moreover, the tactical methods adopted by the hero and the composition and formation of his forces are more Hellenistic than African. This feature is particularly obvious in Niane’s version of the second battle, at Negeboriya (Appendix B 7, Battle 2), where details of the disposition of the forces of both sides and the enemy king’s hasty retreat are strikingly reminiscent of those of Issus in Arrian and Diodorus.\(^{50}\) The description is deliberately archaising: spears, cavalry and infantry, with Sunjata riding his ‘Daffeke’ (‘charger’).\(^{51}\) In Djanka Tassey Kondé’s version of the Battle of Negeboriya, Sunjata faces a barrage of musket fire from the walls of his enemy’s capital.\(^{52}\) The battle sequences in most other versions also feature firearms. Kondé’s account of the final battle between Sunjata and Sumanguru (Sibi Krina, Appendix B 9, Battle 3) does not take place at Sibi Krina, but at Djakajalan, and is presented as a duel, with both armies unengaged.\(^{53}\) It does not form the structural climax of the narrative. Kouyaté’s account, however, differs from the canonic Alexander narrative only in that the enemy is wounded through a talisman – an arrow with the talon of an eagle as its point, which robs him of his superhuman power.\(^{54}\) Nevertheless, allusions to Alexander at Gaugamela (Appendix B 9, Battle 3) abound: the terrain is a wide plain, there is a bird-omen, Sunjata’s forces

\(^{49}\) Thus Tombs 1978:15, 32-33.
\(^{50}\) The description of Sunjata’s battle formation closely resembles that of the Macedonian phalanx: ‘He formed a tight square with all his cavalry in the front line.’ The topography of the opposing battle lines is also similar.
\(^{51}\) Niane 1965:52 and 93 n. 58: ‘… an emphatic word for “a fine charger”’.
\(^{52}\) Conrad 2004:175-77, lines 4885-4912.
are drawn up near a river, Sumanguru is conspicuous by his headdress, Sunjata leads the cavalry charge, trampling the enemy underfoot, one of Sunjata’s commanders informs him that a detachment under his second-in-command (his half-brother, Bella Fakoli) is being hard-pressed by the enemy (reminiscent of Parmenio at Gaugamela; cf. Plut. Alex. 32.6; 33.10). After rescuing him, they both set off in hot pursuit of Sumanguru with the object of taking him alive, which they fail to do, just as Alexander fails to capture Darius alive.55

Secondly, Niane-Kouyaté’s version emphasises politics, tactics and diplomacy; there are details of alliances, laws and treaties, characteristic of neither the Alexander Romance nor other versions of the Sunjata epic. Other oral traditions concentrate more on tensions within Sunjata’s family and clan, and on social and religious issues.56 At the end of the epic, in Niane’s version, Sundiata assumes the robes of a Muslim mansa when he organises his empire at the great festival (cf. Appendix B 4). To a Western audience this may recall Alexander’s assuming the diadem and Persian garb after finally defeating Darius in 330 to promote unity among the Macedonians and Persians.57 Similarly, in the organisation of their empires, both Alexander and Sunjata incorporate the young men of the defeated enemy into their armies and train them as ‘cadets’.58 Such practical measures are not the stuff of the Alexander Romance or of the other African oral traditions, but of politics and history. The climactic celebrations after Sunjata’s victory emphasise not only Mande unity, but also the incorporation of other peoples in the region, just as Plutarch and certain modern historians regarded Alexander’s mass marriages at Susa as a manifestation of universal peace and unity.59

I would suggest, therefore, that the correspondences in the Niane-Kouyaté version to the ‘Alexander canon’, especially Plutarch’s and

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57 Arr. Anab. 7.9.9; Plut. Alex. 47.6 and 71.1; Diod. Sic. 17.108.
58 Niane 77; cf. Arr. Anab. 7.6.1; Plut. Alex. 47.6, 71.1; Diod. Sic. 17.108.1-3; Justin 12.11.4; see Appendix B, 11 and 12.
59 The prevailing view of Alexander scholarship in the 1940s and 1950s centred around the notion of Alexander as the great reconciler of nations and ‘the unity of mankind’; thus Tarn 1933 and Robinson 1957; Radet’s 1931 romantic and heroised Alexandre le Grand, which, ‘trivial’ though it may be (thus Badian 1976:300), Niane may have read as a student. Plut. Alex. 70.3; Diod. Sic. 17.107.6; Curt. 10.3.11-12 locate the event at Susa and Arr. Anab. 7.11.8-12.2 locates it at Opis.
Arrian’s accounts, are more than coincidental. If this is the case, two questions arise. First, is the Niane-Kouyaté version directed primarily at a Western audience as political propaganda simply ‘to put the newly independent Mali Republic on the map’ and as a statement of national identity directed towards the colonial powers, as is generally maintained, or does it have a wider import? Second, is the classical allusion *entirely* imposed by the transcriber/translator, or does it come directly from Kouyaté’s recitation? If the latter, why was this particular *griot* the only one of the many whose recitations have been hitherto documented, edited and discussed by Africanists, to have this characteristic, and what was the source of his knowledge? In either case, why, to the best of our knowledge, has no other reciter since or before then, included the Alexander references such as we find in Niane’s version? Moreover, it is difficult to believe that the traditionally educated *djeli* Kouyaté, could have been exposed to the Greek Alexander historians, even though he might have been familiar with the Qur’anic episode and the Arabic Romance tradition.

Stephen Bulman refers to a personal communication he had with Niane, in which the latter said that he was introduced in 1958 to Mamoudou Kouyaté, a ‘master bard, *djeliba koro*’, in Upper Guinea and heard ‘elements of the epic’ over many weeks.60 He then conflated these performances into a single seamless narrative, by which, as Austen observes:

> Sunjata’s claim to transcendent imperial status is tied to the very existence of this narrative as well as to its use of the varied (in different versions) references not only to Meccan ancestry but also to residence in the more Islamicised community of Mema … the donning of Muslim robes at critical moments, and comparison with the generic Mediterranean world-conqueror, Dhu al-Qarnain.61

Bulman moreover remarks (*ibid.* 243) that Niane’s version ‘is dotted with circumstantial and historical detail much of which derives from these studies.’ This would, presumably, include the ‘Western orientated’ Alexander-motif that permeates the narrative, which is more likely to have derived from the redactor’s studies at the University of Bordeaux in the 1950s, than from Kouyaté’s recitation. It is therefore reasonable to

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61 Austen 1999:76; cf. Niane 35 and 75.
assume, both from the allusions to Western culture and the fact that his
version of the epic was originally written in French, the language common
to the educated and literate population of the French Sudan, that Niane
intended it for a Western audience as well as for the newly independent
Francophone West African nations. Guy Tombs suggests that this was
intended ‘to bridge that cultural gulf between Bamako and Paris … [and] to
show that the Malians did have the answer to questions that Frenchmen
were asking about their past.’\(^62\) It was also a way of valorising both Sunjata
as the political leader *par excellence* and Mali as the hegemonic country of
the French Sudan; in short, to endorse the ideology of Modibo Keita.

In a more recent article, Bulman traces the influence of the French
education system on the Mande élite of the former French Sudan.\(^63\) The
École William Ponty is an exclusive academy in the coastal town of St
Louis in Senegal. It was the *alma mater* of almost every emerging West
African Head of State in the 1950s and 1960s, including Modibo Keita of
Mali, Houphuet Boigny of Ivory Coast, and Leopold Senghor of Senegal.
As one may expect, the school prepared future leaders and administrators
by cultural assimilation for service in the French African colonies. In 1932,
the year in which Modibo Keita enrolled (also the year Niane was born), it
began to [encourage] its pupils to explore their own, indigenous culture
and their past and to write and perform dramas in French based on
traditional themes, among which one of the most popular was Sunjata.\(^64\)
Furthermore, Bulman suggests that the school may have influenced the
way such oral traditions as the Sunjata *epos* gained the status of historical
documents, thus disseminating the knowledge of Sunjata across West
Africa. This process was taken up by the recording industry from the
1940s and the music of Mali still remains extremely popular among
World Music enthusiasts today.\(^65\)

To return to the role of the *griots*: not only were they the repositories
of history (Niane, 1), but also the advisors and (and sometimes feared)
critics of their patron-chiefs.\(^66\) Kouyaté and his patron Modibo Keita
would have shared a common interest in the activities of Sunjata and
agreed on emphasising the connection with Djoulou Karainani, about

\(^{62}\) Tombs 1978:44.
\(^{63}\) Bulman 2004.
\(^{64}\) Bulman 2004:39.
\(^{65}\) The reissue of Salif Keita’s early recordings on CD confirms this trend. See note 14 above.
\(^{66}\) Miller 1990:85-86.
whom the future president would have learned at school. Niane, also Western-educated (though there is no evidence that he attended William Ponty) and acquainted with classical history, further elaborated the Alexander the Great-theme by aligning the trajectory of Sunjata’s life with that of his supposed ‘prototype’ and focused on the actions of Mali’s national hero around issues that corresponded with some aspects of the main themes of the history of Alexander.\(^{67}\)

Niane’s version, therefore, polarises and internationalises the epic, making it reflect a universal conflict between freedom and tyranny, good and evil, and civilisation and chaos, represented respectively by the hero and his demonised opponent, the ‘barbarian’ Sumanguru – a dichotomy more prominent in this than in other versions, where the latter appears as a semi-divine figure, a civiliser, master musician and the founder of the Mande culture.\(^{68}\) The Niane-Kouyaté version, to establish the negative image of Sumanguru, describes the griot Balla Fasséké’s visit to his ‘seven storey tower’ and his ‘fetish room’ at the top, which contained all the trappings of ‘the barbarian’: ‘a monstrous snake’, ‘strangely-shaped weapons’ hanging on the wall, ‘tapestried with human skins’ and the blinking skulls of Sumanguru’s victims.\(^{69}\)

In conclusion, I return to Alexander in Jerusalem. In his introduction, Gruen says that the Jews ‘engaged actively’ with Greek traditions, ‘adapting genres and transforming legends to articulate their own legacy in modes congenial to a Hellenistic setting’; also that they ‘recreated their past, retold stories in different shapes, and amplified their scriptural corpus … through the medium of the Greek language and Greek literary forms.’ Their objective was ‘to develop their own cultural self-definition’ and to position themselves ‘within the broader Mediterranean world and ‘to establish their distinctiveness.’\(^{70}\) The same holds true in the case of the Mande of West Africa, first in their contact with the Islamic world through Arab and Berber traders from the 10th century, and then, half a millennium later, with Western Europe. In the cultures both of the Mande

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67 Bulman 2004:45 n. 6 says that he could not ascertain whether Niane was himself a graduate of the École William Ponty.

68 Sumanguru is favourably mentioned in other versions of the epic as having supernatural powers as an ‘earth priest’, since, as a blacksmith, he was part of a class which ‘had a technological stranglehold on iron making [which] placed the smith at the economic and political apex of the Mande world’ (Bird 1999:291).


70 Gruen 1998:xv (adapted).
and the Hellenistic Jews, although so far apart and different from each other, Alexander the Great became a ‘brand’ and their identifying link with Western culture: in the Jewish myth, by Alexander’s acknowledging Jahweh as the supreme God, even above Zeus, who would bring about his conquest of Persia; similarly, in the Islamic context, by an eighth-century Arabic poet’s reference to Dhu al-Quarnain as an honorary Muslim and by his appearance in the Qur’an as the instrument of Allah’s plan.71

Association with the ‘Alexander Brand’ thus enables cultures, separated by vast distances of space and time, to gain acceptance in an international milieu, because of his reputation not only as a world-conqueror, but also as a unifier and reconciler of West and East. Since it is a truism that myth is a more potent agent of national unity than history, Sunjata and his exemplar may again play a role in the current conflict of identities in Mali.

APPENDIX

Parallels and correspondences between the Sunjata and Alexander narratives in Niane’s narrative72

Group A: Conventional heroic topoi

Direct comparisons by the griot between Sunjata and Alexander the Great

1. Niane 1-2: ‘By my mouth you will get to know the story of the ancestor of great Mali, the story of him who, by his exploits, surpassed even Alexander the Great; he who, from the East, shed his rays upon all the countries of the West’ (cf. A3, below).

2. Niane 5-6: [The hunter prophesying the birth of Sunjata to his father] ‘King of Mali, destiny marches with great strides, Mali is about to emerge from the night. Nianiba is lighting up the East … [F]or she will be the mother of him who will make the name of Mali immortal for ever. The child will be the seventh star, the seventh conqueror of the earth. He will be more mighty than Alexander.’

71 See Appendix C 3.
72 Translations from Plutarch, Arrian and Diodorus Siculus are from the Loeb Classical Library (Perrin, Brunt and Welles).
Omens presaging the hero's birth

3. Niane 13: ‘Suddenly the sky darkened … thunder began to rumble and swift lightning rent the clouds ….. A flash of lightning accompanied by a dull rattle of thunder burst out of the east and lit up the sky as far as the west …’

_Alexander Romance_ (Pseudo-Callisthenes) 1.12: ‘As the child fell to the ground, lightning flashed suddenly, thunder began to rumble, the ground shook and all the heavens were moved.’

Childhood precocity

4. Niane 35: ‘Always keen to learn, Sundiata, [at the age of ten, in exile at Mema in Ghana], asked the caravaneers many questions. They were very well-informed people and told Sundiata a lot of things. He was told about the countries beyond Ghana; the land of the Arabs; the Hejaz, the cradle of Islam and of Djata’s ancestors (for Bibali Bounama, the faithful servant of the Prophet came from Hejaz). He learnt many things about Alexander the Great too, but it was with terror that [they] spoke of Sumaoro, the sorcerer king, the plunderer, who would rob merchants of everything when he was in a bad mood.’

Plut. _Alex._ 5: ‘Ambassadors from the King of Persia arrived. Alexander received them in his father’s absence. He did not trouble them with childish enquiries but questioned them about distances, the nature of the journey into the interior of Persia, the character of the king, his experience in war and military strength …’

Exile

5. Niane 28: ‘Thus Sogolon and her children tasted exile … Their feet ploughed up the dust of roads. They suffered the insults which those who leave their country know of.’

Plut. _Alex._ 9.11: After the drunken broil [with Attalus] at his father’s wedding, Alexander took Olympias and established her in Epirus, while he himself tarried in Illyria.

Group B: Explicit assertions and deliberate (?) correspondences/echoes.

Explicit references to Alexander

1. Niane 23: [Sunjata] also listened to the history of the kings which Balla Fasséké [his _griot_] told him; enraptured by the story of Alexander the Great, the mighty
king of gold and silver, whose sun shone over quite half the world.’

2. Niane (a) 37: ‘The soothsayers of Mema revealed the extraordinary destiny of Djata. It was said that he was the successor of Alexander the Great and that he would be even greater …
Niane (b) 48: ‘[T]he divines (marabouts) … related to Sundiata the history of Alexander the Great and several other heroes, but of all of them Sundiata preferred Alexander, the king of gold and silver, who crossed the world from west to east. He wanted to outdo his prototype both in the extent of his territory and the wealth of his treasury.’

Correspondences between the early lives of Alexander and Sunjata

3. Niane 36: ‘Moussa Tounkara [Sunjata’s foster father/guardian] was a great warrior and therefore he admired strength. When Sundiata was fifteen, the king took him with him on campaign. Sundiata astonished the whole army with his strength and his dash in the charge. In the course of the skirmish … he hurled himself on the enemy with such vehemence that the king feared for his life … [The king] saw with rapture how the youth sowed panic among the enemy. He had remarkable presence of mind, struck right and left and opened up for himself a glorious path.’

Diod. Sic. 16.86.3: ‘Then Alexander [aged 18 at Chaeronea], eagerly longing to show off his valour to his father, since his desire for distinction had no bounds … was first to break through the solid front of the enemy line.’

Plut. Alex. 9.2 ‘He was also present at Chaeronea and took part in the battle against the Greeks, and he is said to have been the first to break through the ranks of the Sacred Band.’

Plut. Alex. 6.8: ‘[After Alexander tames the horse, Bucephalas] all the rest broke into loud cries, but his father, we are told, actually shed tears of joy.’

Regency

4. Niane 37: ‘After three years the king appointed Sundiata … his Viceroy, and in the king’s absence it was he who governed. Djata had now seen eighteen winters … Everybody bowed before him … [The soothsayers of Mema] revealed the extraordinary destiny of Djata. It was said that he was the successor of Alexander the Great and that he would be even greater.’

Plut. Alex. 9.1: ‘When Philip was on an expedition to Byzantium, Alexander, then only sixteen years old, was left behind as regent of Macedonia and kept the royal
Correspondences between Alexander’s three major battles against Darius III and Sunjata’s three major battles against Sumanguru

Battle 1: The valley of Tabon = Granicus

5. Niane 49: ‘In the evening … Sundiata arrived at the head of a great valley, which led to Tabon. The valley was quite black with men … The troops stopped. When Djata saw the layout of Sosso Balla’s (Sumanguru’s son) men, he turned to his generals, laughing.

‘Why are you laughing, brother, you can see that the road is blocked.’

‘Yes, but no mere infantrymen can halt my course towards Mali,’ replied Sundiata.

All the war chiefs were of the opinion that they should wait until the next day to give battle because, they said, the men were tired.

‘The battle will not last long,’ said Sundiata, ‘and the men will have time to rest. We must not allow Sumaoro the time to attack Tabon.’

Orders were given, the drums began to beat; on his proud horse, Sundiata … drew his sword and led the charge, shouting his war-cry.’

Plut. Alex. 16:1-2: [M]ost of the Macedonian officers were afraid of the depth of the river, and of the roughness and unevenness of the farther banks … ‘When Parmenio would not allow him to run the risk, on the ground that it was too late in the day, objecting to their risking the passage, he said that the Hellespont would blush for shame, if after crossing it, he declared that he should be afraid of the Granicus and he plunged into the river with thirteen detachments of cavalry.’

Arr. Anab. 1.14.6: ‘For some time the two forces on the river’s bank, dreading to precipitate the event, remained still and in deep silence on either side … but Alexander, leapt on his horse, calling on his suite to follow him … and himself leading the right wing, began the crossing.’

Turban/helmet parallel

6. Niane 51: [referring to the second battle, Negeboriya; see below] ‘Sundiata could be distinguished by his white turban.’

Plut. Alex. 16.7: [referring to Alexander’s first battle, Granicus] ‘Many rushed upon Alexander, for he was conspicuous by his buckler and by his helmet’s crest,
on either side of which was fixed a plume of wonderful size and whiteness.\textsuperscript{73}

**Battle 2: Negeboriya = Issus**

7. Niane 51: ‘Sumaoro (Sumanguru) thought to draw Sundiata into the plain, but Sundiata did not allow him the time to do it. Compelled to give battle, the king of Sosso drew up his men across the narrow valley of Negeboriya, the wings of his army occupying the slopes. Sundiata adopted a very original form of deployment. He formed a tight square with all his cavalry in the front line.’

Diod. Sic. 17.33.1 ‘Alexander set his cavalry along the front of his whole army.’

Arr. *Anab.* 2.8.6-7: ‘[Darius] placed Greek mercenaries, about 30 000, foremost of his hoplites facing the Macedonian phalanx; next, on either side, 60 000 of the so-called Cardaces who were also hoplites; this was the number which the ground where they stood allowed to be posted in one line. He also stationed 20 000 men on the ridge on his left, over against Alexander’s right.’\textsuperscript{74}

8. Niane 51-52: ‘Soumaoro rushed up and his presence in the centre revived the courage of the Sossos. Sundiata caught sight of him and tried to cut a passage through to him. He struck to the right and struck to the left and trampled underfoot. The murderous hooves of his ‘Daffeke’ (charger) dug into the chests of the Sossos. Soumaoro was now within spear-range and Sundiata reared up his horse and hurled his weapon. It whistled away and bounced off Soumaoro’s chest … furious Sundiata snatched up his spear and with his head bent charged at Soumaoro, but as he raised his arm to strike his enemy he noticed that Soumaoro had disappeared … [53] From the top of the hill he watched the compact mass of Soumaoro’s smiths withdrawing in a cloud of dust.’

Diod. Sic. 17.33.5-34.5: ‘Alexander cast his glance in all directions in his anxiety to see Dareius, and as he had identified him, he drove hard with his cavalry at the king himself, wanting not so much to defeat the Persians but to win the victory with his own hands … [34.1] One could see many forms of wounds inflicted, furious struggles of all sorts inspired by the will to win … The horses which were

\textsuperscript{73} At the battle of the Granicus Alexander engaged in single combat with the satrap of Ionia, a kinsman of King Darius. Sundiata engages in single combat with the son of the Sosso king (Sussu Balla). Both Alexander and Sundiata, in the first major battle of the campaign, engage with the enemy king’s deputy, not the king himself; cf. Niane 51; Plut. 16.1 and 8; Diod. Sic. 17.20.1 alone attests Spithrobates as Darius’ son-in-law.

\textsuperscript{74} I.e. the Persian infantry were drawn up in a line, on ground that would not hold their number, right up to the rising ground, facing Alexander’s right wing.
harnessed to the yoke of Dareius’ chariot were covered with wounds and terrified by the piles of dead about them. They refused to answer to their bridles … [The] king himself, in extreme peril caught up the reins, being forced to throw away the dignity of his position and to violate the ancient custom of Persian kings.’

Arr. Anab. 2.11.2-3: ‘The Persians did not give way till they realised that Darius had fled and till their mercenaries were cut off, mowed down by the phalanx.’

**Battle 3:** Sibi Krina = Gaugamela (the hero finally defeats the king)

9. Niane 58-59: ‘Sumaoro was advancing along the river and was trying to block his route to Mali … On the eve of Krina … Balla Faséké [Sunjata’s griot] reminded Sundiata of the history of Mali so that, in the morning, he would show himself worthy of his ancestors.’

Plut. Alex. 33: [citing Callisthenes]: ‘Alexander gave a long speech to the Thessalians and the rest of the Greeks … He called on the gods and prayed that if he were really the son of Zeus, they should protect and encourage the Greeks … Aristander the seer … rode along the ranks pointing out to them an eagle which soared above the head of Alexander and directed his flight straight against the enemy … great courage filled the beholders.’

10. Niane 65: ‘The king of Sosso, who did not want Sundiata to get near him retreated far behind his men but Sundiata followed him with his eyes. The vanquished Soumaoro looked up towards the sun. A great black bird flew over above the fray and he understood. It was the bird of misfortune.’

Plut. Alex. 33: ‘As for Darius, all the horrors of the battle were before his eyes … he abandoned his chariot and retreated.’

**Other parallels and quasi-parallels**

Sundiata’s and Alexander’s forces are both vastly outnumbered; bird omens are mentioned in both, although reversed: Alexander sees an eagle at the beginning of the battle and the defeated Sumanguru/Sumaoro sees a ‘black bird of ill omen at the end’; both battles begin when the sun is already high; both Sundiata and Alexander pursue the enemy king for a day and a night and fail to take him alive.

**Events after the final victory: the king arranges his empire**

11. At the end of his campaigns (Niane73-78), Sundiata gathers all the Mande tribes at Kaaba and assumes the robes of a Muslim Mansa when he organises his

12. Both Sundiata and Alexander, in the organisation of their empires, incorporate the young men of the defeated enemy into their armies and train them as cadets:

Niane 78: The Konaté of Toron became the cadets of the Keitas so that on reaching maturity a Konaté could call himself a Keita; cf. Plut. *Alex.* 47.6 and 71.1; Diod. Sic. 17.108.

**Group C: Alexander the Great in Arabic sources**

1. Coins minted by local rulers between the 3rd century BC and the 2nd century AD in the south-eastern Arabian peninsula and derived from the Lysimachid/Ptolemaic/Seleucid iconography with the horned Alexander (Dhu al-Qarnain) as Zeus Ammon, probably account for Alexander's Arabised name. See also Callot 2012.


   (92) Then followed he [Zul Qarnain] another way. (93) Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains, he found, beneath them, a people who scarcely understood a word. (94) They said: 'O Zul-Qarnain! the Gog and Magog do great mischief on earth: shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightst erect a barrier between us and them?' (95) He said: ‘That (the power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute): help me therefore with strength (and labour): I will erect a strong barrier between you and them. (96) Bring me blocks of iron.’ At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain sides, he said, ‘Blow (with your bellows),’ then, when he had made it as fire, he said: ‘Bring me that I may pour over it, molten lead.’ (97) Thus were they made powerless to scale or to dig through it. (98) He said: ‘this is a mercy from my Lord: but when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into dust; and the promise of my Lord is true. (99) On that day We shall give them (Gog and Magog) to surge like waves on one another: the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together.’

3. Pre-Qur'anic poetry: *Muhammad Ibn Ishaq* (d. 761/767)

   Dhu'l-Qarnayn before me was a Muslim; Conquered kings thronged his court,
East and west he ruled, yet he sought
Knowledge true from a learned sage.
He saw where the sun sinks from view
In a pool of mud and fetid slime
Before him Bilquis [Queen of Sheba] my father’s sister
Ruled them until the hoopoe came to her.

4. Ibn Khaldun, History of the Berbers

When the authority of the rulers of Ghana dwindled away they were overcome by the Sussu, a neighbouring people of the Sudan, who subjugated and absorbed them. Later the people of Mali outnumbered the peoples of the Sudan in their neighbourhood and dominated the whole region. They vanquished the Sussu and acquired all their possessions, both their ancient kingdom and that of Ghana as far as the Ocean on the west. They were Muslims. It is said that the first of them to embrace Islam was the king named Barmandana (thus vocalized by Shaykh Uthman), who made the pilgrimage and was followed in this practice by the kings after him. Their greatest king, he who overcame the Sussu, conquered their country, and seized power from their hands, was named Mari Jata. Mari, in their language, means ‘ruler of the royal blood,’ and Jata means ‘lion’ (Levtzion & Hopkins 1981:333).

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ALEXANDER AND THE UNITY OF MANKIND: SOME CAPE TOWN PERSPECTIVES

John Atkinson
University of Cape Town

The brevity of this afterpiece on three characters operating in Cape Town – Benjamin Farrington, Harold Baldry and Mary Renault – reflects the fact that in South Africa Alexander studies did not attract much serious engagement before the 1980s. One reason may have been that in most universities where the Classical languages were studied, Latin was mainly taken by students who were obliged to take Latin if they wished to study Law, and Greek was strongest where it served as an ancillary for students majoring in Theology. This had a bearing on the research interests of at least some academic staff, and virtual job demarcation tended to keep the two sections apart in the Afrikaans-medium universities.1 And then there was the convenient conviction that courses on Classical civilisation and literature in translation, at least if beyond the introductory first year level, were close to a betrayal of the core value of Classics at university level. Thus Farrington, sometime after he left UCT, felt the need to explain to Frans Smuts of the University of Stellenbosch:

Although I had misgivings about the wisdom of permitting such a course [in classical culture through the medium of English at the University of Cape Town], since I hold that the job of a University Department of Classics is to teach Greek and Latin, I consented to give the course myself.2

1 The five institutions set up or reconstituted as University Colleges in 1960 in terms of the Extension of University Education Act no. 45 of 1959 to serve the ‘homelands’, operated to some extent as satellites of the University of South Africa, then very much under Afrikaner control, and followed the same model.

2 Farrington’s boldness went beyond simply teaching texts in translation, for ‘I felt it necessary to transcend the usual limits of the curriculum in two directions, namely, by including the history of science and by continuing the story to include the rise of Christian Greek and Latin literature. This altered the direction of my subsequent studies’ (letter to F. Smuts quoted in Smuts 1960:19). In fact, courses in translation had been offered at the University of Cape Town even before he arrived there in 1920; and Farrington had worked on Shelley’s translations from the Greek for his MA thesis.
At the same time there was the challenge of making Classical texts available in Afrikaans translations. It was all too easy to argue that as the standard text books were in English, English should be the language of instruction. But many took up the challenge and on the Greek side, unsurprisingly, priority was given to epic poetry, tragedies and comedy; while on the Latin side there was an obvious drive to provide translations of Roman legal texts, and at a more advanced level works of the Roman-Dutch jurists, though here the recipient language was more often English and the target readership more international. In this broad context there was little serious interest in Alexander, and those who looked for ‘relevance’ in ancient history tended to take more interest in Roman history, thanks no doubt to the influence of Roman-Dutch law, and for some in other ways of Mommsen and Marx.3

Thus for various reasons Alexander does not feature large in reception studies in South Africa for the greater part of the 20th century. But it would be a travesty to ignore three characters in particular, while recognising that they were mavericks in a city at the far end of South Africa.4 The Irish Farrington was attracted to South Africa in 1920 because of his support for the Boer cause, but he was quickly disabused of his naïve ideas and equally of his commitment to Sinn Fein and its most prominent leader at the time, Eamon de Valera. He turned to Marxism and in his research focused on the history of science and Epicurean atomism. Thus his references to Alexander were tangential, but of some interest because of the traces of the influence of Mahaffy, whom he knew while he was studying at Trinity College Dublin, and whom he said he loathed. Then there was Harold Baldry, who took up a lectureship in Cape Town in 1936, two years after Farrington left. He was more overt in his support for the Communist Party, though only a member from 1941, as he helped to found and fund the South African newspaper The Guardian, for which he

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3 In the early 20th century, Mommsen’s admiration for the Boers was reciprocated; cf. Stuchtey 1999, esp. 151-52; Hilton 2014. Later, Marxist intellectuals in the Cape identified with Mommsen’s view of Julius Caesar, as I picked up from Jack Meltzer in the 1970s. Miriam Griffin 2009:433 suggests that it is possible that Marx was influenced by Mommsen’s presentation of Caesar in his Römische Geschichte. Griffin cites the passing reference to Caesar in Marx’s letter to Engels dated 27 February 1861. Of course, one has to distinguish between a line taken by Marxists and a Marxist line followed by the faithful.
4 In commenting on them I have drawn on published sources, but also on oral evidence, in particular from the late Jack Meltzer, Maurice Pope and Roy Sargeant, each of whom worked with one or more of my subjects.
was also a major contributor from 1937 to 1948 with his column on international affairs under the by-line ‘Vigilator’. But when he broke from the party, he banished all mention of that chapter in his life, and did the same when he left Cape Town and headed for the Chair of Classics in Southampton. He has to be included here because of his major work, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (1965). The former champion of Stalin was by now clearly the champion of more liberal ideals as indicated by the adoption of the phrase so key to Tarn’s presentation of Alexander, though Baldry takes to pieces Tarn’s case for presenting Alexander as the philosopher who pioneered the concept of the unity of mankind. And clearly, Mary Renault deserves to be included for her Alexander trilogy and her book on the nature of Alexander. Her treatment of the Alexander sources and her discussion of various episodes, in particular where she could draw on her medical knowledge, command respect.

Let the title of Baldry’s book justify taking ‘the unity of mankind’ as the theme to compare and contrast the approaches of these three writers, though the sound bite attributed to Alexander in this phrase is not exactly what Arrian meant, as will be explained. The context in which it appeared began in Opis in 324, when Alexander was confronted by a serious display of group solidarity as his Macedonian troops mutinied, demanding that he should either retain them all or let them all return to Macedonia. Those remaining after the pending discharge of veterans no longer fit for active service might be excused for feeling threatened by the integration into the army of tens of thousands of Persians and the incorporation of Persians into elite units and the high command. Their grievances included his policy of assimilation as epitomised by the marriages at Susa earlier that year, when he took another two wives, both members of the Persian royal family, and the plus-minus ninety Companions were detailed off to marry daughters of Persian and Median nobles. This policy raised the prospect of an Irano-Macedonian heir to the throne, which may well have worried traditionalists among the Macedonian troops, even if they had taken local girls as sexual partners along the way.⁵ The marriages in Susa imply that Alexan-

⁵ At least from the beginning of the invasion of India, cf. Diod. Sic. 17.94.4. Gruen 2011:71-75, 208-09 makes the debatable point that in Graeco-Roman antiquity there is no evidence of any legal prohibition on interracial marriages, but he rightly notes that in this case the Macedonian troops had readily taken Asian partners. Thus, their protest at Opis was not against mixed marriages, and Alexander’s aim was collaboration between Persians and Macedonians, and not fusion of the races. Indeed, the policy was not so much eugenic miscegenation as a continuation of
der had some sort of notion of the brotherhood of man, even if that has nothing to do with the toast which he made at the banquet of reconciliation in Opis, when he prayed for ‘unity of purpose between Macedonians and Persians and a partnership in empire’.6

In the 1930s it was almost conventional to attribute to Alexander some sort of a policy of fusion of the races, or acceptance of the brotherhood of man. In 1938, Berve, a dedicated Nazi, published his ‘Die Verschmelzungspolitik Alexanders des Grossen’, arguing that Alexander after 330 admitted Persians into his court and military hierarchy, and then at Susa he made official policy the integration by marriage of the two master races (‘Herrenvölker’).7 Of course, Berve would have known that the Persians were of the Indo-European family, and thus not unrelated to the Macedonians. He was at pains to show that Alexander’s fusion policy was limited to Iranians, who were thus of Aryan stock, and did not extend to the predominantly Semitic peoples of the western part of the Persian Empire.8 But in 1940 Fritz Schachermeyr (later a great admirer of Hendrik Verwoerd) abandoned the attempt to put a positive spin on Alexander’s policy of fusion, and took a more brutal Nazi line in attacking racial mixing.9 For the contrast, Tarn in 1933 made the bold claim that it was Alexander who pioneered the more general idea of the Unity of Mankind, and gave expression to the ideal by the marriages celebrated at Susa and his prayer at Opis.10

Naturally, issues of race relations were a concern of the politically aware in South Africa in that period, not least in university circles, where institutional policies were way to the right of radical liberals,11 which

Philip’s policy of dynastic planning and securing the cooperation of peoples whom he wished to control.
7 Berve 1938:157 refers to the ‘Blutmischung’ of the two ‘Herrenvölker’.
8 Berve 1938:158-60, 166-67. While Arr. Anab. 7.4.6-8 only mentions a restriction with regard to the Companions that they should marry Persians or Medes, Berve argues that this provision extended to the Macedonian troops generally.
9 Lebensgesetzlichkeit in der Geschichte: Versuch eine Einführung in das geschichts-biologische Denken (1940), known to me from Bosworth (1988 [1996]): esp. 59-61. The book was strongly anti-semitic and generous in praise of Hitler.
10 Tarn 1933.
11 In 1923, the view of the Council of the University of Cape Town was that the recruitment of students of colour should be discouraged, not least to avoid the situation where a white cadaver or model might be subjected to the gaze of a student of darker hue; cf. Phillips 1993:114-15.
brings me to the examples of the two University of Cape Town classicists, Farrington and Baldry, and to the novelist Mary Renault. They were all, though in different ways, characters in episodes of South Africa’s political history.

Benjamin Farrington was an Irishman who, though a Congregationalist, supported Sinn Fein. He moved to Cape Town in 1920 and within six months published a series of articles in Afrikaans in *De Burger* appealing to Afrikaners to support the fledgling Irish Republic. But his clash in January 1922 with De Valera turned him against Irish extremist Republicanism, and the Rand Revolt of March 1922 disabused him of Afrikaner nationalism.\(^\text{12}\) Banners with the slogan ‘Workers of the World unite for a White South Africa’ would also have put him off white middle-class English politics. His friendship with Ruth Schechter (the daughter of Solomon Schechter of Cairo Genizah fame) and admittance into her circle of radical intellectuals drew him towards Marxism. This circle was ‘anti-segregationist’, and some of its number joined the newly founded Communist Party, or, like Farrington, were linked with any of the expanding number of Marxist, Leninist, Trotskyist, radical Jewish associations.\(^\text{13}\) He introduced his colleague, the zoologist Lancelot Hogben, to Karl Marx’s thesis on Epicurean physics and followed Epicurus’ revision of Democritean atomic theory as providing the liberation of man from determinism. Thus Farrington argued that Epicurus undid the damage that had been done by the leaders of Athenian democracy, who had blocked the progress made by Ionian experimental scientists and had trapped the citizens in politico-religious mumbo-jumbo. In the ideal world, all men would have been united in their freedom from restrictions imposed by arbitrary class, religious, ethnic and whatever divisions.

After leaving for Britain, Farrington joined the Communist Party and remained a member till the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956. His communist idealism was reflected in the inaugural lecture which he delivered after his appointment as Professor of Classics in the University College of Swansea in 1936, entitled *Diodorus Siculus, Universal Historian*

\(^\text{12}\) There is irony in the fact that Farrington’s clash with De Valera meant that he was prepared to accept Dominion status for Ireland. He was opposed to the religious and political particularism of extremist Irish republicans, as also to the ‘insolence and tyranny’ of British imperialism.

\(^\text{13}\) Farrington’s time in Cape Town is reviewed by Atkinson 2010. The present chapter has another companion piece in a paper on ‘Benjamin Farrington and the science of swerve’ that is awaiting publication. Cf. also Hirson 2001.
(Farrington 1937). In this lecture he dwelt on Diodorus Siculus’ exposé of the brutal treatment of slaves in the mines. The lecture’s main thrust was that Diodorus took the notion of the unity of mankind from Stoicism, but in the form developed by Cleanthes. Whereas Zeno had said that ‘all men were citizens of the world, but the wise alone were free, the rest slaves’ (Diogenes Laertius 7.121), Cleanthes rejected this effective defence of the institution of slavery as a law of nature, and opted rather for the millennial idea that all men were equal in the polity of the Sun.14

In the field of Alexander studies, Farrington can be placed somewhere on the matrix between J.P. Mahaffy and W.W. Tarn. For Farrington commended the way Macedon came to promote the noble ‘ideal … of the well-being of the inhabited world as a whole’,15 with which he contrasted the ‘religious and political particularism’ of the citizens of the Greek city state, and their acceptance of the distinction between freeman and slave as ‘a law of nature’.16 This might seem to echo Mahaffy’s observation about Alexander that ‘his campaigns … must have … forced this upon his mind, that the deep separation which had hitherto existed between East and West would make a homogeneous empire impossible, if pains were not taken to fuse the races by some large and peaceful process.’17 In the concluding section of his earlier treatment of Alexander, Mahaffy similarly praised Alexander as being ‘the father and protector [of the Orientals] against the insolence and tyranny of Macedonians and Greeks.’18

Between Mahaffy’s formulation and Farrington’s judgement came Tarn’s 1933 Raleigh Lecture ‘Alexander the Great and the unity of

14 Farrington 1937:14-17. Zeno’s line is reflected in Plut. Alex. 27.10-11. On Cleanthes, see Diog. Laert. 7.168-76 and the material assembled by Von Arnim 1921:1; but the point made by Farrington does not depend on any unequivocal statement by Cleanthes: Cic. Nat. D. 2.15, 24, 40-41 support the idea, but 1.37 adds confusion.
15 Farrington 1939:121.
17 Mahaffy 1892:160.
18 Mahaffy 1897:42. I take this to be a coded attack on British jingoist imperialism, and I suggest that Farrington may have been a little like Mahaffy in thinking of the narrow-minded Athenians, whom he often criticises, as a substitute for the little-Englanders who characterised London. Mahaffy elsewhere uses ‘England’ for the modern comparandum.
mankind’, to which Farrington makes numerous allusions.\textsuperscript{19} The key phrase in the discussion comes at the end of Arrian’s account of the banquet at Opis in 324, when Alexander prayed for ‘a unity of purpose between Macedonians and Persians and a partnership in empire.’ Tarn took the first limb to indicate a broader mission ‘to promote Homonoia among his subjects – all his subjects without distinction of race.’ And, had Alexander lived, he would have presided over an empire made up of various national groups, all living in ‘fellowship and concord’.\textsuperscript{20} He later clarified his interpretation of the second limb by replacing ‘concord’ with what can be rendered ‘partnership in the realm’, as ‘the various peoples of his realm might be partners in the realm rather than subjects’,\textsuperscript{21} but this did not mean ‘partnership in rule’.\textsuperscript{22}

Farrington seems to echo Tarn in his description of the Hellenistic kingdoms that emerged after Alexander’s death: ‘monarchies with cosmopolitan tendencies, in which petty distinctions of race, religion, and city were to some extent effaced by the one great contrast between monarch and subject’, for which Zeno and the Stoics offered a new morality.\textsuperscript{23} Unfortunately, in revising \textit{Science and Politics} for the new edition, he failed to take account of the demolition of Tarn’s Raleigh Lecture in Badian’s article with the same title, ‘Alexander the Great and the unity of mankind’, which included his observation that Alexander ‘certainly did not intend to become the figure-head of a free Commonwealth of Nations.’\textsuperscript{24}

In 1965 Farrington should have distanced himself more from Tarn, but

\textsuperscript{19} Apart from the direct references to Tarn, one notes that Farrington’s lengthy coverage of the Iambulus story was anticipated by the treatment of Tarn & Griffith 1952:9-10.

\textsuperscript{20} Tarn & Griffith 1952:26-27. J.H. Hofmeyr, when addressing the conference of CASA in 1928, similarly invoked the image of the British Commonwealth, ‘a partnership of sister nations’, as matching the achievement of the Romans in creating ‘a world state on a basis of equality, with no suggestion of superiority of a dominant state’; Hofmeyr 1929:5-14. Tarn 1948:422 clarified his position further by stating that ‘no trace of cosmopolitan ideas can be found in Alexander’, and that he was not about ‘abolishing race and treating all mankind as one people, as a cosmopolitan state’.

\textsuperscript{21} Tarn 1948:400.

\textsuperscript{22} Tarn 1948:444.

\textsuperscript{23} Farrington 1965:194-95.

\textsuperscript{24} Badian 1958:7. Badian’s interpretation is now the standard view, reflected in more popular biographies, e.g. Lane Fox 1973:425-29 and Cartledge 2004:190, no less than in specialist studies.
back in 1937, in his communist phase, he was more concerned with the contribution of Stoicism to the strengthening of the revolutionary idea of the innate equality of man.

Farrington had left Cape Town in 1934, and H.C. Baldry arrived as a lecturer in 1936. Like Farrington, Baldry ran the risk of offending the conservative University of Cape Town establishment by his journalistic activity, for he wrote a column, ‘Behind the overseas news’, under the pen-name ‘Vigilator’ for *The Guardian* from its launch in 1937 to 1948.\(^{25}\) His contribution went well beyond a weekly full-page article, as he and his wife, Carina Pearson, helped to establish the paper financially. She was the business manager and provided a column herself as ‘Hannah’, albeit on more domestic issues, to make life easier for the housewife. In the early days of the paper they and the founding editor, Betty Radford, might be seen as representative of Cape Town’s liberal élite, but the editorial and management team included Ray Alexander and Jack Simons, and the paper became the mouthpiece of the South African Communist Party.

As ‘Vigilator’, Baldry focused on the conflict between capitalism and Stalin’s USSR. Until way into 1942, Britain and America held back from decisive action in the hope that Russia and the Fascists would exhaust themselves and cease to be a threat to the free enterprise system. Baldry resolutely defended the Soviet system against Western calumnies. His sister-in-law was a committed member of the Communist Party, while, as already noted, Baldry himself and his wife were not initially members, but eventually signed up in May 1941. A contemporary of his, Jack Meltzer, told me that during the War, Baldry was under some pressure from the University of Cape Town to give up this work with the paper. Nevertheless, it was only in 1948 that he left the Party and quit the paper, the same year, perhaps coincidentally, that he was promoted to the vacant Chair of Classics. But such a cynical interpretation may be unfair, for by the end of the war Baldry was signalling some disillusionment with Stalinism. In a much shorter than usual contribution to *The Guardian* of 22 August 1946, dealing with problems in Paris and Palestine, he commented that ‘Stalin’s war greatness is too recent a memory to make a mud-throwing campaign possible against him – yet.’ Watch this space! It would also be more generous to point out that India had achieved dominion status in 1947 and was soon to become an independent republic in 1950. After all, he had written in *The Guardian* about the need for Britain to grant

independence to India, and he could by 1948 consider that it was ‘mission accomplished’. The pattern for decolonisation was established.

He had taken a similar strong line with each case as it arose, that the allies could not count on loyal support if there was no common will to resist, borne of the attainment of full political independence. But as ‘Vigilator’ he did not question what this independence might mean for Indians, the Chinese, Singaporeans, or whoever.

In 1948 he dumped the Communist Party, and then in 1954 left South Africa. After getting to Southampton, he would have nothing to do with South Africa and Capetonians. This distancing is illustrated in another way, by the fact that in writing The Unity of Mankind, he did not allude to its origins in a Fondation Hardt conference in 1961 in which he had been a participant (as noted by Murray 1966:368).

When he wrote about the unity of mankind, Baldry argued that the idea had a long history, and that Alexander was neither the pioneer nor the conscious champion of the idea. Secondly, he supported the line taken by Hammond that the assimilation of Iranians into the army and administration and, through intermarriage, into the social order, was for pragmatic reasons and ‘not for any philosophical or religious ends’. 26 Alexander did indeed establish a new paradigm through the ‘un-Greek attitude of this Macedonian towards “barbarians”’, and because of his imperialist successes Greek language and culture spread widely. But with his death and the wars of the Successors such limited assimilation as he had brought about was not developed. What happened was more what we should call globalisation, with the Greeks as the dominant force, rather than any fusion of the races or acceptance of racial equality. Mainland Greeks did not even buy into the idea of a Graeco-Macedonian civilisation, 27 and Baldry rejects Tarn’s more general claim that ‘[m]an as a political animal, a fraction of the polis or self-governing city-state, had ended with Aristotle; with Alexander begins man as an individual’. 28 Baldry thus rejected the idea that the beginning of the Hellenistic era marked ‘a sudden shift in the climate of thought’ in the Greek world, 29 and he was equally resistant to the idea that Zeno’s utopia marked a dramatic switch to the idea of ‘human unity’ which suppressed traditional distinctions between Greek

28 Baldry 1965:133, citing Tarn & Griffith 1952:79.
29 Baldry 1965:134.
and barbarian, slave and free. Zeno was, in Baldry’s view, no pioneer for the vanguard of a revolution, and was thinking of the unifying force in society of men possessed of wisdom. All very platitudinous, and dismissed by Oswyn Murray as bearing the stamp of Baldry’s association with South Africa.

Like Farrington and Baldry, Mary Renault came from overseas, in her case in 1948. Like them, she engaged with the moral dilemma of living in an ethnically divided society, though her commitment was no further to the left than the Black Sash. In 1972 Mary Renault, then living in the Cape Town suburb of Camps Bay, published the second book in her trilogy on Alexander the Great. This bore the title *The Persian Boy*, and told the story of Alexander’s campaigns in Asia with the eunuch Bagoas as the narrator. Obviously, this historical novel stands apart because of the centrality of the theme of Alexander’s homosexuality. It is not relevant to this discussion to dwell on gender issues, since we are here more concerned with the racial issue, which is hardly less important in her presentation of Alexander. In real life, Mary Renault was confronted by many challenges to her conscience which she faced as a white liberal living in the apartheid society. Her style was to offer practical support to victims of the system without any publicity. Thus she apparently delivered meals anonymously to the coloured writer Alex Laguma, when he was in gaol in Cape Town, presumably in 1963. But for her a defining moment, or rather a crisis, arose after the opening of the Nico Malan Theatre (nowadays the Artscape Theatre) in 1971. The theatre was to be the home base of the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), and its constituent groups, which included CAPAB Ballet headed by David Poole. Mary Renault had formed a strong bond with Poole, a ballet dancer whose career was complicated by the fact that he was classified as coloured. The immediate problem was that, as an enterprise funded by government, the Nico Malan was supposed to be exclusively for white audiences. While Cape Town theatre-goers might be more inured to such legislated restric-

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31 Murray 1966:16 includes the comment that Baldry gives preference to ‘the woolliest thinkers’ … ‘Haarhoff’s *The Stranger at the Gate* came out of South Africa, and Baldry too has served there; there his message may be in place.’ In fact, Baldry 1965:205 gives only one reference to Haarhoff, and that as a subsidiary point on an interpretation of Soph. *Ajax* 1259-63.
32 Sweetman 1993:287. Laguma was twice arrested in the late 1950s, and again on 31 March 1960, this time as a staff member of *New Age*. 
tions, professionals in the creative arts took a more aggressive stance against race restrictions as applied to the Nico Malan, and campaigned for a complete boycott of the theatre. For CAPAB Ballet things came to a head in 1972 when David Poole invited Margot Fonteyn to perform at the Nico Malan. The world press put Margot Fonteyn under enormous pressure to respect the boycott and stay away from Cape Town and the Nico. Various plans were explored for mitigating the negative effects of the proposed performance before an all-white audience, but in the end it went ahead. Throughout this crisis Mary Renault resolutely opposed the boycott call, and in the process split the local branch of PEN, of which she was president at the time. I would emphasise that in all this she was standing by her friend David Poole, and I suggest that in championing his cause she was also presenting her way of bridging the racial divide in defiance of apartheid.

Preposterous as it may seem, I wish to suggest that something of her friendship with David Poole, and its significance, is reflected in her account of the last seven years of Alexander’s campaigns as seen by Bagoas in *The Persian Boy*, which appeared in that same year 1972. Bagoas reports that Alexander said to him: ‘From loving you I first learned to love your people.’33 The Roman historian Curtius Rufus’ history of Alexander, written c. AD 40, presents Bagoas very differently, and he features in an episode towards the end of Alexander’s life sadistically plotting against the eminent Persian Orxines by getting Alexander to believe that Orxines raided Cyrus’ tomb in Pasargadae for all the valuables interred with the king.34 Renault created a new line to make Bagoas the innocent victim of abuse and to show that Bagoas understands why he has incurred hostility from the Persians: because he is seen as a collaborator.

Renault did not simply take artistic licence to the extreme to turn Curtius’ picture of Orxines as the innocent victim of Bagoas into the image of him as a villain. Renault was no admirer of Curtius as an historian and rejected his treatment of Alexander as ‘a corrupted tyrant’. In her author’s note she condemns the ‘unbearably silly’ Curtius for ‘muddled sensationalism’ with ‘florid exercises in Roman rhetoric’, and for twisting the story of Alexander ‘by recourse to Athenian anti-Macedonian agitprop’.35 But in the same context, she was careful to show that she had read the sources critically and could use Aristobulus’ record of the contents of

33 Renault 1972:342.
34 Curt. 10.1.22-38; Commentary in Atkinson 2009:93-99.
Cyrus’ tomb to discredit Curtius’ account of how Bagoas invented a story of untold wealth interred with Cyrus as the means of creating a charge against Orxines of tomb-robbing. Thus she establishes a prima facie case for doubting the veracity of Curtius’ version, and justifies her inventiveness in imagining that what lay behind Bagoas’ hostility to Orxines was ‘a family blood feud’.

This is introduced in the opening pages of the novel, where Bagoas introduces himself and recalls the horrendous details of the way his father was murdered on the orders of Orxines in the turmoil that followed on the death of Ochus and his son Arses. Thus honour dictated that the young Bagoas should seek vengeance, but, as it turned out, when Orxines crimes were exposed and he was put to death, Bagoas played no part in the episode and was taken by surprise when the accused was first identified. Bagoas was a gentle soul and found the execution of Orxines ‘distasteful’.

Of course, in dealing with the Opis banquet, Bagoas reports Alexander’s toast in an altogether sympathetic way: ‘So, when he lifted the great loving-cup to the sound of trumpets and begged the gods to give us all kinds of blessings, but harmony between Macedonians and Persians above all, I drank with a whole heart, and drank again to the hope reborn in his face.’ In Renault’s presentation, the conversion to non-racialism is an intense personal experience rather than a political programme. This interpretation is supported by the way she treats the relationship established between Bagoas and Alexander in her more historical volume *The Nature of Alexander* (1975). Alexander had twice before turned down offers of ‘Greek slave-boy beauties’, but this was different and the relationship was consensual. Greeks might disapprove, but for Alexander there was no problem, because in his view ‘all men are God’s children’, a view shared by few of his countrymen.

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38 Renault 1972:356.
39 Renault 1975:136. Renault was no starry-eyed romantic, least so when an episode invited her to use the knowledge she had acquired in the nursing profession. Thus, for example, she carefully analysed the story of Hephaestion’s death, and concluded that he was probably poisoned, which would explain why Alexander had his doctor, Glaucias, immediately killed. Renault 1975:208-10 thought that Glaucias could have acted for Craterus, but more likely for Eumenes. But, in her author’s note to *The Persian Boy*, she remarks that the symptoms of Hephaestion’s final illness suggest typhoid, and that his death could have been
interpretation of Alexander’s prayer at Opis, and from Baldry’s argument that by Alexander’s day the idea of the unity of mankind was something of a cliché with little practical substance.

Postscript

While Oliver Stone’s cinematic approach to the prayer at Opis falls outside the scope of this chapter, mention may be made of a play written by a local South African writer, Juliet Jenkin, and presented as Mary and the Conqueror in the Artscape Theatre in Cape Town in 2011. This imagines an interaction between the relationship of Alexander with Hephaestion and Mary Renault’s with Julie Mullard. Here Mullard does not share Mary’s enthusiasm for Alexander, and Mary defends her line with ‘[w]e can’t judge him by today’s standards.’ Jenkin also has Hephaestion express to Alexander his concern about what his victories have cost in human suffering: ‘We are losing our way.’

Bibliography


cau caused unintentionally by his taking food before the lesions had healed and resultant peritonitis (1972:420).

40 As reported by Tyrone August in his review in the Cape Times 4 Oct. 2011.


Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

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