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ANDREW G. SCOTT

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PREFACE

This volume examines various aspects of contemporary historiography in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. The term 'contemporary historiography' (Jacoby's *Zeitgeschichte*) is usually applied to historical works that cover, in whole or in part, the periods of time through which the historians themselves lived. These works are typically valued for their proximity to the events they narrate, though they are not without their problems of interpretation. Through various devices, authors might attempt to give the impression of eyewitness status even when they themselves were not present; contemporary events could shift authors' point of view and compel them to provide unrealistic or biased accounts; and memories of eyewitnesses were not always sharp. The papers in this volume examine how we might read and understand histories of this type. They demonstrate how contemporary historiography was practiced across time and how it was a constantly evolving part of the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition.

The papers on Herodotus and Thucydides, Julius Caesar, Cassius Dio, and Herodian originated in a session held at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Classical Studies in San Diego in 2019. To the original four papers presented there have been added chapters on Ptolemy I Soter, Sallust, and Tacitus.

My thanks go to the contributors to this supplement, for their dedication and persistence, and to John Marincola, for his help and patience in bringing this work to publication. I also thank the anonymous reviewers, who offered many criticisms and suggestions for the improvement of this volume as a whole.

A.G.S.
Philadelphia, November 2022

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CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHY AND PTOLEMY'S CREATION OF AN 'EGYPTIAN' ALEXANDER

Frances Pownall

Abstract: In the wake of the premature death of Alexander the Great, contemporary historiography began to reconfigure his image in response to the aims and ambitions of the various Successors. Ptolemy I was arguably the most successful in reworking the events of Alexander's campaign in service to his political and military agenda. In particular, Ptolemy took care to excise all the non-Egyptian elements from his narrative of Alexander's consultation of the oracle at Siwah in order to represent him as a Ptolemaic predecessor, thus laying a solid foundation for his new dynasty based in Alexandria.

Keywords: Ptolemy I, Callisthenes, Alexandria, Ptolemies, Siwah, Perseus.

Historians of the classical period often went to great lengths to erase themselves from their narratives of contemporary political and military history. Thucydides, for example, is notoriously reticent on the subject of his own military and political role in the Peloponnesian War.[1] Xenophon suppresses his personal military experience in the *Hellenic*a,[2] and even in the *Anabasis*, where his (eventual) role as commander forms the backdrop to his narrative of the campaign of the Ten Thousand,

[1] He does not mention it in his preface (1.1.1), although he does base his argument on the unity of the twenty-seven-year conflict upon his personal experience in his second preface (5.26); on his claim to authority in this passage, see Marincola (1997) 133–4. In the only passage where he appears as a historical agent in his own narrative (4.104.4–107.1), he underplays his own role by resorting to the third person; on the difference between the author as narrator and character, see Hornblower (1994) 132; cf. id. (1996) 333.

[2] E.g., at *Hell.* 3.2.7 and 3.4.20. On the separation of the authorial and narratorial *personae* of the *Hellenica*, see McCloskey (2017) 622–25; cf. Azoulay (2018) 8–10.

he carefully distances himself as narrator from agency in the action.[3] Of course, it is more difficult to discern the presence of fragmentary authors in their own narratives, but with the exception of Ctesias, whose alleged intimacy with the Achaemenid royal family through his service as court physician served to bolster the authority of his narrative,[4] there are no real traces in the extant material from their works of any personal role played by the fourth-century historians prior to Alexander. Although Ephorus was known for his local patriotism,[5] and Theopompus for his vitriol against Philip II,[6] Polybius criticised them both (along with Timaeus) as armchair historians.[7] Even Philistus, who played an important military role under both Dionysius I and Dionysius II of Syracuse, and Callisthenes, who accompanied Alexander to Asia as official court historian until his arrest and condemnation in 327 BC, do not appear *in propria persona* in the material extant from their panegyrical accounts of their powerful patrons.[8] This reluctance of historians to insert themselves into their narratives abruptly ceased in the wake of Alexander's campaigns, when his former officers engaged in a bitter and often bloody rivalry to succeed to his vast and newly-conquered empire, and the potentialities offered by the writing of contemporary history as a source of legitimation became increasingly

[3] At *Hell.* 3.1.2, Xenophon attributes the authorship of the *Anabasis* to 'Themistogenes of Syracuse', which has the effect of transforming 'a subjective personal narrative into an apparently objective historical account': so Flower (2012) 55. On Xenophon's 'heterodiegetic' narration in the *Anabasis*, see Grethlein (2012); cf. Pelling (2017).

[4] Marincola (1997) 134. Ctesias' claim of a longstanding personal association with the Achaemenid court (*BNJ* 688 T 3 = F 5) is generally accepted; see, e.g., Lenfant (2004), esp. vii–xxii; Llewellyn-Jones (2010) 2 and 12–17; Stronk (2010), esp. 6–11. Dorati (1995) and (2011) has argued, however, that this claim is fabricated; cf. Wiesehöfer (2013).

[5] Generally accepted by modern scholars, apart from Samuel (1968) and Ragone (2013–14).

[6] See, e.g., Shrimpton (1991) 157–80, Flower (1994) 98–135, Pownall (2004) 149–75. On Theopompus' reference to his rhetorical education and extensive travels as qualifications for his historical works (*BNJ* 115 F 25), see Marincola (1997) 134–35.

[7] Pol. 12.25f = Ephorus, *BNJ* 70 T 20; Theopompus, *BNJ* 115 T 32a; Timaeus, *BNJ* 566 T 19.

[8] On Philistus' favourable portrayal of the Dionysii in his historiographical work, see Pownall (2017). On Callisthenes' willingness to advance the agendas of first Philip and then Alexander, see Pownall (2020a) with earlier bibliography.

apparent. Of these military men turned historians,[9] arguably the most successful was Ptolemy I Soter, who founded what was to become an exceptionally stable dynasty that ruled Egypt for three centuries.

Particularly in the early stages of his control of Egypt, when Ptolemy was still solidifying his position and laying the foundations for his dynastic rule,[10] his 'quest for legitimacy' centred around emphasising the closeness of his association with the figure of Alexander,[11] achieved perhaps most concretely through his hijacking of Alexander's embalmed corpse and the subsequent grandiose burial of his illustrious predecessor in the ancient capital of the pharaohs at Memphis,[12] as well as the calculated deployment of Alexander's image on his coins.[13] Ptolemy's history of Alexander's campaign, in which he presents himself as playing a starring role, also served to bolster his own military credentials and justify his rule over Egypt.[14] A crucial part of this propagandistic message was the creation of a Ptolemaic Alexander to serve as the founder of his fledgling dynasty. Ptolemy's reinvention of his illustrious predecessor formed an integral part of the construction of his own royal image and the selling of it to multiple audiences: his Macedonian and Greek subjects, the other Macedonian Successors with whom he was engaged in a competitive rivalry, and (as is now increasingly being recognised) the indigenous Egyptian elite. In response to the influential claim by Alan Lloyd

[9] On the contemporary historians of Alexander, see esp. Müller (2014) 29–113 (along with commentaries on the individual authors at *BNJ* 117–39); cf. Zambrini (2007) and Pownall (2020b) 251–3.

[10] The traditional view of Ptolemy as an isolationist who was content to confine his rule to Egypt, recently defended by Anson (2018), has successfully been challenged; for revisionist views of Ptolemy's ambitions, see, e.g., Meeus (2014); Hauben (2014); Strootman (2014); Lane Fox (2015) 172; Worthington (2016) 4. As I shall argue, Ptolemy's creation of a Ptolemaic Alexander belongs to the period when he was still consolidating his position in Egypt, before he set his sights on the larger Mediterranean world.

[11] Borrowing the useful phrase coined by Bingen (2007) 15.

[12] On the ongoing symbolic importance of the body of Alexander throughout the Ptolemaic dynasty, see Holton (2018); cf. Thompson (2022).

[13] Sheedy and Ockinga (2015); Lorber (2018).

[14] Although the self-serving nature of Ptolemy's history has been challenged by Roisman (1984) and (less emphatically) Worthington (2016) 213–19, it remains (justifiably, as I shall argue) the *communis opinio*; see, e.g., Errington (1969); Bosworth (1996) 41–53; Zambrini (2007) 217; Müller (2014) 78–90 and (2020b); Howe (2014), (2018a), and (2018b) Commentary on T 1; Heckel (2016) 230–9 and (2018). For discussion of some specific examples where Ptolemy appears to have diverged from the 'official version' that Alexander himself wished to circulate, see Squillace (2018).

that Ptolemy I immediately established a close association with the native Egyptian clergy,[15] Gilles Gorre has convincingly demonstrated that 'there were many and significant barriers to Egyptian and Macedonian interaction that took some time for Ptolemy I to overcome'.[16] Although Ptolemy was not directing his historiographic efforts at the Egyptian elite in the first instance, he nevertheless carefully slanted his narrative of Alexander's expedition, especially his nine-month sojourn in Egypt, to support his own ongoing efforts to legitimise his dynastic rule to the Egyptian as well as the Greco-Macedonian segments of his subject population.[17]

In this connection, I would like to re-examine Ptolemy's distinctive spin on the Siwah episode, which includes, as I shall argue, a reconfiguration of Alexander's legendary ancestry. Alexander's visit to the oracular shrine at Siwah famously culminated in his announcement that the god Ammon had explicitly acknowledged his paternity.[18] The association of the Libyan oracular deity Ammon (according to the Greek spelling) with the Egyptian god Amon (whose cult was associated with pharaonic rule and was administered by a powerful priesthood based at Thebes) as well as Zeus, as the head of the Greek pantheon, existed already in the Archaic period, and Zeus Ammon was worshipped at both Cyrene and (significantly) at Aphytis in the Chalcidice,[19] which, after Philip II's defeat of the Chalcidian League, became a Macedonian possession. Alexander's deployment of Zeus-Ammon's endorsement of his divine filiation was a masterful stroke, allowing him to negotiate legitimacy simultaneously on multiple levels with his Macedonian troops, Greek allies, and the Egyptian elite.[20] Ptolemy's

[15] Lloyd (2002); cf. Worthington (2016) 191–92.

[16] Gorre (2018) 130; cf. Sheedy and Ockinga (2015) 238–9 and Caneva (2018), esp. 88–97.

[17] See the cautionary remarks on the separate Greek and Egyptian audiences to which Ptolemy directed his legitimising propaganda by Howe (2018a) 157; cf. Caneva (2016a), esp. 47–68. Nevertheless, Howe argues (I believe correctly) for a certain amount of fluidity of Ptolemy's legitimising strategies, which, like his coinage (as demonstrated by Lorber (2018)), were constantly evolving in response to his changing circumstances in the fraught decades after Alexander's death, and were deliberately multivalent; cf. Caneva (2016a) 79. On Alexander's successful synthesis of administrative practices of previous regimes and new policies of his own as a resident (rather than absentee) ruler, see Thompson (2018).

[18] The bibliography on Alexander's visit to Siwah is immense. For recent contributions, see, e.g., Howe (2013); Bowden (2014); Collins (2014); Ogden (2014); Müller (2020c).

[19] On the Greek and Macedonian appropriation of A(m)mon, see Caneva (2011). I shall refer to 'Ammon' in Greek and Macedonian contexts, and 'Amon' in Egyptian ones.

[20] So Caneva (2016a) 14–28; cf. Bowden (2014).

narrative of the Siwah episode in his historiographical work offers a particularly crucial example of the ways in which he reconfigured the existing tradition on Alexander to serve as a more effective legitimation of his own dynastic rule, not least because his divergences can be checked against the account of Callisthenes, who is usually thought to have been the ultimate source of the accounts of the Siwah episode in the later tradition.[21] Moreover, Callisthenes was embedded in Alexander's expedition as his official court historian,[22] and his narrative of the visit to Siwah was almost certainly approved by the king himself before his history was sent back (probably in installments) to its intended audience in mainland Greece to ensure continued support for the campaign.[23]

Because Callisthenes' account reflects the version of the episode at Siwah that Alexander wished to promulgate, it is important to begin with it in order to discern where Ptolemy's aims diverge from Alexander's. Callisthenes' narrative of Alexander's visit to Siwah is preserved by Strabo (17.1.43 = *BNJ* 124 F 14a), who grumbles at the blatant flattery it contains (cf. Timaeus, *BNJ* 566 F 155a):

> Callisthenes, at any rate, says that Alexander was very ambitious to go inland to visit the oracle, because he had heard that both Perseus and Heracles had done so earlier. He says that Alexander set out from Paraetonium, although the south winds had come up, and forced his way through; when he became lost as a result of the thick dust, he was saved by the falling of rain and two crows guiding his route, although these statements are flattery, as is what follows. He says that the priest permitted the king alone to go into the temple in his usual attire, while the others changed their clothes, and that all heard the oracle from outside except for Alexander, who was within; the oracular responses were not given in words, as at Delphi and

[21] See, e.g., Bowden (2014) 43–51; O'Sullivan (2015); Caneva (2016a) 12; Rzepka (2016), commentary on F 14a.

[22] Explicit at Just. 2.6.17 = *BNJ* 124 T 9; implied by Arr. *Anab.* 4.10.1–2 = *BNJ* 124 T 8 and by the reference to Callisthenes as Alexander's 'secretary' in a library catalogue from a gymnasium in Tauromenium (T 23 *bis*).

[23] On the propagandistic *Tendenz* of Callisthenes' history of Alexander's expedition, see Heckel (2020) and Pownall (2020a). For the argument that Callisthenes' later refusal to co-operate with Alexander's attempt to foist *proskynesis* upon his Greek and Macedonian courtiers does not in fact represent a *volte face* from his willingness to propagate Alexander's divine filiation, see Pownall (2014).

> among the Branchidae, but mostly by nods and tokens, as in Homer: 'the son of Cronus spoke and nodded assent with his dark brows', the prophet playing the role of Zeus. This, however, the man told the king explicitly: that he was the son of Zeus. 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, his future victory near Arbela, the death of Darius, and the revolutionary attempts in Lacedaemon.[24]

In his own lengthy narrative of Alexander's visit to Siwah (Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.1–3.4.5), Arrian provides a useful counterpoint to Callisthenes' account. Although Arrian composed his history of Alexander's expedition at the time of the high Roman Empire, he famously claimed that he based his narrative primarily upon the eyewitness accounts of Ptolemy and Aristobulus (Arr. *Anab. praef.* 1–2). Earlier scholarship took Arrian's claim at face value, and the *communis opinio* held that he rather uncritically relied on Ptolemy's narrative, supplementing it occasionally with Aristobulus.[25] More recently,

[24] *ὁ γοῦν* Καλλισθένης *φησὶ τὸν* Ἀλέξανδρον *φιλοδοξῆσαι μάλιστα ἀνελθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ χρηστήριον, ἐπειδὴ καὶ* Περσέα *ἤκουσε πρότερον ἀναβῆναι καὶ* Ἡρακλέα. *ὁρμήσαντα δ' ἐκ* Παραιτονίου, *καίπερ νότων ἐπιπεσόντων, βιάσασθαι· πλανώμενον δ' ὑπὸ τοῦ κονιορτοῦ σωθῆναι γενομένων ὄμβρων καὶ δυεῖν κοράκων ἡγησαμένων τὴν ὁδόν, ἤδη τούτων κολακευτικῶς λεγομένων. τοιαῦτα δὲ καὶ τὰ ἑξῆς· μόνῳ γὰρ δὴ τῷ βασιλεῖ τὸν ἱερέα ἐπιτρέψαι παρελθεῖν εἰς τὸν νεὼ μετὰ τῆς συνήθους στολῆς, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους μετενδῦναι τὴν ἐσθῆτα ἔξωθέν τε τῆς θεμιστείας ἀκροάσασθαι πάντας πλὴν* Ἀλεξάνδρου, *τοῦτον δ' ἔνδοθεν εἶναι. εἶναι δὲ οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐν* Δελφοῖς *καὶ* Βραγχίδαις *τὰς ἀποθεσπίσεις διὰ λόγων, ἀλλὰ νεύμασι καὶ συμβόλοις τὸ πλέον, ὡς καὶ παρ'* Ὁμήρῳ *'ἦ καὶ κυανέῃσιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεῦσε* Κρονίων', *τοῦ προφήτου τὸν Δία ὑποκριναμένου· τοῦτο μέντοι ῥητῶς εἰπεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ὅτι εἴη* Διὸς υἱός. *προστραγῳδεῖ δὲ τούτοις ὁ* Καλλισθένης, *ὅτι τοῦ* Ἀπόλλωνος *τὸ ἐν* Βραγχίδαις *μαντεῖον ἐκλελοιπότος, ἐξ ὅτου τὸ ἱερὸν ὑπὸ τῶν* Βραγχιδῶν *σεσύληται ἐπὶ* Ξέρξου *περσισάντων, ἐκλελοιπυίας δὲ καὶ τῆς κρήνης, τότε ἥ τε κρήνη ἀνάσχοι καὶ μαντεῖα πολλὰ οἱ* Μιλησίων *πρέσβεις κομίσαιεν εἰς* Μέμφιν *περὶ τῆς ἐκ* Διὸς *γενέσεως τοῦ* Ἀλεξάνδρου *καὶ τῆς ἐσομένης περὶ* Ἄρβηλα *νίκης καὶ τοῦ* Δαρείου *θανάτου καὶ τῶν ἐν* Λακεδαίμονι *νεωτερισμῶν*. All translations of the Greek are my own.

[25] Even the leading authority on Arrian, the late Professor Brian Bosworth, succumbed to this tendency in his earlier work: Bosworth (1980) 16. He did, however, concede that the

however, Arrian's narrative has been increasingly recognised as a complex and sophisticated literary achievement,[26] and represents an engagement with a wide variety of sources (including the so-called Vulgate tradition) beyond Ptolemy and Aristobulus.[27]

Significantly for our purposes, Arrian explicitly indicates two places where Ptolemy appears deliberately to deviate from Callisthenes' account. In the first, Ptolemy substitutes snakes for Callisthenes' crows as divinely-sent guides to Alexander and his weary troops as they marched to the oracle through a sandstorm in the featureless desert (Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.5–6 = Ptolemy, *BNJ* 138 F 8 and Aristobulus, *BNJ* 139 F 14):

> Ptolemy the son of Lagus says that two snakes proceeded in front of the army hissing, and Alexander ordered his guides to follow them, trusting the divinity, and they led the way to the oracle and back again. (6) But Aristobulus—and the accounts of most authorities are in line with his version—says that two crows flew in front of the army, and that they became Alexander's guides.[28]

As we have seen, the sudden appearance of crows offering divine guidance originated in Callisthenes, and Arrian's wording suggests that Aristobulus is the authority who transmitted it to the later tradition.[29] Ptolemy's snake variant is both unique and deliberate, and Daniel Ogden is likely correct in his interpretation that his intention was not just to confirm the identity of Alexander's snake-sire as Ammon, but also to legitimate his own dynastic

traditional view of Arrian as a mirror of Ptolemy stood in need of a thorough re-examination; Bosworth (1980) 20.

[26] See, e.g., the seminal works of Stadter (1980) and Bosworth (1988); cf. Bosworth (2007); more recently, Burliga (2013); Liotsakis (2019); Leon (2021).

[27] For an illustration of Arrian's ongoing dialogue in the *Anabasis* with the previous Alexander tradition writ large, see Pownall (2022).

[28] Πτολεμαῖος μὲν δὴ ὁ Λάγου λέγει δράκοντας δύο ἰέναι πρὸ τοῦ στρατεύματος φωνὴν ἱέντας, καὶ τούτοις Ἀλέξανδρον κελεῦσαι ἕπεσθαι τοὺς ἡγεμόνας πιστεύσαντας τῷ θείῳ, τοὺς δὲ ἡγήσασθαι τὴν ὁδὸν τήν τε ἐς τὸ μαντεῖον καὶ ὀπίσω αὖθις· Ἀριστόβουλος δέ—καὶ ὁ πλείων λόγος ταύτῃ κατέχει—κόρακας δύο προπετομένους πρὸ τῆς στρατιᾶς, τούτους γενέσθαι Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τοὺς ἡγεμόνας.

[29] Plutarch (*Alex.* 27.3–4 = *BNJ* 124 T 14b) confirms that Callisthenes' account contained the miraculous appearance of crows to guide Alexander to Siwah; they appear also in D.S. 17.49.5; Curt. 4.7.15; *Itin.* 21 (the only authority besides Arrian to acknowledge the existence of the variant tradition of snake guides).

rule to an Egyptian audience, for the Greco-Macedonians would not naturally associate Ammon with a snake.[30]

The other variant that Arrian identifies as unique to Ptolemy in the Siwah episode is the itinerary of Alexander's journey back to Egypt (Arr. *Anab*. 3.4.5 = Ptolemy, *BNJ* 138 F 9 and Aristobulus, *BNJ* 139 F 15):

> Then Alexander marvelled at the place and consulted the god. And when he had heard what his heart desired, as he said, he marched back towards Egypt, by the same route [i.e., via Paraetonium: cf. Arr. *Anab*. 3.3.3] according to Aristobulus, but by a different route straight to Memphis, according to Ptolemy the son of Lagus.

The tradition of the return journey of Alexander and his troops to Egypt via the longer and more difficult desert route to Memphis (instead of retracing their steps along the coastal route) almost certainly also has its roots in Ptolemaic propaganda. Ptolemy goes out of his way to associate Ammon's proclamation of his paternity of Alexander with Memphis, the ancient capital of the pharaohs, the seat of Ptolemy's satrapy, and the site of his original burial of Alexander's body, thus allowing him to assert legitimacy to an Egyptian as well as a Greco-Macedonian audience.[31]

In this connection, I would like to examine a third instance in which Ptolemy appears to deviate from the narrative of Callisthenes where, as I shall argue, a previously unrecognised reflection of Ptolemaic propaganda is visible. Arrian's introduction into his narrative of Alexander's visit to Siwah makes it very clear that his ultimate source for the episode was Callisthenes, transmitted through Aristobulus (Arr. *Anab*. 3.3.1–4 = *BNJ* 139 F 13):

> After this, a longing seized him to travel to the shrine of Ammon in Libya. He intended to consult the god because the oracle of Ammon was said to be infallible and both Perseus and Heracles had consulted it, the former when he was sent against the Gorgon by Polydectes, and the other when he was journeying to Antaeus in Libya and Busiris in Egypt. But Alexander was also ambitious to rival Perseus

[30] Ogden (2009). Cf. Ogden (2013) 333: 'it is inconceivable that Ammon as the Greeks knew him should have sired in the form of a serpent in any original version of the story: he was a ram-god, not a serpent-god, for the Greeks, a fact made emphatically clear from Herodotus onwards'.

[31] Pownall (2021). Cf. Howe (2014), who also argues that the variant is deliberate and reflects Ptolemaic propaganda, although he reaches somewhat different conclusions.

> and Heracles, as he was descended from them both and he himself traced back some part of his own birth to Ammon, just as the myths trace that of Herakles and Perseus back to Zeus. He set out to visit Ammon, therefore, with this thought, that he would know his own origins more accurately or that he would at least say that he did. As far as Paraetonium, he took the coastal route through desolate territory, although it was not altogether waterless, about 1600 stades, as Aristobulus states. From there, he turned inland, where the shrine of Ammon is located. The route is desolate and for the most part both sandy and waterless. But much rain from the sky fell for Alexander, and this was attributed to the divinity.[32]

This passage has very obvious parallels with Callisthenes' account, particularly Alexander's alleged motivation to visit the oracle in order to rival his ancestors Perseus and Heracles, sons of Zeus who had made the arduous trip to Siwah first, along with the episodes of the divinely-sent lifesaving rain and the crow guides (which Arrian relates just after this passage in the citation quoted earlier). Furthermore, Arrian's explicit citation of Aristobulus (*BNJ* 139 F 13) in the reference to Paraetonium between the two passages that ultimately derive from Callisthenes, as well as in his narrative of the crow guides (*BNJ* 139 F 14) and (following an intervening description of the oasis in which the oracular shrine was located) Alexander's route back to Egypt (*BNJ* 139 F 15), suggest very strongly that he is following Aristobulus (who is transmitting Callisthenes) for his narrative of the Siwah episode and citing Ptolemy only as a variant.

Furthermore, it is important to note that both of Ptolemy's divergences from Callisthenes that are explicitly identified by Arrian—the substitution of snakes for crows and the direct association of Ammon's recognition of

[32] *ἐπὶ τούτοις δὲ πόθος λαμβάνει αὐτὸν ἐλθεῖν παρ' Ἄμμωνα εἰς Λιβύην. τὸ μέν τι τῷ θεῷ χρησόμενον, ὅτι ἀτρεκὲς ἐλέγετο εἶναι τὸ μαντεῖον τοῦ Ἄμμωνος καὶ χρήσασθαι αὐτῷ Περσέα καὶ Ἡρακλέα, τὸν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν Γοργόνα ὅτε πρὸς Πολυδέκτου ἐστέλλετο, τὸν δὲ ὅτε παρ' Ἀνταῖον ἦγει εἰς Λιβύην καὶ παρὰ Βούσιριν εἰς Αἴγυπτον. Ἀλεξάνδρῳ δὲ φιλοτιμία ἦν πρὸς Περσέα καὶ Ἡρακλέα, ἀπὸ γένους τε ὄντι τοῦ ἀμφοῖν καί τι καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς γενέσεως τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐς Ἄμμωνα ἀνέφερε, καθάπερ οἱ μῦθοι τὴν Ἡρακλέους τε καὶ Περσέως ἐς Δία. καὶ οὖν παρ' Ἄμμωνα ταύτῃ τῇ γνώμῃ ἐστέλλετο, ὡς καὶ τὰ αὐτοῦ ἀτρεκέστερον εἰσόμενος ἢ φήσων γε ἐγνωκέναι. μέχρι μὲν δὴ Παραιτονίου παρὰ θάλασσαν ἦγει δι' ἐρήμου, οὐ μέντοι δι' ἀνύδρου τῆς χώρας, σταδίους ἐς χιλίους καὶ ἑξακοσίους, ὡς λέγει Ἀριστόβουλος. ἐντεῦθεν δὲ ἐς τὴν μεσόγαιαν ἐτράπετο, ἵνα τὸ μαντεῖον ἦν τοῦ Ἄμμωνος. ἔστι δὲ ἐρήμη τε ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ψάμμος ἡ πολλὴ αὐτῆς καὶ ἄνυδρος. ὕδωρ δὲ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ πολὺ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐγένετο, καὶ τοῦτο ἐς τὸ θεῖον ἀνηνέχθη.*

Alexander's divine sonship with the ancient pharaonic capital of Memphis—are intended to support his own claim to legitimacy directed at his native Egyptian subjects, particularly the powerful priesthood of Amon. This Egyptian orientation suggests that Ptolemy's narrative of the Siwah episode lacked Callisthenes' literary construction of Alexander as an epic hero on a panhellenic mission. Although I concede that this is very much an *argumentum ex silentio*, given the exiguous amount of material extant from Ptolemy's history, Ptolemy's evident concern to legitimise his own dynastic rule in Egypt renders it very likely that he deliberately omitted Callisthenes' claim of Alexander's direct descent from Perseus.

As we have seen, Callisthenes alleges that Alexander's motivation in making the pilgrimage to the oracle was to emulate his heroic ancestors, Perseus and Heracles. As there is no other evidence associating either Perseus or Heracles explicitly with Siwah,[33] it is likely that Callisthenes invented both traditions.[34] Not only would the invention of prior consultations of the oracle at Siwah by Perseus and Heracles serve as heroic precedents for Alexander's own journey to the oracle, they would also bolster Alexander's claims to divine parentage as both Perseus and Heracles were sons of Zeus. As the founder of the Argead dynasty, Heracles appears frequently on Argead coinage, including Alexander's own issues (where the hero sports his customary lion-skin headdress),[35] and Alexander is attested to have performed sacrifices and games to Heracles throughout his campaign.[36] Perseus, on the other hand, as Heracles' ancestor, was (technically at least) automatically an ancestor of Alexander also, but significantly he (unlike Heracles) is not featured in previous Argead coinage or iconography; in fact, this genealogy does not occur anywhere outside of the Siwah episode, suggesting that it, like the prior consultations of Heracles and Perseus, is a creation of Callisthenes,[37] presumably on Alexander's orders. Interestingly, there is some intriguing evidence that Alexander did in fact play up his lineage from Perseus in an Egyptian context, for Pliny (*HN* 15.46) tells us Alexander crowned the victors of the athletic competitions that he

[33] Herodotus (2.42) alludes to a tradition that Heracles visited the sanctuary of A(m)mon in Egyptian Thebes. Similarly, he also (2.91) associates Perseus with both Egypt, where a festival in his honour was celebrated at Chemmis, and Libya, where he collected the Gorgon's head.

[34] Bosworth (1980) 269–70; Bowden (2014) 44–45; Ogden (2014) 13; Pownall (2014) 59.

[35] See Dahmen (2007) 39–41.

[36] Heckel (2015), esp. 25 and 29–30.

[37] Müller (2020d) 265–6.

established at Memphis with the persea plant (a traditional symbol of pharaonic power), which had been brought there by his ancestor Perseus.[38] These games are likely those mentioned by Arrian (*Anab.* 3.5.2) as instituted in honour of Zeus Basileus by Alexander upon his return to Memphis from Siwah, and it is tempting to suppose that coins issued from Memphis under Ptolemy's predecessor Cleomenes depicting a beardless warrior with a Phrygian helmet on the obverse and a winged horse on the reverse were intended to legitimise Alexander's rule in Egypt.[39]

The motivation for Callisthenes to graft Perseus onto the Argead family tree is not hard to discern, for it was widely believed among the Greeks that Perseus was the eponymous ancestor of the Persians.[40] Thus, Alexander's alleged descent from Perseus would legitimise his future conquest of Persia, at first to his Greek and Macedonian subjects, and presumably over time to his Persian ones as well, particularly after he began deliberately and ostentatiously to incorporate into his own traveling court carefully chosen aspects of Persian ceremonial (ironically, as his opposition to Alexander's 'orientalising' was precisely what ultimately caused Callisthenes' downfall). The legitimising aim of this connection to Perseus explains why Callisthenes is so careful to juxtapose the recognition of Alexander's divine filiation at Siwah both with his victory over Darius at Arbela (i.e., Gaugamela) and the death of Darius that signaled the end of the Achaemenid line through the apparently off-hand reference (in the passage cited from Strabo above) to the 'many oracles' of Apollo at Didyma that the Milesian ambassadors conveyed to Alexander upon his return to Memphis.

Furthermore, Callisthenes' somewhat strained association between Alexander's consultation of the oracle at Siwah and the oracle of Apollo at Didyma, through his reference to the alleged impiety of the Branchidae, serves as a very effective reminder of the Persian plundering and destruction of sanctuaries during Xerxes' invasion of Greece. It is notable that here too Callisthenes resorts to invention to legitimise Alexander's conquest of Persia. The Branchidae, the priestly family that administered the sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma (near Miletus), did not in fact offer up the sanctuary for

[38] Caneva (2016b) esp. 46–8 (who posits a Ptolemaic origin for this *aition*); cf. Caneva (2016a) 15–16. See also Barbatani (2014) 218–20, who comments on Perseus' unique position as 'a thoroughly Hellenic hero', but one with multicultural roots in both Egypt and Argos (legendary homeland of the Argead dynasty of Macedonia), though she notes that 'his genealogy shows that even his "Egyptian lineage" is originally Argolic'.

[39] Caneva (2016a) 16 n. 16 and (2016b) 46 n. 16; cf. Dahmen (2007) 9–10.

[40] Hdt. 7.150.2; Hellanicus, *BNJ* 4 F 59 (= *BNJ* 687a F 1b; cf. F 1a); Xen. *Cyr.* 1.2.1.

Xerxes to sack in 480 BC; instead, according to Herodotus (6.19.3), it was plundered and burnt at the time of the defeat of Miletus in 494. It seems, therefore, that the sacrilegious Persian in question was actually Darius, rather than Xerxes, and Herodotus says nothing on the subject of the Branchidae's alleged responsibility for the sanctuary's fate. Callisthenes' motivation in inventing this tradition is two-fold. First of all, the transferral of the historical context of the destruction of the sanctuary at Didyma from the Ionian Revolt to the Persian invasion of 480 allows him to add to the list of Xerxes' crimes against the Greeks and their gods that legitimised Alexander's campaign against Persia. Second, the tradition that Xerxes settled the Branchidae in Sogdiana after their betrayal of the sanctuary serves to justify Alexander's massacre of a people by that name and destruction of their town in his pursuit of Bessus.[41] Thus, Callisthenes' deliberate distortions in his references to the Branchidae in the Siwah episode are intended to enhance Alexander's self-proclaimed panhellenic mission,[42] for the theme of revenge against Xerxes in particular for his destruction of Greek sanctuaries formed an important part of Alexander's consensus strategy (to borrow the useful phrase of Giuseppe Squillace) that was intended to secure the willing co-operation of the Greeks in his campaign against Persia.[43]

The panhellenic overlay that pervades the extant fragments of Callisthenes' history also explains why Alexander is acknowledged in his account as the son of Zeus, both at Siwah and by 'many (other) oracles'. Callisthenes' concern to paint the recognition of Alexander's divine sonship at Siwah in Hellenic terms as part of the ongoing justification of the campaign as revenge against the Persians can also be discerned in his narrative of the Battle of Gaugamela, at which Alexander decisively defeated the last Achaemenid king Darius III, whose flight from the battlefield effectively ceded to his victorious opponent control of the Persian Empire. It is not surprising that Callisthenes dramatises the moment by presenting the king as an epic hero, emphasising his descent from Zeus.[44] Nevertheless, although Callisthenes' version of the Siwah episode was directed in the first instance at a Greek readership prior to 327 BC (the date of his arrest and

[41] Curt. 7.5.28–35; Plut. *Mor.* 557B.

[42] So Müller (2020a) (with earlier bibliography).

[43] Squillace (2010); cf. Flower (2000); Antela-Bernárdez (2016); Rung (2016).

[44] Plut. *Alex.* 33.1 = Callisthenes, *BNJ* 124 F 36: 'Zeus-descended' (Διόθεν ἐστὶν γεγονώς). On this passage, see Pownall (2014) 60–61.

condemnation), there is reason to think that Alexander associated himself with Amon in traditional pharaonic terms to his Egyptian subjects for the remainder of his campaign.[45]

But Arrian (*Anab.* 3.2.1–2, passage cited above), who appears to be following the narrative of Aristobulus (as I have argued above), repeatedly refers to the deity at the oracular sanctuary of Siwah as Ammon (i.e., rather than Zeus, who only appears in his role as the divine progenitor of Perseus and Heracles). Because the publication of Aristobulus' history in its final form did not occur until after the death of Antigonus Monophthalmus in 301 BC,[46] he adopts the association with Ammon that Alexander broadcast in the later stages of his campaign, when he was emphasising his legitimate succession to the Achaemenid dynasty to the constituent peoples of his newly-acquired empire (i.e., beyond a strictly Greek audience). It is virtually certain that Ptolemy too referred to Alexander's divine parent as Ammon,[47] in response to his ongoing requirements for legitimation in a specifically Egyptian context.[48] Because Ptolemy's rule was based in Egypt, there was no need for him to legitimise Alexander's conquest of the Achaemenid empire by connecting him to the legendary ancestor of the Persians or to emphasise his filiation from Zeus as a parallel to either Perseus or Heracles.

Ptolemy's adherence to a strictly Egyptian context in his rendition of Alexander's pilgrimage to Siwah suggests that this passage at least of his history was composed relatively early in his rule, when he was attempting to solidify his support in Egypt, particularly from the powerful priesthood of Amon at Thebes. As an integral part of this platform of negotiation with the Egyptian elite, Ptolemy took care to carry on with the restoration of religious monuments that had been undertaken in Alexander's name following his

[45] See esp. the bilingual inscription on an altar at Bahariya explicitly referring to Alexander as the son of Amon; Bosch-Puche (2008); cf. id. (2013) and (2014); Bianchi (2018). But see Ladynin (2016) 258–9, who argues that this particular inscription is an early Ptolemaic imitation, although there are others that attest to Alexander's adoption of traditional pharaonic titulary (if not divine sonship *per se*); cf. Sheedy and Ockinga (2015) 232–7 and Caneva (2016a) 20–22.

[46] *BNJ* 139 F 54, with commentary by Pownall (2013).

[47] If, as I shall argue below, Ptolemy's history was not a work of old age but was published earlier in his rule, Aristobulus may well have adopted his practice. But given our scanty biographical data for both historians, the temporal relationship between their histories is impossible to determine, and it is safest to consider the work of each independently from the other; see Pownall (2013) 'Biographical Essay'.

[48] So Howe (2013) 63–64, who adduces a parallel switch from Zeus to Ammon on Ptolemy's coinage; cf. Sheedy and Ockinga (2015) and Pownall (2021).

departure from Egypt, ostensibly to right the wrongs inflicted by the sacrilegious Persian usurpers. As long as Alexander's Argead heirs were alive and Ptolemy was still ruling from Memphis as satrap, dedicatory inscriptions recorded under the name of Philip III Arrhidaeus continued to emphasise the king's restoration of the temples of the Egyptian gods.[49] But Ptolemy's aggressive territorial ambitions in Syria in the wake of his victory over Demetrius Poliorcetes at Gaza in 312/11 BC seem to coincide with his appropriation of the religious role in Egypt previously played by Alexander and his heirs,[50] and his inauguration of an ambitious new building program closely associated with the temple complexes of the Thirtieth Dynasty.[51] On the so-called 'Satrap Stele' (*CGC* 22182),[52] erected at Buto in 311 BC after Ptolemy's successful campaign in Syria, although the young Alexander IV (Arrhidaeus having been executed on Cassander's orders five years previously) is given the normal pharaonic titulary, it is Ptolemy who is honoured in Egyptian royal phraseology for fulfilling the traditional duty of the king to restore the property of the gods:

> As he brought back the sacred images of the gods which were found within Asia, together with all the ritual implements and all the sacred scrolls of the temples of Upper and Lower Egypt, so he restored them in their proper places.[53]

As Donata Schäfer has recently observed, although the direct audience of the Satrap Stele was the educated priestly elite, the message that Ptolemy was a dutiful and righteous king was intended for a much broader (Egyptian) audience through oral dissemination, and illustrates the wide reach of his legitimising propaganda.[54]

[49] Cf. Lloyd (2011) 88–90 and Sheedy and Ockinga (2015) 236–7.

[50] On the intensification of Ptolemy's empire-building efforts after Gaza, see Hauben (2014) and Meeus (2014).

[51] Minas-Nerpel (2018).

[52] On the 'Satrap Stele', see esp. Schäfer (2011); Colburn (2015) 173–80; Howe (2018a) 161–4; Ockinga (2018).

[53] Trans. Ockinga in Sheedy and Ockinga (2015) 238.

[54] Schäfer (2015) 447–51. Ockinga (2018) adds that the royal phraseology employed on the Satrap Stele suggests that Ptolemy would have been considered a legitimate pharaoh by his Egyptian subjects, even before he formally adopted the title of king a few years later.

More important for our purposes, perhaps, is the Satrap Stele's claim that the temple property that Ptolemy returned had been stolen by the Persians.[55] Ptolemy, it seems, exploited the persistent 'memory' of alleged Achaemenid abuse of traditional religious practices and confiscation of temple property to portray himself as a pious restorer (a characteristic of the rightful king) as part of his legitimisation campaign to his Egyptian subjects, particularly the clergy.[56] Although Ptolemy's claim to have recovered statues of the gods and other temple property looted by the Persians is almost certainly specious,[57] the restitution of sacred objects became a *topos* among Ptolemaic royal inscriptions, illustrating the ongoing success of his appropriation of the idiomatic Egyptian virtues of kingship.[58] In addition to its ideological function as legitimising propaganda, Ptolemy's alleged recovery of stolen religious objects from Asia offered him and his successors a useful pretext to gain the support of the Egyptian elite for ongoing military campaigns in Syria against first the Antigonids, and eventually the Seleucids, who could be portrayed as the direct inheritors of the Achaemenid Persians.[59]

Ptolemy's desire to present himself as the antithesis of the impious Achaemenids as part of his platform of legitimation to his Egyptian subjects provides further confirmation that he did not include Alexander's supposed descent from Perseus in his narrative of the Siwah episode. Although it was essential for Ptolemy to maintain a connection to Alexander in order to justify the claim that he was his legitimate successor in Egypt, it was not necessary to adopt every aspect of the panhellenic hero that Callisthenes had created in response to Alexander's directives. Instead, Ptolemy was free to manipulate the Callisthenic Alexander into a figure of his own invention, carefully selecting the aspects that corresponded with his own agenda. Thus, he summarily excised Alexander's direct descent from Perseus, the legendary

[55] The explicit reference to Xerxes' alleged seizure of sacred lands at Buto is probably not historical, but emanates from the *topos* that he represented an archetypal temple robber: see Klinkott (2007). Cf. Kuhrt (2014), who demonstrates that the tradition of Xerxes' wholesale destruction of temples in Babylon is a similar fiction created by the classical Greek historians.

[56] Colburn (2015).

[57] There is no historical context for this claim in any of our extant accounts of the Diadoch Wars: Colburn (2015) 178. Cf. Agut-Labordère (2017) 150: 'the first Ptolemies tried to manipulate the Egyptian *cultural* memory in regard to the lootings in order to give rise to a common *political* memory that was compatible with their own perception of the Persians'.

[58] Colburn (2015) 179–81 and Agut-Labordère (2017) 151–3.

[59] Agut-Labondère (2017), esp. 158–61; cf. Briant (2009) 31 and Howe (2018a) 163.

ancestor of the Persians, from his reworking of Ammon's recognition of Alexander's divine sonship at Siwah, an episode that was crucial not only for the legitimation of Argead rule in Egypt, but more importantly the foundation of his own dynasty based at Memphis (the ancient religious capital of Egypt). Unlike Alexander, Ptolemy was not ruling Persia, and it offered him no benefit in his Egyptian context to emphasise his predecessor's rightful succession to the Achaemenid empire through his descent from Perseus. In fact, it was far more useful to his immediate political purposes to sever this putative link to the legendary ancestor of the Persians and to exploit instead the persistent tradition (whether real or manufactured) of Persian depredations of Egyptian shrines, and to portray his rival Diadochi (rather than Alexander) as their direct successors.

Despite the traditional view that Ptolemy would not have had the time to write his history until the end of his eventful reign,[60] his blatant self-aggrandisement and highlighting of his close association with Alexander in the extant fragments suggest that he composed it relatively early in his rule of Egypt, when his need for legitimation was the greatest.[61] The deliberate excision of non-Egyptian elements from Ptolemy's narrative of Alexander's consultation of the oracle at Siwah (including as I have argued, his legendary descent from Perseus) demonstrates that one of the main aims of his history was to solidify his position in Egypt, and in particular to gain the support of the native high clergy in the ongoing struggle against his rivals. Ptolemy's embarkation on an extensive campaign of aggressive imperialism from 312/11 BC onwards suggests that he felt secure in his position in Egypt and no longer felt it necessary to seek legitimation from his subject population (whether Greco-Macedonian or native Egyptian) to quite the same degree. It is no coincidence that Ptolemy's transferal of the seat of his satrapy from the ancient home of the pharaohs at Memphis on the Nile to Alexandria, with its Mediterranean orientation, had occurred by 311 BC, when the Satrap Stele mentions it as his residence. Ptolemy's subsequent transformation of Alexandria from a fortress (as it is described in the Satrap Stele) into an appropriately impressive capital (and the eventual highly symbolic reburial of Alexander's embalmed corpse in suitable splendour at its centre) suggests that later in his rule Ptolemy was more secure in his control of Egypt, was less concerned to establish his legitimacy, and was beginning to focus his

[60] Most recently advocated by Worthington (2016) 216–19 and Heckel (2018).

[61] Errington (1969); 241–2; Bosworth (1980) 22–23; Stadter (1980) 68; Howe (2018a) 171–6 and (2018b) 'Biographical Essay'.

attention upon laying the foundations for a world empire to be ruled from his new capital, a city which despite its name had very little association with Alexander himself.[62] In other words, he now set his sights beyond Egypt to the larger Mediterranean world, and although the figure of Alexander continued to play a key role in this new phase of propaganda, Ptolemy's own ties to Memphis arguably began to overshadow those of his illustrious predecessor, culminating in his assumption of the title of *basileus* in 306/5 BC,[63] and subsequent coronation as pharaoh.[64]

The spectacular success of Ptolemy's self-serving propaganda reveals the important role of the writing of contemporary history for rulers to justify their regimes and to legitimate political and territorial aspirations. Although contemporary accounts were generally considered the most reliable, they were also the most subject to distortion and manipulation to serve the agenda of their authors. The fraught decades after the death of Alexander the Great, when his former officers began to jockey for position in the new world order, led to a new focus on the possibilities offered by the writing of contemporary history for the solidification and legitimisation of their power, and historians no longer adhered to the conventional practice of effacing themselves from their narratives. Ptolemy's entrance into the historiographical arena seems to have created a ripple effect among his contemporaries that was just as far-reaching as his military and political activities. It is likely, as Tim Howe has suggested recently,[65] that Ptolemy's creation of a Ptolemaic Alexander to bolster his specific ambitions inspired his rivals to do likewise. It cannot be coincidental that there appears to have been a cluster of Alexander historians at the court of Antigonus Monophthalmus, presumably writing in service to an Antigonid agenda.[66] But whereas the other contemporary historians circulated particular versions of Alexander intended to legitimise the claims of their powerful patrons (and thereby maintain their own positions at court), Ptolemy was the only one to adapt and reconfigure Alexander's image and ideology with a specific Egyptian twist in order to bolster support from all elements of his subject

[62] Howe (2014); Strootman (2014), esp. 314–15; Caneva (2018) 91; Pownall (2021).

[63] According to the traditional date after Antigonus' failed invasion of Egypt. It is possible, however, that Ptolemy's assumption of the royal title dates to 305/4 BC, in the aftermath of his siege of Rhodes; so, e.g., Caneva (2016a) 68–75. The precise date does not affect my argument.

[64] Hölbl (2001) 21–22; Worthington (2016) 162.

[65] Howe (2018a) 174.

[66] So, e.g., Bucciantini (2015) 152–3; Howe (2018a).

population for his own dynastic rule. Ptolemy's subtle rebranding of Alexander as a Ptolemaic precursor in his history was a carefully constructed plank in his ever-evolving royal program aimed at laying solid foundations for a new dynasty based in Egypt that would overshadow all of his contemporary rivals. In this aim, he was astonishingly successful.

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