



Le regalità ibride in Oriente da Alessandro ai Sasanidi

a cura di
Generoso Cefalo, Alessandro Magnani







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ALEXANDER'S HYBRID HISTORIOGRAPHY:

Documentary History, Historical Emplotment, and the Scribal 'Connective Tissue'

SAM BLANKENSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The cultural hybridity inherent in Alexander III's self-promotion is well-documented, but his historiographical activities as king are less frequently understood in this light. His strategy of delegating management of his royal image to a professional historian (Callisthenes of Olynthus, then Chares of Mytilene), while simultaneously employing a traveling complement of specialized scribes (namely, bematists, hypomnemmatists, and writers of *ephemerides*) replicates the division of scribal activities in the service of the Achaemenid Great Kings' management of imperial history, as far as we can tell from the royal inscriptions and from internal bureaucratic records. In this paper, I elucidate the nature and occasional interplay of these two different modes of historiographical production—one characterized by ideologically shaped, often emplotted, historical narrative; the other by bureaucratic record-keeping—as practiced by the scribal cadre under the Achaemenid kings and then by the secretariat who traveled with Alexander. After considering mechanisms of intellectual transfer from the Achaemenids to the Argeads, I conclude by proposing a final shared feature of Achaemenid and Alexandrian historiography that owes to the existence of the interpersonal 'connective tissue' binding monarchs to their scribal supporters. Namely, the proximity of intellectuals practicing discrete types of historiographical task conditioned the emergence of new, hybridized forms of text that superseded the intentions either of the Persian Great Kings or of Alexander.

Keywords: Achaemenid Empire; Alexander; historiography; Callisthenes; scribal practice

When Alexander III campaigned throughout, and eventually conquered, the Achaemenid Persian Empire, he confronted the task of managing not only his armies and territories, but also his own image and legend.¹ He drew variously from Macedonian, Greek, and Persian cultural and political repertoires in these endeavors. While the hybridity of his courtly practice is well-studied, I suggest in the present contribution that what we can tentatively reconstruct of his historiographical program similarly evinces an impulse towards the hybridization of existing cultural practices. That is, the various (and largely lost) textual materials associated with Alexander's campaigns, ranging from the *ephemerides* and the published periegetic works by his hired "step-counters" (*bematistai*) to the narrative histories of his deeds, jointly hint at the combination of inherited and/or adopted Greco-Macedonian modes of narrative history-writing with Persian strategies of record-keeping and historiographical production. Alexander's intentional borrowing and adaptation of what had proved, in Persia, an effective apparatus for imperial control, is of a piece with his other purposeful implementation of strategies learned from Persia. As with other Persianate elements of his kingship, moreover, Alexander's employment of Achaemenid modes of historiography was enabled by longstanding processes of Argead acculturation to the Macedonian kingdom's Achaemenid neighbors (and sometime overlords).

Grouping together Alexander's *bematists*, *ephemerists*, and official historians into a single cadre, all subject to one and the same overarching historiographical 'program,' may seem forced or artificial. The day-to-day activities of Alexander's historian Callisthenes and his *bematist* Baeton, for example, would appear to diverge significantly, given the different types of textual production associated with each. The one wrote some sort of rhetorical narrative of Alexander's deeds, apparently emplotting these to some extent along the lines of culturally familiar narratives (*e.g.*, those of Homer and/or Herodotus); while the other maintained records of Alexander's ac-

¹ I am immensely grateful to my fellow participants at *Ricerche a Confronto XIX* and to the anonymous reviewers for their useful feedback. I thank Jessica Westerhold as well for her helpful comments, and Julian Degen for the bibliographical leads. Of course, all remaining errors are mine alone.

tual movements. I suggest, nevertheless, that the shared proximity of each of these persons to Alexander's court, and their respective involvement in textual production inspired by Alexander's activities, entails conditions of courtly integration or acculturation to a shared mission and ideological program, in similar ways to the scribal apparatus supporting the rule of Persia's Great Kings.

My argument will proceed as follows: first, I will build on recent studies of Achaemenid-period textual evidence (both documentary and literary) to propose that the Achaemenid bureaucratic corps, through its acculturation to Achaemenid court norms, constitutes a unique locus for the combination of historiographical techniques, both documentary and ideological-narrative. Having identified these two historiographical modes, I will describe, in turn, the scribal cadre employed by the Achaemenid Great Kings and by Alexander, first with attention to their documentary operations and then to their generation of emplotted historical narrative. The mechanisms for the transfer of Achaemenid habits to Argead Macedonia will then be considered. I will conclude by elucidating a final shared feature of Achaemenid and Alexandrian historiography that owes, in my view, to the nature of the interpersonal 'connective tissue' binding monarchs to their scribal supporters.

Writing in Achaemenid Persia: Scribal Acculturation and Extra-curricular Compositions

In the case of Achaemenid Yehud, Mark Leuchter has demonstrated how its local scribal apparatus was trained and acculturated to the rhetoric of empire in part through the curricular reproduction of the normative, propagandist narratives encoded in the Achaemenid royal inscriptions.² After their shared training, the individuals comprising this milieu engaged day-to-day in the production of official imperial documentation.³ Fascinatingly, the imprint of their Achaemenid-acculturated scribal activities is discernible not only in its intended context—namely, in the official documentary

2 LEUCHTER 2024, especially Chapter 1.

3 See *ivi*, pp. 36-54.

production of this cadre's 'day jobs' – but also in the erudite Jewish literature which members of the cadre arguably produced while 'off the clock.' Leuchter convincingly shows how various compositions produced by this milieu evince different attitudes toward the Achaemenid regime that conditioned their textual production; as examples of literary texts produced under these conditions, he treats *Ezra-Nehemiah*, the *Book of the Twelve*, and the *Book of the Watchers*.⁴

The phenomenon he elucidates is not exclusive to Achaemenid Yehud, however. The makeup of the dossier of Aramaic texts found at the administrative colony in Elephantine supports this perception of multi-generic textual production, as well as the idea of the potential for officially-sanctioned materials to influence, in terms of their form and content, nonofficial literary activity. While most of the Elephantine texts are documentary in nature, two literary texts survive in the dossier: these include *TAD* C1, 1, a palimpsest containing the *Wisdom of Ahiqar* in Aramaic;⁵ and *TAD* C2, 1, featuring Aramaic versions of the Bisitun Inscription of Darius I (DB) as well as DNB, one of the same king's royal inscriptions on his tomb at Naqš-ī Rustām.⁶ As Ann-Kristin Wigand has recently demonstrated, these texts, taken together, reinforce a key political lesson for all subjects of the Achaemenid regime: the absolute requirement on the one hand, and dividends to be gained on the other hand, of loyalty to the beneficent Persian king.⁷ Importantly, the papyri containing the literary texts, with their politically normative messaging, are equally part and parcel of the local imperial apparatus which generated such documents as an authorization for boat repair (*TAD* 4, 6, 2)⁸, a request for the restoration of the physical structure and cultic permissions of a YHW-temple (*TAD* 4, 7)⁹, a treasury inventory (*TAD* 3, 19)¹⁰, or an account of allocations of emmer (*TAD* 3, 26)¹¹, to take a fairly random sampling of texts. Even the physical collocation of the

4 LEUCHTER 2024.

5 WIGAND 2023, p. 161. For text and translation, see PORTEN – YARDENI 1993, pp. 24-53.

6 WIGAND 2023, pp. 165-168. Text and translation in PORTEN – YARDENI 1993, pp. 58-71.

7 WIGAND 2023, pp. 165-168.

8 Text and translation at PORTEN – YARDENI 1986a, pp. 96-101.

9 Text and translation in *ivi*, pp. 68-71.

10 Text and translation at PORTEN – YARDENI 1993, pp. 242-243.

11 Text and translation at *ivi*, pp. 252-255.

Ahiqar text with “an erased Customs Account for Year 11 (= 475 B.C.E.)”¹² forcefully emblemizes the coexistence of these various text-types – literary and purely documentary – in one and the same dossier, that is, one and the same ideological and managerial universe.

In Egyptian Elephantine, too, these Achaemenid textual materials were available not only for their own immediate official purposes, but also for unofficial and creative reception by local parties, just as in the case of the Jewish milieu responsible for generating such texts as *Ezra-Nehemiah*. As Wigand notes, developments in subsequent Egyptian wisdom literature, including a Demotic version of *Ahiqar*, “demonstrat[e] that the *Ahiqar* material became rooted in Egypt and had an impact on Egyptian cultural production”.¹³ In other words, these literary texts exerted intellectual influence beyond their immediate use and reproduction in an official imperial context, thereby taking on a life of their own and offering the potential for creative elaboration.

Unfortunately, contemporary non-imperial narrative compositions in writing do not survive from other parts of the Persian empire to provide a window onto comparable processes occurring throughout the empire.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in the Great King’s court, one could imagine the most outstanding practitioners of scribal craft and scholarly training being recruited to serve as creators or copyists and disseminators of royal inscriptions.¹⁵ In any case, then, a typical scribe in the Persian chancellery must have been exposed to various modes of imperial text – both the ‘documentary’ and the ‘narrative-rhetorical’ – even if each individual did not personally produce both forms of text. In the Jewish milieu, both of these modes appear to have exerted formative influences on the creation of an entire body of literature

¹² Ivi, p. 23.

¹³ WIGAND 2023, p. 169; see pp. 168-169 on the relationships between the Aramaic *Wisdom of Ahiqar* and Egyptian wisdom literature both previous and later.

¹⁴ It would be interesting to read Herodotus’ variant Persian accounts of, e.g., the death of Cyrus in this light – as oral versions, and/or as nonofficial developments, of official accounts – but this undertaking is beyond the scope of the present paper. See the important contribution of SANCISI-WEERDENBURG 2010 for indications.

¹⁵ See SHAYEGAN 2012, pp. 84-93 for an analysis of the process of composition of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions. Note in particular at p. 92: *Babylonian scribes within the Achaemenid chancellery, or at the provincial level, possibly aware of the past usage of royal titulary in Mesopotamia, may have decided in favor of [Xerxes’] adoption [in Babylon] of the old Babylonian title šar māt Šumeri u Akkadî.*

produced for elite Jewish consumption; and the same may be true for Elephantine in its Egyptian context.¹⁶

I suggest that the potential for similar hybrid activity existed throughout the Achaemenid realm and, indeed, persisted into Alexander's takeover. I argue that the purposeful exposure and acculturation of Achaemenid scribes to the normative narratives of the empire, as well as to its standardized forms of bureaucratic accounting,¹⁷ made the scribal cadre into a unique 'connective tissue' between bureaucrats and writers of historical narrative, a group capable of negotiating both scribal modes, with uniquely generative results (such as the textual output evinced in post-exilic Jewish literature, or the Egyptian afterlife of *Aḥiqar*). Additionally, I suggest that the constellation of scribes attested in Alexander's entourage is similar enough to the Achaemenid situation (and its creative consequences for specific locales) to merit consideration as a case of Achaemenid "*influence*" on Alexander's practice of kingship rather than "*convergence*" of Macedonian and Persian royal habits (to use Pierre Briant's helpful distinction).¹⁸

By the designation of Alexander's 'scribes,'¹⁹ I mean to take into consideration a variegated and disjunct group of writers: note-takers, secretaries, letter-writers, literati: some whose names survive, and others whose do not; but all concerned, in their different intellectual spheres and competences, with the operational success of Alexander's campaigns and kingship. Thus broadly construed, the literature – ranging from technical to historiographic – which emerged as a by-product of Alexander's campaigns, indicates sustained writerly activity among the intellectual tasks taking place at his court.²⁰ At a public-facing level, Alexander appointed official historians to narrate his accomplishments: initially, Callisthenes of Olynthus (*BNJ* 124), then Chares of Mytilene (*BNJ* 125) after Callisthenes' fall from Alexander's favor. Writers of memoranda (ὑπομνήματα) and "*dailies*" (ἐφημερίδες) produced internal records of the king's activities.²¹ On a diplomatic level, the possibility that Alexander made use of letter-writers is

16 In addition to LEUCHTER 2024, see BLANKENSHIP 2024 on Achaemenid discursive techniques adopted in the composition of *Ezra-Nehemiah*.

17 On these two modes, see some reflections already in BLANKENSHIP 2022.

18 BRIANT 1994, pp. 283-284.

19 See CHUGG 2005, pp. 155-156 for the idea of Alexander's "secretariat".

20 For Alexander's court, see SPAWFORTH 2007.

21 See HAMMOND 1988, ANSON 1994, CHUGG 2005, BEARZOT 2025.

opened up by Aeschines' suggestion (*On the Embassy* 124-125) that Philip could avail himself of the epistolary expertise of Leosthenes of Athens and Python of Byzantium.²² It would strain credulity, and oversimplify matters, to suggest that all of these different types of writers all worked together as a class or self-conscious cadre, in consultation with one another. But as we will see, their various discursive modes as writers and intellectuals did not remain strictly compartmentalized in the environment of Alexander's court.²³

The fact that modern students of Alexander associate given names attested from his entourage with given types of writerly task or intellectual enterprise (for example: Baeton the bematist, Eumenes the writer of *ephemerides*), does not preclude the existence of a largely-anonymous complement of 'scribal' intellectuals whose activities and interrelationships may only be reconstructed from their surviving work. The names and biographies of the vast majority of Persian scribes, however, are unknown to us; we can only attempt to reconstruct their social and/or political affiliations provisionally, through the writing they left behind.²⁴ Despite the anonymity of many of the texts they composed, we are able to discern something about the intellectual activities of such individuals *en milieu* and to trace their collective intellectual imprint upon multiple textual corpora.

Approaching these textual corpora, both Persian and Greek, as well as the related testimonia, let us consider the ways in which scribes in either sphere participated in the two modes of historiographical record-keeping proposed here.

22 MÜLLER 2024, pp. 145-146. AESCHIN. *On the Embassy* 124 expresses incredulity at Demosthenes' accusation that he (Aeschines) wrote a letter for Philip, as if Leosthenes were unable to do it (οὐ δυνατός ἦν ἐπιδεξίως ἐπιστολὴν γράψαι). Aeschines does imply, however, that Philip was skilled enough as an orator to write such a letter on his own (αὐτός, §125); and in their reports on Alexander's letter to Darius III after the Battle of Issus, both Arrian and Quintus Curtius Rufus make Alexander himself the author of the letter (ἀντιγράφει Ἀλέξανδρος, ARR. *An.* 2, 14; *Alexander* [...] *rescripsit*, CVRT. 4, 1, 10). On Alexander's missive, see MÜLLER 2024, pp. 146-147, with further bibliography.

23 In fact CHUGG 2005, pp. 156-159 suggests that bematistic data was incorporated into the *Ephemerides*, and specifically by the bematist Diognetus of Erythrae (see n. 46 below).

24 See, for example, the essays in HENSEL – ADAMCZEWSKI – NOCQUET 2023.

'Documentary History': Bureaucratic Record-Keeping

First, I will trace the documentary mode of textual production that took place in either court. The habit of constant, meticulous record-keeping is a hallmark of Persian imperial management, certainly from the time of Darius I forward. The official authorization of this activity, and its occurrence at the highest levels of the imperial hierarchy, is suggested by Ctesias' mention of βασιλικαὶ διφθέραι 'royal parchments' (*FGrHist* 688 T3) or 'royal records' (βασιλικαὶ ἀναγραφαί, *FGrHist* 688 F1b, 22, 5), and by the references in *Ezra* 6, 1-3 and *Esth.* 6, 1 to royal archives.²⁵ Suggesting the authoritative nature of the archives and their contents, biblical sources (e.g. *Ezra* 1, 2-4) record – or at least purport to record – royal decrees that were stored in these archives and retrievable later on by subsequent kings (and the same sources envisage these decrees as exerting binding legal power over royal successors).²⁶ While such texts and archives do not survive with the format, titles, or contents attributed to them by Ctesias or by the Hebrew Bible, and such literary appeals to their existence may say as much about Greek or Jewish perceptions of Persian record-keeping as about realities on the ground, nevertheless the impression created by these brief references is reified through the various documentary corpora mentioned above, that is, the Persepolis Fortification Archive,²⁷ the Bactrian documents, and, in Egypt, the Aršāma dossier²⁸ and Elephantine documents.

If, as I have argued elsewhere, Greek intellectuals such as Herodotus and Xenophon were sufficiently aware of these Persian imperial practices that they could skillfully emulate and even problematize the pervasive use of list-making as a Persian technology,²⁹ and if Jewish scribes (apart from

25 For the *royal archives* mentioned by Ctesias, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, and *Esther*, cfr. LLEWELLYN-JONES – ROBSON 2010, pp. 58-63; VAN SETERS 1983, p. 294.

26 Cfr. the consultation of the imperial archives at *Ezra* 4, 15, *Ezra* 6, 1-2 (the latter instance resulting in the retrieval of Cyrus' decree, reproduced at *Ezra* 6, 2-5, that had authorized the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple). For a repository of royal precedent, compare also HDT. 3, 31, where Cambyses consults the *royal judges* (βασιλῆται δικασταί) for legal permission, within the framework of *ancestral laws* (τῶν πατρίων θεσμῶν), to marry his own sister. Pace MOORE 2021, 72, for whom [o]f course, in the time of Darius, a decree of Cyrus would not have been valid, I think such Greek and Judean perceptions of abiding documentary authority, including "ancestral law" as a precedent to be obeyed even by Great Kings, must correspond in some way to Persian practice (or at least royal rhetoric).

27 The *editio princeps* for most of these documents is HALLOCK 1969.

28 On which see TUPLIN – MA 2020.

29 BLANKENSHIP 2022.

producing such texts at their ‘day jobs’) were similarly able to appropriate the format and style of Persian imperial lists (among other techniques of Persian management of resources and history) in the composition of *Ezra-Nehemiah* as an authoritative text for their own community;³⁰ then the Argead Macedonian kings – erstwhile clients of the Achaemenid realm – must have been aware of these Achaemenid modes of imperial management too. Indeed, Julian Degen rightly emphasizes the situation of both Greeks and Macedonians in the “*imperial borderland*” of the Achaemenid empire, such that these Aegean polities were receptive to Achaemenid imperial discourses and institutions.³¹

Contemporary literary sources from the Greek sphere accordingly demonstrate knowledge of scribal note-taking or record-keeping in the service of Persian kings on military campaign, and in my view suggest that some Greek intellectuals may have developed a critical awareness of the potential for such contemporaneous record-keeping to inform historiographical, or quasi-historiographical, activities. I refer briefly to two Herodotean testimonies here. First, according to *Histories* 4, 88, 1, Mandrocles, the architect of Darius’ bridge across the Bosphorus, has a drawing made (γραφάμενος, *bis*) of Darius’ expedition. Mandrocles dedicates this historical representation to a temple of Hera; so his creation is neither quite the same as historiography proper nor is its primary purpose the commemoration of Darius’ deeds so much as the achievement of Mandrocles himself.³² Still, Herodotus’ story likely refracts an authentic tradition in the ancient Near East wherein scribes and artists accompanied campaigning kings with an eye to contemporary record-keeping and subsequent commemorative activity. This usage goes back at least to the Neo-Assyrians, an important model for Achaemenid kingship: the reliefs in Tiglath-Pileser III’s palace in Nimrud in fact illustrate such scribes making records of spoils after battle; Julian Reade has connected “*the appointment of war-artists*” with Shalmaneser as well.³³

30 BLANKENSHIP 2024, pp. 627-636; see also CARLSON HASLER 2020 on *Ezra-Nehemiah* as an “archival” text, and JONES 2018 on documents in *Ezra-Nehemiah* as “colonial mimicry”.

31 DEGEN 2025. I am grateful to Dr. Degen for generously sharing his work with me before publication.

32 See GRETHLEIN 2013, p. 189.

33 Quotation from READE 1981, p. 154. For this practice, see, e.g., PARKER 2011, pp. 360, 366, and READE 1981, p. 154 (cited by PARKER 2011, p. 366). PARKER 2011, p. 362, Fig. 2 provides one of

Second, I adduce the explicitly registered presence of γραμματισταί ‘scribes’ on Xerxes’ campaign against the mainland Greeks.³⁴ After the Great King musters and enumerates his huge westward expeditionary force (at HDT. 7, 59, 3), he goes around asking each contingent of the army and navy about themselves (land forces: διεξελάντων ἐπὶ ἄρματος παρὰ ἔθνους ἕν ἕκαστον ἐπυνθάνετο, “driving around on a chariot, he was making inquiries people by people, one each at a time” at 7, 100, 1; navy: ἐπειρωτῶν τε ἑκάστας ὁμοίως καὶ τὸν πεζὸν καὶ ἀπογραφόμενος, “asking about each of them in the same way as the infantry, and having the answers written up,” at 7, 100, 2) and causes his scribes to take down the results of his ethnographic inquiries (ἀπογραφόμενος, 7, 100, 2; cfr. ἀπέγραφον οἱ γραμματισταί at 7, 100, 1). The result of their write-up, as Jonas Grethlein has shown, is suggestively similar to Herodotus’ historiographic activity, and in particular the lengthy ethnographic catalogue presented by the Greek historian himself immediately before this passage.³⁵ Already in the late fifth century, then, Greek observers were familiar with the Persian royal practice of note-taking or record-keeping, and its historiographical uses.

While Greeks do not mention such personnel by name, documentary sources from the Achaemenid realm allow us to trace the careers of individual actors within the local bureaucratic cadres employed in the service of the Great Kings of Persia.³⁶ Close to the central administration of the imperial heartland, some scribes’ names are registered in the Persepolis Fortification Archive texts.³⁷ Scribal names likewise appear in the dossier

these images of scribes on campaign (from Tiglath-Pileser’s palace)

34 I treat this case-study in BLANKENSHIP 2022, pp. 79-81; see already GRETHLEIN 2009, pp. 205-207 and GRETHLEIN 2013, pp. 190-191.

35 GRETHLEIN 2009, pp. 205-207; cfr. GRETHLEIN 2013, pp. 190-191.

36 I am grateful to my interlocutors at *Ricerche a Confronto XIX* for provoking me to think about individual biographies of scribal personnel.

37 For example, many of the tablets comprising HALLOCK’s Category T Texts, or Letters, are addressed by a high-ranking official such as Parnakka (see e.g. PF 1788-1810) to someone else, but contain the notice [PN] wrote (the text). The Elamite formula reads: PN *tal-li-iš-da*. Texts and translations as in HALLOCK 1969; see pp. 50-53 for general comments on the T Texts, including interpretation of the scribal notices. Such personal names include, e.g., Kamezza (PF 1788, ll. 10-11, PF 1789, ll. 11-12), Ansukka (PF 1790, l. 25, PF 1795, ll. 12-13), Šakšabanuš (PF 1791, l. 28, PF 1796, ll. 14-15, PF 1797, ll. 11-12), and Karkiš (PF 1792, ll. 15-16, 1793, l. 16). Note that the latter is not the same Karkiš as the satrap studied by HENKELMAN 2010, pp. 704-713; cfr. p. 704 for the presence of multiple people named Karkiš in the PFA tablets.

of Aramaic documents recovered from Bactria (*ADAB*),³⁸ similarly in the context of letters composed by a scribe on behalf a high-ranking official (usually Axvamazdā, satrap of Bactria): here we find the Iranophone names of “*Hašavaxšu the scribe*” (*hšwḥšw spr’*, *ADAB* A1, 12)³⁹, “*Daizaka the scribe*” (*dyzk spr’*, A2, 7, A4, 6, A7, 2),⁴⁰ and “*Nurafratarā the scribe*” (*nwrprtr spr’*, A5, 3).⁴¹ In Achaemenid Egypt, letters were handwritten by such persons as Rashta (e.g. *TAD* A6, 9, 6, *rst spr’*, cfr. also *TAD* A6, 10, 10, A6, 11, 6, A6, 12, 3, A6, 13, 5 – all on behalf of Aršāma the satrap)⁴² and Nabuaqab (*TAD* A6, 2, 23, *nbu ‘qb ktb*).⁴³

More famously – and suggestively for the model of personal proximity to the monarch that is developed in this paper – the Hebrew Bible mentions “*Ezra son of Seraiah*” in Babylon (*Ezra* 7, 1), whose biography is recounted at some length: in addition to providing his extended genealogy (*Ezra* 7, 1-5), the text reports that “*he was a scribe skilled in the Torah of Moses*” (*vāhū’-sofēr māhîr bātōrat Mošeh*, *Ezra* 7, 6) and that his activities brought him sufficiently close to the Great King that “*the king gave to him, as the hand of YHWH his God was upon him, everything according to his asking*” (*vayyiten-lō hammelek kāyad-YHWH elohāv’ālān kol baqāšātō*, *Ezra* 7, 6), ultimately authorizing a mission to Ezra’s ancestral province of Yehud.

Similarly, Alexander’s court shows signs of an official scribal practice of internal record-keeping for utilitarian purposes. Several types of these note-takers are attested. Some writers of daily records (ἐφημερίδες) are known by name: the keeping of this ‘day-book’⁴⁴ or ‘journal’⁴⁵ was apparently directed by Eumenes of Cardia (described as a γραμματεὺς by *ARR. An.* 5, 24, 8, again as ‘royal scribe/secretary,’ ὁ γραμματεὺς ὁ βασιλικός, at *An.* 7, 4, 6 = *BNJ* 117 F2a; and as ἀρχιγραμματεὺς ‘chief scribe/secre-

38 NAVEH – SHAKED 2012.

39 See NAVEH – SHAKED 2012, p. 75 for this name, proposed transliteration, and linguistic analysis.

40 NAVEH – SHAKED 2012, p. 84.

41 NAVEH – SHAKED 2012, p. 106.

42 PORTEN – YARDENI 1986a, pp. 114-115 for *TAD* A, 6, 9; further appearances of Rashta in the documents at pp. 116-123.

43 PORTEN – YARDENI 1986a, pp. 100-101. See also the family trees reconstructed by PORTEN – YARDENI 1986b, pp. 188-189, *Figure 10: Activity of Professional Scribes and Their Families (460-400 B.C.E.)*.

44 ROLFE 1946, p. xv.

45 HAMMOND 1988, p. 129 and *passim*.

tary' by PLU. *Eum.* 1, 4 = *BNJ* 117 T2c) and Diodotus of Erythrae.⁴⁶ Only some five fragments of the *Ephemerides* survive: the original records were destroyed in a fire at Eumenes' tent, though Alexander apparently desired their restoration.⁴⁷

The paucity of fragmentary remains has contributed to scholarly disagreement about the nature of the work, including its purpose, contents, intended readership, and physical treatment and intellectual uses after Alexander's death.⁴⁸ Interestingly, the five extant fragments contain references not only to Alexander's quotidian actions (e.g., "after getting up and bathing, he slept and again ate dinner," ἐξανάσταντα καὶ λουσόμενον καθεῦδεν τε καὶ αὐθις δειπνεῖν, *BNJ* 117 F3a = *ARR. An.* 7, 25, 1) but especially his chosen leisure activities: hunting (F1 = PLU. *Alex.* 23, 4) and drinking (F2a = *AEL. VH* 3, 23; F2b = *ATH.* 10, 44; F2c = PLU. *Quaestiones conviviales* 1, 6, 1; F3a). This topical focus is surely due in part to the sympotic interest of the excerpters, but not entirely (as the fragment from Arrian makes clear).

The level of detail, in any case, with scrupulous attention to Alexander's daily bathing and meals, is remarkable; and it is not paralleled by previous Greek documentary practice as far as I can tell. What this phenomenon instead recalls, I would suggest, is a combination of the Achaemenid habits of minute documentation and of courtly attention to the person of the king, already collocated in the courtly procedures and norms of the Achaemenids.⁴⁹ In addition to the attachment of political significance to regularized rituals of bodily adornment of the Great Kings, as expressed in forms ranging from cosmetics to dress (see in particular the ceremony of literal royal investiture in a special robe, as reported by PLU. *Art.* 3, 2),⁵⁰ the king's dining habits were subject to thoroughly-documented institutionalization as well. The relevant documentation buttresses the practical maintenance of the King's Table institution as both a redistributive system (as attested by the Persepolis Fortification texts which record disbursements

46 ROLFE 1946, p. xv; CHUGG 2005, p. 155, who, however, suggests (p. 158) that the name Diodotus represents a corruption of Diognetus; BEARZOT 2025; and *BNJ* 117 T1, F2b = *ATH.* 10, 44.

47 PLU. *Eum.* 1-2. See CHUGG 2005, p. 155, BEARZOT 2025.

48 For discussions, see HAMMOND 1988, ANSON 1996, CHUGG 2005, and BEARZOT 2025.

49 On the body of the Great King and courtly rituals associated with his person, see LLEWELLYN-JONES 2013, pp. 56-73.

50 See LLEWELLYN-JONES 2013, pp. 13-15, 63-64.

of food for the king's table, the queen's table, and satrapal tables)⁵¹ and as a political one, structured in terms of a hierarchy of attendants on the feast (note, for example, how the "cupbearer" of the king – a servant of the quotidian need of the king to consume wine – amounts to a ceremonial as well as advisory figure).⁵² Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones summarizes well the overlap in courtly roles: "*Courtiers were also bureaucrats*".⁵³

Alexander's court, adopting aspects and formal offices from Persian court ceremonial, likewise structured political and bureaucratic discourse around the body of the king: for example, investing access to his physical person with social and political honor.⁵⁴ Whereas the Great Kings had consulted with "cupbearers" and "chamberlains" on matters of policy, Alexander's "announcer" in court could double as his official historian, i.e., a consultant and practitioner in the management and dissemination of his image: such is the case of Chares of Mytilene (labelled εἰσαγγελεύς at *BNJ* 125 F2 = *PLU. Alex.* 46, 1), who succeeded Callisthenes in the role of historian.⁵⁵ The minutiae of Alexander's daily activities, then, duly inscribed in the *Ephemerides*, suggest a similar impulse toward institutionalization of the king's embodied habits – ranging from strictly observed protocols to official record-keeping – to that of the Achaemenid court.

One of Alexander's embodied habits on campaign was the traversal of territory on the march. To document the movements of the expedition, Alexander apparently commissioned "*pacers/step-counters*" (βηματισταί) to accompany him.⁵⁶ *STR.* 2, 1, 6 = *BNJ* 119 T3 describes their activities, and Alexander's editorial interest in their completed compositions, as follows: οὐδὲ τοῦτο δὲ ἀπίθανον τοῦ Πατροκλέους, ὅτι φησὶ τοὺς Ἀλεξάνδρῳ συστρατεύσαντας ἐπιδρομάδην ἱστορῆσαι ἕκαστα, αὐτὸν δὲ Ἀλέξανδρον

51 See above all HENKELMAN 2010.

52 For the king's cupbearer and other offices, see LLEWELLYN-JONES 2013, pp. 30-35.

53 LLEWELLYN-JONES 2013, p. 34.

54 SPAWFORTH 2007, pp. 93-94, 102-106. Cfr. also pp. 84-85 on the *domestic services* performed by royal pages, as part of their training to become *Macedonian officers and generals* (p. 85). Philip's innovations along these lines, characterized as *Persian influence at Pella*, are discussed at p. 91.

55 SPAWFORTH 2007, p. 94. See MÜLLER 2017 on *BNJ* 125 F2.

56 TZIFOPOULOS 2013. On Achaemenid road-networks, measurement by parasangs, *dattimara* or "road-counters", mile-markers, the Achaemenid conceptual control of space, and the need for further study of the bematists, see HENKELMAN 2017, pp. 63-79, especially n. 39. Cfr. KEGERREIS 2017 for an interpretation of the bematist class as an Achaemenid borrowing. On the administrative connections of the bematists, note that KEGERREIS 2017, pp. 42-43 interprets the bematists as playing *some official role in Alexander's administration*.

ἀκριβῶσαι, ἀναγραφάντων τὴν ὅλην χώραν τῶν ἐμπειροτάτων αὐτῶ· τὴν δ' ἀναγραφὴν αὐτῷ δοθῆναι φησιν ὕστερον ὑπὸ Ξενοκλέους τοῦ γαζοφύλακος (*Nor is this comment of Patrokles incredible, because he says that those who campaigned with Alexander wrote up everything in running fashion; and that Alexander himself verified it, after those who were most experienced had written up the whole territory for him; and he says that the write-up was given to him later by Xenocles the treasurer*).

The results of these bematists' geographic surveys have not been preserved in full, but fragments of bematistic texts do survive in sources such as Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* (see, e.g., the fragment of Baeton at *Nat.* 6, 44-45; 6, 61-63 = *BNJ* 119 F2a). This practice on Alexander's part tends to elicit scholarly comment insofar as it provides us with useful data about his movements and insofar as it may constitute one piece of a larger apparatus of scientific inquiry undertaken by professionals specially recruited for his campaign. For Oswald Dilke, Alexander's Aristotelian education, and presumably Aristotle's habits of wide-ranging empirical study in particular, served as a sufficient explanation for why the young prince would arrange for step-counters to accompany his journey.⁵⁷ A more recent treatment of the bematists more pragmatically "*infer[s] that [...] the bematists formed a special military unit*" whose surveying functions were "*activities fundamental for the achievement of efficient speed in military communications, transportation, and maneuvering*".⁵⁸ However that may be, the fact of the subsequent publication of bematistic data, and the collocation of the numerical figures of distances between place-names with ethnographic information, is not so obvious a development.⁵⁹ I will attempt further below to read this development as a site for the convergence of the apparently (or perhaps initially) separate modes under analysis here: (inward-facing) record-keeping, on the one hand, and (outward-facing) em-plotted historiography of Alexander's deeds on the other.

57 DILKE 1985, pp. 29, 59-60. Critical discussion in MOLINA MARÍN 2024, who refines the traditional view of Alexander as *explorer and scientist* (p. 317). See also KEGERREIS 2017, p. 39, with references to previous interpretations of the bematists as a product of Philip II's military reforms.

58 TZIFOPOULOS 2013, p. 1080; cfr. MOLINA MARÍN 2024, p. 319.

59 Note also the statue and inscription (*IG* 303) of Philonides the *hemerodromas* and bematist of Alexander, with discussion in KEGERREIS 2017, p. 39.

Historical Emplotment of Narrative

Let us turn now to elucidate the latter mode of historiographical production. Alexander is well known to have carefully controlled his own image and to have sought to shape perceptions of his activities; thus for example Shane Wallace has recently emphasized the fact that the king had preferences for his official sculptor, painter, and historian.⁶⁰ The greatest and most venerable panhellenic cultural touchstone – Homeric narrative – was at hand as one potent model for the young king. Indeed, when Alexander slept with the so-called “*Iliad of the Casket*” under his pillow, as Plutarch tells us (*Alex.* 8, 2; cfr. *Alex.* 26, 2),⁶¹ he dreamed of becoming a “new Achilles”⁶² – or of rallying his followers around such an idea. Plutarch’s poignant image neatly emblemizes the idea that the historical enterprise Alexander set in motion had been imagined already in advance as unfolding along the lines of a Homeric, and particularly Iliadic, plot.⁶³ Indeed, with a striking expression, Plutarch goes so far as to comment that “*Homer does not at all seem to be lazy, or to have nothing to offer him (sc. Alexander), in joining in the expedition*” (οὐκ οὐδὲ ἀσύμβολος αὐτῷ συστρατεύειν ἔοικεν Ὅμηρος, *Alex.* 26, 2).⁶⁴

Historical and historiographical emplotment of current events is nothing new in Greek (and Macedonian) traditions before Alexander’s time: this intellectual trend can be perceived for example in the Homeric resonances activated both in Herodotus’ *Histories* and in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*, each of which situates Iliadic themes, motifs, and/or (partial) story-lines into the novel context of a monumental struggle of unified Greeks against a Persian enemy.⁶⁵ On the Macedonian side, the creation of an “Argead”

60 WALLACE 2021, p. 17; cfr. ANSON 2021, p. 14.

61 τὴν [...] Ἰλιάδα [...] ἣν ἐκ τοῦ νάρθηκος καλοῦσιν, *the [...] Iliad [...] which they call ‘that of the Casket’*”.

62 See STEWART 1993, pp. 78–86 for Alexander as a “new Achilles”.

63 *Contra* MCGROARTY 2006, p. 121, cited at DEGEN 2022a, p. 157 n. 619.

64 Plutarch’s comment pertains specifically to a testimony of Heraclides that Alexander dreamed of a Homer-like figure before founding Alexandria; for source criticism, see HAMMOND 1993, p. 58. I hope to demonstrate, however, the wider applicability of Plutarch’s statement in terms of Homeric templates laid down for, and resonances encouraged by, Alexander’s activities and commemorations thereof.

65 GEHRKE 2022 on ‘*intentional history*’ in general; for the relationship between Homer and Herodotus, see for example the *Histos* supplement on this topic (MATIJAŠIĆ 2022); for Xenophon and Homer, see PURVES 2010, Chapter 5 (with further bibliography at pp. 163–165). See now FERRARIO 2024, p. 115 n. 16 for a provocation to apply GEHRKE’s concept to Achaemenid materials.

dynastic legend by Alexander I in order to claim sufficient Greek ancestry to compete in the Olympic Games (see HDT. 5, 22, and cfr. 8, 137-139) likewise represents a kind of dynastic emplotment onto a culturally-significant narrative template, with ideological aims for doing so.⁶⁶

But this sort of emplotment is not unique to the previous Greek or Greco-Macedonian literary tradition. The practice of both staging emplotted narrative, and ensuring that the corresponding official historiography of one's regime is expressly shaped according to the same templates, similarly characterizes the historiographical activities of the Achaemenid Great Kings.

I should explain briefly here that the Achaemenids are often regarded as choosing not to participate in historiography (at least as conventionally defined) at all, with the single exception of the narrative of Darius' accession at Bisitun.⁶⁷ In this monumental text the usurper king justifies his tenure of the Persian throne by narrating his election by Ahuramazdā and the events of his first year of kingship, specifically his victories in carefully enumerated battles against nine rebel-kings. Even already in the appendix to Darius' inscription at Bisitun, in which his second and third years of kingship are narrated, and then in all subsequent royal inscriptions after DB, the Great Kings tend to describe the Persian empire's present (a present envisaged as extending infinitely into the future) in a mode typically characterized by modern readers as "timeless" or ahistorical.⁶⁸ It is true that, in subsequent inscriptional testimonies of the Achaemenid kings, any events that may constitute imperial history are effectively elided, as if sublimated to the *telos* of imperial achievement. Nevertheless, I consider even these static and "ahistorical" *descriptions* of the empire, which remain remarkably consistent from Darius I to Artaxerxes III,⁶⁹ to evince a specific historiographical attitude: their pointed foreclosure of future change and their description of an idealized *pax Persica* communicates a considered

66 See MÜLLER 2021, p. 110 and now DEGEN 2025, pp. 12-16, who argues for both Argive and Achaemenid thematic inputs.

67 See, e.g., TUPLIN 2005, p. 235. I will treat this issue at greater length in a planned publication.

68 See the important discussion of ROLLINGER 2014 (especially, pp. 197-200). For the ahistorical quality of the inscriptions, see SANCISI-WEERDENBURG 1999, p. 110 (on the inscriptions' *timeless attitude*); SANCISI-WEERDENBURG 2010, p. 441 (*timeless values matter more than temporal events*); and cfr. TUPLIN 2005, p. 235 (inscriptions after DB as *privileg[ing] the generic and timeless*).

69 See LECOQ 1997 and KUHRT 2007 for translations of the various inscriptions.

attitude towards imperial history, amounting to the empire's foundational, programmatic inauguration of paradise on earth, the maintenance of perfect orderliness in the present, and the insinuation that this situation will last into perpetuity.⁷⁰

This paradigm itself represents an emplotment of teleological ideas about cosmic history from the Mazdean religious tradition (as suggested by Avestan parallels) onto the landscape and time-scape of the Achaemenid empire, as Bruce Lincoln has indicated.⁷¹ At the same time, the Bisitun Inscription activates other extant narrative structures of regional significance, thereby emplotting Darius' activities not only onto a Mazdean, i.e. Iranian, template but also onto the oldest traditions of ancient Near Eastern kingship. For example, it is well-known that the motif of Darius' nine victories "*in one and the same year*" (DB §52) pointedly recalls the nine victories of the archetypal Akkadian king Narām-Sîn as depicted on his Victory Stele.⁷²

Such narratives of Achaemenid triumph and manifest destiny were designed in the first instance for the stabilization and management of the imperial heartland, and thus they pointedly re-combine Iranian, Elamite, and Mesopotamian traditions.⁷³ This discourse is skillfully adapted further in other geographical areas of imperial interest. These localized examples of historiographical emplotment indicate that Achaemenid ideological and historiographical discourse is distinguished by its tendency to accommodate – and to opt for – locally-determined emplotment of narrative.⁷⁴ One thinks of the Babylonian orientation of the Cyrus Cylinder, for example, in which Cyrus appears as the chosen of Marduk, and as a more suitable Babylonian king than the native and rightful king, Nabonidus;⁷⁵ or the Egyptian titlature of Cambyses, as it appears on texts such as the stele depicting Cambyses and the Apis bull: here Cambyses refers to himself in

70 ROLLINGER 2014; Achaemenid paradise: LINCOLN 2007 and LINCOLN 2012.

71 LINCOLN 2007 and LINCOLN 2012.

72 SKJÆRVØ 1999, p. 14, with further bibliography.

73 As is suggested by the languages chosen for the trilingual inscriptions of the imperial heartland: Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian.

74 Cfr. ROLLINGER 2022, pp. 33-34. See SHAYEGAN 2012, Chapter 5, especially, pp. 91-108, for '*diplomatic*' i.e., local, versions of DB. Interestingly, see a similar interpretation (independently) in KUBISCH – KLINKOTT 2024, pp. 188-197, focusing on the reign of Cambyses in Egypt (but see p. 194 with n. 162 for a wider view on the dynasty).

75 See HAUBOLD 2007 for details.

traditional Egyptian style as “*Horus Smatowy, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesutire, the perfect god, lord of the two lands*”.⁷⁶ Similarly, Darius’ self-representation in Egypt, as on the Egyptianizing statue of the Great King found at Susa, replicates –in the hieroglyphic inscription on the statue’s base, as opposed to the cuneiform rendering of the same text – traditional Egyptian titles for the Persian king as well as a pharaonic résumé of his accomplishments and right to rule Egypt.⁷⁷

Another signal aspect of Persian management of history is the delegation of history-writing to subordinates. Moreover, such texts are created only after historiographical processes which may include careful ethnographic research carried out by scribes or other authorized representatives of the king, and/or the consultation and creation of written records.⁷⁸ The underlying processes of the royal delegation of historiography and its scribal crafting are actually narrated by Greek and Jewish historians; the Herodotean testimonies to the practice of Darius I and Xerxes, treated above, are complemented by the Hebrew Bible’s treatments of Persian historical archives.

In addition to the archival research referred to in the *Book of Ezra*, treated above, one may also consider *Esther* 6:1, in which the official use of royal records, called *sēfer hazzikronôt dibrê hayyāmîm*, “*the book of the Remembrances, of the Matters of the Days*”,⁷⁹ is parodized through their apparent repurposing as bedtime stories for King Aḥašvērôš. In spite of the humorous situation, the scene accords with the general Persian practice of having subordinates handle the king’s records: here, the records are caused to be read “*in the presence of the king*”, *lifnê hammelek*, as indicated by the *niphal* form of the verb *qr’*.⁸⁰ The historiographical utility of this “*Book of the Remembrances*” is hinted at by the fact that the record it contains of Mordecai’s actions (duly preserved in the day-book, e.g., the book also known as that “*of the Matters of the Days*”) spurs Aḥašvērôš to authorize

76 Translation as in KUHRT 2007, p. 12; see KUHRT 2007, pp. 122-124 for an image of the stele, along with translations of its text and captions, and commentary.

77 Text, translation, and illustration in KUHRT 2007, pp. 477-480; see also YOYOTTE 1974. Cfr. now KUBISCH – KLINKOTT 2024, pp. 183-197 for a similar argument to mine.

78 See ROLLINGER 2014, p. 193 for Cambyses’ research into Babylonian cultic traditions.

79 Translation after HOLMSTEDT – SCRENOCK 2015, p. 177.

80 See HOLMSTEDT – SCRENOCK 2015, p. 177 on 6, 1.

a commemorative and honorific display of Mordecai's loyalty, complete with a normative ideological message for his other courtiers (*Esth.* 6, 2-10).

While Greek literary attestations (if not yet the Hebrew Bible's reflections) of these aspects of Persian historiographical practice would presumably have been available to the Macedonian court, Alexander is likely to have been inspired not by the Greek accounts but by his own awareness of current Persian habits. I suggest that Alexander's propagandist emplotment of his ongoing campaigns onto various pre-existing story templates – whether Homeric, panhellenic,⁸¹ and/or ancient Near Eastern – consciously borrows from this imperial strategy of the Persian Great Kings: not only in the sense that he staged his own activities, but that his delegation of historiography to subordinates entails their authorized depiction of Alexander in a specific mold.⁸²

The histories produced by Callisthenes of Olynthus (*BNJ* 124), and then Chares of Mytilene (*BNJ* 125), fulfill the perceived need for an authorized, disseminated royal narrative.⁸³ The work of the bematists, by contrast, was published separately, and only after Alexander's death; whereas the records of the hypomnemmatists were presumably never intended for publication at all. To my mind, this specific division of historiographical duties in Alexander's entourage, with sometimes no apparent connection between the internal practice of daily record-keeping and the outward-facing, monumental accounts of royal history, corresponds quite closely to the division of responsibilities observable in the scribal apparatus of the Great Kings of Achaemenid Persia. When Alexander participated in this historiographical schema, however, his delegated historians introduced emplotted narratives from Greek *and* ancient Near Eastern cultural spheres into this framework, so that the Macedonian king availed himself of a patchwork of Greco-Macedonian and Persian techniques for managing imperial history.

81 Critical discussion of the panhellenic motif in DEGEN 2022a, pp. 133-202.

82 See SPAWFORTH 2007, OLBRYCHT 2010, OLBRYCHT 2014 for Alexander's adoption of Persian customs, including the insignia of kingship; cfr. MÜLLER 2021, p. 113.

83 Compare WEBER 2009, p. 89 on the uniqueness of Callisthenes' activity as official court historian, even by comparison with Argead patronage of poets and philosophers; cfr. FLOWER 1994, p. 21 on Theopompus of Chios. I agree with the conclusion of BOSWORTH 1970, pp. 412-413 that we cannot assume either that Aristotle was responsible for Callisthenes' commission or that an Aristotelian or Peripatetic historiographical program can be reconstructed for Alexander.

In the case of the Homeric template for Alexander's activities, some scholars attribute such emplotment to the literary sensibilities of ancient authors, rather than to intentionality on Alexander's part: in particular, Homeric themes may be attributed to Arrian's idiosyncratic historiographical treatment of Alexander's life and campaigns, with a view to representing himself as the new Homer to Alexander's Achilles.⁸⁴ Indeed, the historian himself programmatically indicates this aspect of the *Anabasis of Alexander* at the very moment in the narrative of Alexander's visit to Troy (*An.* 1, 12, 1-2, 4):

οἱ δέ, ὅτι καὶ τὸν Ἀχιλλέως ἄρα τάφον ἐστεφάνωσεν· Ἡφαιστίωνα δὲ λέγουσιν ὅτι τοῦ Πατρόκλου τὸν τάφον ἐστεφάνωσε· καὶ εὐδαιμόνισεν ἄρα, ὡς λόγος, Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀχιλλέα, ὅτι Ὀμήρου κήρυκος ἐς τὴν ἔπειτα μνήμην ἔτυχε.

καὶ μέντοι καὶ ἦν Ἀλεξάνδρου οὐχ ἥκιστα τούτου ἔνεκα εὐδαιμονιστέος Ἀχιλλεύς, ὅτι αὐτῷ γε Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἐπιτυχίαν, τὸ χωρίον τοῦτο ἐκλιπὲς ξυνέβη οὐδὲ ἐξηγέσθαι ἐς ἀνθρώπους τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα ἐπαξίως, οὐτ' οὖν καταλογάδην, οὔτε τις ἐν μέτρῳ ἐποίησεν [...].

ἔνθεν καὶ αὐτὸς ὀρμηθῆναί φημι ἐς τήνδε τὴν συγγραφὴν, οὐκ ἀπαξιώσας ἐμαυτὸν φανερὰ καταστήσειν ἐς ἀνθρώπους τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα.

Others [said] that he also wreathed the tomb of Achilles; and they say of Hephaestion that he wreathed the tomb of Patroclus. And it seems that Alexander called Achilles blessed, as the story goes, since he had obtained renown for the future with Homer as herald.

And yet Achilles deserved to be called blessed by Alexander not least because of this, since for Alexander himself, not in line with his other good fortune, this realm turned out to be left lacking, nor were the

84 ARR. *An.* 1, 12, 2.

deeds of Alexander reported to mankind in a worthy fashion, neither in a prose account, nor did anyone make a poem [...].

For which reason, I say that I myself have set out on this history, not deeming myself unworthy of making the deeds of Alexander conspicuous to mankind.

While Arrian, even as he implies his stature as Alexander’s deserved Homer, presents his own commemorative efforts as unprecedented, the deliberate recalling of Homeric materials in multiple Alexander traditions (including the very sources on which Arrian himself must be relying here when he reports Alexander and Hephaestion’s Homeric gesture) rather tells against a uniquely Arrianic intervention and instead indicates that this theme was an intentional aspect of Alexander’s self-presentation.⁸⁵ Homeric motifs are apparent, for example, even in the existing fragments of Callisthenes’ work; and apparently Alexander and “*those with Callisthenes and Anaxarchus*” (τῶν περὶ Καλλισθένη καὶ Ἀνάξαρχον) actively engaged together with the text of Homer, though the exact nature of the activities is unclear from the testimony (BNJ 124 T10)⁸⁶: φέρεται γοῦν τις διόρθωσις τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως ἢ ἐκ τοῦ νάρθηκος λεγομένη, τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου μετὰ τῶν περὶ Καλλισθένη καὶ Ἀνάξαρχον ἐπελθόντος καὶ σημειωσαμένου τινά. (*At any rate, there is said to have been some recension of the poetry of Homer – the one called “Of the Casket”, where Alexander, along with those with Callisthenes and Anaxarchus, went through it and made some notes*).

These references to Alexander’s reading and note-taking on a recension of Homer in the company of Callisthenes suggest at the very least that Homeric narrative was on the king’s mind, if not necessarily that he personally mined Homer, alongside his own appointed historian, for paral-

85 See DEGEN 2022a, DEGEN 2022b, DEGEN 2024, for compelling demonstrations of Alexander’s engagement with ancient Near Eastern ideological paradigms of kingship and empire; cfr. STROOTMAN 2022; the contributions of both are discussed further below. I am grateful to Marco Ferrario for making me aware of these contributions, and to Julian Degen for sending me some of these resources as well.

86 See RZEPKA 2016 on BNJ 124 T10 for discussion.

lels to his unfolding career and its ideological shaping through deliberately crafted messaging.⁸⁷

It is tempting to wonder whether such considerations did enter into their discussions, however. A hint in this direction proceeds from the possibility that the historian synchronized Alexander's victory at the Granicus with the date of the mythical sack of Troy (*BNJ* 124 F10b = *PLU. Cam.* 19, 7):⁸⁸ καὶ γὰρ Ἀλέξανδρος ἐπὶ Γρανικῷ τοὺς βασιλέως στρατηγούς Θαργηλιῶνος ἐνίκησε, καὶ Καρχηδόνιοι περὶ Σικελίαν ὑπὸ Τιμολέοντος ἡττῶντο τῇ ἐβδόμῃ φθίνοντος, περὶ ἣν δοκεῖ καὶ τὸ Ἴλιον ἄλῶναι [Θαργηλιῶνος], ὡς Ἐφορος καὶ Καλλισθένης καὶ Δαμάστης καὶ Φύλαρχος ἱστορήκασιν. (*And in fact Alexander defeated the King's generals at Granicus during Thargelion, and the Carthaginians were worsted by Timoleon near Sicily as the month was nearing its close; around which time it seems that Troy was taken, too [in Thargelion], as Ephorus and Callisthenes and Damastes and Phylarchus have indicated in their histories*).

While Plutarch makes the point explicit, one wonders whether Callisthenes did as well; such an interpretation of Plutarch's source for the Alexandrian synchronism is offered, with caution, by Jacek Rzepka, who writes: "[c]ertainly, for Kallisthenes a date for Granikos in Thargelion provided a great opportunity to explore similarities between the Trojan War and the expedition of Alexander once again".⁸⁹

A more concrete attribution to Callisthenes of the deliberate Homeric shaping of Alexander's story is offered by STR. 17, 1, 43 = *BNJ* 124 F14a. Reporting on the Alexander historians' account of the king's visit to the oracle of Zeus-Ammon, Strabo indicates that Callisthenes said: [...] <γενέσθαι δὲ> οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐν Δελφοῖς καὶ Βραγχίδαῖς τὰς ἀποθεσπίσεις διὰ λόγων, ἀλλὰ νεύμασι καὶ συμβόλοις τὸ πλεον, ὡς καὶ παρ' Ὀμήρῳ ἡ καὶ κυανέησιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεῦσε Κρονίων. ([...] <that it happened> not, as in Delphi and Branchidae, that the oracular responses were through words, but in nods and tokens for the most part, as also in Homer: «The son of Cronus spoke and nodded assent with his dark-blue eyebrows»).

87 For STEWART 1993, p. 10, Callisthenes deliberately "represent[ed] the king as the true successor of Homer's heroes."

88 Cfr. RZEPKA 2016 *ad loc.*

89 RZEPKA 2016 *ad loc.*

The quotation (= *Il.* 1, 528, 17, 209, *h.Bacch.* 13) and its application to Alexander's visit presumably originated with Callisthenes, that active reader and discussant of the *Iliad of the Casket*.

The activation of Iliadic resonances, moreover, is not mutually exclusive from the generation, or staging, of other emplotted narratives, which would prove useful for appealing to different audiences at different junctures of Alexander's campaign. Multiple re-enactments of Greek traditions can be discerned; for example, the same fragment from Callisthenes (*BNJ* 124 F14a) begins: ὁ γοῦν Καλλισθένης φησὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον φιλοδοξῆσαι μάλιστα ἀνελθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ χρηστήριον, ἐπειδὴ καὶ Περσέα ἤκουσε πρότερον ἀναβῆναι καὶ Ἡρακλέα (*"At any rate, Callisthenes says that Alexander especially sought the honor of going up to the oracle, since he had heard that Perseus, too, had previously gone up, and Hercules"*). By literally retracing the steps of these two panhellenic culture-heroes, Alexander demonstrates a self-aware interest in casting himself in their mold;⁹⁰ Callisthenes, his delegated historian, was appropriately sensitive to Alexander's desire to achieve this culturally marked honor or reputation (cfr. φιλοδοξῆσαι) for himself.

Besides Achilles, Perseus, and Hercules as heroic Hellenic figures with story-complexes available for literary imitation and historical self-staging, the ideological discourse of panhellenism, reaching back notionally to Xerxes' invasion of the Greek mainland and renewed in political, diplomatic, and literary contexts from the time of Herodotus through Alexander's own day, furnished an equally powerful Greek narrative motif for both prospective and commemorative emplotment alike.⁹¹ Fittingly, the Trojan War narrative and the panhellenic idea of Greek vengeance on the East (e.g., for Xerxes' outrages during his invasion of Greece) had already been discursively intertwined at least as early as Herodotus, providing a sort of ready-made thematic complex with obvious currency in the fourth century Mediterranean.⁹² Sabine Müller appropriately draws attention, in the pan-

90 ANSON 2021, pp. 15-17 interprets such episodes in terms of Alexander consciously striving to outdo these mythical exemplars, rather than evocative emplotment of his activities along the lines of theirs. These two possibilities do not seem mutually exclusive to me. See DEGEN 2022b for a fascinating, and in my view convincing, proposal that Dionysus serves as a figure for cultural *translatio* of Achaemenid universalism into acceptable Greco-Macedonian models of royal competition.

91 On Alexander's panhellenism, see FLOWER 2000.

92 Cfr. FLOWER 2000, pp. 107-110.

hellenic connection, to the difference between the historical Alexander and the images of Alexander generated by his propagandists and historians; but her observation that “*sometimes, literary artifice corresponds to the actual policy*”⁹³ hints towards Alexander’s personal sensitivity to the emplotment of his actions along culturally evocative models.⁹⁴

Fittingly for the “king of Asia,”⁹⁵ Alexander did not only emplot his activities along Greco-Macedonian storylines, but also made pointed use of ancient Near Eastern motifs of kingship and territorial control for the purposes of ruling over the former realm of the Achaemenids.⁹⁶ The activation of a plurality of images to motivate different ethno-political consituencies seems to have been intuited already by Alexander’s historians: as Michael Flower puts it, “*Curtius (3.10) and Justin (11.9.3-6) claim that Alexander [at Issus] said what was appropriate to each of the nationalities in his army (Macedonians, Greeks, Illyrians, and Thracians)*”.⁹⁷ The same was true for his Persian dependents. While non-Greek commemorative avenues are more difficult to glimpse from the accounts of the Greek historians responsible for shaping and disseminating Alexander’s image, they are still discernible. For example, Julian Degen has recently shown how, in the furthest eastern reaches of Alexander’s journeys, the king staged “universalist” claims of world conquest in response to an age-old ancient Near Eastern (including Achaemenid Persian) imperial directive and mode of self-presentation.⁹⁸ In Achaemenid royal self-styling, the empire (*xšāça-*) was represented as being always already coterminous with the entire world (*būmi-*), thanks to the (ongoing) military campaigns of the conquering sovereign.⁹⁹ The sea beyond represented the only acknowledged limit to this realm; and Alexander’s maritime and riverrine ambitions may be read as an

93 MÜLLER 2021, p. 114.

94 On Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, and its depiction of Cyrus II, in particular, as a model for the Alexander historians, see MÜLLER 2021, pp. 114-115, with further bibliography.

95 The famous appellation of Alexander as reported by Plutarch (βασιλεύς [...] τῆς Ἀσίας, *Alex.* 34, 1).

96 This is in addition to his debated adoption of aspects of Achaemenid courtly protocol. See, e.g., BRIANT 1979, pp. 1414, who famously dubbed Alexander the “last of the Achaemenids” – and, *contra*, LANE FOX 2007.

97 FLOWER 2000, p. 112.

98 DEGEN 2024; cfr. DEGEN 2022b.

99 LEUCHTER 2024, p. 28, citing earlier literature.

attempt to outdo the Achaemenids in their own previous stagings of mastery of the sea (and of the whole world contained within its boundaries).¹⁰⁰

This narrative trajectory would not have been self-evident as a natural point of cultural reference to the Greek writers in Alexander's entourage, however; and Alexander's self-staging according to this ancient Near Eastern and Achaemenid Persian paradigm has only been gleaned by the perceptive modern student of both ancient Near Eastern and Greek traditions. Along similar lines, Rolf Strootman has recently unraveled the thematic complex of Alexander's legendary *πόθος* or "longing", frequently considered an Arrianic intervention, as a genuine reflex (dating back to Alexander and his Achaemenid-aculturated successors) of the same ancient Near Eastern tradition of universalism.¹⁰¹

For the Greeks at the outset of the expedition, however, Alexander's programmatic visits to Elaious and Ilion¹⁰² encouraged a certain view of their commander and king, as did the burning of Persepolis.¹⁰³ In the end, the fate of Callisthenes, following after his disagreements with Alexander and his critique of the king's self-presentation, suggests the ultimate editorial control which Alexander wielded over his own narrative. Even the punishments meted to Callisthenes, however variously described by the Alexander historians, echo Persian practices for the treatment of rebels, and in particular, those who would "rebel" by contradicting officially-sanctioned imperial narrative. The punishment by Artaxerxes II of an anonymous Carian participant in the battle of Cunaxa offers a chilling precedent for Alexander's behavior:¹⁰⁴

τοῦ δὲ Καρός, ὃς τὴν ἰγνύαν πληγείς ὁ Κῦρος ἔπεσε, καὶ αὐτοῦ
δωρεὰν αἰτοῦντος, ἐκέλευσεν εἰπεῖν τοὺς διδόντας ὅτι Σοὶ ταῦτα
δίδωσιν βασιλεὺς εὐαγγελίων δευτερεῖα· πρῶτος γὰρ Ἀρτασύρας,
μετ' ἐκεῖνον δὲ σὺ τὴν τελευτήν ἀπήγγειλας. [...] ἡγανάκτει
μαρτυρόμενος καὶ βοῶν ὅτι Κῦρον οὐδεὶς ἕτερος, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς

100 DEGEN 2024, especially. pp. 8-10; cfr. DEGEN 2022a, pp. 351-362, DEGEN 2022b.

101 STROOTMAN 2022, pp. 197-203.

102 ARR. *An.* 1, 11, 3-1, 12, 2; FLOWER 2000, p. 109.

103 FLOWER 2000, pp. 113-115.

104 I intend to treat this episode at greater length in a planned publication. For further analysis of the religious background for Artaxerxes' behavior, see LINCOLN 2007, pp. 85-86.

ἀπεκτόνοι, καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἀδίκως ἀποστεροῖτο. ταῦτα δὲ ἀκούσας ὁ βασιλεὺς σφόδρα παρωξύνθη καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐκέλευσεν ἀποτεμεῖν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. παροῦσα δ' ἡ μήτηρ, Μὴ σύ γε, εἶπεν, οὕτω τὸν Κᾶρα τοῦτον ὃ βασιλεῦ, τὸν ὄλεθρον ἀπαλλάξῃς, ἀλλὰ παρ' ἐμοῦ τὸν ἄξιον ἀπολήγεται μισθὸν ὃν τολμᾷ λέγειν. ἐπιτρέψαντος δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκέλευσε τοὺς ἐπὶ τῶν τιμωριῶν ἡ Παρύσατις λαβόντας τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐφ' ἡμέρας δέκα στρεβλοῦν, εἴτα τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐξορύξαντας εἰς τὰ ὦτα θερμὸν ἐντήκειν χαλκὸν ἕως ἀποθάνῃ.

When the Carian by whom Cyrus had been struck in the hamstring and fell asked for a gift too, (the king) bade those who were presenting it to say, «The king gives you these as a second-place prize for the good news; for Artasyras first, and you after him, brought the good news of his [Cyrus'] death». [...] He [the Carian] was vexed, and he bore witness and shouted that nobody else but he himself had killed Cyrus, and that he was unjustly being deprived of the glory. When the king heard this, he became very irritated and ordered that the man's head be cut off. His mother, however, who was present, said, «King, do not let this Carian escape his destruction; rather, he will receive his just reward from me for the things which he dares to say». When the king handed him over, Parysatis ordered those who were in charge of punishments to take the man and stretch him on the rack for ten days, and afterward to gouge out his eyes and pour molten bronze into his ears until he should die. (PLU. Art. 14, 3-5)

The Carian's contradiction of the official version of events at Cunaxa (as proffered by Artaxerxes himself) results in gruesome torture and death. Similarly, Callisthenes after his disagreement with Alexander about the construction of his image¹⁰⁵ is variously reported to have been placed in a cage, left untreated of a flea (or lice) infestation, given up to a lion, hanged, bound in fetters, fattened up in captivity, tortured on the rack (BNJ 124 T1, T6, T7, T8, T18) – many of which scenarios have the ring of an Achae-

¹⁰⁵ Technically, over the appropriateness of *proskynesis* for Alexander; while this gesture is admittedly not the same as historiography, it is another facet of Alexander's projected image and thus Callisthenes' disapproval is of a piece with his official participation in Alexander's self-representation.

menid exemplary punishment.¹⁰⁶ Alexander's techniques for establishing and policing narratives (or images) of his reign are the same as those of the Achaemenid in this instance: the authorization of a particular historiographical vision, and the torture of figures who would gainsay his preferred self-representation.

Despite their utility both in mobilizing followers and shaping legacies, however, even emplotted historical narratives must exist alongside the actual unfolding of events day-to-day: events which, in the management of an empire or a massive expedition, are duly recorded by specialist secretaries, scribes, and other bureaucrats. For Alexander, such a corps of record-keepers is, as we have seen, attested in the remains of the classes of activity treated above, namely the work of the bematists and the writers of *ephe-merides*. The persons responsible for all of these types of intellectual work were, as I have suggested, united by the fact of being in Alexander's orbit, where they could have conferred informally with one another. This sort of connective tissue among practitioners of discrete types of record-making conditioned new forms of textual production, and variants of historiography in particular, just as it had in the Achaemenid sphere.

One could object, in both the Achaemenid case and in Alexander's case, to the collocation of these two different types of record as two sides of a single historiographical coin: the problem is the apparent independence of these two suggested types of historiography from each other. The timelessness of the Persian royal inscriptions seems to necessitate willful ignorance of the *realia* of day-to-day imperial administration. Similarly, the details of Alexander's daily movements, payments of troops, and whatever else the *ephe-merides* and *hypomnemata* may have contained¹⁰⁷ (beyond what appears in the surviving fragments) would, of course, hardly take into account the structures and themes of Homeric narrative, or of panhellenic trajectories of revenge for fifth-century Achaemenid incursions. The disjuncture between these two disparate aspects of historiographical management, however, can be resolved if we consider the professional location and social position of the milieu tasked with producing each type of record: namely, the scribal cadre as an aspect of the king's courtly entourage, all

106 Cfr. bound rebels at DB §§32, 33, 50, and the Bisitun relief with its pictorial depiction of the bound rebel-kings; hanging of rebels at DB §32; LINCOLN 2007, pp. 87-94 on the "*torture of the boats*".

107 On which see HAMMOND 1988, especially pp. 131-132.

of whose members depend on top-down commissioning and authorization by the king.

In the Persian context, the ultimate dependence of scribes on the institution of kingship is filtered through the hierarchical command structure of the Persian empire, namely the satrapal institution with its attendant dependencies on the sub-satrapal level. The uniformity of practice, ranging from the widespread use of Achaemenid Aramaic as the administrative language of the empire to the standard forms and formulae of official documentation, furnishes one illustration of this top-down emanation from the royal court to all levels of imperial administration; another consists in the robust system of verification for administrative processes and their documentation, *e.g.*, through the practices of sealing with identifiable personal seals and/or the attachment of personal names as endorsements for the purposes of (upward) accountability.¹⁰⁸ Scribes are also envisioned, on a programmatic level, as attendant upon the person of the Great King: in his programmatic inaugural inscription, Darius I narrates (DB §70) how the contents of the Bisitun Inscription itself were “*read forth before me*” (*patiyaḡraḡiya paīšiyā māḡ*), with a view to the king’s final authorization of his official story.¹⁰⁹ As administrative duties and the recording thereof are delegated to personnel of decreasing authority, so also the scribes behind Darius’ narrative record of his achievements are delegated with the task of (writing and) disseminating this narrative, proceeding from the king and the imperial center he embodies, downward and outward, to “*everywhere within the lands*” (*vispadā antar dahyāva*), such that “*the people/host worked hard*” (*kāra hamātaxšatā*) at it.

Avenues of Influence

While there is thus ample evidence for a complement of scribes in the retinue of (or the hierarchy answerable to) the Great Kings of Persia, this phenomenon is not attested on the part of the Argeads (or classical Greek leaders) before Alexander. We know of the Argead court’s recruitment of

108 See HENKELMAN 2013, pp. 536-537; MOORE 2021.

109 SHAYEGAN 2012, pp. 96-103; see also LEUCHTER 2024, pp. 25-26.

Greeks such as Zeuxis the painter and Euripides the tragedian, particularly during the “Hellenizing” reign of Archelaus,¹¹⁰ but not of a corresponding commissioning of official historians: even Theopompus of Chios (*BNJ* 115), the eyewitness author of *Philippika*, felt free to criticize the king,¹¹¹ even if he was in some sense a financial dependent of Philip (at the least, a recipient of χορηγία).¹¹² Alexander’s appointment of Callisthenes (and Chares) thus represents an innovation.

As for his recruitment of bematists and journal-writers, scholars disagree on the extent to which the general practice of note-taking (particularly in the form of the ἐφημερίδες) existed as a regular practice in the Argead court before the kingship of Alexander. There is scant evidence for the internal documentary habits of Macedonian kings before Alexander III. Cornelius Nepos asserts that Eumenes of Cardia began his career as “scribe” or “secretary” (*in scribae loco*) under Philip (*Eum.* 1, 4-6 = *BNJ* 117 T2b) before holding this office under Alexander;¹¹³ but other testimonia for an Argead scribal apparatus are lacking. Nevertheless, the situation of Macedonia and neighboring Thrace on the Achaemenid imperial periphery leaves room for the possibility that such developments took place in Macedon at an early stage. In this vein, N. G. L. Hammond attributed the adoption of the practice to the reign of Alexander I,¹¹⁴ whereas E. M. Anson (and, more recently, C. Kegerreis) thought that Alexander the Great must have picked up the habit on campaign: not as an inheritance from his Persian-accultured forebears but as a direct result of exposure to the ongoing practice of record-keeping in Persia.¹¹⁵ It may remain impossible to decide the precise date of transmission and adoption of this practice, given the long span of interactions between Macedon, Persia, and their Aegean neighbors.

Alexander the Great was, after all, only the latest in a succession of dynasts who had long been acculturated both to Greek cultural practices and to Achaemenid social, political, and cultural forms, in a highly inter-

110 See, e.g., HESKEL 1997, p. 169; cfr. SPAWFORTH 2007, p. 90; CHAPINAL-HERAS 2022.

111 MORISON 2015; cfr. FLOWER 1994, pp. 98, 104-115.

112 FLOWER 1994, p. 21.

113 Cfr. HAMMOND 1988, p. 130, with discussion.

114 HAMMOND 1988, pp. 133-134.

115 ANSON 1996, pp. 503-504; KEGERREIS 2017.

connected and hybridizing geographical zone.¹¹⁶ The reign of Alexander I as Persian client or ally in Macedon¹¹⁷ had entailed the sustained exposure of the Macedonian ruling elite to the normative protocols of Achaemenid court practices and institutions, many of which were replicated or reproduced on an imperial scale.¹¹⁸ In the context of the reigns of Amyntas I and Alexander I in particular, Achaemenid modes of elite differentiation seem to have become popular in Macedon: the analysis of grave goods from sixth- to fourth-century Macedon by V. Saripanidi suggests elite participation in the vastly expanded trade networks opened to Macedon through Achaemenid contact.¹¹⁹ Beyond the status of Macedon as an Achaemenid client kingdom, Persian military forces occupied and/or traversed the northern Aegean during the Greco-Persian Wars.¹²⁰ The Achaemenids were not the only major influence on Macedonian kingship, however; already at this early period, Alexander I found his Macedon “*in the crossfire between the Greek and Persian worlds*” (in the words of E. N. Borza), such that diplomatic and cultural familiarity with both neighbors was essential.¹²¹ While some “philhellenic” activities are attributed to Alexander I, for example his attempt to participate in the Olympic Games,¹²² Archelaus is credited with a more rigorous and systematic introduction of Hellenizing reforms to Macedon, especially in the context of competition for resources in the northern Aegean during the Peloponnesian War.¹²³ Greek influences in terms of pol-

116 I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this important point. On cultural hybridity in Macedon, Thrace, and western Anatolia, see VASSILEVA 2015, pp. 326-333; and DEGEN 2025, especially pp. 2-11.

117 If not, however, as satrap of Macedon; so MÜLLER 2021, p. 109. On the reigns of Amyntas and Alexander I, with attention to political interactions with the Persian empire, see BORZA 1990, pp. 98-131.

118 See, above all, HENKELMAN 2017 on the “*imperial paradigm*”, including scribal systems, that the Persians adopted and adapted from the Elamites and then purposefully exported to regions of the empire, such as Arachosia, for which we have no evidence of such structures before Achaemenid rule. See also KING 2025 on the “*house of the satrap*” institution, whose structures and practices were replicated throughout the empire. KHATCHADOURIAN 2016 likewise theorizes the “*satrapal condition*” and the physical buildings, such as the paradise and the columned hall, that reproduced this condition symbolically and iconographically in regions from the center to the periphery.

119 SARIPANIDI 2019, especially pp. 401-404, links the increase in trade and monetization under Alexander I to the Achaemenid presence in the region, with Alexander’s management of Achaemenid tribute exaction as a possible mechanism for these changes. VASSILEVA 2015 enumerates Achaemenid impacts and influences on Thrace.

120 VASSILEVA 2015, pp. 322-324; BORZA 1990, pp. 100-115.

121 BORZA 1990, p. 115.

122 BORZA 1990, pp. 130-131.

123 CHAPINAL-HERAS 2022; CARNEY 2015, p. 193; BORZA 1990, pp. 161-179.

icy were buttressed by interpersonal networks, exemplified by the express invitation of Greek intellectuals and artists to reside at Archelaus' court.¹²⁴ By the time of Philip II, then, continued intensive interactions with Greek and northern Aegean polities, as well as Persians, marked Philip's court as a "cosmopolitan" space for Alexander III's upbringing.¹²⁵ The nature of cultural hybridity in Macedon and Thrace – that is, the hybridized adoption and adaptation of Achaemenid, Greek, and local materials – is increasingly brought into sharper relief in current research.¹²⁶ Such trends of hybridity among Alexander III's forebears conditioned his own receptivity to and aptitude for multi-cultural strategies of administration.

Generative Effects of the 'Connective Tissue'

Whatever the timeframe, amid these long-lasting processes of interaction and acculturation, for the transfer of the specific materials and technologies studied here, by the time of Alexander III, one can compare the phenomenon, in both the Achaemenid and the Macedonian cases, of a writerly and courtly collective associated with the respective monarch. Likewise, one can identify in both cases the unforeseen generative effects of this collocation around a central figure – whether Great King or subsequent "King of Asia" – of an apparatus for intentional as well as incidental historiography. These generative effects are visible in at least two ways. On the one hand, the effects of the cross-fertilization among competences of the writerly apparatus around the Great Kings or Alexander stem from complex commemorative agendas on the part of individual writers and intellectual figures (or groups thereof). That is, just as experience of the Persian empire conditioned productive Jewish and Greek historiographies of the Achaemenid period which functioned outside of an official imperial context, so also Alexander and his campaigns accumulated literary pendants in the form of works informed by the protocols and activities of Alexander, but not always created *for* Alexander. For example, the bematist Baeton

124 CHAPINAL-HERAS 2022, pp. 15-19; CARNEY 2015, p. 193.

125 So described by CARNEY 2015, p. 194; for the presence of Persian ambassadors at Philip's court, cfr. MÜLLER 2021, pp. 110-111, and SPAWFORTH 2007, p. 92.

126 In addition to VASSILEVA 2015 and SARIPANIDI 2019, see especially DEGEN 2025.

may now, and even in antiquity, inherently summon to mind the exploits of Alexander and be remembered by posterity expressly as “*Baeton, measurer of that man's journeys*” (*Baeton itinerum eius mensor*, PLIN. *Nat.* 7, 11 = *BNJ* 119 F5; cfr. *Hist. Nat.* 6, 61), or “*Baeton, the bematist of Alexander*” (Βαίτων [...] ὁ Ἀλεξάνδρου βηματιστής, ATH. *Deipnosophistae* 10, 59 = *BNJ* 119 F1), inasmuch as he is remembered at all. At the same time, however, he seems to have published his data in a work entitled Σταθμοὶ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου πορείας (“*Stages of the March of Alexander*”, also at *BNJ* 119 F1) – and not anonymously, but under his own name. The commemorative act thus encompasses his own person and achievements, as well as the famous patron of his activities. The same is true for Amyntas, another bematistic author of Alexander’s Σταθμοί (cited alongside Baeton at *BNJ* 119 F1).

On the other hand, the generative effects of the ‘connective tissue’ and its activities result from the cross-fertilization with one another of the various interests or competences of the separate types of intellectual task performed by its members.¹²⁷ This, I think, accounts for the emergence of new hybrid forms of literature in the orbit of the Great Kings and of Alexander. In the case of Achaemenid Yehud, for example, mimesis or “colonial mimicry”¹²⁸ of official Persianate documentation, as in the Aramaic-language imperial correspondence which appears in *Ezra*, suggests that deep (and indeed experiential) familiarity with Achaemenid administrative protocols is creatively brought to bear on longstanding Yahwistic narrative traditions, thereby resulting in a hybridized form of literary production by and for Jewish communities living under the empire.¹²⁹ Greek perceptions of Persian archival and bureaucratic practice similarly inform the creative literary presentation of Greco-Persian history: note how the list of Xerxes’ expeditionary force at HDT. 7, 61-99 recalls, simultaneously, a Homeric catalogue, with all its deep cultural resonances for Greek audiences, and a

127 For instance, and to simplify matters dramatically, intentional history often makes use of tropes familiar from – and with powerful appeal stemming from – folktale patterns and oral traditions; while specificity (in terms of dates, numbers, geographical locales, and other details) seems more at home in a documentary mode than a moralistic one.

128 JONES 2018.

129 Again, see LEUCHTER 2024 and BLANKENSHIP 2024 for details.

prosaic Persian-style documentary text, presumably recognizable as such to elite Greeks at the periphery of the Persian Empire.¹³⁰

A similar generative and hybridizing dynamic can be perceived, albeit dimly, in the literary output of Alexander's entourage. In the case of the bematists, for instance, the fragments and testimonia suggest that their published work, or at least what eventually came to be associated with these individuals, did not consist of bare lists of distances traveled by Alexander, but apparently such distances punctuated by details of geography, ethnography, and thaumasiography or paradoxography, forming a sort of military-exploratory *periegesis*.¹³¹ While the narrative shape of such works can no longer be ascertained due to their fragmentary status, their apparent contents suggest some conformity to a periegetic model. I tentatively wonder whether the cultural associations of the periegetic form leave some room for an analysis of the Σταθμοί (particularly Baeton's) as in some sense 'emplotted' at least in thematic terms (rather than the usual narrative ones). That is, the Σταθμοί used real data – distances experientially traversed between locales – in a periegetic generic framework,¹³² to illustrate a thesis compatible with the emplotted historiographical narratives of a Callisthenes or Chares: namely, Alexander's control, in this case, over the distances enumerated in the Σταθμοί and the territory they delineated.¹³³ Once again, such a work, and the hybrid form it took, may have exceeded Alexander's intentions for the authorized historiography of his kingship.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Alexander's commissioning of a royal journal (the *Ephemerides*), considered in concert with the rest of his apparatus of record-keeping (the bematists) *and* the configuration and dissemination of any such data

130 BLANKENSHIP 2022, pp. 77-87.

131 TUCI 2018.

132 One could object that Xenophon's *Anabasis* and perhaps even the end of Ctesias' *Persica* (*FGrHist* 688, 33 = Photius §76) furnish enough of a precedent for this combination of materials; but I have argued elsewhere that these examples, too, are inspired by Persian documentary practice and management of territory and resources (see BLANKENSHIP 2022, pp. 96-107).

133 Cfr. MOLINA MARÍN 2024, especially. p. 328 on the *synergy* [...] *between geographical knowledge and conquest*.

along emplotted narrative lines, by a professional historian specially delegated to perform the task, recalls the Achaemenid management of imperial history. I have argued that the distribution of these various intellectual duties constitutes, in and of itself, a historiographical program, and that this program maps onto the practice of the Achaemenid Great Kings. Following the precaution of Briant about distinguishing typological convergence from direct influence of the Achaemenid Persian Empire on Macedonian royal practices, it may be impossible to say definitively whether Alexander independently realized the utility of narrative emplotment as an *instrument of empire*, and the role that daily note-takers – recorders of real data – could play in constructing imperial history.¹³⁴ Indeed, a traditional explanation for Alexander's strategies of recruitment has looked instead to the influence of Aristotle (the famous empiricist) and his wide-ranging intellectual interests as a potential impetus for the make-up of Alexander's entourage.¹³⁵

In my view, however, Alexander's coordination of these two types of historiography for the express purpose of ruling over the newly conquered Achaemenid Empire, and managing his historical image along the way, suggests an intentional adoption and manipulation of available Achaemenid models for the narrative control of the empire once ruled by Persians. Further, similar consequences obtained in each case as a result of the scribal 'connective tissue' through which such narrative control was mediated: the existence of such a loose group of intellectuals – again, some named, some anonymous – and their writerly activities conditioned the emergence of new, hybridized forms of text, superseding the intentions either of the Persian Great Kings or of Alexander. This suggestion of similarity and indeed receptivity can accommodate key differences, moreover, between the textual output of the Achaemenid-acculturated scribal milieu and Alexander's court writers: Alexander's bematists measured distances by Greek *stades*, over against the Achaemenid *parasang*, suggesting different technologies for making sense of, and ultimately dominating, space;¹³⁶ Alexander's chancellery wrote in Greek, rather than imperial Aramaic. But these cul-

134 The phrase *instrumen[t] of empire* comes from RAAFLAUB 2009.

135 See for example DILKE 1985, pp. 29, 59-60 on the bematists. I follow HENKELMAN 2017, pp. 63-70 in looking for Persian, rather than exclusively Greek, forerunners for Alexander's bematistic practices and interests; see also KEGERREIS 2017.

136 See HENKELMAN 2017, pp. 63-79 on Persian conceptualization and control of space.

tural differences in execution are subservient to the intellectual impulses structuring their usage. Such a conclusion offers insight into the situation of early historiography between the Greek Aegean and the Near Eastern world encompassed by Achaemenid Persia and, moreover, provides more evidence for our ongoing theorization of Alexander's kingship and management of his multi-ethnic realm.

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