

Bending Space: Praise and *Parrhēsia* in Hellenistic Court Geography

by

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Statement of Originality:

This is to certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Signature:

Name: Joshua David McDermott

Dedicated to Alison

Abstract

Hellenistic geographical treatises have traditionally received little attention for their ideological content. Recent scholarship has provided a much-needed revision to this approach, examining these texts through an imperial lens as expressions of propaganda. However, such readings provide an incomplete understanding of these treatises' functions, tending to overlook elements which stifle, rather than promote, imperial concerns. This thesis argues that the ideologically diverse nature of Hellenistic court geographies should be understood as sympotic gifts of court *Philoï* (friends) to the king. Imperial propaganda is interpreted through a sympotic lens as *epainos* (praise), and potentially subversive texts are understood as expressions of *parrhēsia* (frank speech). To identify these expressions within court geography, a range of methodological tools are adopted. Critical and counter-cartographic lenses identify *epainos* and *parrhēsia* within spatial geography. Analysis of descriptive geographical elements draw on narratological tools to consider the effect of digressions, emplotment, and implicit juxtaposition as means of reinforcing or, conversely, distancing the audience from the imperial gaze.

Two case studies explore the imperial geography of early Hellenistic kingdoms. First, the geographical propaganda of the Ptolemies is examined and found to prescribe a thalassocratic suzerainty across the *oikoumenē*—something not necessarily apparent in the world beyond the imperial map. The *periplous* and vectorial geography of Timosthenes of Rhodes and Ptolemaic court poets are identified as flattering expressions of Ptolemaic divine kingship and *oikoumenē*-wide hegemony, amplifying imperial ideology. However, a critical analysis of Eratosthenes of Kyrene's treatise reveals it to function as geographical *parrhēsia*, imperial geographic tools having been co-opted by the geographer to disrupt these same imperial pretensions. The second case study considers the geography of the early Seleukid court where claims of universal kingship were increasingly at odds with geopolitical realities. A critical geographic analysis of the works of the imperial geographers, Patrokles and Demodamas of Miletos, identifies ideologically flattering distortions in their treatises, constructing powerful vectors as gifts of *epainos* for their royal patrons. In contrast, Megasthenes' geography is found to frustrate Seleukid imperial ideology, expressing a geographical *parrhēsia* which places clear limits on universal kingship through the elevation of his imperial rival.

This dissertation redefines our understanding of Hellenistic geography by adopting a sympotic cultural lens. The identification of elements of *parrhēsia* within court geography allows for a more nuanced reading of Hellenistic geographies as texts responding to the concerns of the sympotic court. Court geographies performed vital ideological functions: geographic tools provided unique ways for *Philoï* to challenge the imperial claims of their royal patrons.

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My research into Hellenistic geography began when I encountered the ideological concerns expressed in court science and poetry while studying for my Master of Arts in 2018 under the guidance of Prof. Paul McKechnie (Macquarie University). With his encouragement, I delved further into the fascinating ideology of the geography and geopolitics of the Hellenistic world. I want to thank Paul for his insights concerning the Hellenistic court and Hellenistic political history.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow those of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2023), 5th edition, T. Whitmarsh (gen. ed.) (Oxford). Additional abbreviations are listed below.

ABC	Grayson, A.K. (1970, 1975) <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles</i> (Locust Valley NY)
Austin	Austin, M.M. (2006) <i>The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation</i> (Cambridge)
BM	The British Museum, London
BNJ	Worthington, I. (gen. ed.) (2021), <i>Jacoby Online. Brill's New Jacoby</i> (Leiden)
Cairo	The Egyptian Museum, Cairo
CM	Glassner, J.-J. (tr. and ed.) (1993) <i>Chroniques Mésopotamiennes</i> (Paris)
ETCSL	Black, J., Cunningham, G., Robson, E. and Zólyomi, G. (tr. and eds) (2003-2006) <i>Electronic Corpus of Sumerian texts</i> (Oxford)
FGrHist	Jacoby, F. (1923-1959) <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> , volumes I-III (Berlin and Leiden)
GGM	Müller, C. (ed.) (1855–61) <i>Geographici Graeci Minores</i> (Paris and Ann Arbor MI)
IG	Kirchner, I. (ed.) (1913) <i>Inscriptiones Graecae. Vol. II et III. Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores</i> (Berlin)
Louvre	Musée du Louvre, Paris
MMA	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.
MOCCI	<i>Munich Open-access Cuneiform Corpus Initiative</i> , funded by LMU Munich, the Henkel Foundation, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Munich)
MRE	Hultzsch, E. J. T. (tr. and ed.) (1925) 'The Rock Edicts' in <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Volume 1, The Inscriptions of Asoka</i> (Oxford)
OGIS	Dittenberger, W. (ed.) (1903, 1905) <i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> (Leipzig)

ORACC	Tinney, S., Novotny, J., Robson, E. and Veldhuis, N. (eds) (2014) <i>The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus</i>
PHI	Packard, D. (ed.) (2023) <i>Packard Humanities Institute's Searchable Greek Inscriptions</i> (Ithaca NY and Columbus OH)
<i>P. Hibeh</i>	Grenfell, B.P. and A.S. Hunt (eds) (1906–1955) <i>The Hibeh papyri</i> (London)
<i>P. Mil. Vogl. VIII. 309</i>	C. Austin and G. Bastian (eds) (2002) 'Poseidippos: Epigrams' (University of Milan inv. 1295), <i>Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia</i> (Milan)
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	Grenfell, B.P. and Hunt, A.S. (eds) (1898 – 2021) <i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , volumes 1–86 (London)
<i>P. Sorbonn.</i>	Cadell, H. (ed.) (1966) <i>Papyrus de la Sorbonne, nos. 1- 68</i> , (Paris)
<i>P. Teb.</i>	Hunt, A.S. and Smyly, J.G. (eds) (1933) <i>The Tebtunis papyri</i> , volume III, part I (London and New York NY)
<i>P. Petr.</i>	Mahaffy, J.P. (ed.) (1891–1905) <i>The Flinders Petrie papyri with transcriptions, commentaries and index</i> (Dublin)
RC	Welles, C.B. (ed.) (1934), <i>Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period</i> (London and Prague)
SC	Houghton, A., Lorber, L. and Kritt, B. (2002) <i>Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: Part I, Seleucus I through Antiochus III</i> (New York NY and Lancaster PA)
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (1923–) (Alphen aan den Rijn, Amsterdam, Leiden)
<i>Supp. Hell.</i>	Lloyd-Jones, H. and Parsons, P.J. (eds) (1983) <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum</i> (Berlin and New York NY)
<i>Syll.</i>	Dittenberger, W. (ed.) (1917-20) <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (Leipzig)
Vat.	The Vatican Museums

Introduction

In the early hours of Monday, 2nd September 2019, as Hurricane Dorian devastated the Bahamas, the president of the United States released an erroneous tweet, speculating that Alabama, among other states, would ‘most likely be hit (much) harder than anticipated.’¹ The National Weather Service (NWS) in Birmingham lost little time in making a correction, reassuring citizens that ‘Alabama will NOT see any impacts from #Dorian’.² On Wednesday 4th, the president displayed a map of the likely flight path of the category 5 hurricane which had been crudely altered with a black marker pen. Many observers noted that the alteration seemed uncannily like the broad strokes made by the president’s own notorious sharpie with which he habitually signed documents.³ The potentially criminal alteration was telling—an additional semicircle had been added so that the probable path of the hurricane included Alabama.⁴ #Sharpiegate was born. Two days later, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the parent organisation of the NWS, made a surprising announcement which supported the president and criticised the NWS meteorologists who should not have spoken ‘in absolute terms’.⁵ In 2020, an external review concluded that this statement by the NOAA had, in fact, violated its own Scientific Integrity Policy, and ‘was not based on science but appears to be largely driven by external influence’.⁶ The public statement, like the doctored map, had been altered to match the presidential will. At the time, it was the late-night comedians who were most strident in their criticisms. Trevor Noah observed incredulously, ‘the president of the United States just changed a map with a sharpie to make himself look right... and he thought we wouldn’t notice?’⁷ Jimmy Kimmel noted ‘not only do we have fake news, we now have fake weather too’.⁸ The seemingly untouchable comedians of the republic could draw on an alternate authority, that of scientific tradition, to challenge and lampoon the president, who was expected to tolerate such criticism, albeit through gritted teeth. For all the power of the Oval Office, there were outlets through which esteemed critics could push back, criticising a ruler who went beyond spin, and who was perceived to be recklessly defying the realities established by geography and science.

¹ D. Trump @realdonaldtrump (2019), 2nd September 12.51AM; M. Pengelly (2019).

² NWS Birmingham @NWS Birmingham (2019), 2nd September 1.11AM.

³ ‘...a frenzy of speculation over whether the president himself, or perhaps some lackey eager to impress, was responsible’, D. Smith (2019); M.D. Shear & Z. Kanno-Youngs (2019).

⁴ J. Pietruska (2019).

⁵ NOAA (2019); T. Law & G. Martinez (2019).

⁶ R. Beitsch (2022); C. Flavelle (2020).

⁷ T. Noah @TheDailyShow (2019), 5th September 10:13AM.

⁸ A. Chiu (2019).

1. Question

Our recent lived experiences are a reminder of the potential for geography and other sciences to become highly politicised. Representations of space can be used to reinforce, but also to challenge, the interests of those in power. Following developments in the modern discipline, recent readings of Ptolemaic, Seleukid, and other Hellenistic geographical treatises have increasingly treated these texts as ideological expressions, distorting space to serve a distinct propagandistic function for royal patrons. However, not all court geographers seem to have stuck to the remit. Indeed, some appear to have created geographies which challenge, rather than support, the imperial claims of their respective patrons. These seemingly incongruous texts cannot be easily accommodated by current approaches. Yet if we consider both propagandistic and more ideologically unorthodox texts through the cultural lens of the royal *symposion*, we may be able to gain a clearer sense of how they functioned side by side at court. While propagandistic geography could function as credible *epainos* (praise), the discipline may also have provided a means to express *parrhēsia* (frank speech), a sympotic mode of expression which involved challenging one's friends, including royal patrons.⁹ Geographical *parrhēsia* provided an avenue not merely to resist pressure to produce propaganda, but also to pointedly challenge it, demonstrating the limits of empire and elevating alternate concerns. This dissertation will aim to identify elements of geographic texts which resist, disrupt, and challenge early Hellenistic imperial ideology, and demonstrate how they function as expressions of sympotic *parrhēsia*. Reading these texts as sympotic expressions of court friendship will account for the range of ideological positions maintained by geographers within these Hellenistic courts. This approach may allow us to answer the question: To what extent can ideological concerns within Hellenistic geography be understood as expressions of *parrhēsia*?

2. Literature Review

This review of literature will show that the study of ancient geography has tended to follow developments in the modern discipline, albeit with something of a conservative delay. The modern discipline of geography has deep empiricist roots. Immanuel Kant characterised it in his own time as replacing 'endless fantasies' of prior ages with 'careful examination, which allows us to draw reliable conclusions from verified reports'.¹⁰ Carl Ritter and Alexander von Humboldt followed this empiricist methodology with its emphasis on investigation; the latter saw his work as the product of observations 'of the external world' contributing to an ever-progressing 'empire' of knowledge.¹¹ Nineteenth and early twentieth century treatments of ancient geography applied a similar set of values to understanding ancient geographical

⁹ *LSJ* s.v. ἔπαινος A1 & 2; παρρησία A.

¹⁰ 'Our knowledge originates with the senses. They give us the material to which reason merely gives an appropriate form.' I. Kant (1802) 9.159; (1757) 2.3.

¹¹ A. von Humboldt (1848) 2.xxiii, for new geological knowledge via 'legitimate induction', see: 2.147-9; 2.59-60; empire of knowledge: 1.60, 1.59; I. Kant (1757) 2.3; C. Ritter (1836) 1.838.

texts.¹² Sir Edward Bunbury went as far as to apply ‘the same rules of reasonable criticism’ one would apply to any nineteenth century geographer.¹³ He found much to approve of in the imperial geography of early Hellenistic military commanders, such as the Seleukid *stratēgoi* (generals) Patrokles and Demodamas of Miletos, and the Ptolemaic *nauarch* (admiral), Timosthenes of Rhodes, observing that their geographies were informed by a reassuring ‘soundness of judgement’.¹⁴ Sir William Woodthorpe Tarn followed this approach, characterising Patrokles’ geography as a collection of factual ‘reports’, and even likening the work of Timosthenes to the *Mediterranean Pilot* from his own day.¹⁵ This essentially empiricist approach remained dominant throughout much of the twentieth century, maintained by the eminent Peter Marshall Fraser, who presented *stratēgoi*-geographers as stalwart defenders of reason over fantasy.¹⁶ Such an approach is not without its limitations. The impression of detached, sober military figures risk anachronistic caricature, Hellenistic geographers depicted as sharing the same concerns for territorialising exactitude which preoccupied later European colonial surveyors.¹⁷ This retrojection tends to omit consideration of the uniquely Hellenistic ideological forces at play in the courts where these geographical treatises were published.

Non-military geographers from the *Mouseion*-Library complex in Alexandria are likewise traditionally presented as unaffected by court ideology. Like Bunbury and Tarn, Fraser viewed a scholar’s research under such court patronage as ‘an affluent, carefree, and peaceful life’.¹⁸ Indeed, scientifically rigorous geography was, according to George Sarton, its own (and only) reward.¹⁹ The benevolent regime was understood to only benefit indirectly, via prestige (τιμή or δόξα), the ‘intellectual achievement’, according to Fraser, providing ‘justification of the empire’.²⁰ While no longer explicitly idealised in these terms, the shadow of this empiricist approach remains salient in contemporary scholarship. Ancient geography continues to be often judged primarily in terms of accuracy, with distortions excused as inadvertent errors caused by limited data.²¹ The approach is not without value, reflecting something of ancient

¹² Bunbury following von Humboldt (1843) 1.389-407; (1848). See: A. Bunbury (1879) 1.103 n.1, 1.193 n.7, 1.200, n.2, 1.215, 1.222-4, 1.256-7, 1.574, 2.76 n.6, 2.209, 2.373, 2.374; although: 1.26 n.7, 2.203.

¹³ Bunbury (1879) 1.vii.

¹⁴ Bunbury (1879) 1.572-3, 87-8. *LSJ* s.v. στρατηγός A; ναύαρχος A.

¹⁵ W.W. Tarn (1901) 19-20; (1952) 242-3; *contra*: G. Shipley (2011) 12.

¹⁶ Timosthenes ‘strictly practical interest’ *contra* paradoxography: P.M. Fraser (1972) 1.522. Patrokles’ accuracy: 1.534.

¹⁷ Colonial accuracy as territorial claim: J. Pickles (1992) 193-230; D. Wood (1992) 43; J.B. Harley (1988b) 65. British Survey of India is an oft-cited example: M.H. Edney (1997) 24-5; T. Simpson (2017) 3-36; K. Schlögel (2016) 151-159. Surveys appropriated for non-European territorialisation: T. Winichakul (1994).

¹⁸ C.G. Heyne (1785) 76-134; Bunbury (1879) 1.576; Tarn (1952) 239, 269. Fraser’s ‘carefree’ environment: Fraser (1972) 1.306-10, 316, 456; (1971) 10-11, 33. *Cf.* Antigonos II’s court: Tarn (1913) 224; (1951) 51-2.

¹⁹ Sarton (1959) 59.

²⁰ *LSJ*. s.v. τιμή I, 1-4; Fraser (1972) 1.307, 9-11, 16, 19. δόξα as prestige or glory: *LSJ* s.v. δόξα A, 1-3. P. Green (1985); A. Erskine (1995) 38-48; ‘il rapporto del potere con la scienza e la tecnologia’, L. Russo (2001) 283.

²¹ Greek geography as empirical: J.S. Keltie & O.J.R. Howarth (1913) 23-25; J. Ager (1977) 1-15; G. Aujac (1987) 148-160; G. Irby (2012) 81-108. For Eratosthenes, see: Roller (2010); (2015). Megasthenes as rationalist: E.A. Schwanbeck (1846) III-IX; J.W. McCrindle (1877) 16-22; Roller (2008); R. Stoneman (2019) 11, 129, 134; (2021) 1-24. *Cf.* Roman geographic ‘accuracy’: Plin. *HN* 3.17; M. Boatwright (2015) 235-259. Distortions/errors from limited data, Eratosthenes: Roller (2010) 127, 186-8; P.M. Fraser (1996) 80-82; K. Geus (2002) 260-289.

scholarly concerns. Certainly, fellow scholars were an important audience for Hellenistic technical treatises.²² Yet this is, at best, only half of the story. Elite writing in antiquity was not necessarily limited to a single audience, with more learned, ironic, and potentially subversive texts being especially dependent on divergent readings of multiple target audiences.²³ A clearer understanding of the texts within the ideological and cultural context of the Hellenistic court is needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the intended purpose of these texts.

Much-needed revision has come in recent decades from the application of political geographical approaches to ancient texts. The difficulties in presenting a neutral map in the modern geographical discipline have long been understood. Von Humboldt explicitly lamented the challenges he faced: selection from his swathe of new data necessarily involved simplification and distortion.²⁴ Yet by the mid-twentieth century, informed by the powerful role of geographical propaganda in war, cartological selection and omission was no longer understood as an ideologically neutral process. Heinz Soffner described it as ‘the visual front’.²⁵ Critical geographers such as John Ager, John B. Harley, Mark Monmonier, Denis Wood, among others, argued that selections and omissions in maps helped guide the intended audience to a particular reading.²⁶ Choices in cartographic representation were similarly understood as potent propaganda to assimilate the audience to an ideologically orthodox perspective. Projection could isolate or link territories, diminishing or expanding geopolitical space for the audience.²⁷ Juxtaposition could aggrandise or diminish a territory to make powerful, seemingly irrefutable arguments.²⁸ Geopolitical demarcation, through shading and confident lines across the represented landscape, would not only assert a sometimes misleading sense of control, but could reinforce identity and geopolitical claims in ways which may not reflect the reality on the ground.²⁹ This was further amplified by symbols and

Megasthenes’ sources: Roller (2008), esp. F4, F6c, F14; Stoneman (2019) 129-188; (2021) 8-9. Cultural confusion: R. Thapar (2012) 73, 113.

²² Correspondence between scholars: Fraser (1971) 14-15.

²³ S. Hinds (1987) 25-27; R. Rutherford (2011) 84, 98-99. Subversion and irony in the Ptolemaic court: Theoc. *Id.* 15; Burton (1995) 16, 51, 62, 108, 125, 134; E.-R. Schwinge (1986) 72; R. Strootman (2016) 9-10.

²⁴ Von Humboldt (1848) 2.xix.

²⁵ H. Soffner (1942) 465-76; H. Speier (1941) 310-330; G.H. Herb (1996) 6-33, 76-94, 151-177. C. Leuenberger & I. Schnell (2010).

²⁶ Critical Geography: J. Habermas (1971); (1978); Harley (1988b) 65; Wood (1992) 25, 41-3, 55; Monmonier (1991) 1-4, 87-99. Turnbull (1994) 42; Pickles (1992) 197; (2004) 63. Selection: K. Schlögel (2016) 63-79; Ager (1977) 1-4; Wood (1992) 1-2, 24-5; Harley (1988b) 66; (1991) 13; (1992) 232-5; P. Cloke et al. (2004). Omissions: Wood (1992) 45; B. Harley (1988b) 66, 70-1. Distortions: Monmonier (1991) 87, 94-99. Demarcation and borders: Speier (1941) 321-326; M. Foucault (1980) 172-182; Harley (1988a) 282; Wood (1992) 21, 25; Monmonier (1991) 90.

²⁷ Projection and scale: Ager (1977) 4-9; J.B. Harley (1991) 9-16; Monmonier (1991) 87, 94-112; (2004) 121-172, for qualifications, see: 173-84. Centrality: Leuenberger & Schnell (2010) 809-11, 825.

²⁸ Juxtaposition of Size: Speier (1941) 318-19; Leuenberger & Schnell (2010) 814, fig. 3 & 4; Monmonier (1991) 94-99, 102, fig. 7.11. Encirclement: Speier (1941) 316-17, 328-30; Ager (1977) 9-11. Monmonier (1991) 99-102.

²⁹ Partitions, shading: Speier (1941) 314-318; Ager (1977) 9-13; J.B. Harley (1988a) 282; Wood (1992) 21, 25; Monmonier (1991) 91, 95. Fig. 7.5. Knowable space: Edney (1997). Exaggerating colonised space: J. Belich (1986) 29, 355, 449-450, 464-470; Schlögel (2016). Blank space: J. Conrad (1899) 11; E.W. Said (1978) 285-6. Harley (1988b) 66, 70-1; *contra* human place: Y.F. Tuan (1977) 54, 73, 144; for geo-political states: P.J. Taylor (1999) 8-16.

nomenclature.³⁰ These curated representations assume a prescriptive role, obliging the audience to accept a represented landscape in keeping with an assimilating imperial gaze, the authoritative maps of officialdom denying any opportunity for criticism or dialogue. Rather, a specious pretence of objectivity is asserted, with alternative perspectives silenced.³¹ This political reading of the map sits in sharp opposition to Kant's assertion that geography was to satiate our 'desire for knowledge'.³²

An overdue application of this political geographic approach to ancient geography has developed in recent decades. Rather than the pragmatic *stratēgoi*-geographers and ideologically-detached scholars of the traditional reading, recent revisionist approaches have increasingly argued that ancient geographical treatises were part of a broader program of propaganda to bolster imperial objectives for the regimes which patronised these works.³³ Data selection and omission by geographers is understood as a process with live political ramifications, ameliorating the geopolitical legitimacy of the royal patron and undermining his rivals among the would-be Successors to Alexander.³⁴ Demarcation and partitions, through sequence in *periplous* and hodological itineraries, and by clear lines in spatial geographies, are interpreted as powerful cartographic gestures intended to organise and sort places and peoples in terms which express imperial control.³⁵ Selective representations, distortions, and projection choices are interpreted as gestures to orient the map around an imperial core and project a sense of imperial reach.³⁶ This approach, still somewhat in its infancy, has provided an important new way to understand geography within the politically charged climate of Hellenistic courts, informed by zero-sum claims to imperial rule.

³⁰ Symbols: Speier (1941) 327-8; Ager (1977) 4-7; Monmonier (1991) 17-42. Maps symbols over function: C. Riopelle & P. Muniandy (2013) 153-172. Nomenclature: Ager (1977) 11-14; J. Faričić et al. (2012) 125-134; Leuenberger & Schnell (2010) 810-812.

³¹ Orientalist gaze: Said (1978) 3-8, 21-23, 70-73, 221. Hegemonic gaze: Harley (1991) 13; D. Haraway (1988) 575-99. Assimilating lens: Harley (1988b) 65-66; Wood (1992) 47. Prescriptive geography: J. Agnew (2007) 398-422; Monmonier (1991) 88; Harley (1988a) 282; T. Unwin (1992) 52. Cartography reinforcing imperial claims: E.A. Sutton (2015); Leuenberger & Schnell (2020). Faux objectivity: Said (1978) 104-5; Wood (1992) 25, 41-3, 55; Harley (1988b) 65; Pickles (1992) 193-230; (2004) 63; L. Mogel (2008) 105-160; Turnbull (1994) 42; Unwin (1992) 31-42; 152-7.

³² Kant (1802) 9.2.31.

³³ Privileged focalisation: C. Pelling (2009) 507; K. Clarke (1999) 23. Assimilating gaze: R.J.A. Talbert (2012b) 164-191; P. J. Kosmin (2014b) 61-76; M.S. Visscher (2020) 29-70. Panoptic gaze, see: M. Foucault (1977) 206, 217; J. Bentham (1787-8) 31-95.

³⁴ Ideological pressures: P.T. Keyser & G. Irby-Massie (2006) 242; S. Bianchetti (2016) 137-9; Kosmin (2017) 86. Omission: Bianchetti (2016) 137-9; Visscher (2020) 181-90; Clarke (1999) 245-6, 270-1. Temporal omissions: Kosmin (2014b) 186-208; (2016) 86-88, 122; (2017) 87-94. Selection: S. Sherwin-White & A. Kuhrt (1993) 19-20; Visscher (2020) 25-70.

³⁵ *Periplous* partition, demarcation: B. Salway (2012) 204-216; G. Shipley (2012) 11-13; K. Buraselis & D.J. Thompson (2013) 1-18; K. Buraselis (2013) 97-107. Itinerary geography: P. Janni (1984) Ch. 2; D. Dueck (2012) 26-41; G. Irby (2016a) 827-8; (2012) 90-1; M. Pretzler (2005) 159; Z. Tan (2014). Challenges: R.J.A. Talbert (2012a) 262-4. Spatial geography, partition: Salway (2012) 200-230; C.B. Krebs (2006) 111-136; Tan (2014) 181-185, 191-3; Pelling (2009) 507; Clarke (2018) 93-114, 195; Kosmin (2014b) 31-76; (2017) 89-94; Visscher (2020) 68-9. Spatial geography, assimilating: Dueck (2012) 68-98; Cf. descriptive: 20-67.

³⁶ Core: Kosmin (2014b) 79-125, 227-30, 257-8; (2017) 86-88. Reach: Dueck (2010) 245; R. Strootman (2012) 38-61, esp. 44; (2016) 147; R.J.A. Talbert (2004) 21-37; Visscher (2020) 51-62. Orientation: Salway (2012) 216-19.

While making a valuable contribution to our understanding of the political role of geographical texts, this propagandistic reading tends to presume a blanket ideological conformity, allowing little room for alternate geographic voices. Although some ancient geographic treatises seem to assiduously promote imperial concerns, other treatises sit more awkwardly within such a framework, appearing at times to disrupt, rather than affirm, the imperial concerns of their royal patrons. Accommodation of these unorthodox geographic elements within the propagandistic model has resulted in some elaborate, and sometimes unlikely, re-interpretations of early Hellenistic imperial ideology.³⁷ Radical, alternate, and counter-cartographical geographical approaches from the modern geographical discipline may help account for such incongruities in a more compelling manner.³⁸

Post-structuralism provides much needed nuance to critical geography, allowing room for resistance and disruption to the hegemonic lens.³⁹ In terms of spatial geography, the Situationist school of the 1960s explored the ways that appropriation of tools from dominant political geography could create a subversive *détournement*, opening the space for alternate ways of seeing.⁴⁰ Building on these foundations, radical geographers have celebrated counter-cartographies. Counter-cartographies omit, replace, or demote traditional cartographic features, both civic and natural, in ways which challenge the orthodox geographic lens.⁴¹ Through a counter-cartographic lens, spatial geography is reinterpreted as a potentially revolutionary pedagogical media.⁴²

Descriptive geography took a different approach to disrupting the imperial gaze. Twentieth century radical geography followed Pëtr Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus in exploring how divergent descriptive digressions can potentially privilege natural forces and individual experiences. Immersing the reader in the landscape, descriptive digressions can potentially disorient the reader, subsequently undermining imperial pretensions to control the terrain and, indeed, the audience.⁴³ Using narratological tools, radical geographers found that descriptive digressions could act as a means of entering the landscape on their own terms,

³⁷ Recent examples: 1) Megasthenes' *Indika* as cultural appropriation by Seleukids: Visscher (2020) 52-3, 61. 2) Megasthenes' *Indika* justifying Seleukid demarcation: Kosmin (2014b) 37-41, 45-9. 3) Eratosthenes' oikoumenē-wide partitions as attacking Seleukid, not Ptolemaic, imperial geography: Kosmin (2017) esp. 91-93.

³⁸ Postmodern geographies: M. Dear (1988) 267-74; Gregory (1989) 67-96; Harvey (1989); E.W. Soja (1989); G. Olsson (1991) 85-92; Unwin (1992); G. Palsky (2020).

³⁹ Power, negotiation of/with/resistance to: M. Foucault (1981) 48-79; (1985) 78-93. Challenges to authority: (2001); (2010); Deleuze & Guattari (1987) 469-73; Deleuze (1968). For agency, resistance, appropriation: S. Bignall (2010) 60-99. D.W. Smith (2016) 264-282.

⁴⁰ K. Knabb (1959) 67-8. *Détournement* through appropriation: G. Debord (1957).

⁴¹ Mogel (2008) 107; 'counter-mapping': Pickles (2004) 177-188; J.W. Crampton (2009) 91-100; W. Bunge, (1975) 149-81. J. W. Crampton and J. Krygier (2005) 12; R. Kitchin & M. Dodge (2007) 331-44.

⁴² Mogel (2008) 118; Foucault (1997) 132-3; Crampton & Krygier (2005) 13-14; Pickles (2004) 12. As pedagogy: Leuenberger & Schnell (2020) 2.

⁴³ E. Reclus (1905-1908); P. Kropotkin (1909); Crampton & Krygier (2005), 12; G. Sarashina (1930); S. Springer (2013) 46-60; N. Wald & D. Hill (2016) 23-42.

providing autonomy in opposition to the elevated panoptic lens promoted by the maps of officialdom.⁴⁴

Some significant progress has been made in applying these approaches to the analysis of geographies from later periods of antiquity. Katherine J. Clarke's analysis of Strabo's *Geography* reveals an author adopting narratological techniques to divert the reader from the explicit aims of the text, with relative positioning, narrative emplotment, and temporal digressions utilised to distance the audience from a unified and elevated imperial perspective.⁴⁵ Narratological treatments of Pausanias' works have examined the disruptive and transcendental effect of 'religious gazing' via the geographer's digressions.⁴⁶ These allow the reader to take a pilgrimage with him to the religious past, distancing us from the profane present. Zoë Tan goes further with Tacitus' *Germania*, showing how the geographer uses a full range of spatial and descriptive counter-cartographic tools—alien markers, omissions, and disorienting emplotment—to create an ungovernable space for his imperial audience.⁴⁷ These are challenges that could not be directly made in the political sphere, but geography, bolstered by the authority of the scientific tradition, allowed geographers to safely challenge imperial ideology.

An equally compelling case can be made for such a treatment of early Hellenistic treatises, developed in a climate where 'court science' was expected to educate and challenge, as well as entertain and praise.⁴⁸ However, a similar reading for early Hellenistic geographers is yet to be attempted in a substantial way. Figures such as Eratosthenes and Megasthenes remain uncomfortably squeezed into the role of propagandists, despite extensive digressions and spatial distortions which appear to distance the audience from the imperial ideology of their patrons. A new reading is needed to account for aspects of their texts which run counter to the imperial ideology of their patrons.

Consideration of the aulic context in which these texts were produced may provide insight into how these propagandistic and seemingly subversive texts apparently coexisted in early Hellenistic courts. The traditional view of an idealised scholarly existence at court has been questioned in recent decades, with the political climate of the court increasingly stressed. As we have seen, some have argued for an authoritarian model of court dynamics, with

⁴⁴ Debord (1959) 62-66; Springer (2012) 1605-1624; N. Willems (2007) 69-71, 73-4. Digressions, space-time: P. J. Ethington (2007) 465-93.

⁴⁵ Emplotment: Clarke (1999) 36-7, 200-203; (1997) 97-98; A. Merrifield (1993) 518. Temporal digressions: Clarke (1999) 245-293; (2017b). Cf. 'time-space tapestry' in human geography: M.I. Finley (1975) 16; Dear (1988); C. Brillante (1990); K. Clarke (2017b). Relative positioning: Clarke (1999) 23-24, 202-205. Descriptive-spatial opposition: Dueck (2012) 20-67. Although propagandistic elements remain: S. Potheary (2002) 398-400, 416-424; Dueck (2000) 98-9, 111-114, 125.

⁴⁶ J. Elsner (1995) 88-124; J. Kindt (2012) 39-40; Dueck (2012) 26-41; Clarke (2017b); K.W. Arafat (1992) 388-9, 407-9; V. Pirenne-Delforge (2008); E.T.E. Barker et al. (2023) 141-51.

⁴⁷ Alien, elusive landmarks: Tan (2014) 190-195; Tac. *Ger.* 5.1, 7.3; 9.2; 10.2; 39.1; 43.3. *Contra*: Pompon. 2.25. Blurred edges, nature: Tan (2014) 185-8; Tac. *Ger.* 1.1. Disorientation, relative positioning: Tan (2014) 195-7, esp. n.106. *Contra* Caes. *B Gall.* 6.25. Omissions: Tan (2014) 195; Tac. *Ger.* e.g. 30.1, 32.1, 33.1, 36.1-2. Cf. J.B. Rives (1999) 48-56.

⁴⁸ M. Berrey (2017).

geographers being little more than ciphers for the regime's imperial concerns.⁴⁹ However, the complexities of the relationship between scholars, as *Philoï* (Friends), and their royal patrons has increasingly been brought to light.⁵⁰ Building on the prolific research into the Greek *symposion* by Oswyn Murray, Pauline Schmitt Pantel, William Slater, Marek Węcowski, Kathleen Lynch, and Fiona Hobden, among others, the significance of the royal *symposion* at the Hellenistic courts has been substantially re-evaluated.⁵¹ Rolf Strootman and Stella Miller have challenged received notions that the *symposion* was in its twilight as an institution, instead revealing it to be a vital socio-political location for gift exchange and negotiation of power between king and his retinue of *Philoï* in the early Hellenistic period.⁵² Following Geoffrey Lloyd's cultural approach to ancient science, Marquis Berrey's research has demonstrated how 'court science' fits into a sympotic framework, with technical treatises functioning as entertaining gifts, designed to praise, challenge, and instruct.⁵³ Not only *epainos*, but *parrhēsia*, that particularly Greek form of frank speech among friends, played a significant part in this exchange. Increasingly, historians have identified potential examples of *epainos* and *parrhēsia* in texts, especially in didactic and encomiastic poetry intended for a royal court audience.⁵⁴ Yet geographical treatises of the Ptolemaic and Seleukid courts are yet to be meaningfully considered as *parrhēsia* within this sympotic context.⁵⁵ Doing so will allow us to understand how and why elite geographers produced geographical treatises which not only praised but, at times, challenged the imperial ideology of their royal patrons.

⁴⁹ Authoritarian: N. Elias (1969); with qualifications: I. Petrovic (2017) 145-154; Erskine (1995) 38-48. Court treatises as propagandistic: Kosmin (2014b); (2017) 85-96; Visscher (2020) esp. 9-13, 17, 200-202.

⁵⁰ *LSJ* s.v. φίλος 1d, 1a. *Philoï*: W. Donlan (1980); (1985) 223-244; H. Roisman (1983) 15-22; D. Konstan (1997). Court *Philoï*, Greek traditions: G. Herman (1981) 103-49; (1987); (1997) 199-224; R. Strootman (2011) 63-89; (2014a) 93-186; (2016) 25-74; (2018) 273-296. *Contra*: Achaemenid aulic continuity: D. Engels (2017) 69-100; Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) 48-50. For negotiation, complexity: I. Savalli-Lestrade (2017) 1-20; Strootman (2007). The specific institutional title (*Philos*) is capitalised throughout this dissertation, in contrast to the lowercase (*philos*), which is used to refer to a sympotic friend in a more general sense.

⁵¹ Greek *symposion* developments: O. Murray (1983) 11-23; (1990) 31-42; (1991c) 83-103; (1994) 63-75; (1996) 271-282; (2002) 133-138; (2016) 195-206; (2017) 139-153; M. Vickers (1970); (1973); (1975); (1980); (1990) 105-121; Slater (1976) 161-170; M. Tecusan (1990) 238-260; R.A. Tomlinson (1990) 95-101; E. Pellizer (1990) 177-184; M. Millar (1991) 59-82; Schmitt Pantel (1991); (1992); J. Luke (1994) 23-32; Rotroff (1996); F. Hobden (2004) 121-40; (2013); K. M. Lynch (2018) 233-256; R.M. Rosen (2016) 140-158; G. Lieberman (2016) 42-62; M. Węcowski (2012) 19-48; (2014); (2018) 257-272.

⁵² Sympotic Continuity: V. Cazzato & E.E. Prodi (2016) 1-16; at court: R. Strootman (2013) 68-74; (2014a); (2016); A. Cameron (1995) 71-103; S.G. Miller (2016) 288-299. For Hellenistic debauchery, see: Bevan (1927) 222-3, 236, 378-9; followed by: Collins (1997) 449 n.46. *Symposion* in decline, see esp.: Węcowski (2018) 257-72; J. Kwapisz (2014).

⁵³ 'Court Science... describes knowledge about the natural world produced for the entertainment of the court', Berrey (2017) 5; as *paideia*: 28, 90-1, 100-12; as entertainment: 127-161; K. Tyjerg (2003) 443-466; S. Berryman (2009) 42-3. Cf. Green is dismissive of 'toys': P. Green (1990) 470-79. For science as court gift, see: M. Leventhal (2017); L. Taub (2017) 144-148; S. West (1985) 61-66; K. Gutzwiller (1992) 359-85. Cultural approach to Greek science: G.E.R. Lloyd (2001).

⁵⁴ *Parrhēsia* alongside *epainos* in poetry: Burton (1995), esp. 129; M. Fantuzzi & R. Hunter (2004); 'έρωτικός...', Theoc. *Id.* 14.62; cf. more hostile characterisation: Ath 13.576e. For a scientific 'joke': R. Netz (2009) 150-2; *Parrhēsia* in Eratosthenes' *Katasterismoi*: J. Pàmias (2004) 191-8; Eratosth. *Cat.* 11.

⁵⁵ Geography as praise: Kosmin (2014b) 45, 94-100, 270-1.

3. Methodology

Ancient geographical texts are situated between disciplines, requiring a range of methodological approaches to be handled effectively.⁵⁶ As we have seen, recent revision which challenges traditional empiricist treatments have adapted the tools of modern political geography to identify propagandistic elements within early Hellenistic geography. However, this process is far from complete. An important task in this dissertation will be to identify Ptolemaic and Seleukid geographical propaganda and examine texts which support regime ideology in terms of universal kingship and associated imperial claims. Drawing on the approaches of modern political geographers such as Harley, Monmonier, and others, the effects of data selection and omission in early Hellenistic geographies will be examined. In terms of spatial representation, distortions and exaggerations of peripheral boundaries and peripheral spaces on the map will be considered, and their association with claims of imperial reach examined. For internal areas of claimed imperial space, a vectorial geographical lens will be applied and its centripetal effects and assertions of control assessed.⁵⁷ Following Derek Gregory, the effect of 'domestication' through partition and nomenclature will also be investigated.⁵⁸ Through these critical geographic tools, we will be able to examine the intended effect of spatialising gestures as they appear in early Hellenistic geographical treatises, especially those of Timosthenes, Patrokles, and Demodamas. We will see how the geographic expressions specifically align with, and exaggerate, imperial claims as gestures of geographic *epainos*. Furthermore, the survey will also consider geographic propaganda as it emerges in court poetry, such as in the works of Poseidippos of Pella and Theokritos of Syracuse, as well as in imperial *stelai*, and civic and religious nomenclature. This range of sources will allow us to confidently establish the imperial ideology of the Ptolemies and Seleukids expressed in spatial and descriptive geographical terms.

Having established the features of Ptolemaic and Seleukid imperial geography, we will be well placed to examine texts which sit less comfortably within a propagandistic framework. The works of Eratosthenes of Kyrene and Megasthenes, writing for the Ptolemaic and Seleukid courts respectively, will be examined for elements which challenge orthodox imperial geography. For spatial geography, we will draw on the radical geographic approaches of John Pickles, Jeremy Crampton, Lize Mogel, and others, to consider the disruptive effect of appropriated political geographic tools on the audience. Tan's use of such techniques with an ancient text is instructive, revealing the counter-imperial and even subversive effects of spatialising gestures such as displacement, alternate demarcations, impenetrable boundaries, omissions, and implicit juxtapositions. The impact of these techniques within a contemporary geopolitical and cultural context will be explored, as we consider how such techniques would perform as specific gestures of *parrhēsia* to challenge the imperial ideology of the court audience in targeted ways.

⁵⁶ Clarke (1999) 6-10, 337-40.

⁵⁷ Vectors: O. Virilio (1977) 149-151; H. Lefebvre (1991) 86; M. Wark (1994) 8-11, 64; (1995); (1997) 26-27, 47-9.

⁵⁸ Gregory (2001) 85, 87, 97. Said (1978) 211.

For descriptive geographical aspects of Eratosthenes' and Megasthenes' treatises, narratological tools from the tradition of literary criticism will be utilised.⁵⁹ Irene de Jong, Simon Hornblower, Tim Rood, and others, have shown how narratological analysis can uncover a range of focalisers in ancient texts which can be utilised by authors to lend credence to particular perspectives and to equally distance the reader from others.⁶⁰ In recent narratological treatments of Pausanias and Strabo, the disruptive and individualistic effects of emplotment and digression have been uncovered.⁶¹ Emplotment takes the reader on an individualising journey into the text, and deeper digressions deny the universal imperial gaze its hold over space and time.⁶² Clarke shows how emplotment can distance us from imperial aims.⁶³ Tan's analysis of Tacitus' *Germania* reveals how the reader's experience as protagonist can be intentionally disoriented in an unfamiliar and ungovernable landscape.⁶⁴ Following these approaches, the emplotment and extended digressions of Eratosthenes and Megasthenes will be examined for potentially ideologically disruptive effects.

The identification of counter-imperial concerns in ancient texts raises unique challenges. Subversive texts tend to adopt deliberate ambiguity, using irony and allowing for alternate readings from multiple audiences to safely criticise imperial orthodoxy.⁶⁵ As Paul Kosmin concedes, political readings of ancient geography can, at times, risk being overly speculative.⁶⁶ To move to more stable ground, it may be useful, where possible, to establish authorial intent with anchors from beyond the texts themselves. For the polymath Eratosthenes, we have other texts by the same author through which we may establish his concerns regarding the perceived excesses of Ptolemaic imperial pretensions and divine kingship. Building on Jordi Pàmias' important identification of subversion in Eratosthenes' *Katasterismoi*, this dissertation will examine non-geographical texts, such as Eratosthenes' *Arsinoë* and *Letter to King Ptolemy*, to further bolster the case for authorial concerns which challenge Ptolemaic claims to a divine and universal kingship.⁶⁷ For Megasthenes, the author of a lone surviving fragmentary text, such an approach is not available. However, we are fortunate to have surviving fragmentary texts of contemporary Seleukid geographies, those of Patrokles and Demodamas. Dirk Obbink and Tim Whitmarsh have shown how we can gain meaning through consideration of a text's

⁵⁹ Geographical digressions distancing reader from imperial lens: A. von Humboldt (1818) 83; Reclus (1905-1908); G. Sarashina (1930); R.A. Bagnold (1941), xxi; Gregory (2001) 102-3; N. Willems (2016) 65-84.

⁶⁰ S. Hornblower (2011), displacement: 68-74; negation: 83-89; voices: 95-99. Focalisation: I.J.F. de Jong (1999) 9-13; T. Rood (1998); C. Pelling (2009); J.R. Morgan (2014); R. Scodel (2014) 1-10.

⁶¹ Pausanias: J. Elsner (1995) 88-124; Dueck (2012) 26-41; M. Pretzler (2007) 79; Clarke (2017b). Strabo: Clarke (1999) 23-24, 202-205.

⁶² Emplotment moving between space-place: Clarke (1999) 36-7, 200-7; A. Merrifield (1993) 516-31; J.N. Entrikin (1991) 1-26, 109-131; Pretzler (2007) 59-64, 70-8.

⁶³ Strabo as *paideia* instead of strategic text: Clarke (1999) 201-2; *contra*: R. Syme (1995).

⁶⁴ Tan (2014) 190-191, *cf.* 199.

⁶⁵ Irony & alternate readings: E. O'Gorman (2000) 10-22, 88-115, 186-93; A. Barchiesi (2001); Hinds (1987) 25-27.

⁶⁶ Kosmin (2017) 90.

⁶⁷ Eratosthenes' challenges to ideological orthodoxy in poetry, biography: Eratosth. *Cat.* 11; Pàmias (2004); Geus is less emphatic: 'politischen Motiven geschehen', Geus (2002) 222; *cf.* Fraser (1972) 2.951 n.25. Comparing texts: O'Gorman (2000) 178-80.

position within a genre.⁶⁸ Comparison with other texts from the same genre and period may allow us to identify patterns of ideological orthodoxy and contrast these with Megasthenes' unorthodox components.

Another prominent challenge for interpreting the fragments of Eratosthenes' and Megasthenes' geographical texts is distinguishing the primary geographer's voice from those of our sources.⁶⁹ For Eratosthenes, these are most prominently Strabo, Arrian, and Pliny the Elder.⁷⁰ For Megasthenes, the main sources are Strabo, Arrian, and Diodoros Sikulos. This is, at times, a convoluted process, requiring an awareness of the sources' own respective authorial concerns.⁷¹ Strabo's Eratosthenes is, like Strabo, a pragmatic geographer readily making practical compromises on one hand, and using engaging imagery on the other. In contrast, Pliny's Eratosthenes is the conscientious mathematician.⁷² We can most clearly identify Eratosthenes' voice when he is rejected by our sources; Strabo regarding Eratosthenes' treatment of Homer, and Arrian concerning Eratosthenes' treatment of Alexander, Dionysos and Herakles.⁷³ For Megasthenes, our three main sources follow a similar overall structure, although Diodoros does not clearly identify his source. It is in these areas which they intersect both in terms of topic and technique that we can make the most confident associations with our author, while other elements of the respective fragments will be treated with more caution.

The challenges of reading these geographies are further exacerbated when fragments are removed from their literary context. Duane W. Roller's introduction for his 2010 edition of Eratosthenes' *Geographika* is critical of Hugo Berger's 1880 collection for making unnecessary divisions, taking us further from the literary context and compromising fragmentary analytical methodology.⁷⁴ Significantly, scholars have made similar criticisms of Roller's compilation.⁷⁵ Similar disputes occur with collections of Megasthenes' fragments. Felix Jacoby, followed by Roller, included only thirty-four certain fragments in which the author was named, but E.A. Schwanbeck's and John W. McCrindle's collections identified some fifty-nine.⁷⁶ Richard Stoneman recently identified forty-five, some providing much needed extension to *pericope* missing from Jacoby and Roller.⁷⁷ For the reader's reference, the fragment

⁶⁸ T. Whitmarsh (2004) 9-10, 107-8; 128, 227-8; fragmentary analysis: 27-9; scientific literary genre: 113-117; D. Obbink & R. Rutherford (2011) 44; S. Goldhill (2002) 22-24, 89, 98, logic, observation as scientific literary device: 100-104, 109-110. Comparing orthodox/unorthodox accounts: O'Gorman (2000) 19; S. Bhatt (2017) 82-88; although P.A. Brunt urges caution: (1980) 477-94.

⁶⁹ Irby (2016) 821.

⁷⁰ Roller (2010) 15-18; Bianchetti (2016) 141; difficulties: Fraser (1972) 1.526.

⁷¹ Erskine (2003) 6.

⁷² Eratosthenes' imagery: see Ch. 3.1, 3.4. For Strabo's use of imagery elsewhere: Peloponnese as leaf: Strabo 8.2.1, Iberia as ox-hide: 3.3.3; For imagery illustrating complexity: K. Zimmermann (2002). Pliny characterising Eratosthenes as conscientious: Plin. *HN* 5.40, 6.33.171.

⁷³ Eratosthenes as trustworthy: Arr. *Ind.* 3.1-4; *Anab.* 5.5.1; distancing from Eratosthenes' criticisms of Alexander: Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.1-2; 5.2.6-5.3.5; Arrian's promotion of Alexander: *Anab.* 1.8.8, 6.9.4-6, 6.13.5, 6.26.5, 7.30.3.

⁷⁴ '...don't atomize the fragmentary tradition further', Obbink (2011) 39-40.

⁷⁵ Roller's missing fragments: P.T. Keyser (2011b); K. Geus (2011) 554 Difficulties in identifying true fragments: C. Eckerman (2011) 78. For challenges: Roller (2010) 36-37.

⁷⁶ E.A. Schwanbeck (1846); J.W. McCrindle (1876).

⁷⁷ Sufficient *pericope* for fragments: D. Obbink (2011) 39-41. F. Jacoby (1958); R. Stoneman (2021).

numbers of Roller and Jacoby will be noted, for Eratosthenes and Megasthenes respectively. However, this dissertation's approach will follow Obbink's third principle, that the passages should be treated contextually within the source as much as possible.⁷⁸ Greek and English translations of Arrian will follow P.A. Brunt, while Strabo will follow H.L. Jones, and Diodoros Sikulos will follow Charles H. Oldfather, C. Bradford Welles, Russel M. Geer, and Francis R. Walton with adaptations where indicated.⁷⁹ Other translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Abbreviations follow those of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Transliteration of Greek terms follow de-Latinised versions where feasible, with exceptions for very familiar names and places, which maintain their anglicised form in the interests of clarity.⁸⁰ Indian transliterations follow the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) unless indicated. All dates are BCE unless indicated otherwise.

4. Outline

This dissertation aims to identify expressions of *parrhēsia* in Eratosthenes' and Megasthenes' geographical works and consider their intended effects on a court audience. In chapter one, we begin by identifying the cultural context of the *symposion*. We will examine the unique qualities of the classical *symposion*—exclusivity, equality, *paideia*, *philia*, *epainos*, and *parrhēsia*—which were maintained in Ptolemaic, Seleukid, and other early Hellenistic courts. A particular focus will be the role of the king and his geographers and other scientists as *philoï*. Scientific works as expressions of *epainos* and *parrhēsia* will be considered, laying the foundations for the Ptolemaic and Seleukid geographic propaganda and *parrhēsia* in the chapters to follow.

In chapter two, we adopt a critical geographic approach to the geographical propaganda of the early Ptolemaic regime asserted in treatises, *stelai*, poetry, and civic nomenclature. I will argue that Timosthenes' *On Harbours* and Theokritos' seventeenth *Idyll* functioned as geographic *epainos* which claimed and organised the *oikoumenē* in Ptolemaic thalassocratic terms. Furthermore, vectoral geography will be examined as a means of expressing hyperbolic reach, and irresistible centripetal pull towards the imperial centre. In addition to these spatialising gestures, the use of religious landscape will be shown to bind the relatively young regime to venerable roots. It will be argued that the Ptolemies' imperial geography presented the regime as the centre of the world.

With Ptolemaic imperial geography clearly established, in chapter three we search Eratosthenes' geographical treatises for elements which limit, frustrate, or undermine these claims. To establish authorial intent, we will first survey the polymath's non-geographical

⁷⁸ Obbink's 3rd Principle: 'to reconstruct the original context of a fragment is as important as reconstructing the original work from which it was derived, and may be our only key to it.' Obbink (2011) 39-41; H. Youtie (1958).

⁷⁹ Arrian: P.A. Brunt (1976-1983); Strabo: H. L. Jones (1917-1932). Diodoros: books 1-4: C.H. Oldfather (1933-1954); book 17: C. Bradford Welles (1963); books 18-20: R.M. Geer (1947-54); books 21-32: F.R. Walton (1957).

⁸⁰ People/deities: Alexander, Aristotle, Arrian, Muses, Plutarch, Plato, Ptolemy. Places: Athens, Carthage, Ganges, Indus, Ister, Macedonia, Nile, Rhodes, Rome, Sicily, Syracuse. The transliteration macron omitted from familiar eta-sigma ending names for ease of reading: Herakles, Eratosthenes, Megasthenes, Timosthenes, Sokrates.

works to identify specific concerns, anxieties, or attitudes which challenge Ptolemaic imperial and religious ideology. We will apply narratological tools to identify potential *parrhēsia* in the author's descriptive emplotment and digressions, while radical and counter-geographical approaches will allow us to identify spatialising gestures which run counter to imperial concerns. I will argue that these function as a gift of powerful geographical *parrhēsia* from an elite scholar to his *philos*, the king.

In chapter four we shift to the Seleukid sphere. We first identify the imperial propaganda of the early Seleukid regime. We will consider the development of divine universal kingship in foundational dynastic myths, and the subsequent ideological crisis of the so-called 'Treaty of the Indus'. We will adopt a critical geographic lens to identify geographic propaganda in the treatises of the *stratēgoi*-geographers, Patrokles and Demodamas. I will argue that they constructed a prescriptive map emphasising Seleukid centrality, domestication of space, and imperial reach, sometimes exaggerating and at other times starkly contradicting geopolitical realities. These performed as powerful gifts to their patron. Other sources of imperial geography, such as civic nomenclature, civic inscriptions, and royal letters, will further establish Seleukid attempts to build an imperial core for a new world empire.

In chapter five, with Seleukid imperial geographic propaganda established, we can more confidently identify elements of Megasthenes' *Indika* which undermine these Seleukid claims of universal empire. We will first examine his use of spatial geography to emphasise the rival claims of the Mauryan empire and juxtapose these with a diminished Seleukid space. We will then see how temporal, natural, and cultural digressions further elevate India as a land of natural resources and imperial order pointedly denied to the Seleukids. I will argue that Megasthenes' treatise effectively appropriates the tools of political geography to challenge the excesses of Seleukid imperial pretensions.

This thesis intends to not only further integrate modern political geographic tools into the study of ancient geography, but to add greater nuance to current discourse concerning ancient political geography. It aims to account for the conflicting voices among the elite scholars at Hellenistic courts. While not ideologically neutral, it would be a mistake to assume all geographies sung from the same hymn sheet. Rather, they are part of the complex world of sympotic culture among *Philo*i in negotiation with the king. The culture of the *symposion* lubricates such negotiations. Praise and frank speech come naturally to friends over cups. It is to the royal *symposion*, then, that we should first turn.

Chapter 1: Praise and *parrhēsia* at the sympotic court

Legitimacy for a Successor to Alexander was to be found at court as well as on the battlefield.⁸¹ The Hellenistic king drew on the traditions of the *symposion*, surrounding himself with his *Philoī* ('Friends')—a mix of advisers, military commanders, diplomats, poets, and scholars—to affirm his position as the apparent custodian of elite Greek culture.⁸² Court *Philoī* needed to be selected with care, their qualities reflecting the king's prestige, character, and his ability to rule.⁸³ Yet these same sympotic traditions placed complex, and sometimes contradictory, expectations on his *Philoī*. To be called a 'friend of the king' (φίλος τοῦ βασιλέως) was more than an esteemed title.⁸⁴ The interaction between king and *Philos* was to be governed by a sympotic sense of *philia*.⁸⁵ Assuming the performative relationship of sympotic friends, a court *Philos* was not only expected to entertain and praise his king, but also to educate, advise and, indeed, challenge him when necessary.

We begin this chapter by establishing the values and expectations of the Archaic and Classical aristocratic *symposia* which informed the elite culture of Hellenistic royal courts (1.1). We will see how this environment fostered an exclusive yet internally flat structure, where symposiasts were encouraged to share equally in toasts, discussions, songs, and competitions of all kinds. We will identify ways in which royal courts consciously emulated the fictive equality of sympotic traditions. Then, we consider the role of scholars as *Philoī* at court (1.2). We will examine the performative *philia* which governed their scholarly works and patronage. Finally, we consider the expectations placed on these scholar-*Philoī* at the sympotic court to entertain, praise, advise, and challenge the king (1.3). I will argue that these challenges are best understood as part of the sympotic tradition of *parrhēsia* (frank speech), where friends speak honestly to each other, in contrast with the threatening deceptions of *kolakes* (flatterers).⁸⁶ This expectation of *parrhēsia* provided an avenue for court scholars to challenge aspects of royal ideology. But the stakes were high in what Foucault described as 'the parrhesiastic game', and available to only the most intimate and talented of the king's *Philoī*.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Alexanders 'spear-won' legitimacy (δορίκτητος): Diod. Sic. 17.17.1; Worthington (2004) 71-2, 90; (2014) 140-142, 197-8. Ptolemy I: Hölbl (2001) 90-91; Worthington (2016) 100-101, 128. Seleukos I: Kosmin (2014b) 88-9, 115-117. Cf. φιλοδοξία via court patronage: Ps.-Aristeas 81 cf. 206; Berrey (2017) 94. Patronage providing cultural legitimacy: Fraser (1972) 1.307-8.

⁸² *LSJ* s.v. φίλος I.A.

⁸³ Often illustrated in the negative: Philip II: Ath. 6.248d-f; Ptol. IV: Polyb. 5.34.2-6; M. Ant.: Plut. *Ant.* 28.

⁸⁴ For summary of institution: Fraser (1972) 1.101-3, 2.182-3; Walbank (1984b) 65-66.

⁸⁵ Berrey (2017) 25, 91-94; Strootman (2016) 28; (2014a) 38, 54.

⁸⁶ *LSJ* s.v. παρρησία A1; cf. κόλαξ A; κολακεία A.

⁸⁷ M. Foucault (2011) 12-13; (2001) 17-18.

1.1 Friends at the *symposion*

I. The A-Listers: exclusivity at the *symposion*

Establishing an exclusive space distinct from the broader *polis* was a salient concern of the elite *symposion*.⁸⁸ For the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoë III Philopator (246/5-204), as depicted by the court *Philos* Eratosthenes, the nature of this anxiety is vividly depicted. The fragment is best read in full:

‘τοῦ Πτολεμαίου κτιζόντος ἑορτῶν καὶ θυσιῶν παντοδαπῶν γένη καὶ μάλιστα περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον, ἠρώτησεν Ἀρσινόη τὸν φέροντα τοὺς θαλλοὺς, τίνα νῦν ἡμέραν ἄγει καὶ τις ἐστὶν ἑορτῆ· τοῦ δ’ εἰπόντος ‘καλεῖται μὲν Λαγυνοφόρια, καὶ τὰ κομισθέντα αὐτοῖς δειπνοῦσι κατακλιθέντες ἐπὶ στιβάδων, καὶ ἐξ ἰδίας ἕκαστος λαγύνου παρ’ αὐτῶν φέροντες πίνουσιν’-ὡς δ’ οὗτος ἀπεχώρησεν, ἐμβλέψασα πρὸς ἡμᾶς ‘συνοικία γ’ ἔφη ‘ταῦτα ῥυπαρά· ἀνάγκη γὰρ τὴν σύνοδον γίνεσθαι παμμιγοῦς ὄχλου, θοίνην ἕωλον καὶ οὐδαμῶς εὐπρεπεῖ παρατιθεμένων’.’

Ptolemy founded festivals and sacrifices of all kinds, especially ones in honour of Dionysos. Arsinoë asked the man carrying the branches what day he was celebrating and what festival it was. He replied: ‘It is called the Lagynophoria, and people dine on the food which they brought for themselves while reclining upon beds of rushes, and each person drinks out of his own pitcher which he carries from his own house’. After he left, she looked at us and said: ‘These are indeed sordid parties, for the gathering must be composed of an utterly random mob, who set before themselves a stale meal and one that is not respectable at all.’

Eratosthenes BNJ 241 F16 (=Ath. 7.276b-c) (tr. Pownall (2009))

The queen complains about the ‘Lagynophoria’, a new Dionysian festival of Ptolemy IV’s creation. In Eratosthenes’ telling, the new festival contains many breaches of elite sympotic tradition. It involves many participants, unknown and uninvited, invading the court. Each brings their own *lagynos* and bedding, instead of sharing *kratēr* and *klinē* as per sympotic custom.⁸⁹ The exclusive space has become open, the elite replaced by the unknowable *ochlos*.⁹⁰ The traditional *symposion*, Arsinoë complains, is in shambles.⁹¹

Yet such concerns were far from new. Archaic poets of the seventh and sixth centuries had similarly fretted about the threat of the *deiloi* or *kakoi*—upwardly mobile men—infiltrating

⁸⁸ A. Alexandrou (2018) 30; Węcowski (2014) 78, 325; D.W. Tandy (1997) 231.

⁸⁹ *LSJ* s.v. λάγυνος; A1: ‘a flask; A2: ‘a measure’. Węcowski (2012) 260-264.

⁹⁰ *LSJ* s.v. ὄχλος A I-3.

⁹¹ L. Llewellyn-Jones (2012) 2.

from the wider *polis* and undermining the unique *philia* cultivated in the aristocratic *symposion*.⁹² These themes loom large in Theognis of Megara's elegiac poetry, in which the symposion is the only place where authentic *philia* can flourish, cultivated by the *agathoi* or *esthloi*.⁹³ The poet advises his beloved Kyrnos to 'associate with the noble' and 'drink and dine with them.'⁹⁴ Kyrnos would thus acquire wisdom through *paideia* and 'learn noble things'.⁹⁵ Conversely, 'if you mingle with the base, you will lose even the sense you have.'⁹⁶ The *kakoi*, we are told, 'love treachery, deceit, and craftiness, just like men beyond salvation', in sharp opposition to the 'sincere love' (φίλει καθαρὸν) of the elite *symposion*.⁹⁷ For Theognis, the exclusive clique of the sympotic *aristoi* is not, as in Homer, defined by martial valour.⁹⁸ Rather, their superiority is carefully cultivated through drinking together at the *symposion*. For both Theognis and Queen Arsinoë, the symposion is an identifier of an aristocratic elite defined by 'style and manners', with specialised rooms, furniture and even drinking vessels elevating the in-group above the outside world.⁹⁹

This elite focus on sympotic manners, which became the defining culture of the Hellenistic courts, received relatively little scholarly attention until the cultural turn of the 1970s. Since then, research of the Greek *symposion* has expanded substantially, almost becoming a subgenre of ancient Greek social history. It was investigated, *inter alia*, as a means of understanding elite art, especially lyric poetry, and vase paintings, within their cultural context as entertainment.¹⁰⁰ Oswyn Murray's seminal work treated the study of the *symposion* as vital to effectively understand the concerns of the Archaic and Classical elite more broadly.¹⁰¹ Research into the cultural aspects of sympotic drinking has expanded profoundly in recent decades. Murray, followed by Lynch, Węcowski, Hobden, and others debate the significance of the *andrōn* (ἀνδρῶν) as a space of elite self-definition, often in contradistinction to both traditional kinship organisations and the wider *polis*.¹⁰² With much of its

⁹² Base and noble men: Thgn. 19-60, 182-3, 1109-21 (tr. D.E. Gerber (1999)); Alc. F75 (=P. Oxy. 1234 F6); Praxilla F749 (Ar. *Vesp.* 1236-8) (D.A. Campbell (1992)); F750 (Ar. *Thesm.* 528). *LSJ* s.v. δειλός 1.II; κακός A I 2,4. Anxieties: W. Donlan (1980) 77-111; (1985) 223-244; V. Cobb-Stevens (1985) 160-163. *Contra*: Hobden (2013) 11-12.

⁹³ Thgn. 28-35; *LSJ* s.v. ἐσθλος A1-3 = ἀγαθός A1-3. 'Vocabulary of differentiation', Donlan (1980) 49-50, 148; Cobb-Stevens et al. (1985) 2-6.

⁹⁴ 'αἰεὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔχεο', Thgn. 32; 'ταῦτα μαθῶν ἀγαθοῖσιν ὁμίλει', Thgn. 38; 'καὶ μετὰ τοῖσιν πῖνε καὶ ἔσθιε, καὶ μετὰ τοῖσιν ἴζε, καὶ ἄνδανε τοῖς, ὧν μεγάλη δύναμις', 33-34. Aristocratic 'indoctrination': T.J. Figueira (1985) 134-6.

⁹⁵ 'ἐσθλῶν μὲν γὰρ ἅπ' ἐσθλὰ μαθήσεαι', Thgn. 35. *LSJ* s.v. παιδεία A 2,3.

⁹⁶ 'ἦν δέκακοῖσισυμμίσηγς, ἀπολεῖς καὶ τὸν ἐόντα νόον', Thgn. 35-37; D. Levine (1985) 178-179.

⁹⁷ 'ἀλλὰ δόλους ἀπάτας τε πολυπλοκίας τ' ἐφίλησανοῦτως ὡς ἄνδρες μηκέτι σωζόμενοι', Thgn. 67-68; *contra*: 'με φίλει καθαρὸν' 89.

⁹⁸ // 2.768, 4.260, 7.50.

⁹⁹ Donlan (1980) 53; the 'diacritical feasting' model: M. Dietler (2001) 86; Węcowski (2012) 36-38; similar to Grignon's 'segregative' model: Grignon (2001) 28-30. Although caution with anthropological generalisations needed: K. O'Connor (2015) 1-25.

¹⁰⁰ Sympotic performance, lyric: W. Rösler (1990); vase paintings: F. Lissarrague (1987).

¹⁰¹ O. Murray, (1967, 1972, 1983, 1990, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1994, 1996 etc.).

¹⁰² *LSJ* s.v. ἀνδρῶν; *Contra* kinship: Schmitt Pantel (1992) 48-9, also: 28-9, 39-42. *Contra polis*: 'working against the community, whose base is in the *symposion*', Murray (1983); (1994); with qualification: (2017); Węcowski

accoutrements borrowed from near-eastern royal banquets, the *symposion* appropriated reclined drinking to create something culturally specific to Greek aristocratic concerns, notable for its explicitly intimate and internally egalitarian emphasis. They were further marked by their distinctive drinking style, sharing *kratēr* and *kylix*, and through entertainment, showcasing sophistication through games, songs, poetry, and particular modes of conversation.¹⁰³ Murray, followed by Węcowski, understood these attributes in broad anthropological terms as a *Männerbund*, echoing Michael Dietler's and Claude Grignon's feasting models, in which an internally egalitarian male group defines itself through its sharply exclusionary intimacy with one another.¹⁰⁴ As will be shown in this chapter, these elite traditions of the *symposion* continued well beyond their Archaic origins, and were self-consciously adopted to maintain a sense of Greekness, exclusivity, and intimate equality among the elite of the Hellenistic court.¹⁰⁵

The exclusive nature of the sympotic space proved significant for Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic symposiasts alike. To facilitate this, architecture helped accentuate this shared sense of exclusivity, the *symposion* occurring in the *andrōn*. This room was a distinctive and privileged third space—neither public nor domestic—in Archaic and Classical aristocratic dwellings, identifiable in elite houses across the Greek world.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to the Homeric feast halls, this room at the front of the *oikos* was more intensely male-dominated, where 'men meet without interruption from the women', according to Vitruvius.¹⁰⁷ The enduring significance of this function is apparent in the pre-eminent position of *andrōnes* at Hellenistic palace-complexes. Unlike their Babylonian, Egyptian, and Achaemenid predecessors, the Hellenistic palace-complex is not oriented around a large audience hall or throne room but instead the *aulē* and prominent *andrōnes*.¹⁰⁸ This is vividly illustrated at the palace-complex at Aigai (Vergina). Once through the imposing palace entranceway, the visitor finds herself in a space neither domestic nor quite public, a grand peristyle *aulē* dominated by *andrōnes*.¹⁰⁹ Nielsen observes that 'rooms for banquets dominate completely', with residential quarters relegated to the back or upper storeys of complex.¹¹⁰ At Pella, the first and largest *aulē* (50 x

(2014); (2018); Hobden (2009) 143-4, 147-9; *contra*: Slater (1990) 213. Democratic appropriation: Lynch (2011) 80-1, 170-2.

¹⁰³ Murray (1983); (1990); Węcowski (2014); (2018); F. Lissarrague (1987) 68-86, 123-139; Schmitt Pantel (1992).

¹⁰⁴ O. Murray (1983) 18-20; Grignon (2001); Dietler (2001).

¹⁰⁵ 'meta-sympotics': Hobden (2013) 22-65.

¹⁰⁶ Third space: L.C. Nevett (2005a) 84. Archaic development: F. Lang (2005) 15-29. Classical *andrōnes* as formulaic: K.M.D. Dunbabin (1998) 82.

¹⁰⁷ Homeric halls: *Od.* 1.330; J. Luke (1994) 27. Male-dominated: slaves and *hetairai* present and subordinate: Vitruvius *De arch.* 6.7.4. Cf. Xen. *Symp.* 2.8; L.C. Nevett (2005a).

¹⁰⁸ Strootman (2004) 60-65, 188-195; (2017) 25. N.G.L. Hammond & F.W. Walbank (1988) 3.477-78, fig. 16; Morgan (2017) 36-7, 40, 49, 54; B.L. Kutbay (1998); Nielsen (1994), although continuities: 15-16.

¹⁰⁹ Aigai: Nielsen (1994) 81-83; Strootman (2014a) 64-5; Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.477-8.

¹¹⁰ *LSJ* s.v. ἀύλη A: courtyard.

50m) has spacious *andrōnes* on its sides overshadowing the smaller rooms.¹¹¹ This transition from external to sympotic space is especially dramatic at the fortified palace-complex of Demetrias; the imposing towers and fortified gates leading to an *aulē* which is surrounded by *andrōnes* fit for the royal *symposion*.¹¹² The journey for the visitor to these palace-complexes is one of contradictions; her approach presents the palace as connected to the city but delineated from it.¹¹³ From the exterior of the complex, the grandeur of the king is apparent; the imposing façade presents the public face of the distant, divine sovereign.¹¹⁴ Yet the interior displays the *andrōnes* in the most prominent space at the front of the palace-complex. Much like in the elite *oikos*, they are prominently reserved for the exclusive *symposia* of the king and his elite *Philoï*.

Symposia were further separated from the wider community through what Grignon calls markers of ‘segregative commensality’, most prominent of which being the use of *klinai*.¹¹⁵ Albenda and others trace such lounging to an emulation of the reclined drinking of Neo-Assyrian kings, exemplified in the *Banquet Scene* of Ashurbanipal.¹¹⁶ A similar sense of elite luxury can be observed in Jewish accounts; the *Book of Amos* describes reclining banquets ‘on beds of Ivory’ by those ‘who drink from wine bowls’, associating *marzēah* banquets with elitism.¹¹⁷ In the Greek world, reclined drinking seems to have been associated with the elite from the outset; the *Eurytios Kratēr’s* depiction of Herakles has the hero lounging and conversing with King Eurytios and his sons.¹¹⁸ At almost the same time, we hear the first reference to *klinai* in Alkman’s lyric poetry, positively distinguishing them from dining on stools.¹¹⁹ This exclusive association with reclining would prove to have remarkable saliency. In Aristophanes’ *The Wasps*, the quintessentially non-elite figure of Philokleon does not know how to recline, Bdalkleon advising him to ‘extend your legs and pour yourself out on the coverlets in a fluid, athletic way. Then praise one of the bronzes, gaze at the ceiling...’.¹²⁰ The humour depends on the *klinē’s* continuing role as an elite convivial marker.¹²¹ This aristocratic association with reclined drinking is maintained in the Hellenistic period; the famous royal *symposion* of Ptolemy II Philadelphos which took place at his grand pompe highlights this

¹¹¹ *Andrōnes* overshadow the smaller rooms, which are ‘sanctuaries’: Strootman (2014a) 61, or small ‘throne room’, Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.477; Nielsen (1994) 91. For use of these *andrōnes*, see: Livy 40.6.1-16-3. Palace ‘Flügelreimgruppe’: Nielsen (1994) 87, 228.

¹¹² Demetrias: A.W. Lawrence (1979), fortifications: 334-5 (fig. 76); *andrōnes*: 93.

¹¹³ Delineated: Strootman (2014a) 42-92; connected: Siganiidou and Lilimpaki-Akamati (2003) 14-15.

¹¹⁴ Strootman (2014a) 61, divine kingship performed in public: 47-9, 25-6; cf. theatricality in Hellenistic sanctuaries: J.J. Pollitt (1998) 230-250.

¹¹⁵ Grignon (2001) 28-29; Węcowski (2014) 15.

¹¹⁶ Ashurbanipal, *The Banquet scene*, BM 124920; ‘the earliest known example of the symposium motif’, P. Albenda (1976) 49; Murray (1996) 271. Although explicitly hierarchical: O’Connor (2015) 60-61.

¹¹⁷ NSRV *Amos* 6:4-6 (ed. OUP (1995)). RS 15.88.4 in J.L. McLaughlin (2001) 14; Stronach (1996) 183, 199.

¹¹⁸ Eurytios Krater, *Louvre* E635; Schmitt Pantel (1992) 18-27.

¹¹⁹ Alc. F19 (= Ath. 3.110f, 111a) (tr. & ed. D.A. Campbell (1988)); J. Boardman (1990) 124; Hobden (2013) 9.

¹²⁰ Philokleon: ‘πῶς οὖν κατακλινῶ; Bdalkleon: ‘τὰ γόνατ’ ἔκτεινε, καὶ γυμναστικῶς ὑγρὸν χύτλασον σεαυτὸν ἐν τοῖς στρώμασιν. ἔπειτ’ ἐπαίνεσόν τι τῶν χαλκωμάτων, ὀροφὴν θέασα...’, Ar. *Vesp.* 1208-1217; Schmitt Pantel (1992) 223-224. Satire of elite *symposion*: Rosen (2016) 140-158.

¹²¹ Elite convivial luxury, freedom: Ath. 12.512b.

tendency to define exclusive space, even when outside the *andrōn*.¹²² In Kallixeinos' account, the *symposion* is ostentatiously enclosed by a scarlet tent (οὐρανίσκῳ), and further separated from outsiders by a colonnade on three sides, some columns shaped like palm trees and others like Dionysian *thyrsoi*.¹²³ Within this space, 130 *klinai* are laid out, comfortably separated from the wider festivities. Like in the *andrōnes* of the Archaic and Classical aristocrats, reclining *Philoi* of the royal Hellenistic *symposion* are clearly identifiable as an exclusive group, distinguished in location and in style from the wider court.¹²⁴

The exclusive *symposion* was removed from the public and domestic spheres in a temporal, as well as a spatial sense. Symptotic time was delineated at the conclusion of the *deipnon*, shifting with prayer and libations to the gods before the *symposion* proper commenced.¹²⁵ This unique time in late evening, available only to the elite, had potential to create something shared and transcendental.¹²⁶ For Pindar, it is in this time that inspired possibilities emerge, 'time spent in drinking expands, nourishes, and enlarges the soul'.¹²⁷ Pindar uses nautical imagery to convey this sense of a shared journey removed from the outside world. One's fellow symposiasts can be likened to shipmates, the *symposion* itself a metaphorical ship, 'on a sea of golden wealth, we all alike sail to an illusory shore'.¹²⁸ These transcendent nautical themes can be seen vividly in Exekias' *Dionysos Cup*, the god is presented in symptotic form, reclining at sea, the ship sprouting vines and bearing clusters of grapes, echoing the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos*.¹²⁹ The lyric poetry of Bacchylides associates the illusions of Dionysian drunkenness with the illusions associated with nautical travel.¹³⁰ Nautical imagery is likewise on vivid display in the notorious anecdote of the House of the Trireme.¹³¹ Even in this cautionary anecdote concerning drunken excess (*methē*), Athenaios' symposiasts do not question Timaios of Tauromenion's account of the madness of the young aristocrats who mistaken their *symposion* for a ship in a storm.¹³² In their state of *methē*, they are united against the external sea, throwing furniture overboard to lighten the house's ballast.¹³³ These accounts share exclusionary and transcendental concerns, the symposiasts are removed from the mercantile and political deceits of the *polis* in which an elite man, without his symptotic *philoi*, may drown. Symptotic space and time expressed here would be understood by Dietler and Grignon as

¹²² Dating uncertain: *terminus ante quem* 270 BCE: V. Foertmeyer (1988) 91.

¹²³ Kallixeinos *BNJ* 627 F2 (=Ath. 5.196b).

¹²⁴ For Hellenistic *symposion* see: Strootman (2014a) 43, 188-191; Berrey (2017) 109-116; P. Garnsey (1999) 131. *Contra*: royal *symposion* as only nostalgia: Węcowski (2018).

¹²⁵ Xenophanes of Kolophon F1 (=Ath. 11.462); R. Nadeau (2015) 270-1.

¹²⁶ Elite time: Xenophanes of Kolophon F3 (=Ath. 12.526a) (ed. D.E. Gerber (1999)). An 'aristocracy of leisure', O. Murray (1983) 16; (1991b) 296; Węcowski (2014) 335.

¹²⁷ 'γὰρ καὶ τρέφει μεγαλύνει τε τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ ἐν τοῖς πότοις διατριβή...' Pind. F124b (W.H. Race (1997)).

¹²⁸ 'πελάγει δ' ἐν πολυχρύσοιοπλοῦτου / πάντες ἴσα νέομεν ψευδῆ πρὸς ἀκτάν', Pind. F124b6-7.

¹²⁹ Slater (1976) 164-6; Cf. *Hymn Dion*: for madness see: 16-18; vines: 35-42; dolphins: 51-3.

¹³⁰ Bacchyl. F.20B (P. Oxy. 1361) (D.A. Campbell (1992)); Slater (1976) 165. Cf. Murray likens to Pindar F.124a-b: (2017) 139. Bacchylides' timelessness esp. appropriate for transcendental symptotic space: Bacchyl. F11 & 12.

¹³¹ *BNJ* 566 F149 (=Ath. 2.37c-e); Slater (1976) 162-3.

¹³² *LSJ* s.v. μέθη II, 1, 2.

¹³³ Pl. *Phd.* 99b. *LSJ* s.v. μέθη II. Excessive μέθη was a threat to the *symposion*: Pl. *Leg.* 775b, *Symp.* 176d-e. Cf. public Dionysian μέθη: e.g. 637a-b.

typical of ‘diacritical feasting’, in which shared elevation is in opposition to the outside world.¹³⁴ Yet, in the aristocratic Greek symposion, this shared sense of exclusivity is distinctive for an internally egalitarian structure. Together, the symposiasts change into shipmates of essentially equal status, removed from the ordinary, and united in a journey to Pindar’s transcendental shore.

II. We’re all friends here: equality at the *symposion*

Sympotic interactions were not just defined by aristocratic exclusivity but were also bound by an internal sense of equality. Indeed, as we saw above, for Queen Arsinoë III and Eratosthenes, the *Lagynophoria* was not just problematic for its openness.¹³⁵ As bad as that was, the isolation of the drinkers from one another seemed equally offensive. We have seen that attendants to this new festival were to drink from their own *lagynoi*, instead of sharing wine from the communal *kratēr*, and would bring their own bedding instead of sharing *klinai* in a sympotic circle. At Ptolemy IV’s innovative revelries, not only are guests isolated from one another, but they are also isolated from their *philos*, the king. It is little surprise that this is presented in damning terms by Eratosthenes. Drinking at a distance was associated by Greek writers with Achaemenid modes of drinking, in which hierarchy was emphasised. Herakleides of Kyme’s *Persika* highlights these differences; the Great King does not drink in a communal space, but instead imbibes behind a curtain.¹³⁶ When fellow drinkers do enter his room, it is as solitary guests. Instead of sharing from a *kratēr*, ‘they drink with him, but not the same wine; they sit on the floor and he lies on a couch with golden feet; and when they are very drunk they depart’.¹³⁷ The power disparity is sharply pronounced. For a Hellenistic *Philos* like Eratosthenes, distance and hierarchy were anathema to the *philia* cultivated in the *symposion*.

The aristocratic sympotic tradition, which Eratosthenes so valued, required an internal equality of the participants as *philoï*. Indeed, the layout of the *andrōn* had long obliged the performance of equality among participants.¹³⁸ In the Classical *oikos*, the *andrōn*’s distinctive near-square shape with off-centre doorway allowed room for reclined drinking in equal-sized and evenly-spaced *klinai*, each large enough to hold two guests (1.8-9 X 0.8-9m), equidistant from the room’s centre.¹³⁹ These *klinai* all sat on an equally distinguished *trottoir* with borders, sometimes on a mortared floor featuring decorated panelling.¹⁴⁰ Katherine Dunbabin

¹³⁴ Dietler (2001) 85-94; Grignon (2001) 28-30.

¹³⁵ See: Ch. 1.1.1.

¹³⁶ *BNJ* 689 F2 (=Ath. 4.26.145a-146a); Nielsen (1994) 21.

¹³⁷ ‘καὶ ὅταν εἰσέλθῃσι, συμπίνουσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ, οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν οἶνον κάκεῖνοι, καὶ οἱ μὲν χαμαὶ καθήμενοι, ὁ δ’ ἐπὶ κλίνης χρυσόποδος κατακείμενος· καὶ ὑπερμεθυσθέντες ἀπέρχονται’, *BNJ* 689 F2 (=Ath. 4.26.145a-146a. (tr. E. Almagor (2018)). A. Kuhrt (2007) 611. n.7.

¹³⁸ J. Luke (1994) 27.

¹³⁹ Dunbabin (1998) 2, 82-4, esp. fig. 1.

¹⁴⁰ L. Nevett (2010) 47-9.

observes that the layout ‘gives little opportunity for any difference of status’.¹⁴¹ The finest *andrōnes* had a central mosaic further emphasising a sense of communality and equality.¹⁴² This equality is also reflected in artistic depictions. In the Tomb of the Diver at Paestum, elite symposiasts are presented on the same plane above a broad red dado, their equal size and status idealised.¹⁴³ Similarly, for the Hieron-Makron and Duris painters, symposiasts are presented as relative equals in their reclining pose, wrapped in a series around the *kylix*, entertained by diminutive musicians and slaves.¹⁴⁴ They are, as Pindar put it, ‘all alike’ (πάντες ἴσα), transformed into equals by the shared sympotic experience.¹⁴⁵ For Murray, this is a ‘meeting of equals in which social gradations [are] ignored’.¹⁴⁶ Joanna Luke also understands the layout of the *symposion* as ‘a deliberate effort to underline the absolute equality of all members of the group’.¹⁴⁷ The layout of the *symposion* insists on a performance of equality among elite *philoī*.

We get a continuing sense of this performative equality in the layout of the royal *symposia* in Hellenistic courts.¹⁴⁸ Unlike stratified public feasts, the prominent *andrōnes* of palace *aulai* facilitate *Philoī* to drink as equals.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the *andrōnes* at the main *aulē* of the palace at Aigai are identifiable due to their distinctive shape which lends itself to internally egalitarian drinking. The largest of these is 16.7m in width, replete with mosaics and elevated perimeters, positioning symposiasts on an elevated, but level, space.¹⁵⁰ Literary accounts of royal banquets support the sympotic equality found in the archaeology. The royal tent of Ptolemy II’s pompe, according to Kallixeinos, was ‘big enough to hold 130 couches in a circle’ (ἐπιδεχόμενον κύκλω), creating a sense of equality between drinkers. We get a similar sense of equality between king and his elite *Philoī* in Ptolemy IV’s *Thalamēgos*, a royal barge Kallixeinos tells us was ‘constructed for *symposia*’.¹⁵¹ The central orthogonal space ‘was surrounded by columns and held twenty couches’.¹⁵² Despite Kallixeinos’ emphasis on luxury, none of these *klinai* are distinguished as different or elevated above the others. Instead, we discover room upon room of similar layout. On the second storey we encounter ‘a thirteen-couch Bacchic room surrounded by columns, with more intimate *andrōnes* on the sides’.¹⁵³ The sense of intimate conviviality of *Philoī* is maintained in each of these banquet rooms. These

¹⁴¹ Dunbabin (1998) 83-4.

¹⁴² P. Ducrey & I.R. Metzger (1979) 34-42.

¹⁴³ R.R. Holloway (2006) 368-370, fig. 3, 4, 7, 8.

¹⁴⁴ E.g. Duris *kylix* (*Museo Archeologico Etrusco* 3922) in Węcowski (2014) 32; Hieron-Makron *kylix*: *MMA* 20.246; Lissarrague (1990) 196-207.

¹⁴⁵ ‘πάντες ἴσα...’ Pindar F124b

¹⁴⁶ Murray (1985) 40.

¹⁴⁷ J. Luke (1994) 27.

¹⁴⁸ Fictive equality: I. Savalli-Lestrade (2017) 102, n11. At royal *symposion*: ‘even the Hellenistic king ...was expected to behave as if he were equal,’ Murray (1985) 40.

¹⁴⁹ Hierarchy public feasts: Węcowski (2012) 267-270

¹⁵⁰ Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.477-478; Morgan (2017) 41.

¹⁵¹ ‘κατεσκευάστο δ’ αὐτῆς κατὰ μὲν μέσον τὸ κύτος τὰ συμπόσια’, *BNJ* 627 F1 (=Ath. 5.38) (tr. P.T. Keyser, 2014). Strootman (2014a) 78-79; Morgan (2017) 50-51; S. G. Miller, 2016: 295.

¹⁵² Sympotic layout: ‘...περίπτερος δ’ ἦν εἴκοσι κλινὰς ἐπιδεχόμενος’, *BNJ* 627 Fr1 (=Ath. 5.38).

¹⁵³ ‘...ὑπέκειτο Βακχικὸς τρισκαίδεκάκλινος περίπτερος’, *BNJ* 627 F1 (=Ath. 5.38).

grand sympotic banquets, which were designed to ‘impress and astonish the world’, advertise royal *symposia* in which a performative equality between the king and his elite *Philoi* are on full display.¹⁵⁴

III. Fun and games: *epidexia*, *agōnia*, and *paideia*

With one’s status left at the door, the *symposion* could become a place for games and competitions (*agōnia*), taking the form of toasts, songs, bawdy jokes, pithy *gnomai*, and serious philosophical and scientific discussions.¹⁵⁵ These were usually regulated by *epidexia*—movement to the right in an anticlockwise direction—whereby contributions to the *symposion* rotate sequentially to maintain *sophrosyne* through equal contributions.¹⁵⁶ ‘Capping’ songs perhaps best exemplify this principle, Artemon of Kassandreia explaining how lines were sung ‘in rotation, one after another’.¹⁵⁷ Extended philosophical and scientific competition ideally followed the same format, with propositions being made and challenged through *epidexia*, each contribution responding to the previous one. The idealised philosophical discourse of Plato’s *Symposion* adheres quite rigidly to *epidexia*: Phaidros is challenged by Pausanias, followed by Eryximachos’ scientific rationale, which then contrasts dramatically with Aristophanes’ legendary definition of love, before the stylish Agathon plays foil to Sokrates’ self-deprecating philosophy.¹⁵⁸ The philosophical development depends on the structural equality of *epidexia* and the playful *agōnia* of incremental discourse in the style of capping song. This approach can also be observed in Plutarch’s description of the Seven Sages at Periander’s *symposion*. For the host, the incremental, competitive sequence not only allows each guest a fair chance to speak, but also is as ‘profitable for ourselves as anything could be’.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, for Plutarch, the *symposion* was the ideal place to learn, where Dionysos facilitated practical learning of the ‘art of life’.¹⁶⁰ Scholarly discourse was not, then, to be a dry transmission of theory in a lecture hall. Rather, it was to be a ‘blending [of] Dionysus not less with the Muses than with the Nymphs’.¹⁶¹ The cumulative wisdom of *epidexia* was a form of *paideia*, sophisticated sympotic learning through the lens of play.

Yet there were important exceptions. Not all sympotic discourse seems to have been constrained by *epidexia*. Artemon of Kassandreia also speaks of the crooked ‘*skolion*’ (σκόλιον) which was more freestyle, with contributions from ‘only those regarded as intelligent,

¹⁵⁴ Strootman (2014a) 78.

¹⁵⁵ For games, see: F. Lissarrague (1987) 68-86. Gnostic poems: Xenophanes (Leshner (1992)) provides pithy sympotic examples: Ath. 10.41, 11.462, 782a); Hobden (2013) 22-64. *LSJ* s.v. ἀγωνία A1.

¹⁵⁶ Węcowski (2014) 123; *LSJ* s.v. σωφροσύνη A1, 2: Thgn. 379, 701, 1138; J. Clay, & A. E. Peponi (2016) 204.

¹⁵⁷ ‘κατά τινα περίοδον ἐξ ὑποδοχῆς’, Ath. 15.694b; Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 1.1.5 615b; G. Lieberman (2016) 42-62.

¹⁵⁸ Pl. *Sym.* 178-211.

¹⁵⁹ Plut. *Conv. sept. sap.* 6 (*Mor.* 151e).

¹⁶⁰ ‘...ἦν τέχνην περὶ βίον,’ Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 613b.

¹⁶¹ ‘οὐχ ἥττον ταῖς Μούσαις τὸν Διόνυσον ἢ ταῖς Νύμφαις κεραυνύντας’, Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 613d, 612e. F. Klotz (2006).

regardless of where they happened to be sitting'.¹⁶² This is a mode which provided space for potentially more heated competition. This freer structure appears to inform Xenophon's *Symposium*, allowing for more overtly competitive discourse.¹⁶³ Philippos' light entertainment of crude jokes and mockery is juxtaposed more sharply with Sokrates' wisdom, the back-and-forth only possible through abandoning *epidexia*.¹⁶⁴ The competitive exchange results in wisdom for all. In Grignon's feasting model, such competition further binds the exclusive group as an expression of fictive equality. He observes that it is only in the intimate space away from the public glare that members of elite feasts can challenge one another safely without too much risk to status.¹⁶⁵ For Athenaios, the tension created by this freer dynamic may risk a certain 'disorder' (ἀταξίαν), but he nonetheless allows for these detours from *epidexia* due to their value as *paideia*.¹⁶⁶ The overall benefit of shared enlightenment through this more dynamic competition, it seems, was worth the risk to the *sophrosyne* of the *symposion*.

At the royal *symposion* of the Hellenistic kings, court *Philoi* could make their contributions in this more directly competitive fashion, the entertainment achieved through such exchanges apparently trumping the regulations of *epidexia*.¹⁶⁷ In the Ptolemaic court, great value was placed on the ability to provide an entertaining response in real-time. Stilpo's success at the royal *symposion* is instructive. He bettered many of his philosophical competitors in 'inventiveness and sophistry', and he had been eagerly sought by Ptolemy I for his court.¹⁶⁸ But he was most famed for his scathing wit.¹⁶⁹ He came up against Diodoros 'Kronos', another philosopher who, at first blush, seemed ideal for Ptolemy's *symposion*. Diodoros 'vulgarised' dialectics, according to Leith, and Sedley emphasises his 'sophistical leanings, his flamboyancy, and his love of showmanship'.¹⁷⁰ Such was his eloquence that Herophilos, the renowned physician, chided him for his sophistry when he presented with a broken arm.¹⁷¹ Yet for all his eloquence, Diodoros found himself fatally outpaced by Stilpo. When challenged by Stilpo's wit, Diodoros was unable to respond 'on the spot', and so he was 'reproached by the king', and gained his unflattering nickname, 'Kronos'.¹⁷² He left the banquet in humiliation and, despite producing a carefully crafted written rebuttal in the days that followed, ended

¹⁶² 'ἄλλ' οἱ συνετοὶ δοκοῦντες εἶναι μόνοι, καὶ κατὰ τόπον τινὰ εἰ τύχοιεν ὄντες', Ath 15.694b.

¹⁶³ Hobden (2013) 195-228; (2004) 121-40; Węcowski (2014) 87.

¹⁶⁴ Philippos jokes: Xen *Symp.* 1.11-16; 2.12-14, 2.20-1, 6.10; cf. Sokrates' jokes: 2.14-16, 3.10, 8.6.

¹⁶⁵ Grignon (2001) 29.

¹⁶⁶ Ath. 15.694b.

¹⁶⁷ Berrey (2017) 110-13.

¹⁶⁸ Stilpo as urbane πολιτικώτατος: Diog. Laert. 2.11.114; Longinus *Subl.* 34.2; sought by Ptolemy I: Diog. Laert. 2.11.114, 116.

¹⁶⁹ Diog. Laert. 2.11.117, 118.

¹⁷⁰ D. Leith (2014) 594; D. Sedley (1977) 78.

¹⁷¹ 'ἦτοι ἐν ᾧ ἦν τόπω ὤμος ὦν ἐκπέπτωκεν, ἢ ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ἦν· οὔτε δὲ ἐν ᾧ ἦν οὔτε ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ἦν· οὐκ ἄρα ἐκπέπτωκεν', Sext. Emp. *Pyrr.* 2.245; Leith (2014) 594.

¹⁷² 'καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος παραχρήμα διαλύσασθαι, ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τά τε ἄλλα ἐπειμήθη καὶ δὴ καὶ Κρόνος ἤκουσεν ἐν σκώμματος μέρε', Diog. Laert. 2.10.111-12.

his days ‘in despondency’.¹⁷³ A scholar needed to speak the entertaining language of the *symposion*, not the school, at the court of the Hellenistic king.¹⁷⁴

We have seen that sympotic values find saliency in the courts of Hellenistic kings.¹⁷⁵ As in the Archaic and Classical *oikos*, the Hellenistic palace privileged the third space, the *andrōn*, in which elite men were transformed into *philoī*. We have seen how layout and manners of the *symposion* were designed to facilitate a fictive equality among an exclusive elite. The *philoī* could play, joke, and enlighten their fellow *philoī*. This last quality was the purview of philosophers and scholars at the *symposion*. They were also expected to praise, teach, and challenge their royal host, guided by the customs of *philia*. It is to this dynamic between scholar and king, both assuming the role of *philoī*, that we now turn.

1.2 When scientists are *Philoī*

I. Friends in high places: the court *Philoī*

The institution of the ‘Friends of the king’ (φίλοι τοῦ βασιλέως) was a defining feature of Hellenistic court culture, allowing for remarkably intimate exchanges between scholars and their royal patron. The king’s *Philoī* were not just career-courtiers, but also esteemed poets, philosophers, scientists, and military commanders, whose positions at the heart of the court were understood in sympotic terms, through the lens of performative friendship.¹⁷⁶ Nielsen and Walbank understand the creation of the *Philoī* as an essentially pragmatic innovation, the Hellenistic king needing an intimate clique to consolidate power over alien lands and peoples.¹⁷⁷ Others have identified antecedents in the ritualised kinship of the Achaemenids, albeit with varying degrees of confidence.¹⁷⁸ Achaemenid evidence for such roots are, it must be said, very thin; the Great King is a ‘friend’ of justice (*arstam*) as he is an enemy of the Lie, but this abstraction has little to do with members of the court.¹⁷⁹ Herodotos, Xenophon, and Arrian do mention ‘kinsmen’ (*sungenes*), a term we see in later Seleukid courts, and ‘table companions’ (*homotrapezoi*).¹⁸⁰ Diodoros, probably following Kallisthenes, is alone in using the term *Philoī*.¹⁸¹ However, these positions at Achaemenid court are usually presented as sharply

¹⁷³ ‘ἔξελθὼν δὴ τοῦ συμποσίου καὶ λόγον γράψας περὶ τοῦ προβλήματος ἀθυμῖα τὸν βίον κατέστρεψε’ Diog Laert. 2.10.112; P. Gray (2007) 306-7.

¹⁷⁴ Berrey (2017) 7.

¹⁷⁵ Continuity of *symposion* at court: Strootman (2016) 31-33; (2018a) 277; Berrey (2017) 41-47, 89-126; contra: Węcowski (2012) 257-272; Dupont (1977) 62-65.

¹⁷⁶ Worthington (2016) 3-10, 132-33.

¹⁷⁷ Nielsen (1994) 16; Walbank (1984b) 70-71.

¹⁷⁸ P. Briant, (2002) 308; Kuhrt is cautious: Kuhrt (2007) 622; Strootman mostly challenges Achaemenid antecedents: Strootman (2014a) 20-24, 36-41, 121; Macedonian antecedents: Walbank (1984b) 65-70; Fraser (1972) 1.101-4.

¹⁷⁹ *XPI* 26-31, DB §63; see Briant (2002) 302-3.

¹⁸⁰ *LSJ* s.v. συγγενής II, III; ὁμοτράπεζος.

¹⁸¹ ‘...φίλων καὶ συγγενῶν τῶν παρ’ Ἀρταξέρξη’, Diod. Sic. 16.50, 17.30.1.4, 31.1,6; 17.32.1, 35.2-4; cf. Xenophon: συγγενής; Xen. Cyr. 1.4.27, 2.2.31 & ‘ἀναβαίνει οὖν ὁ Κύρος λαβὼν Τισσαφέρην ὡς φίλον...’,

hierarchical, and are further complicated by the prominence of eunuchs.¹⁸² Far from a fictive equality, the asymmetrical nature of the relationship is emphasised in these accounts, the Great King bestowing and, especially, removing favours to regulate competence and loyalty.¹⁸³ So say the Greeks, at least. We do not find any clear examples of *Philoï* in the Achaemenid accounts: the few oblique accounts of courtiers do not show anything closely resembling the *philia* of the Hellenistic court.¹⁸⁴ Until better Persian evidence emerges, we need to consider the possibility that the Greek accounts of Achaemenid *Philoï* are anachronistic or, at the very least, deeply shaded by the authors' own cultural lens.

Some scholars argue that the origin of the Hellenistic *Philoï* can be found in Macedonian traditions. For Strootman, the roots of the court *Philoï* tradition lie in the Macedonian traditions of the *Hetairoi*.¹⁸⁵ The *Hetairoi* can be first identified in the court of Phillip II, perhaps as a means of concentrating political power at the king's court, defined by proximity to the king, rather than familial ties from kinship alone.¹⁸⁶ They act not simply as a military elite, but also as sympotic drinking companions and advisers.¹⁸⁷ Certainly, dysfunction and reconciliation in Alexander's court is presented in our sources through a sympotic lens. When Alexander murders Kleitos at the *symposion*, the king later berates himself for being in breach of sympotic norms, becoming 'the murderer of his own friends'.¹⁸⁸ Happier occasions are also expressed through *philia*. Reconciliation after the rebellion at Opis is, tellingly, resolved with drinking 'from the same bowl' by Alexander and the Macedonians.¹⁸⁹ Alexander's *hetairoi* are symposiasts as much as commanders, the gestures and language of the *symposion* used to negotiate relations with the king.

However, the concepts of *hetairoi* and *philoï* have even older roots in Greek tradition.¹⁹⁰ For Archaic poets of the *symposion*, the well-developed institution of friendship—*philoï*, *hetairoi*, and *xenoi*—are considered venerable, reaching back to Homer for precedent.¹⁹¹ In Homer,

7.1.30. Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.2; 'οἱ ὁμοτράπεζοι': Arr. *Anab.* 1.8.25. Greek sources, problems & use: Briant (2002) 302-312; Kuhrt (2007) 6-14. J. Curtis & St. J. Simpson (2010).

¹⁸² Hierarchy: Hdt. 8.67.2-68.1; Kinship strictly ranked: Xen. *Anab.* 2.2.1; selection: Diod. Sic. 17.59.2; loyalty of ὁμόσπονδος': Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.25. Eunuchs: Plut. Artax. 12.1, 15.1-2; Xen. *Cyr.* 7.5.59-65; Kuhrt (2007) 588-590.

¹⁸³ Favours: Plutarch, Artax. 22.9-11; Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.28-9; *Oec.* 4.6-10. Cf. *NSRV Esther* 6.1-9; 30-31. L. Llewelyn-Jones (2012) 559-331.

¹⁸⁴ Elamite tablet, Persepolis: PF 1793. VII/-/19, Dareios I (October-November 503); PFS 9* at Kuhrt (2007) 633-4, no.13.

¹⁸⁵ Strootman (2016) 25, 28; (2011) 64, 66; (2014a) 1-9, 15, 22. *LSJ* s.v. ἑταρος I.7.

¹⁸⁶ Concentration of court power under Phillip II: F.W. Walbank, (1984a) 7.1.227-9; (1984b) 64-5. Macedonian origins for ἑταίροι: Strootman (2016) 25-6 n1; R. Lane Fox (2007) 269; contra: Bevan (1902) 12-13, 123.

¹⁸⁷ Alexander: Arr. *Anab.*: Political advice, *hetairoi*: 1.25.6-8; 2.6.1, 3.9.3-4, 4.8.8, 9.5, 7.15.1; diplomatic: 2.25.2, 4.1.2; social: 5.2.6, 7.18.6; 4.1-3; 7.29.4.

¹⁸⁸ 'φονέα τε τῶν φίλων οὐ διαλείπειν αὐτὸν ἀνακαλοῦντα', Arr. *Anab.* 4.9.4; Curt. 8.1.22-12; Plut. *Alex.* 51-2C W. Heckel & J. Romm (2012) 356.

¹⁸⁹ '...καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κρατῆρος αὐτὸς τε καὶ οἱ ἀμφ' αὐτὸν ἀρυόμενοι ἔσπενδον τὰς αὐτὰς σπονδὰς...', Arr. *Anab.* 7.11.8; J. Romm (2010b) 380-387.

¹⁹⁰ Strootman (2011) 70-1.

¹⁹¹ Donlan (1985) 223-6; L.A. Kozak (2014) 60-66.

Patroklos is the ideal *pistos hetairos* of Achilles in a bond closer than kin.¹⁹² Hector's intimacy with his *hetairos*, Podes, is described through feasting, the latter being 'dear to Hector at banquets'.¹⁹³ Roisman observes the 'strictly personal' nature of these bonds which transcend and blur internal aristocratic hierarchies.¹⁹⁴ Such value on the relations between *philoï* continued to find resonance for Theognis' sympotic audience, the author boasting of his own faithfulness to a *pistos hetairos* or *philos*.¹⁹⁵ The relationship is defined by remarkable intimacy; Theognis directly challenges his interlocutor to also demonstrate personal love (εἶ με φιλεῖς) through 'heart' and 'mind' (νόον δ' ἔχε καὶ φρένας), not specious words of 'affection' (στέργε) alone.¹⁹⁶ The elegiac poetry presents *philia* not as something merely expedient or obligatory, but as something personal, intimate, and all the more potent for carrying these qualities.¹⁹⁷ Such a performance of love was a salient aspect of elite sympotic culture.¹⁹⁸ These *philoï* relationships would be the hallmark of the sympotic court.

Friends, of course, need to be honest and trustworthy. Elegiac poems inevitably present pessimistic examples. Archilochos laments the betrayals from fellow symposiasts, who should be faithful to one another.¹⁹⁹ Theognis sees 'counterfeit' (κιβδηλότατον) friends around him.²⁰⁰ Fortunately, the true *philos* will reveal himself through tests, paradoxically through the pain caused by his honesty, which one should embrace 'even when he is hard to bear'.²⁰¹ Isokrates draws on the same tradition when he recommends 'the most searching tests' for prospective *Philoï* at court.²⁰² Also like Theognis, Isokrates observes that one's most faithful *Philoï* do not 'praise everything you say or do, but ... criticise your mistakes.'²⁰³ The self-conscious parallels with Archaic *philia* are palpable, a king's companions being understood through the lens of the aristocratic *symposion*, celebrating love and frankness, and maintaining an anxiety regarding false friends with honeyed words. The *Philoï* of the Hellenistic courts looking for exemplary models had a venerable Greek tradition to draw on.

The institution of the *Philoï* emerges vividly in third century Alexandria, self-consciously adopting the language and customs of the Greek aristocratic *symposion*.²⁰⁴ The initially 'elastic' title of *Philos* speaks unambiguously to its sympotic origins, as do the increasingly elaborate titles given to *Philoï*, all of which emphasise intimacy with the king.²⁰⁵ Fraser observed that

¹⁹² 'εἶ κ' Ἀχιλλῆος ἀγαυοῦ πιστὸν ἐταῖρον', *Il.* 17.557, 19.321-327; H. Roisman (1983) 15.

¹⁹³ 'ἐπεὶ οἱ ἐταῖρος ἔην φίλος εἰλαπιναστής' *Il.* 17.557.

¹⁹⁴ Roisman (1983) 16.

¹⁹⁵ 'οὐδέ τινα προῦδωκα φίλον καὶ πιστὸν ἐταῖρον', *Thgn.* 529; Donlan (1985) 227-8; G. Nagy (1985) 23-36.

¹⁹⁶ *Thgn.* 1082cf-84, 697-698.

¹⁹⁷ Intimate contra political friendships: *Arist. Eth. Nic.* 1166; Konstan (1997) 51.

¹⁹⁸ Performative: Herman (1987) 17.

¹⁹⁹ *Archil.* F173 (Orig. c. *Celsum* 2.21) (D.E. Gerber (1999)).

²⁰⁰ *Thgn.* 121-124; Donlan (1985) 225-227.

²⁰¹ '...βαρὺν ὄντα φέρειάντι κασιγνήτου', *Thgn.* 98-99, 126, cf. 95-6. Konstan (1997) 51.

²⁰² 'ἀκριβεῖς ποιοῦ τὰς δοκιμασίας τῶν συνόντων', *Isoc.* 2.28; cf. *Thgn.* 119-128; Cobb-Stevens et al. (1985) 2-6.

²⁰³ *Isoc.* 2.29; cf. *Thgn.* 979-982.

²⁰⁴ Hobden (2013) 23, 48-9, 64.

²⁰⁵ Fraser (1972) 1.101-104; Strootman (2013b) 68-84.

while such titles such as the Chief Steward (ἀρχεδέατρος), the Chief Huntsman (ἀρχικύνηγος), and the Stablemaster (ὁ πρὸς ταῖς ἡνίας) may seem humble, they advertise an intimacy as important as any military or governmental position.²⁰⁶ This can be seen clearly in the *Tebutinis papyrus* 790, where one *Philos* holds the titles of ‘Doorkeeper’ (ἀρχιθύρωρος), ‘*Philos*’, and ‘*Stratēgos*’.²⁰⁷ The first two of these titles grant intimacy that the title of *stratēgos* alone does not. Likewise, one Ptolemaios in a second century dedication proudly introduces his father’s titles, ‘ἀρχικύνηγος’ and ‘πρώτων φίλων’, in the same breath.²⁰⁸ Talent as a commander or administrator was not enough. One needed to demonstrate intimacy with the king to assert status in the Ptolemaic court.²⁰⁹

A similar emphasis on *philia* can be seen in the Seleukid court.²¹⁰ In the court of Seleukos IV, Aristolochos is celebrated as ‘one of the honoured Friends’ for *eunoia* shown to the king, his brother, and father.²¹¹ Even greater intimacy is on display in Seleukos IV’s public letter to Heliodoros, of Maccabees fame.²¹² The inscription describes the king’s *Philos*, Olympiodoros, as being ‘raised with us’ and expounds that he was ‘introduced into the ranks of the first friends because of his love (φιλοστοργίας) for us’.²¹³ His elevated status is explained in terms of *philia*. Also like in the Ptolemaic court, sympotic titles complimented one another, speaking to different aspects of this intimacy. At the court of Antiochos III, Nikanor’s importance is showcased through his complementary roles of Chamberlain, *Sungenes*, and *Philos*.²¹⁴ Kratēros of Antioch is celebrated both as ‘πρώτων φίλων’ and as ‘τροφεύς’ (Tutor).²¹⁵ As Strootman notes, we have a system in which the most powerful players maintain their status through the performance of sympotic friendship with the king.²¹⁶ As we will see, to succeed in the upper echelons of the Hellenistic court, scholars would need to perform, not just hold, these titles. They would need to assume the language and gestures appropriate for the king’s friends at the royal *symposion*.

²⁰⁶ ‘...ως Φιλομητόρειος / [ὁ συγγεν]ῆς καὶ ἀρχεδέατρος / τὸν ἑαυτοῦ εὐεργέτην’, *OGIS* 168 (SB 8275); ‘...τῶν φίλ[ων]καὶ ἀρχεδέατρος’, *P.Teb.* 728.4..895.12; ‘ἀρχικύνηγος’, *OGIS* 99 (SB 8274); ‘ὁ πρὸς ταῖς ἡνίας’, *SEG* 9.62. See: Fraser (1972) 2.182-3 n57.

²⁰⁷ ‘...Ἀρκάδι τῶν (πρώτων) φίλων καὶ ἀρχιθυρώρων / διεξάγοντι τὰ κατὰ τὴν στρατηγίαν’, *P.Teb.* 790 (2nd C.); Fraser (1972) 2.183 n58.

²⁰⁸ ‘τῶν πρώτων φίλων καὶ ἀρχικυνήγου υἱόν’, *OGIS* 99; Fraser (1972) 2.183 n59.

²⁰⁹ Strootman (2014a) 165-167; G. Weber (1997) 50.

²¹⁰ Status and intimacy of Seleukid *Philois*: Joseph. *AJ.* 13.45, 48-61, 8085; 1 *Macc.* 10.65; Polyb. 5.40-56, 79.12, 82.8, 87.1; Livy 37.41.1; E. Greun (2016) 277-8; Strootman (2011) 68, 74-6. Ptolemaic cultural influence: Walbank (1984b) 65-66. Cf. more dialectical development: B. Dreyer (2011) 45-57.

²¹¹ ‘τῶν τιμωμένων φίλων’, *RC* 45.31; ‘εὐνοίας’, *RC* 45.32-33.

²¹² *NSRV* 2. *Macc.* 3.1-40.

²¹³ ‘[τρ]αφεῖς γὰρ μεθ’ ἡμῶν... δικαίως δὲ τῶν πρώτων φίλων ἀπεδείχθη, τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς φιλοστοργίας’, *SEG* 57.1838.

²¹⁴ No. 4, lns. 18-22 in J. Ma (2005) 289-290; cf. Dreyer (2011) 52 and n.41.

²¹⁵ *LSJ* τροφεύς 1.

²¹⁶ Strootman (2014a) 40-43, 90, 93-5.

II. What to get the friend who has everything? Gift-giving and royal patronage

The patronage of scholars at court worked through the traditions of *xenia* (guest-friendship), the ‘horizontally stratified’ aristocratic network in which gift-giving and a culture of reciprocity strengthened even the most geographically distant bonds.²¹⁷ Theognis celebrated *xenia*, speaking of a willingness to ‘cover a long journey in search of a noble man’.²¹⁸ Aristotle went further; the distance between *xenoi* was what made these relationships ‘the firmest of friendships’ in contrast to the ‘useful friendships’ within the *polis*.²¹⁹ Gift-giving long served as a gesture to affirm these bonds of friendship. In the *Iliad*, Glaukos and Diomedes, after learning of their ties of *xenia*, exchange arms before finding unacquainted opponents to fight instead.²²⁰ In the *Odyssey*, a disguised Odysseus describes a world in which aristocratic strangers are welcomed effusively, creating a sharp contrast with the disorder at home.²²¹ For Homer, meaningful gift-giving created genuine, long-lasting bonds; Odysseus’ exchange of his weapons for Iphitos’ bow should have been ‘the beginning of a loving friendship’, affirmed ‘at the table’, had the latter survived his encounter with Herakles.²²² Yet the gift lived on, the bow ‘lay in his halls at home as a memorial of a staunch friend’.²²³ The Poet uses the gift exchange to grant a quasi-magical essence to the bow which would decimate the suitors and restore the laws of hospitality to the hero’s *oikos*. The gift, then, was a manifestation of the superlative nature of the friendship.

Royal patronage was long understood as part of this gift-exchange between *philoï*. Herodotos reimagines King Dareios’ support of Syloson’s military campaign as part of a more equal gift exchange between *xenoi*. When asking the Great King for military support, Herodotos’ Syloson audaciously presents himself as his unlikely benefactor (*euergetes*), having given a cloak to him many years before, when Dareios was just an unknown officer.²²⁴ Remembering the cloak, Dareios insists it was ‘as thankworthy as if someone now gave me a great gift.’²²⁵ In exchange, the Great King offers gold, silver, and a flotilla as a personal, reciprocal gift (δίδωμι). This account sits incongruously alongside Achaemenid notions of kingship, in which ‘unequal gift-exchange’ is celebrated as an expression of the Great King’s power and

²¹⁷ Strootman (2011) 70; (2016) 63-6; *Xenia* as élite: Herman (1987); Schmitt Pantel (1992).

²¹⁸ ‘ἀλλὰ μετ’ ἔσθλων ἰών βούλευ καὶ πολλὰ μογησικαὶ μακρὴν ποσσίν, Κύρν’, ὄδον ἐκτελέσαι’, Thgn. 69-72.

²¹⁹ ‘βεβαιωτάτη δ’ ἂν δόξειεν εἶναι τῶν φιλιῶν ἢ ξενική’, Arist. *Mag. Mor.* 2.1211a; ‘τὸ χρήσιμον ὄντες φίλοι’, Arist. *EN* 8.4.2; cf. exclusive friendships: Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 7.1238a. Laterally insulated communities: E. Gellner (1983) 9, fig.1. *Contra*: Hes. *Op.* 343; Ath.5.186f. Tandy (1997) 231.

²²⁰ *Il.* 6.119-236.

²²¹ *Od.* 24.278-286; 25.284-286. Gift-giving and reciprocity: 11.350-3; Mauss (1990) 33-43, 47-9.

²²² ‘ἀρχὴν ξεινοσύνης προσκηδέος’, ‘οὐδὲ τραπέζην γνῶτην ἀλλήλων’, *Od.* 21.35-6; Herakles’ violation of convivial custom: *Od.* 21.26-8; Diod. Sic. 4.31.3.

²²³ ‘ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ μνημα ξείνοιο φίλοιοκέσκει’ ἐνὶ μεγάροισι’, *Od.* 21.40-41; R. Seaford (2004) 23-4.

²²⁴ *Hdt.* 3.139-141

²²⁵ ‘σὺ κείνος εἷς ὃς ἐμοὶ οὐδεμίαν ἔχοντί κω δύναμιν ἔδωκας εἰ καὶ σμικρά, ἀλλ’ ὧν ἴση γε ἡ χάρις ὁμοίως ὡς εἰ νῦν κοθέν τι μέγα λάβοιμι’, *Hdt.* 3.140; H. Herman, 1987: 41-43.

generosity.²²⁶ Instead, Herodotos argues for the equal *charis* of both gifts—*chlamys* and *flotilla*.²²⁷ In Herodotos' telling, Dareios' imperial expansionism is justified through the lens of *philia* as gift-exchange.

The patronage of Hellenistic kings was self-consciously presented as part of reciprocal gift-giving performance between *philoï*. Theokritos portrays Ptolemy II Philadelphos as renowned for his generosity to princelings, *poleis*, and 'his brave companions'.²²⁸ A *Philos* receives gifts 'worthy of his art'.²²⁹ This patronage was at its most apparent in the Ptolemaic patronage of the Mouseion-Library complex. While architectural evidence for the Mouseion remains tantalisingly elusive, descriptions of its architectural layout suggest it may have been entwined with the palace, the king's guest-friends effectively welcomed into the royal home.²³⁰ Strabo described the location of *ta basileia* as partially on the Lochias promontory on the eastern rim of the Great Harbour, and Polybios shows that, like most Hellenistic palaces, it is partitioned from the rest of the city.²³¹ Yet significantly, Strabo emphasises that, in contrast to the public places described by Polybios, the Mouseion-Library complex 'is also a part of the royal palaces'.²³² Only the *Sema* is given a similar privilege. We know from Polybios that the palaces were connected by a warren of corridors and walkways (σύριγγα), allowing for discreet movement to major adjacent buildings, and it is certainly feasible that the Mouseion was in such a way connected to the palace, allowing for the king to access some of his most elite *Philoï*.²³³ If Strabo is correct, then such integration of Mouseion-Library and palace would be a powerful expression of guest-friendship.²³⁴ Unlike the Macedonian palaces of Aigai or Pella, the scholars of the Mouseion were already, in a physical sense, 'part' (μέρος) of the palace. In this way they assume the role of *xenoi*, many from distant parts of the Ptolemaic sphere, gathered here under the same roof as their *xenos* and patron, King Ptolemy.²³⁵

But what does one get the friend who has everything? Theokritos claimed that the greatest reward for Ptolemy was *kleos* for his actions; however, astute *Philoï* were mindful to contribute something more personal and certainly more tangible.²³⁶ Contribution as a guest in the actual *symposion* was an important aspect of the role of *philos*, using one's talents, through the lens of

²²⁶ Persian royal gift-giving: Xen. *Anab.* 8.28-9; Briant (2002) 316-323; Kuhrt (2007) 637-644.

²²⁷ Herman (1987) 41.

²²⁸ 'δεδώρηται βασιλεῦσι, πολλὸν δὲ πτολίεσσι, πολλὸν δ' ἀγαθοῖσιν ἑταίροις', Theocr. *Id.* 17.110-111; N. Hopkinson (2015) 255, n.40.

²²⁹ 'δωτῖναν ἀντάξιον ὥπασε τέχνας', Theocr. *Id.* 17.114; Fraser (1972) 1.370, 2.546 n.287. Berrey (2017) 3-5.

²³⁰ The palatial quality Dog Mosaic (2nd C. BCE) and other finds at the foot of Lochias suggests this as the most likely location, matching Strabo: A.-M. Guimier-Sorbets (1998) 263-290; Empereur (1998) 29-30, 58-60.

²³¹ Palace encroaching well-beyond Lochias: Strabo 17.1.8. Separated: Polyb. 15.25.3; 15.32.11; Gate 15.31.2; Strootman (2014a) 77; Morgan (2017) 48. Scholars separated from city: Dio Chrys. *Or.* 32.8-10, 20; Fraser (1972) 1.23, 2.63 n.148.

²³² 'τῶν δὲ βασιλείων μέρος ἐστὶ', Strabo 17.8.1; Roller (2018) 948.

²³³ Polyb. 15.30.6, 15.31.1-4. Walbank (1967) 2.490-2; Morgan (2017) 47-8.

²³⁴ Strootman finds parallels with Antioch library, palace: (2014a) 70-71. Although evidence thin: Savalli-Lestrade (2017) 110.

²³⁵ A. Erskine (1995) 38-39; Morgan (2017) 38.

²³⁶ Theocr. *Id.* 17.116-117.

paideia, to entertain, teach, praise, and challenge other *philoi*. In Plato's and Xenophon's idealised *symposion*, each symposiast had contributed to the atmosphere through entertaining display of their own distinctive talents.²³⁷ We can see this concern on display in an exchange between the famously eloquent historian and grammarian, Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas and his king and *philos*, King Antiochos III. The scholar directly rejects the king's demands that he joins in a sympotic dance. He retorts, 'do you want to watch me dance poorly, or would you like to listen to me do a good job of reciting some of my own works?'²³⁸ As Hegesianax understood, his gift to the *symposion* was the weighty entertainment of *historia*, and, when needed, some pointed *parrhēsia*.²³⁹ With wit, he had reaffirmed the *sophrosyne* of the *symposion*. According to Demetrios of Skepsis, this gift of *parrhēsia* was well received by the king, and Hegesianax was promoted to become one of the king's most esteemed *Philoi*.²⁴⁰

The gift of the scholar need not necessarily be a recital, nor a witty exchange, at the *symposion*. Yet it would often nonetheless have a performative aspect in keeping with the sympotic court culture.²⁴¹ Scholars' gifts were designed to evoke a sense of wonder (*thauma*).²⁴² Many of the solutions we find from Hellenistic scholars seem to have this performative aspect. The court physician Andreas of Karystos' mechanical device for rectifying dislocated limbs was renowned and apparently spectacular.²⁴³ The mathematician Dosithios apparently 'solved practically' problems of conics for Ptolemy III Euergetes with the construction of a parabolic mirror.²⁴⁴ Eratosthenes went to significant lengths to emphasise the performative aspect in his solution to the problem of doubling the cube.²⁴⁵ In his *Letter to King Ptolemy*, he presents his solution accompanied by a mechanical device, the *mesolabos*. This wonder can measure liquids and solids and even calculate the measurements to construct giant catapults. The polymath concludes in the letter to his royal *philos* with the promise that the king could change 'any solid... to another in nature: it's yours'.²⁴⁶ The wonder is explicitly presented in terms of gift-giving, from one *philos* to another.²⁴⁷

Scientific discovery worked spectacularly well for such performative gift-giving. According to West, the astronomer Konon's ostensible discovery of a new constellation, Berenikē's Lock, may well have been part of just such a performance, timed with the heliacal rising of the constellation and the transition of Venus (3rd September in 246 BCE).²⁴⁸ Through such a

²³⁷ Pl. *Symp.*: 180c-185c-197e. Xen *Symp.* 1.11-16; 2.12-14, 2.20-1, 3.11, 6.10; cf. 2.14-16, 3.10, 8.6.

²³⁸ "πότερον, ὦ βασιλεῦ, κακῶς ὀρχούμενόν με θεάσασθαι βούλει ἢ καλῶς ἀπαγγέλλοντός μου ἴδια ποιήματα θέλεις ἀκροάσασθαι;", *BNJ* 45 T3 (= Ath. 4.155a-b) (r. S.D. Olson (2006)); A. Erskine (2010) 23. Dreyer (2011) 47-8.

²³⁹ *Parrhēsia* as entertainment: A. Lukinovich (1990) 263.

²⁴⁰ *BNJ* 45 T4a, b, 5 (Polyb. 18.47.14, 49.2-18.50.3); T5 Livy 34.57.1-6.

²⁴¹ Berrey (2017) 77, 24-5, 117-124, 158-161.

²⁴² *LSJ* s.v. θαῦμα, I1, 2. Cf. Arist. *Mech.* 848a11. Berry (2017) 26, 110, 131-132; K. Tyberg (2003) 443-466

²⁴³ *Celsus Med.* 8.20.4; Berrey (2017) 179-190.

²⁴⁴ Diocles *On Burning Mirrors* 3-6 (tr. G.J. Toomer (1976)); Berrey (2017) 78.

²⁴⁵ L. Taub (2017) 69-70. See also 60-1, 64.

²⁴⁶ See: Appendix 3.I, II.

²⁴⁷ For *mesolabos* as gift and propaganda: M. Leventhal (2017) 43-84; cf. Geus (2002) 203-5.

²⁴⁸ S. West (1985) 61-66.

performance, Konon could play the roles of scientist and performer. The astronomer was ‘he who scanned the sky’ for the divine monarchs, using scientific observation to confirm a miracle which was at once both novel apotheosis of a lock and a reinforcement of traditional Pharaonic religious ideology, Isis aiding the living Horus in keeping Set ‘at bay’.²⁴⁹ For his critics, this discovery was remembered primarily as an attempt to gain royal ‘favour’.²⁵⁰ This was a gift of flattering propaganda presented through the language of gift-exchange between *philoï*.

As we have seen, not all gifts were in person. Letter-treatises could act as scientific gifts, using the language of *philia* to give knowledge to the royal patron.²⁵¹ We see the intimacy of *philoï* in Archimedes’ correspondence with his patron, King Gelon, in *The Sand Reckoner*. In a gesture of mutual flattery, the problem is presented as one familiar to his audience, showcasing the intimacy between author and king as mutual *philoï* and scholars.²⁵² The mathematical formulae which follow are the gift of the scientist for the king. Eratosthenes’ *Letter to King Ptolemy* likewise greets the king with familiarity—‘Βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίω Ἐρατοσθένης χαίρειν’—emphasising intimacy.²⁵³ The letter then moves smoothly to precedence for the problem and the gift of solution. Unlike the offerings made by scholars without such intimate connections, elite scholars could present their letter-treatises in more intimate terms, as sympotic gifts, given from one *philos* to another.²⁵⁴

We have seen in this section the sympotic tradition of *philoï*, not only maintained, but amplified in the context of the royal court. Negotiations between king and his associates were navigated with the language and affectations of performative *philia*. Patronage was understood through such a lens; the king as benefactor was like a powerful friend, bestowing gifts. But this was not asymmetrical. Rather, scholars’ contributions to the *symposion* and scientific achievements at court were presented as reciprocal gifts to their friend, the king. In the next section we consider two important aspects of this gift-giving in detail. We will explore how *Philoï* could disseminate propaganda through praise (*epainos*) as a sympotic gift of *philia*. Yet we will also see how the tradition of *parrhēsia* could allow scholars to place limits or even subvert royal ideology as an expression of this same *philia*.

²⁴⁹ ‘Omnia qui magni dispexit lumina mundi’, Catull. 66.1. D. Selden (1998) 344. Cat 22 (=Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.24.16-20; ed. Grant (1960))

²⁵⁰ ‘Conon mathematicus cupiens inire gratiam regis’, Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.24 (ed. M. Grant (1960)); following Eratosth. Cat. 12. ‘playful and flattering’, R. Hard (2015) 72; cf. ‘...politischen Motiven geschehen Sein’, Geus (2002) 222. See also: Ch. 3.2.I. of this dissert.

²⁵¹ S. White (2010) 374-377.

²⁵² Archim. *Sand reckoner* 1 (Heath (1897)); Netz (2009) 106; Berrey (2017) 128-135.

²⁵³ See: Appendix 3. I, II; Berrey (2017) 130; M. Leventhal (2017) 47-48. *Contra*: L. Taub (2008b) 288.

²⁵⁴ Berrey (2017) 130-31; D.R. Langslow (2017) 215-20.

1.3 Scientists navigating the sympotic court

I. Kind words: *epainos* and *kolakeia*

The role of the *Philos* carried with it expectations seemingly at odds with one another, namely, *epainos* and *parrhēsia*.²⁵⁵ Effective use of ostensibly earnest praise was an important expression of *philia*.²⁵⁶ After all, truly great men did not praise themselves, something which shamed both speaker and audience.²⁵⁷ Indeed, Alexander's drunken self-praise caused 'displeasure' from the old guard, acting as a catalyst for Kleitos' pointed criticism of the king, according to Kleitarchos.²⁵⁸ In contrast, receiving earnest praise was, as Xenophon observed, 'the sweetest of all things to hear'.²⁵⁹ Giving such praise was an appropriate means of supporting a powerful friend. In the *Peri Basileus* literary tradition, spontaneous praise was prized for its quick wit and apparent authenticity. This can be seen in the agile praise of Demetrios II's *Philos*, who effectively defused a disagreement by comparing the king to Herakles through a few choice lines of tragic verse.²⁶⁰ It was later observed that such a well-timed quotation was often 'not only felicitous but also very useful', the act of praise raising spirits and restoring equilibrium to the *symposion*.²⁶¹

Not all praise was spontaneous. Carefully crafted propaganda was presented through this lens of *epainos*. For Plutarch, Theokritos' seventeenth *Idyll*, the encomium to Ptolemy II Philadelphos, is an exemplar of this. The court poet legitimises the marriage of Ptolemy II to his sister-wife, Arsinoë—a potentially taboo notion for a Greek audience—by likening the royal sibling-couple to Olympian gods.²⁶² This loving gesture smoothly echoed the public representation of the *theoi adelphoi*'s divine status, seen in the coinage of the realm.²⁶³ Scientific works could similarly perform a propagandistic function through the lens of *epainos*. We have already seen how Konon's discovery of Berenikē's Lock, immortalised by Kallimachos' verse, extended Ptolemaic reach to the very stars while affirming the divinity of the royal couple in Greek and Egyptian terms. The discovery provides proof of royal divinity as an eternal gift in a breathtaking act of *epainos*. Not to be outdone, in the Antigonid court, the *Philos* and astronomer Aratos of Soli may have used prose to similar propagandistic effect.²⁶⁴ Strootman argues that the astronomer's *Phaenomena*, a much-celebrated didactic work of astronomy, not only shares insights of the rising and setting of the constellations but likens his royal patron to Zeus Kosmokrator through careful allegory. This functions as powerful *epainos* supporting

²⁵⁵ At court: Strootman (2016) 115-30.

²⁵⁶ Pl. *Lach.* 181B-C.

²⁵⁷ Plut. *De se ipsum laudando* 1 (*Mor.* 539c-e).

²⁵⁸ Curt. 8.22; Arrian and Plutarch, following Ptolemy and Aristoboulos, blame *kolakes*: Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.4-7; Plut. *Alex.* 50-53.

²⁵⁹ '...τοῦ δὲ πάντων ἡδίστου ἀκούσματος, ἐπαίνου ἑαυτῆς', Xen. *Mem* 2.1.31.

²⁶⁰ Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 9.2 (*Mor.* 736f-737e).

²⁶¹ '...ὡς μὴ μόνον χάριν ἀλλὰ καὶ χρεῖαν ἔστιν ὅτε μεγάλην ἐχούσης', Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 9.2 (*Mor.* 736e).

²⁶² Theoc. *Id.* 17.126-134; R. Hunter (2003) 189-195. Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 9.2 (*Mor.* 736e-f); cf. Apoll. *Arg.* 4.1165.

²⁶³ *BM* 1909,0505.2: Obv: 'ΑΔΕΛΦΩΝ'; Rev: 'ΘΕΩΝ' (C.C. Lorber (2018), vol. 1, nos. 307-319).

²⁶⁴ Aratos, *Phaen.*; Schol. *Vit. Arat.* 8 (J. Martin (1974)).

Antigonid claims of divinely sanctioned universal kingship.²⁶⁵ For Theokritos, in reference to the Ptolemaic court, carefully crafted scientific and artistic creations are products of *philia*, observing that the ‘interpreters of the Muses celebrate Ptolemy in return for his good works.’²⁶⁶ Scientific and artistic creations are celebrations of the king, the talent of scholars recruited for unambiguous propagandistic purposes. Science, like poetry, adds weight to claims of divine and universal kingship through the lens of *philia*.

However, such praise needed to be executed with care. Being identified as a court *kolax* (flatterer) was to mark oneself out as a threat.²⁶⁷ The fear of *kolakeia* as a manifestation of dangerous, disingenuous friendship was far from new. Such anxieties were part of the conversation of the archaic *symposion*. Theognis was haunted by the deceptions of false friendship, knowing that the ‘smooth tongue’ (γλώσση λεῖα) of *kolakeia* could ‘deceive one’s judgement’.²⁶⁸ For Archilochos, a *philos*’ words alone could not be trusted, one must compare their words to deeds to identify true *philia*.²⁶⁹ The anxiety concerning *kolakes* would find saliency among elites in the classical period, emerging in drinking songs and Platonic philosophical texts alike.²⁷⁰ Theophrastus characterises the *kolax* as one who spoke to his friend at the *symposion* ‘in a whisper’, telling him everything he longs to hear.²⁷¹ The elite *symposion*, it seems, had always been under siege from *kolakeia*.

For kings, the dangers of such seductive deceptions were considered especially acute. The superficial similarity of *epainos* and *kolakeia* made the latter especially insidious. Isokrates’ letter to Nikokles warns the prince to carefully ‘distinguish between those who artfully flatter and those who loyally serve you’.²⁷² This juxtaposition is echoed by Phokion, a *philos* of Antipater, who warns the king to distinguish one from the other.²⁷³ The geographer and historian, Onesikritos, understood the *kolakes* in Alexander’s court as the very antithesis of true *philois*, only praising to ‘elicit favour from’ the king.²⁷⁴ What emerges in the *Peri Basileus* literary tradition is the king as a potentially isolated figure, the superlative benefits of royal favour attracting cunning *kolakes* to the court.²⁷⁵ The notorious *Dionysiokolakes* of Dionysios II mimic the king to ingratiate themselves in ways which deceive, something perhaps inherited

²⁶⁵ Antigonid propaganda likening Gonatas to Zeus: Arat. *Phaen.* Zeus’ unifying rule: 1-18, Justice: 96-136; Strootman (2007) 230-2; (2016) 139-140; K. Gutzwiller (1992) 372-3. Hübner (2020) 304-5.

²⁶⁶ ‘Μουσάων δ’ ὑποφῆται αἰείδοντι Πτολεμαῖονάντ’ εὐεργεσίας’, Theocr. *Id.* 17.115-16 (tr. N. Hopkinson).

²⁶⁷ *LSJ* s.v. κόλαξ 1A.

²⁶⁸ Smooth tongue: ‘ὅς κ’ εἴπη γλώσση λεῖα, φρονῆ δ’ ἕτερα’, Thgn. 97; deceives judgement: 125-128.

²⁶⁹ ‘καὶ φρονέουσι τοῖ’ ὁποῖοις ἐγκυρέωσιν ἔργμασιν’, Archil. F132 (= Ps.-Plat. *Eryxias* 397e) (tr. D.E. Gerber)

²⁷⁰ Praxilla 4 (=Ath. 15.694d) (ed. I.M. Plant (2004)); I.M. Plant (2004) 38-40; Ar. *Thesm.* 527-30. Cf. Pl. *Resp.* 1.334e-335b.

²⁷¹ ‘... καὶ μὴν ταῦτα λέγων πρὸς τὸ οὖς προσκύπτων διαψιθυρίζειν’, Theophr. *Char.* 2.10.

²⁷² ‘δῖόρα καὶ τοὺς τέχνη κολακεύοντας καὶ τοὺς μετ’ εὐνοίας θεραπεύοντας’, Isoc. 2.28; D. Konstan (1998) 295-6.

²⁷³ Plut. *Mor.* 188F; *Phoc.* 30.1.

²⁷⁴ ‘οἶονται γὰρ οὐ μικρῶι τινὶ τῶι δελέατι τούτῳ ἀνασπάσειν ἕκαστος τὴν παρ’ ἡμῶν εὐνοίαν’. Onesikritos *BNJ* 134 T7 (= Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 40).

²⁷⁵ Xen. *Hiero* 6.3; Ath. 6.248d. *Peri Basileus* literature: O. Murray (1967); (1971); B.G. Wright (2015).

in Hiero's court.²⁷⁶ Depictions of such *kolakes* are designed to portray a court of dysfunction with an isolated and subsequently ineffective ruler. In the more hostile accounts of Philip II's court, the king is surrounded by *kolakes* adept in obsequious mimicry, normalising Philip's most woeful behaviour.²⁷⁷ The king develops a misplaced sense of *philia* and sympotic affinity, making an isolated figure feel, mistakenly, supported.

Intoxicating flattery could threaten to dissociate the king from reality itself.²⁷⁸ In the Alexander literature, there is 'no lack of flatterers' who undermine the Great King.²⁷⁹ In Arrian's telling, it is Anaxarkhos who is the most nefarious *kolax*, justifying the king's drunken murder of Kleitos by equating Alexander to Zeus.²⁸⁰ Arrian considers this *kolakeia* to have caused the weeping king 'even greater harm than the affliction he then suffered from', not only in legitimising an unjust act, but in reinforcing the misplaced notion that he was, indeed, the son of Amun-Zeus.²⁸¹ Nikesios is similarly blamed for reinforcing delusions of divinity.²⁸² Alexander may, as Worthington and Stoneman assert, have truly thought himself divine.²⁸³ However, for ancient writers, it was the *kolakes* who were clearly to blame.

This theme of a delusional, intoxicating *kolakeia* that undermines kingship continues in accounts of the Ptolemaic court. The *kolakeia* of Ptolemy IV Philopator's court, Polybios claims, led to no less than the ruin of Egypt (οὗτος Αἴγυπτον ἀπώλεσε).²⁸⁴ Plutarch agrees, observing that the *kolakeia* informed Philopator's 'effeminacy, his religious mania, his hallelujahs, his clashing of cymbals, the name of "piety" and "devotion to the gods"'.²⁸⁵ Notions of divinity are understood not as a product of the monarch's own ego as such, but through a sympotic lens: they are the product of self-interested *kolakes* who pose, disingenuously, as authentic *philois*. Unchecked *kolakeia* leads to a state of delusion and destruction (ἀπώλεσε), for both the monarch and his kingdom. To rescue the king from this potentially existential predicament, he needs the frank speech of the true *philos*.

II. *Parrhēsia* at court: reception

Parrhēsia in court culture could provide a potential antidote for the pitfalls of court *kolakeia*, the *parrhēsiastēs* supported in his bold speech by a venerable tradition. The word '*parrhēsia*'

²⁷⁶ Ath. 6.249-250e.

²⁷⁷ Ath. 6.248e-250; Dem. 18.67; Just. *Epit.* 7.6.14-15.

²⁷⁸ Warring judgement: Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 12 (= *Mor.* 56b)

²⁷⁹ 'οὐκ ἐνδεῖσαι δὲ οὐδὲ πρὸς τοῦτο αὐτῷ τοὺς κολακεία ἐς αὐτὸ ἐνδιδόντας', Arr. *Anab.* 4.9.9; Plut. *Alex.* 23.7, 53-55.

²⁸⁰ Arr. *Anab.* 4.9.7.

²⁸¹ 'ταῦτα εἰπόντα παραμυθῆσασθαι μὲν Ἀλέξανδρον ἐν τῷ τότε, κακὸν δὲ μέγα, ὡς ἐγὼ φημι, ἐξεργάσασθαι Ἀλεξάνδρῳ καὶ μεῖζον ἔτι ἢ ὅτῳ τότε ξυνείχετο', Arr. *Anab.* 4.9.8-9; cf. Ath. 6.250f-251a.

²⁸² *BNJ* 81 F11 (=Ath. 6.251c-d).

²⁸³ Worthington (2004) 280; (2014) 266; R. Stoneman (2010) 342.

²⁸⁴ Polyb. 15.34.5; full narrative: 15.25.1- 36.10. Walbank (1967) 2.493-496.

²⁸⁵ 'οὗτος Αἴγυπτον ἀπώλεσε, τὴν Πτολεμαίου θηλότητα καὶ θεοληψίαν καὶ ὄλολυγμούς καὶ τυμπάνων ἐγχαράξεις εὐσέβειαν ὀνομάζων καὶ θεῶν λατρείαν', Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 12 (*Mor* 56.e).

first appears in the tragedies of Euripides and the notion has been often understood as an intrinsic aspect of public speech in the *polis*.²⁸⁶ Foucault understood *parrhēsia* as the right and duty of a *politēs* ‘to have one’s say in the city’s affairs’.²⁸⁷ For Demosthenes’ audience, to be sure, *parrhēsia* was ‘impossible to deter’ in a democracy, entwined as it was with the truth, an ‘essential quality’ of the democratic polity.²⁸⁸ For Foucault and others, it is the populist ‘crisis of *parrhēsia*’ in the fourth century which leads frank speech to migrate to the Hellenistic royal court. Here, so the argument goes, the ‘originally democratic’ virtue of frank speech found better reception than in the declining and increasingly demagogic democratic *polis*.²⁸⁹

Yet Hellenistic courts could draw on much older aristocratic roots of *parrhēsia* among the *philoī* of the Archaic *andrōn*.²⁹⁰ Far from being the sudden creation of democratic Athens, Cartledge, and Roberts argue for the roots of *parrhēsia* as an elite virtue in Homer.²⁹¹ Kalchas, ‘the best of the diviners’, exercises his right to speak honestly to Agamemnon for the good of the campaign, even if it risks offence.²⁹² This right to frank speech, though, is an elite one denied to ordinary men in the same scene.²⁹³ One Thersites, a ‘clear-voiced talker’, speaks out of turn, challenging Agamemnon directly with plaintive truths about his failures of leadership.²⁹⁴ His *parrhēsia* echoes concerns already articulated by Achilles, yet we are now encouraged to sympathise with Odysseus who beats him into silence.²⁹⁵ Thersites is an *epesbolos* (a rash talker), his subjugation coming just in time to avert *akosmos* on behalf of the community.²⁹⁶ Homer’s view is uncompromising: only those who are in the elite circle of the king, through birth or reputation, are permitted to speak frankly.²⁹⁷

In the Archaic *symposion* we see evidence of *parrhēsia* as one of the defining qualities of true *philia* among the elite.²⁹⁸ For Theognis, honest speech was the ultimate marker of authentic *philia* distinguishing the *aristoi* from the censorious *kakoi*.²⁹⁹ The *philoī* of the *symposion* should welcome such speech, as it is given in love. Archilochos’ ‘subversive’ *parrhēsia* takes a bold

²⁸⁶ *Parrhēsia*, *polis*: ‘ἐλεύθεροπαρρησιᾶ θάλλοντες οἰκοῖεν πόλιν κλεινῶν Ἀθηνῶν’, Eur. *Hipp.* 420-24; *Phoen.* 390-94, *Ion* 669-75; *Hipp.* 422; R. Benitez (2003); K. Raaflaub (2004) 31. Classical *parrhēsia* in private and court scenarios: Eur. *El.* 1049-50, 1055-56; *Bacch.* 668-71.

²⁸⁷ Foucault (2001) 48-52, 77-83; (2011) 33-45.

²⁸⁸ ‘καὶ τὴν παρρησιᾶν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἠρτημένην οὐκ ἔστι τάληθές δηλοῦν ἀποτρέψαι’, Dem. 60.26; L. O’Sullivan (2015) 43-45.

²⁸⁹ M. Malli (2021) 436; ‘crisis’: Foucault (2011) 35-66; (2001) 22-24.

²⁹⁰ ‘originally a typical aristocratic ideal’, Strootman (2014a) 173; Konstan (1997) 93-98. For sympotic customs appropriated by early democratic *polis*, see: L. O’Sullivan, 2015: 60. Lynch (2018) 80.

²⁹¹ Elite: P. Cartledge (2009) 33; T. Roberts (1994) 50; *contra*: community representation: E. Barker (2009) 41-7.

²⁹² ‘οἰωνοπόλων ὄχ’ ἄριστος’, *Il.* 1.69-92, against: 1.105-119.

²⁹³ *Il.* 2.201-2. Cartledge (2009) 35.

²⁹⁴ ‘λιγύς περ ἔων ἀγορητής’, *Il.* 2.246

²⁹⁵ *Il.* 2.248-249; ‘the limits of egalitarian speech’ M. Detienne (1996), 103; *cf.* as analysis of dissent: E. Barker (2009) 56-61.

²⁹⁶ *LSJ* s.v. ἐπεσβόλος *cf.* παρρησιαστής. Roberts (1994) 49; Barker (2009) 58-61.

²⁹⁷ Cartledge (2009) 34-5.

²⁹⁸ Starr (1992) 24.

²⁹⁹ Honest *Philoī*: Thgn. 87-92, 325-328; *cf.* *kakoi*: 600-602; Starr (1992) 23-4. *Contra*: censorship, *polis*: O’Sullivan (2015) 45.

approach in a sympotic context.³⁰⁰ His notorious boast that he left his shield on the battlefield is presented in challenging, rather than confessional terms, rejecting any sense of associated shame.³⁰¹ Sextus Empiricus observes that Archilochos was ‘vaunting us’ (σεμνυνόμενος ἡμῖν) with his frank speech.³⁰² Fränkel detects a critique of the more excessive aspects of the rigid hoplite ethos.³⁰³ Such criticism is freely expressed in the *symposion* where it can be received as well-meaning *parrhēsia* designed to provoke, question, and entertain.

The Hellenistic courts would follow this tradition, treating *parrhēsia* as a valued gift to be received; a sobering balm to the intoxicating effects of *kolakeia*. Eager reception of frank speech had long been treated as the sign of a wise king in the *Peri Basileus* literary tradition. According to Plato, the ideal court of King Kyros welcomed ‘free speech and respected those who could help at all by their counsel.’³⁰⁴ Plato here is treating *parrhēsia* and good advice as synonymous, wisdom cannot be stifled by excessive deference. Similarly, Diodoros’ account of the Seven Sages has King Kroesos adjust his military policy based on the *parrhēsia* from his wise *Philo*.³⁰⁵ Idealised accounts of Ptolemy II Philadelphos by Josephus and Pseudo-Aristeas follow this tradition, with the king’s wisdom demonstrated through his ready reception to *parrhēsia*, providing his *parrhēsiastēs* with joyous laughter and a reward.³⁰⁶ The king is presented as a lover of truth, and a wise ruler.³⁰⁷ Counterexamples were similarly maintained in the *Peri Basileus* tradition; such as Ptolemy Keranos, Philadelphos’ unhinged brother, who ‘paid no attention’ to the home truths of his *Philo*i and met a gruesome end as a result.³⁰⁸ Yet not all accounts are so idealised. In his account of the Third Macedonian War (171-168), Polybios presents Perseus as a king following the *parrhēsia* of *Philo*i when devising strategy. The *Philo*i ‘found fault with him and told him [so]’ after the king made overly obsequious gestures to the Roman republic, despite having recently defeated them in battle.³⁰⁹ Here, *parrhēsia* is a strategic as much as moral concern, a tool of state readily given and received to facilitate effective kingship. Reception of *parrhēsia*, then, not only allowed the king to showcase his sympotic sophistication as a lover of learning and truth, but also allowed him to be an effective statesman on the world stage.

³⁰⁰ Tradition of ‘subversive’ Archilochean elegy challenging Homeric norms: E.T.E. Barker & J.P. Christensen (2006) esp. 36-38; cf. M.L. West (2006) 17; re. *P.Oxy.* LXIX 4708 F1, 2 (N. Gonis et al. (2005)); D. Obbink (2006) 1-9.

³⁰¹ ‘αὐτὸν δ’ ἐξεσάωσα. τί μοι μέλει ἀσπίς ἐκείνη;’, Archil. Fr.5 (=Plut.*instit. Lac.* 34.239b); cf. *Il.* 17.472-3, 18.131-2; Shield abandonment: *Lys.* 10.1.

³⁰² Sextus Empiricus *Pyrrh. hypot.* 3.216; Ael. *VH* 10.13.

³⁰³ H. Fränkel (1962) 137-40; C.A. Anderson (2008) 257; Contra: O. Tsagarkis (2005) 16-18.

³⁰⁴ ‘οὐ φθονεροῦ τοῦ βασιλέως ὄντος διδόντος δὲ παρῆσιαν καὶ τιμῶντος τοὺς εἰς τι δυναμένους συμβουλεύειν...’, Pl. *Leg.* 3.694a-b.

³⁰⁵ Diod. Sic. 9.25.

³⁰⁶ Josephus *AJ* 12.4.4; Ps.-Aristaeas 14-18.

³⁰⁷ The king as a lover of truth: ‘Ἐπαινέσας δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦτον ἕτερον ἐπηρώτα Πῶς ἂν τὴν ἀλήθειαν διατηροῦ;’, Ps.-Aristeas 206.

³⁰⁸ ‘τῶν γὰρ φίλων αὐτῷ συμβουλευόντων ...οὐ προσέσχεν’, Diod. Sic. 22.3.1; Strootman (2018) 174-5.

³⁰⁹ ‘ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ πλείστων φίλων ἐπιτιμῶντων αὐτῷ καὶ φασκόντων ὅτι...’, Polyb. 27.8.14-15. Victory over Rome near Sykourion, 171 BCE (Livy 42.57-62).

III. Successful *parrhēsia* at court

Successful *parrhēsia*, when expressed with care, allowed the royal patron to demonstrate his ‘sophistication and tolerance.’³¹⁰ Theokritos shows confidence in his royal patron when he describes him as ‘shrewd, cultured, a noted lover, extremely pleasant, a man who knows who his friends are, and knows his enemies even better’.³¹¹ The playful criticism here, embedded in affectionate praise, evokes a sense of the *paideia* of the *symposion*. For scholars of weighty tomes too, a light-hearted touch of *parrhēsia* could be effective. We have already seen one such example—Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas— whose pithy refusal to dance reminded the king of his greater value to the *symposion* as a scholar.³¹² Similarly, scientific treatises provided scope for playful *parrhēsia*, the scholar appealing to the laws of science to challenge royal will. Euclid demonstrated just such scientific *parrhēsia* when asked by the king if there was a way shorter than that of *The Elements* to understand his theorems. Euclid is said to have replied that ‘there was no royal road to geometry.’³¹³ In this account, scientific authority places limits on the king’s demands, the mathematician pointedly reminding his patron that the scientific laws of the universe do not bend to royal will.

Peripatetic science provided particularly powerful tools to express *parrhēsia*. Whitmarsh shows that the Archaic and Classical philosophers had already provided foundations to challenge myth and legend through an emphasis on natural causation, ‘an implicit denial of divine activity’.³¹⁴ But in the hands of Hellenistic *Philoï*, such tools gain new uses. Strato of Lampsakos, ‘the Naturalist’ (Φυσικός), who was a *Philos* at the Ptolemaic court of Philadelphos before assuming his role at the Lykeion, radically extended the role for Nature as an unthinking causal agent.³¹⁵ In his model, the gods—even Ptolemaic ones—were controversially absent.³¹⁶ This is most apparent in his work on the rise and fall of seas, in which he suggests that the oracle of Siwa, among other places, was once located conveniently on the coast. As we will see in Chapter Three, these claims would be developed by Eratosthenes a generation later, the Ptolemaic polymath providing geological evidence for Strato’s natural causation, profoundly challenging Ptolemaic claims to dynastic divinity via a god-blessed land. The scientific-philosophic tradition of elite Greek culture provided an authority through

³¹⁰ J.B. Burton (1995) 126-8.

³¹¹ ‘εὐγνώμων, φιλόμουσος, ἐρωτικός, εἰς ἄκρον ἀδύς, εἰδῶς τὸν φιλέοντα, τὸν οὐ φιλέοντ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον’, Theoc. *Id.* 14.61-4; J.B. Burton (1995) 127-9; cf. G. Perrotta (1978) 83.

³¹² See n.156, 158.

³¹³ ‘...μὴ εἶναι βασιλικὴν ἀτραπὸν ἐπὶ γεωμετρίαν’, Procl. *On Euclid* (tr. I. Thomas, 1939); cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.31. 2. Fraser (1972) 1.386-7.

³¹⁴ Anaximander: Diog. Laert. 2.1.1; Arist. *Metaph.* A3 984a5-6; T. Whitmarsh (2015) 57.

³¹⁵ ‘naturalist’ F1 (=Diog. Laert. 5.58-64). Natural causation: e.g. F53 (Sen. *Qnat.* 6.13.1-6); F72 (=Censorinus *DN* 7.2-7) (ed. Sharples (2011)).

³¹⁶ ‘...nullo artifice nec auctore’, F19C (Lactant. *De ira Dei* 10.1) ; ‘Strato... deorum vacationem habeant’, F18 Cic. *Academica* (Lucullus) 2.121.

which even royal ideology could be questioned. Peripatetic science could be utilised as a form of *parrhēsia* to place limits on the excesses of royal propaganda.

Scientific *parrhēsia* provided an important avenue for a scientist to assert his credentials both as scholar and *Philos* of the king, distancing himself from the *kolakes* of the court. In one sense the *parrhēsia* performs a medicinal role for the king. Plato likened it to a sobering antidote or medicine to protect one from the detrimental effects of *kolakeia*.³¹⁷ Indeed, Foucault argues that it is this therapeutic concern for the prince's *psyche* which is at the heart of court *parrhēsia*.³¹⁸ But *parrhēsia* also promoted the reputation of the *parrhēsiastes*. Papademetriou understands this as a primary motivation of expressions of *parrhēsia*, arguing that 'by evoking his *παρορησία*, [the *Philos*] seeks to be considered reliable'.³¹⁹ Likewise, Berrey observes that, for the scholar-*Philos*, the act of *parrhēsia* promotes his role as 'the moral authority of truthfulness'.³²⁰ For scholars who were patronised at court, reputation was always under threat from perceptions of *kolakeia* or, at least, compromise.³²¹ Expressions of *parrhēsia*, then, could do much to ameliorate these perceptions. When tactfully executed, it demonstrated that one was a true *philos* of the king for one audience, and an independent scholar for another.

IV. With friends like these....: dysfunctional *parrhēsia*

Although a prized quality of *Philois* in the Hellenistic court, the successful expression of *parrhēsia* was an inherently fraught one. As we have already seen, the competition with rival *Philois* was fierce, and could destroy a scholar's reputation.³²² But another salient hazard was the potential wrath of the king himself for poorly executed *parrhēsia*, the danger of the 'parrhesiatic game'.³²³ Plutarch considers this danger a potentially stifling one. His probably apocryphal foundation story for the Great Library of Alexandria illustrates this well: Ptolemy I's *Philos*, the philosopher and ex-tyrant, Demetrios of Phaleron, advises his royal patron to acquire books for the Library as a means to get the truth. He explains that 'those things which the kings' Friends are not brave enough to recommend are written in the books.'³²⁴ This prevailing anxiety was not an unreasonable one, complicating the expression of *parrhēsia* before a powerful royal patron.

³¹⁷ *Parrhēsia* like physician's work: at court: Pl. *Ep.* 7.330d; general: Phld. *Peri Parrhēsia* F63, 64 (eds. Konstan et. al (1998)).

³¹⁸ Foucault (2011) 60.

³¹⁹ K. Papademetriou (2018) 27.

³²⁰ Berrey (2017) 94, 99, 104-6.

³²¹ In defence of scholars at court: Aristotle: Diog. Laert 5.31; Cicero: *Rep.* 10-12; *Nat. D.* 4. Philosophers rejecting court: e.g. Diogenes: Ath. 6.254c. Zeno: P.Herc. 1018 Col. 3.10-14; Diog. Laert. 7.6-9; Phld. *Peri Parrhēsia* F27; Foucault (2011) 12-13.

³²² See 2.1C.

³²³ Foucault (2011) 12-13; (2001) 17.

³²⁴ 'ἂ γὰρ οἱ φίλοι τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν οὐ θαρροῦσι παραινεῖν, ταῦτα ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις γέγραπται', Plut. *Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata* (*Mor.* 189e); Fraser (1972) 1.314-315.

At best, tactless *parrhēsia* may result in humiliation. According to Hegesander, Menekrates of Syracuse, the self-proclaimed ‘king of medicine’, depicts the king as a divine force of death, whereas ‘in the guise of Zeus I furnish them with life.’³²⁵ The language of fictive equality is misused to elevate the physician above the king, relatively diminishing the king’s power and causing offense. Armed with the weapons of the *symposion*, Philip used humiliating humour to put the tactless *parrhēsiastēs* back in his box. Menekrates is invited to the royal *symposion* where he and his hangers-on, having arrived dressed as deities, are encouraged to lie on a central couch elevated above the others and decorated in a manner suited to gods. In this way, his ostensible divinity denies Menekrates access to the equality and *philia* of the *symposion*, for ‘whenever food was brought to the other guests, the slaves burned incense and poured libations for Menekrates’ group’.³²⁶ Finally, ‘the new Zeus fled the party with everyone laughing at him’, the audacious and tactless King of Medicine effectively reduced through the humiliating use of sympotic *paideia*.³²⁷

Tactless *parrhēsia* could also have much more dire consequences for the *parrhēsiastēs*. In the court of Alexander the Great, Kleitos insists on the sympotic tradition of *parrhēsia* among the king’s *hetairoi* and ties them explicitly to authentic *philia*, telling the increasingly autocratic king ‘not to invite to supper men who were free and spoke their minds, but to live with barbarians and slaves’ if he wished to avoid honest censure.³²⁸ The challenge is rough, and Alexander kills Kleitos with his own hand in response.³²⁹ Kallisthenes’ *parrhēsia* may be more scholarly, but proved equally ill-judged. The scholar, often effusive in his praise of Alexander, famously rejected *proskynesis*, first with a speech appealing to egalitarian traditions, and then with a sympotic one-liner which expressed nonchalance at being denied a kiss.³³⁰ Kallisthenes is later executed on what Arrian thought were spurious charges of conspiracy.³³¹ Plutarch admired Kallisthenes’ resistance to *kolakeia* but, following Arrian, was critical of his tactlessness, suggesting he lacked the ‘common sense’ necessary to survive as a *parrhēsiastes*.³³² The relationship between scholar and king needed to be certain for *parrhēsia* to function effectively.

The performance of *parrhēsia* was dependent on the performative equality cultivated in a relationship between scholar and king, something not transferrable to other monarchs.

³²⁵ ‘σὺ μὲν Μακεδονίας βασιλεύεις, ἐγὼ δὲ ἰατρικῆς, καὶ σὺ μὲν ὑγιαίνοντας δύνασαι ὅταν βουληθῆς ἀπολλύναι, ἐγὼ δὲ τοὺς νοσοῦντας σώζειν ... Ζεὺς γὰρ ἐγὼ αὐτοῖς βίον παρέχω’, Hegesander F5 (=Ath. 7.289d-f). Historicity: A. Dalby (2000) 372-94.

³²⁶ ‘καὶ ὅποτε τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεφέρετο τὰ ἐδώδιμα, τοῖς ἀμφὶ Μενεκράτην ἐθυμίων καὶ ἔσπενδον οἱ παῖδες’, Ath. 7.289f.

³²⁷ ‘καὶ τέλος ὁ καινὸς Ζεὺς μετὰ τῶν ὑπηκόων γελώμενος θεῶν ἔφυγεν ἐκ τοῦ συμποσίου’, Ath. 7.289f.

³²⁸ ‘...ἢ μὴ καλεῖν ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἄνδρας ἐλευθέρους καὶ παρρησίαν ἔχοντας, ἀλλὰ μετὰ βαρβάρων ζῆν καὶ ἀνδραπόδων’, Plut. *Alex.* 51.3; Strootman (2014a) 173.

³²⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 51.2-6; Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.8-9, 4.9.2-4, 4.14.4; Arrian blames Kleitos: 4.9.1. Curtius, following Kleitarchos, is critical of Alexander: Curt. 8.1.22-52. Badian (1962) 364-5.

³³⁰ ‘φιλήματι, φάναι, ἔλαττον ἔχων ἄπειμι’, Arr. *Anab.* 4.12.3-5. Plut. *Alex.* 52.2.

³³¹ Arr. *Anab.* 4.12.6-14.4.

³³² ‘Καλλισθένης λόγῳ μὴν ἦν δυνατὸς καὶ μέγας, νοῦν δὲ οὐκ εἶχεν’, Plut. *Alex.* 53.1-54.4.

According to Athenaios, this was illustrated in the Seleukid court, where Alexander I Balas welcomed the Epicurean, Diogenes of Oinanda, whose jokes would ‘not even spar[e]... the royal house if he could provoke a laugh’.³³³ Yet upon the succession of Antiochos VII, this relationship collapsed; the same behaviour, previously treated as *parrhēsia*, was now understood as disrespect. Antiochos had him promptly executed.³³⁴ A regime change at the Ptolemies could be similarly hazardous. Our friend Demetrios of Phaleron features again here, Diogenes Laertius depicting him as giving counsel on succession, ‘to invest with sovereign power his children by Eurydice’, a view in opposition to Ptolemy, who himself favoured his son by Berenikē, the future king, Ptolemy II Philadelphos.³³⁵ Furthermore, when Ptolemy I divested some of his royal authority to his son, Demetrios warned, ‘if you give it to another, you will not have it yourself.’³³⁶ The frank pragmatism was resented, and not forgotten, by Philadelphos, who later had Demetrios imprisoned and dispatched to the countryside. The stakes for misreading the room were high and vengeance could be metered out, it seems, to even the most elite *philos*.

Tact and good intentions are integral elements to successful *parrhēsia*. Insults and slander, conversely, transgressed *philia*, Archilochos likening them to being ‘strangled by your friends’.³³⁷ A slighted king was therefore justified in metering out retribution, and distance was no obstacle for royal vengeance. King Attalos, according to Strabo, had the grammarian, Daphitas, crucified for characterising the Attalids as ‘mere filings of the treasure of Lysimachus’.³³⁸ Most notorious of all was the *kinaidologos*, Sotades of Maroneia, who met an equally gruesome fate via the ‘long arm’ of the Ptolemies. Sotades had openly mocked Ptolemy II Philadelphos’ incestuous marriage.³³⁹ Rather than the straight speech of a loving *philos*, this was humour that not only ‘stings’, as Philodemos put it, but tactlessly denigrates royal ideology.³⁴⁰ Sotades was soon hunted down by Philadelphos’ admiral-*Philos*, Patroklos, ensuring the poet met his end in a lead coffin at the bottom of the sea. Such was the price for humiliating the king. Kalchas’ fears in the *Iliad*, it seems, have come to fruition here in the Hellenistic courts: tactless or poorly executed *parrhēsia* could indeed be met with the ‘heavy hands’ of a disgruntled royal patron.³⁴¹ *Parrhēsia*, then, needed to be handled with care - it was

³³³ ‘...ἔτι δὲ βλάσφημον καὶ βάσκανον ἔνεκά τε τοῦ γελοίου μηδὲ τῶν βασιλέων ἀπεχόμενον’, *BNJ* 166 F1 (=Ath. 5.211.a-e).

³³⁴ Ath. 5.211.a-e.

³³⁵ ‘κάκεϊ χρόνον ἱκανὸν διατρίβοντα συμβουλευεῖν τῷ Πτολεμαίῳ πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῖς ἐξ Εὐρυδίκης περιθεῖναι παισί’, Diog. Laert. 5.78 (tr. R.D. Hicks (1925)).

³³⁶ ‘...ἂν ἄλλω δῶς, σὺ οὐχ ἔξεις’, Diog. Laert. 5.79.

³³⁷ ‘σὺ γὰρ δὴ παρὰ φίλων ἀπάγγχει’, Archil. F129 (Arist. Pol. 7.7.1328a1).

³³⁸ ‘πορφύρεοι μῶλωπες, ἀπορρινήματα γάζης Λυσιμάχου / Λυδῶν ἄρχετε καὶ Φρυγίης’, Strabo 14.1.39: cf. Thrown off cliff fulfilling prophecy: Cic. *Fat.* 5. P.M.

³³⁹ ‘εἰς οὐχ ὀσίην τρυμαλιὴν τὸ κέντρον ὠθεῖς’, Sotades: Ath. 14.621. For subversion, see: Hunter (2002) 196-7. *LSJ* s.v. κιναιδολόγος.

³⁴⁰ Loving *parrhēsia*: Phld. *Peri Parrhēsia* F14; contra stinging insults: F26.

³⁴¹ *Il.* 1.88-90.

a performance of *philia* dependent on the intimate relationship of court *Philos* and royal patron. It was certainly no *carte blanche* for criticism of the court.

Conclusion

The traditions of the *symposion* provided kings with a clear way to promote themselves as patrons and custodians of Hellenic culture. The ‘Janus-faced’ Ptolemies were quick to realise the propaganda value in presenting themselves as sympotic kings for a Greek audience, as sophisticated lovers of wisdom with an eye to transforming Alexandria into the new epicentre of the Greek world.³⁴² Although their cultivation of the sympotic court is perhaps the most famous, we have seen that the courts of the Seleukids, Antigonids, Attalids, and others similarly adopted sympotic customs, the king as symposiast surrounded by elite *Philoï*. These kings created palaces built literally with the *symposion* as its centre, the performative equality between king and his *Philoï* facilitating sympotic drinking, entertainment, and *paideia*. As *Philoï*, elite scholars were at the epicentre. We have seen how their patronage was negotiated through the lens of *xenia* and *philia*; their works, from pithy one-liners to longer recitals, dazzling contraptions, and letter-treatises, were all presented as part of the gift-giving tradition.

The intimacy of the *symposion* was a space in which scholars were expected to perform different, sometimes contradictory roles. As *Philoï*, they should make loving gestures. *Epainos* could reinforce and propagate royal ideology as an expression of apparently authentic *philia*. As we will see in Chapter Two and Four, the geographic propaganda by geographers and poets of the Ptolemaic and Seleukid courts could be seen as part of this praise, distorting the map to reinforce the imperial and religious pretensions of the king. These geographical gifts had remarkable saliency, shaping ancient understandings of the world for centuries in ways which were designed to serve the more immediate ideological concerns of early Hellenistic kings.

Yet the sympotic traditions also allowed scholars to resist the excesses of the royal ideology. The sympotic tradition not only permitted, but idealised, frank speech. This *parrhēsia* provided an avenue for works which placed sobering limits on religious and imperial pretensions of royal ideology. In Chapter Three we will see such a gift of geographic *parrhēsia* in the Ptolemaic court by Eratosthenes of Kyrene. In Chapter Five we will see a slightly different approach to geographical *parrhēsia* adopted by Megasthenes in the Seleukid court. We will discover geographies designed to act as a sobering antidote to intoxicating propaganda. If tactfully executed through indirect means, such as geography, works of elite scholars could be as valuable for their *parrhēsia* as their praise. As Isokrates implored his prince, it was

³⁴² Goyette (2010) 2.

through such *parrhēsia* by intimate *Philoī* ‘who have good judgement’ that the kingdom would flourish.³⁴³

³⁴³ Isoc. 2.28-9.

Chapter 2: Geography as propagandistic praise in the Ptolemaic empire

Prescriptive imperial geography played a significant role in asserting claims of universal kingship.³⁴⁴ Mesopotamian kings made hyperbolic claims to geographical control, Ashurnasirpal II being characterised in his royal inscriptions as ‘King of all the four quarters’.³⁴⁵ In Egypt, Amun-Re was said to have bestowed upon Pharaoh Thutmose III an impact which similarly reached ‘the four pillars of heaven’, with all nations ‘united in [his] fist’.³⁴⁶ In this chapter, we will see that the Ptolemies too used imperial geography to assert superlative reach. However, Ptolemaic imperial geography equally emphasised an *oikoumenē*-spanning centripetal pull to the world centre, Alexandria-by-Egypt (Ἀλεξανδρεία τῆ πρὸς Αἰγύπτῳ).³⁴⁷ This chapter considers the ways in which the Ptolemies used *periplous* geography and developed spatial geography along imperial vectors. First, we will examine how the maritime geography of sailors was developed to express imperial control over the *oikoumenē* (2.1). Then, we will consider the construction of vectoral geography (2.2). These vectors not only expressed reach but also served as new avenues for disseminating the imperial cult of Arsinoë, through which the Mediterranean, the Aegean, and the Erythraean Seas appeared, on the map at least, to be territorialised. They could also express a centripetal geography, in which power, people, and resources gravitate to the centre, Alexandria, with a seeming inevitability. In the last section (2.3), we will consider the ways in which the religious landscape was used to bind the young dynasty to venerable traditions of Amun-Zeus at Siwa and the newly deified Homer in Alexandria. Establishing the imperial and religious geography of the Ptolemies in this chapter will leave us well-placed to consider Eratosthenes’ geographical *parrhēsia* in Chapter Three.

The early Ptolemies have traditionally been presented as moderate imperialists with curiously limited ambitions. Such assertions are in danger of a teleological reading of history—mistaking result for intention.³⁴⁸ A fundamentally defensive characterisation of Ptolemaic imperialism is first seen with Polybios’ famous passage:

‘Κοίλης Συρίας καὶ Κύπρου κυριεύοντες· παρέκειντο δὲ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν δυνάσταις, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ταῖς νήσοις, δεσπίζοντες τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων πόλεων καὶ τόπων καὶ λιμένων κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν παραλίαν ἀπὸ Παμφυλίας ἕως Ἑλλησπόντου καὶ τῶν κατὰ Λυσιμάχειαν τόπων· ἐφήδρευον δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ καὶ τοῖς ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ πράγμασι, τῶν κατ’

³⁴⁴ Visscher (2020) 28-39; activity following cartography: Harvey (1996) 321-2; For Lagid ruler cult: H. Hauben (1989); N.L. Collins (1997) S. Pfeiffer (2008); R.A. Hazzard (2000); I. Worthington (2016).

³⁴⁵ *Ashurnasirpal II* A.O.101.1 col. 1. 9b-10, A.O.101.1 col. 1.15-17a at K. Grayson (1991) 1.194.

³⁴⁶ *Cairo* 34010 Ins. 3-4 in W.K. Simpson (2003).

³⁴⁷ Strabo 5.1.7; *OGIS* 193; *P.Oxy* 4.727; H.I. Bell (1946) 130-132.

³⁴⁸ A. Meeus (2014) 269-270.

Αἶνον καὶ Μαρώνειαν καὶ πορρώτερον ἔτι πόλεων κυριεύοντες, καὶ τῶ τοιούτῳ τρόπῳ μακρὰν ἐκτετακότες τὰς χεῖρας, καὶ προβεβλημένοι πρὸ αὐτῶν ἐκ πολλοῦ τὰς δυναστείας, οὐδέποτε περὶ τῆς κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἡγωνίων ἀρχῆς. διὸ καὶ τὴν σπουδὴν εἰκότως μεγάλην ἐποιοῦντο περὶ τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων.'

...masters as they were of Coele-Syria and Cyprus, and they also menaced the dynasts of Asia Minor and the islands, since they had the chief cities, strong places and harbors in their hands all along the coast from Pamphylia to the Hellespont and the neighborhood of Lysimachia; while by their command of Aenus, Maronea and other cities even more distant, they exercised a supervision over the affairs of Thrace and Macedonia. With so long an arm and such a far advanced fence of client states they were never in any alarm about the safety of their Egyptian dominions and for this reason they naturally paid serious attention to foreign affairs.

Polyb. 5.34.6-9 (tr. W.R. Paton (1923))

Polybios' glowing account is a masterclass in forward defence theory, and significant scholarship has been dedicated to the historian's use of various verbs for control.³⁴⁹ Traditionally, this account has been used as evidence of a fundamentally defensive motivation for early Ptolemaic imperialism, where even far-reaching aggression is framed in terms of security.³⁵⁰ Recent scholarship has generally been more cautious, emphasising the passage's primary function, namely, to contrast early Ptolemaic reach (μακρὰν ἐκτετακότες τὰς χεῖρας) with Ptolemy IV's perceived geopolitical vulnerabilities and associated disorder within the court.³⁵¹ For Polybios, looking back, early Ptolemaic control of distant places provides stability for the throne in Alexandria, his defensive interpretation of third century imperial policy perhaps revealing more about the existential concerns of the Ptolemaic regime in the author's own time than providing any indication of how the early Ptolemies themselves understood their empire.

There has been a long tradition of modern historians characterising early Ptolemaic rule as one which was uniquely moderate and of limited imperial ambition. Bevan's Ptolemy I was a man of 'common sense', ruling Egypt like 'a tortoise in his shell', a notion echoed by Bouché-Leclerq.³⁵² Ptolemy II Philadelphos' imperial expansion is reduced to 'foreign entanglements'.³⁵³ For Tarn, Ptolemy I 'scientifically carried out' his foreign policy, obtaining a 'definite fraction' of Alexander's empire, while Ptolemy II's expansion is characterised as somehow 'pacific'.³⁵⁴ Such views have had remarkably saliency. Graham Shipley and Günther

³⁴⁹ Bagnall (1976) 240-1; Barbantani (2007) 67-73; Iossif & Lorber (2012).

³⁵⁰ Will (1979); Hölbl (2001).

³⁵¹ Meeus (2014) 269-270; A. Erskine (2013). Although Tarn pioneered this view: Tarn (1938) 67.

³⁵² Bevan (1927) 21-34. A. Bouché-Leclerq (1903) 1.27-8.

³⁵³ Bevan (1927) 58-59.

³⁵⁴ Tarn (1913) 7, 215-6.

Hölbl, following Jakob Seibert, describe Ptolemy I's imperial policy in 'defensive' terms.³⁵⁵ Ellis and Erskine view Ptolemy as a sensible separatist with no designs on Alexander's empire.³⁵⁶ From early Twentieth Century historians to today, there has been a tendency to idealise the early Ptolemaic regime as a sort of anti-imperial empire.

Some recent scholarship has challenged this view with an emphasis on non-Polybian sources. Revision of the Hieronymos-Diodoros source has identified an aggressive, expansionist imperial strategy adopted by the early Ptolemies.³⁵⁷ Previously maligned sources such as Duris of Samos, the Lindos chronicle, and Attidographic annalistic sources, all utilised by Plutarch, have received greater attention.³⁵⁸ The universal imperial ambition of Ptolemy I and Demetrios I Poliorketes are condemned alike by Plutarch, their battle for Kypros (306 BCE) presented as a latter-day Armageddon, the biographer noting that 'absolute supremacy would at once be the prize of the victor.'³⁵⁹ These were similarly-minded 'tragic actors' in a zero-sum game for universal empire.³⁶⁰ Archaeological finds tend to support this revised notion of an expansionist Ptolemaic empire, with evidence of settlements not only in the Aegean and Peloponnese, but also as far north as Crimea, and as far south as Sudan, providing a picture of an empire which reached with one hand to the Greek heartland and, with the other, to the ends of the seas.³⁶¹ Newly uncovered Ptolemaic court poetry in the form of 112 epigrams by Poseidippos in the *Milan Papyrus* (*P.Mil.Vogl.* VIII 309) reinforce this ideology of an empire without limit, whose reach was only matched by its centripetal pull, the court functioning as a centre towards which the *oikoumenē* gravitates.³⁶² These sources lend weight to Theokritos' depiction of an aggressive 'warrior Ptolemy' with far-reaching geographical claims.³⁶³

A clearer picture of an aggressively expansionist early Ptolemaic regime is emerging in the scholarship. Worthington's Ptolemy I is seeking *arche* over all of Alexander's empire.³⁶⁴ Thompson emphasises his proclivity for war.³⁶⁵ Hauben describes an 'expansionist and multiethnic power'.³⁶⁶ Ptolemy II's maritime power, far from pacific, is characterised by Marquaille as a far-reaching thalassocracy, whose claims to the Aegean were as fundamental

³⁵⁵ J. Seibert (1969) 79, 84-90, 138-151; G. Shipley (2000) 201-202; G. Hölbl (2001) 28.

³⁵⁶ Ellis (1994) 31; Erskine (2006) 172.

³⁵⁷ Meeus (2014) 262-306, esp. 265; (2009) 64 n.4; M. Rathman (2014).

³⁵⁸ Duris (*BNJ* 76); Pownall (2009a); Anson (2014) 8-9. Attidography: Sweet (1951) 177-181; P. Wheatley & M. Dunn (2020) 127-44, 146, n.3. Lindos Chronicle: C. Higbie (2013) 96-113.

³⁵⁹ 'ἀλλὰ τὸ μέγιστον εὐθὺς εἶναι πάντων τῶ κρατοῦντι τῆς νίκης προστιθείσης', Plut. *Demetr.* 15.3.

³⁶⁰ Antigonid universal kingship: Plut. *Demetr.* 17.2, 5-18.7; Pyrrhos: Plut. *Pyrrh.* 12.3; Curt. 10.10.7-8. General: Nep. *Eum.* 2.3-4; Lund (1992).

³⁶¹ J.L. O'Neil (2008) 88-9.

³⁶² Far reaching Ptolemaic influence: Re. *Equestrian Poems*, AB 71-88, esp. 74, 76, 78, 88, see: Marquaille (2008) 60-62; M. Fantuzzi (2005) 249-268. Attractive force: AB *Lithika* 1-20, esp. 5, 7, 16, 19-20; Bing (2005) 119-140.

³⁶³ 'αἰχμητὰ Πτολεμαῖε', Theoc. *Id.* 17.56-57, cf. 75-6.

³⁶⁴ Worthington (2016) 83-6.

³⁶⁵ D.J. Thompson (2018) 8.

³⁶⁶ Hauben (2013) 39.

to its sense of identity as those of Upper Egypt.³⁶⁷ This emerging picture matches the sources more coherently than the earlier characterisation, requiring fewer interpretive contortions when handling evidence of Ptolemaic imperialism in the third century. We no longer need accept the apologetic myth that, like the claims of the British Empire, the Ptolemies apparently conquered ‘half the world in a fit of absence of mind’.³⁶⁸ This was a regime which, like its rivals, was bent on universal kingship, and produced a prescriptive imperial geography to reflect this ideology.³⁶⁹

Geographic sources for early Ptolemaic imperial geography are highly fragmentary.³⁷⁰ Timosthenes of Rhodes was an admiral under Ptolemy II best known for his development of the wind-rose. He published a treatise, probably called *On Harbours*, of which forty-one fragments survive, mostly in Strabo, Pliny, and Stephanos of Byzantium.³⁷¹ We also have indirect access to the archives of the Mouseion-Library through the second century works of Agatharchides, outlining the structure of vectors on the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea) and Erythraean Sea (Indian Ocean).³⁷² Histories, too, provide valuable insights into early Ptolemaic imperial geography. For the period up to 301, we have the Diodoros-Hieronimos source, which reveals the use of naval vectors from an early stage. However, most of the third century lacks such a cohesive historical narrative. Diodoros’ third century books (21-28) are deeply fragmented, some compiled by Byzantine scholars directly from Diodoros, others transmitted via Photios and other scholars.³⁷³ As we have already seen, Plutarch, following Hieronimos, Duris, the Lindos Chronicle, and the Attidographic tradition, provides important insights into Ptolemaic imperial designs, as do certain fragments in Athenaios and Justin. Court poetry, notably Poseidippos and Theokritos, reflect imperial ideology in their works. Most vividly, Theokritos’ seventeenth *Idyll*, the encomium to Ptolemy II, incorporates *periplous*-like geographic references to communicate the king’s superlative reach. The recent *Milan Papyrus* provides a new side to Poseidippos, more informed by imperial ideology, from his celebration of the Arsinoë cult to his adoption of vivid geographical imagery to express the centripetal pull of the Alexandrian court. Further evidence of imperial geography can be seen in papyrology, epigraphy, and emerging archaeological evidence, which together provide insights into the colonisation efforts, euergetism, and administration of the Ptolemaic empire. This chapter will view these sources through a critical geographic lens to identify imperial geographic claims of the early Ptolemaic regime.

³⁶⁷ Marquaille (2008) 41-2.

³⁶⁸ J.R. Seeley (1883) 8.

³⁶⁹ Prescriptive geography: Monmonier (1991) 88; Harley (1988a) 282.

³⁷⁰ G. Aujac (1987) 148-150.

³⁷¹ Windrose: Agathem. 2.7 (Diller 59-76); F. Prontera (2013) 207-9; cf. Arist. *Mete.* II.6.364b-365a. Admiral: Strabo 2.1.40; Marciabi Heracleensis *Epitomi Periplus Menippeus* 2.23-6 (K. Müller (1855) 1.565). *Periplous* title uncertain: ‘τὸς λιμένας’ (Strabo 9.3.10); cf. ‘τὸς περιπλους’ (Agathem. 7 (Diller (1975))); Irby (2016) 860-1; Fraser (1972) 2.751, n13.

³⁷² *BNJ* 86 T3 (Agatharch. 250.460.b3); S.M. Burstein (2012).

³⁷³ F.R. Walton (1957) vii- ix.

2.1 *Periplous*

Early Ptolemaic geographers adopted the humble *periplous*, the periodic maps used by sailors, to express imperial control over the *oikoumenē*.³⁷⁴ We will first consider early *periplous* literature and identify the techniques through which the genre organises and controls the landscape. Then we can examine how the early Ptolemies utilise these techniques for imperial ends, as exemplified in Timosthenes' *On Harbours*, Theokritos' seventeenth *Idyll*, and the Adoulis inscription.

The *periplous* map has traditionally been characterised as an ideologically neutral geography—essentially the notes of independent sailors—however, recent scholarship has identified the ways the *periplous* tradition situated otherness in Greek geographical imagination.³⁷⁵ Hanno's sixth century *periplous* of the African coast moves the Greek audience in a controlled sequence, the periphery becoming increasingly unfamiliar until we reach the torrid zone, a burning country (χώραν διάπυρον) where savage people called 'gorillas' (Γόριλλαι) reside.³⁷⁶ His *periplous* straddles paradoxography and geography, the careful sequencing and measurement of travel-duration giving certainty to the unstable periphery, what Sibley calls 'not quite human' space.³⁷⁷ The peripheral and even fantastical locations are secured through measurable connections to known geographical territory.³⁷⁸

A *periplous* of the *oikoumenē* (a *periegesis* or *periodos gēs*) allowed ancient geographers to present the more familiar world in similarly controlled terms. Traditionally, the text begins at the Pillars of Herakles, before assuming a journey, either clockwise, like Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplous of the Sea and Oikoumenē*, or, alternatively, counter-clockwise.³⁷⁹ Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplous* demonstrates the power of the genre to organise space and people through a mercantile maritime lens, detailing functional harbours, coastal features, and types of trade at particular locations.³⁸⁰ We are led on a journey with disciplined adherence to the coastal sailing formula, using a mixture of temporal and spatial measurements.³⁸¹ Even islands are tied to particular stops along the coastal journey, with Sicily, Thasos, and the Kyklades treated as detours before the author returns us carefully 'again to the point from where I turned away ...'.³⁸² Along the

³⁷⁴ *Periplous* genre: Janni (1984); G.R. Tsetschladze (1992); D. Marcotte (2000); C. Palladino (2016); *contra*: G. Shipley (2011) 22.

³⁷⁵ F. Cordano (1992) 29-30; Clarke (1999) 197-198; C. Jacob (1991) 73-84.

³⁷⁶ *GGM* 1.1-14 (K. Müller (1855)); Hanno *Periplous* 15-16, 18 (tr. W.H. Schoff (1912)).

³⁷⁷ D. Sibley (1995) 51-3.

³⁷⁸ Harvey (1996) 110-111.

³⁷⁹ Ps.-Skylax: Mid-late 4th C. *GGM* 1.33-51; Shipley (2012) 6-8, text: 25-53, tr. 54-88; Clarke (1999) 95 n.40. See also: Strabo 2.5.26, 3.1.2. Cf. counter-clockwise e.g.: Pompon. 1.24-5, 30, etc.; App. *B. Civ. Praef.*

³⁸⁰ Ps.-Skylax *Periplous*: harbour e.g.: 4, 13.3-4, 28.1, 100.1-101.1, 103; gulfs: 23.1, 17.1; trade: 112, 2.1.

Mercantile lens: Roller (2015) 78-79; colonial lens: Shipley (2011) 22; (2012) 11-13; Clarke (1999) 152 n.41.

³⁸¹ Shipley (2011) 9-11.

³⁸² '...ἐπάνειμι δὲ πάλιν ὄθεν ἐξετραπόμην', Ps.-Skylax *Periplous* 67.2 (tr. Shipley (2011)), also '...ὄθεν ἐξετραπόμην', 58.4. Clarke (1999) 204-5; Shipley (2011) 148-9.

coast, ethnic groups are organised in sequence, with more detail and differentiation provided for various Greek colonies.³⁸³ Indeed, for Shipley, the ideological control expressed in the text speaks to the concerns of Greek coastal colonies.³⁸⁴ On occasion, however, the author uses excursions at certain stops to extend a penetrating gaze inland. The Keltoi, for example, are described as ‘a community, left behind from the expedition, upon a narrow front as far as the Adrias [Gulf of Finland].’³⁸⁵ In this summation we get a sense of a complex history, yet this is neatly reduced to the briefest of descriptions, the breadth of the continent oriented towards the middle sea. The *periplous*’ excursions inland provide what Gregory calls an ‘enframing’ lens, with each community clearly catalogued and partitioned before we move on, confident in our knowledge.³⁸⁶

Keen to emphasise their claims to maritime supremacy, the Ptolemies readily adapted *periplous* geography for imperial purposes. Timosthenes’ *On Harbours* uses distances and relative positioning to weave familiar and unfamiliar lands together into a unified Ptolemaic space. However, in a departure from tradition, Timosthenes’ journey begins at the new world-centre, Alexandria-by-Egypt, before moving counter-clockwise from the Kanopis branch of the Nile to the Euxine Sea.³⁸⁷ The movement speaks to an exactness that inspires confidence in his navy’s control of the maritime space. Important locations receive more thorough treatment; the Hekatonnesi islands are carefully counted, and the ‘deep harbour’ at Artarke (Mysia), situated on a Ptolemaic vector through the Propontis to the Euxine Sea, is described in greater detail.³⁸⁸ The journey continues to the eastern end of the Euxine Sea, where we reach Dioskouria in Kolchis, and Timosthenes identifies 300 tribes which are recorded with an unlikely, census-like certainty.³⁸⁹ In this way, the sense of Ptolemaic control penetrates the lucrative interior beyond the Euxine coast.³⁹⁰ The *periplous* then returns to more solid ground with details of Greece and Sicily, effectively blending uncertain geography into a more secure fabric.³⁹¹ The space is unified through the methodical, territorialising tour by the Ptolemaic fleet.

Timosthenes’ map of the western Mediterranean, filled with inaccuracies highlighted by Strabo, made powerful spatialising gestures over the sea.³⁹² Metagonium in Libya is confidently (and erroneously) located opposite Massalia, asserting a misleading familiarity

³⁸³ Ps.-Skylax *Periplous* 2, 10, 12, 13, 14.

³⁸⁴ Shipley (2011) 14-15.

³⁸⁵ ‘...μετὰ δὲ Τυρρηνοῦς εἰσι Κελτοὶ ἔθνος, ἀπο λειφθέντες τῆς στρατείας, ἐπὶ στενῶν μέχρι Ἀδρίου’, Ps.-Skylax *Periplous* 18 (tr. Shipley (2011)).

³⁸⁶ Gregory (2001) 86-92; Wylie (2007) 133.

³⁸⁷ *FGrHist* V 2051 Timosth. Fr.2 (=Plin. *HN* 5.47); Prontera (2013) 209; transmission issues: H. Rackham (1942) 252 n.1.

³⁸⁸ Hekatonnesi: Timosth. Fr.24. (=Strabo 13.2.5). Artarke: Fr. 8 (=Steph. Byz., s.v. Ἀρτάκη).

³⁸⁹ F11 (=Plin. *HN* 6.5); cf. Strabo 11.2.16.

³⁹⁰ Diskouria, emporion: Strabo 11.5.6; Tsetskhladze (1992) 229.

³⁹¹ Greece: *Didym. Dem. Phil. xi*, col. 11, lines 30 ff. in Fraser (1972) 2.751 n.13. Sicily: Agathem. V. 20 (Diller (1975)).

³⁹² Strabo 2.1.40; Marciani Heracleensis *Epitome Periplus Menippeus* 3.10-31.

and control over the space between these oppositional points.³⁹³ This positioning of points introduces an element of spatial geography through imagined vectors; the territorialisation of the maritime space between the two points is suggested through an imagined movement from one to the other.³⁹⁴ The sea itself is now territorialised and incorporated into Ptolemaic space. The geography flatters the Ptolemaic audience, suggesting total control.

This *periplous* imperial lens is evident in Alexandrian court poetry. Theokritos' encomium to Ptolemy II Philadelphos may ostensibly adopt the structure of a hymn.³⁹⁵ Yet it nonetheless encourages the audience to adopt a *periplous*-like imperial lens:

‘καὶ μὴν Φοινίκας ἀποτέμνεται Ἀραβίας τεκαὶ Συρίας Λιβύας τε κελαινῶν
τ’ Αἰθιοπῶν· Παμφύλοισί τε πᾶσι καὶ αἰχμηταῖς Κιλικεσσισαμαίνει,
Λυκίοις τε φιλοπτολέμοισί τε Καρσί καὶ νάσοις Κυκλάδεσσιν, ἐπεὶ οἱ νᾶες
ἄρισταιπόντον ἐπιπλῶντι, θάλασσα δὲ πᾶσα καὶ αἰᾶκαὶ ποταμοὶ
κελάδοντες ἀνάσσονται Πτολεμαίῳ...’

More: he takes a share of Phoenicia, of Arabia, of Syria and Libya and of the dark-skinned Ethiopians; he rules over all the Pamphylians, the spearmen of Cilicia, the Lycians, and those keen warriors the Carians, and the islands of the Cyclades, since the best ships that sail the seas are his. The entire land and sea and all the roaring rivers are ruled by Ptolemy...

Theocr. *Id.* 17.86-92 (tr. N. Hopkinson (2015))

The territories claimed are presented in two coastal sequences with an assimilating inevitability. The first of these, following the Libyan coast, deftly omits renegade Kyrene (under Magas) so as to avoid interrupting the theme of conquest.³⁹⁶ We traverse the Libyan coast before reaching the Aithiopias, which had been located by Timosthenes in the southwest, south, and southeast, encouraging us to picture a circumnavigation of the entire Libyan continent before returning to our starting point at Koelē-Syria once more.³⁹⁷ With the southern half of the *oikoumenē* secure, a second tour turns north. Ptolemy asserts spear-won claims to Kilikia, Lykia, and Karia before reaching the Kyklades. Theokritos' use of a *periplous* lens creates a sense of imperial certainty, each space sequentially claimed as a consequence of Ptolemy's superior navy (ἐπεὶ οἱ νᾶες ἄρισταιπόντον ἐπιπλῶντι). This culminates in universal (πᾶσα) territorial claims, nature itself being subjugated (ἀνάσσονται). A universal empire emerges through his effortless movement. The geographic propaganda is presented through the sympotic language of *epainos*, flattering his primary audience and patron, King

³⁹³ Timosth. F20 (=Strabo 17.3.6).

³⁹⁴ *Periplous* and spatial geography: Palladino (2016) 56-7; proto-vectors: Gottesman (2015) 81-105.

³⁹⁵ N. Hopkinson (2015) 243.

³⁹⁶ Bagnall (1976) 26-27.

³⁹⁷ Agathem. 2.7.

Ptolemy. Theokritos, like Timosthenes, has utilised the tools of *periplous* geography to assert the ideology of universal empire.

This formula had remarkable saliency. Ptolemy III Euergetes adopts it in the Adoulis inscription (246 BCE), maintaining increasingly dubious claims of naval suzerainty. Departing from the traditionally vague Egyptian descriptions of foreign geography, the Adoulis stele declares that Euergetes ‘inherited from his father the kingdom of Egypt and Libya and Syria and Phoenicia and Cyprus and Lycia and Caria and the Cyclades’.³⁹⁸ Hunter observes that this echoes Theokritos’ *periplous*-like ordering.³⁹⁹ However, these are claims no longer tenable under Ptolemy III, the decisive defeats to the Antigonids at the Battles of Kos and Andros undermining Ptolemaic pretensions to naval hegemony.⁴⁰⁰ Undeterred, the inscription goes further, adding a third *periplous* leg, claiming ‘Ionia and the Hellespont and Thrace’ in the journey.⁴⁰¹ With this sequence, Antigonid Macedonia is diminished and surrounded, Ptolemy III recorded as ‘having become master of all the country this side of the Euphrates’.⁴⁰² Significantly, his rival monarchs are transformed into vassals.⁴⁰³ The *periplous* sequence lends a sense of certainty to such universal claims, lands falling like dominoes to the universal king.

We have seen the assimilating power of *periplous* cartography as utilised by the Ptolemaic regime to exaggerate imperial reach. Yet the *periplous*, with its coastal focus, had limitations for a thalassocratic empire bent on universal kingship. Geographic innovations by Timosthenes had us looking beyond the coast, organising relative locations across the sea. The Ptolemies would construct a shared imagined cartography which would extend this much further, sea vectors projecting Ptolemaic rule to ‘where the end of the earth is and whence the swift horses carry the sun.’⁴⁰⁴ In the next section we will examine the Ptolemies’ movement away from the imperial geographical shallows and into the deep with maritime vectors criss-crossing the seas, asserting speed and power over a more thoroughly territorialised maritime space.

³⁹⁸ ‘παραλαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς / τὴν βασιλείαν Αἰγύπτου καὶ Λιβύης καὶ Συρίας / καὶ Φοινίκης καὶ Κύπρου καὶ Λυκίας καὶ Καρίας καὶ τῶν / Κυκλάδων νήσων...’, *OGIS* 54.5-8 (= Kosmas Indikopleustes *Topogr. Chr.* 2.58-59) (tr. E.R. Bevan (1927) 193).

³⁹⁹ R. Hunter (2003) 160.

⁴⁰⁰ Dates uncertain, but probably after Khremonidean War (ca. 250s): A. Meadows (2013) 38; P. McKechnie (2017) 630.

⁴⁰¹ ‘... καὶ Ἰωνίας καὶ τοῦ Ἑλ- / λησπόντου καὶ Θράκιης’, *OGIS* 54.14.15.

⁴⁰² ‘κυριεύσας δὲ τῆς τε ἐντὸς Εὐφράτου / χώρας πάσης’, *OGIS* 54.14.13-14.

⁴⁰³ ‘καὶ τοὺς μονάρχους τοὺς ἐν / τοῖς τόποις πάντας ὑπηκόους καταστήσας’, *OGIS* 54.14.16-17; cf. F. Piejko (1990) 13-27.

⁴⁰⁴ ‘...ἀμφοτέρη μεσόγεια καὶ αἱ πελάγεσσι κάθηνται, μέχρις ὅπου περάτη τε καὶ ὀππότεν ὠκέες ἵπποι Ἥελιον φορέουσιν’, Callim. *Hymn* 4.163-170.

2.2 Branches

I. Reaching out: geopolitical and strategic vectors of expansion

The appearance of power over distant places is a key aspect of imperial geography. For early modern European empires, naval vectors created the appearance of speed and an associated dromological power which exceeded reality.⁴⁰⁵ Paul Virilio argued that the hypersonic vectors of ICBMs similarly transformed the twentieth century geopolitical map, creating a 'negation of space' and drawing distant points together.⁴⁰⁶ In recent decades, culture theorists have argued that information vectors similarly have transformed the map with 'telesthesia', connectivity drawing the periphery to the centre through myriad information nodes across the globe.⁴⁰⁷ In the ancient Mediterranean, naval maritime vectors could similarly transform the map. The Ptolemaic regime viewed its universal empire through just such a 'dromocratic' lens, quick to use its fleet to project the appearance of unchallenged movement, ostensibly enveloping its rivals.⁴⁰⁸ The sea was organised into a series of vital vectors, connected by key nodes, through which this maritime matrix could be organised and controlled. As we will see, this control was exaggerated, creating an empire on the map far more powerful and cohesive than it was in the real world. In the following section we will consider several of the most vital points: the Kypros node and the associated eastern Mediterranean vector, the Propontis-Euxine vector, and the Aegean vector.

A. The Kypros node and eastern Mediterranean vectors

Kypros is a critical location for naval domination of the eastern Mediterranean and featured as a hub in early Ptolemaic geography. The island sits at the boundary between the deep sea of the Mediterranean to the southwest, and the more navigable waters of the Levantine basin, the Gulf of Issos and the Pamphylian Sea.⁴⁰⁹ These more sheltered north and easterly waters were, as Eratosthenes noted, greatly preferred by sailors to the open sea, making Kypros a potential sentinel for any empire wishing to control south-north and east-west movement in the eastern Mediterranean.⁴¹⁰ But it was more than a means of controlling sea-traffic. Kypros had been long understood as a 'pistolet braqué au coeur de la Syrie'.⁴¹¹ The Ptolemies would use it as a base for military aggression, potentially striking anywhere along the coast.⁴¹² This

⁴⁰⁵ O. Virilio (1977) 70; Exaggerating British colonial space: J. Belich (1986).

⁴⁰⁶ Virilio (1977) 149, 150-151; Lefebvre (1974) 86.

⁴⁰⁷ Telesthesia: M. Wark (2012), esp. 39-54; (1994) 8-11, 64; (1997) 26-27, 47-9.

⁴⁰⁸ Dromocratic: Virilio (1977) 63, 92-3; Wark (2012) 52-3; Ptolemaic thalassocracy: Marquaille (2001) 160-164.

⁴⁰⁹ G.A. McCay & A.H.F. Robertson (2013) 422, fig.1-2; A.H.F. Robertson & J.E. Dickson (1984) 1-5.

⁴¹⁰ Eratosth. F128 (=Strabo 2.5.24); 14.6.3.

⁴¹¹ E. Will (1984) 67. Cf. Plut. *Cim.* 18.

⁴¹² Hauben (1987) 213.

node was pivotal for claims of suzerainty; without control of Kypros, no imperialist could claim control of Koelē-Syria, Anatolia, nor the eastern Mediterranean.

The Ptolemies were quick to realise the time-bending and space-bending nature of the naval vectors under Kypros' purview, apparent in Diodoros-Hieronymos' depiction of the Third War of the Successors (315-311), which elegantly illustrates Ptolemaic vectoral geography. The Antigonids, powerful on land, are undercut by Ptolemaic commandeering of Phoenician ships assuring the latter's immediate position as masters of the sea.⁴¹³ In a spectacular gesture of control of the coastal sea vector, Ptolemy's admiral and ally, Seleukos, sails 'contemptuously' (καταπεφρονηκότως) past the Antigonid camp in Koelē-Syria.⁴¹⁴ It is a remarkable moment: the Ptolemaic enemy so close and yet untouchable, outpacing them on a parallel modality of time and space.⁴¹⁵ Antigonid allies are subsequently despondent (ἄθυμοι) 'since the enemy dominated the sea, they would plunder the lands of those who aided their opponents'.⁴¹⁶ Here we are presented with what Wark calls 'determinate imprecision': the vector's location, while visible, maintains undefined points of contact.⁴¹⁷ This is our first sense of the Ptolemaic naval vectors which move with a speed and a multi-polarity which transcend the hodology of traditional Macedonian strategic cartography.

Kypros would prove a vital hub within this maritime vectorial map, its many harbours providing a potential launching pad for multi-pronged strikes along the coast.⁴¹⁸ Ptolemy's conquest of Kypros involved diplomacy and a destructive war, transforming the many kingdoms into a unified Ptolemaic unit, initially under the *stratēgos-Philos*, King Nikokreon of Salamis, then under Ptolemy's own brother, Menalaos, in 310.⁴¹⁹ With control of Kypros, the naval vectors were amplified, the Ptolemies being presented as moving at a different speed, running rings around their land-based rivals:

‘αὐτὸς δὲ μετὰ τῆς δυνάμεως ἐκπλεύσας ἐπὶ Συρίας τῆς ἄνω καλουμένης Ποσειδίου καὶ Ποταμοῦ Καρῶν ἐκπολιορκήσας διήρπασεν. ἐτοίμως δὲ πλεύσας ἐπὶ Κιλικίας Μάλων εἶλε καὶ τοὺς ἐγκαταληφθέντας ἐλαφυροπώλησεν. ἐπόρθησε δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐγγὺς χώραν καὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον ὠφελείας ἐμπλήσας ἀπέπλευσεν εἰς τὴν Κύπρον.’

He [Ptolemy] himself with his army, sailing toward Upper Syria, as it is called, captured and sacked Poseidium [on the Orontes] and Potami Caron. Sailing without delay to Cilicia, he took Malus and sold as booty those who were captured there. He

⁴¹³ Diod. Sic. 19.58.1-5.

⁴¹⁴ Diod. Sic. 19.58.5.

⁴¹⁵ Wark (1994) 17, see also 11-15.

⁴¹⁶ ‘πρόδηλον γὰρ ἦν ὅτι θαλασσοκρατοῦντες οἱ πολέμοι πορθήσουσι τοὺς τοῖς ἐναντίοις κοινοπραγοῦντας...’, Diod Sic. 19.58.6; Marquaille (2001) 160.

⁴¹⁷ Wark (1994) 10-11.

⁴¹⁸ Diod. Sic. 19.57.

⁴¹⁹ Strabo 14.6.6; Diod. Sic. 19.57, 79; *BNJ* 156 F10.6 (=Cod. rescr. Vatic. gr.495.230.235).

also plundered the neighbouring territory and, after satiating his army with spoil, sailed back to Kypros.

Diod Sic. 19.79.6-7 (tr. R.M. Geer (1954))

From the Kyprian node, the fleet is presented as launching attacks, at will, along multiple vectors with impunity, seeming to arrive without warning. This is contrasted with Antigonid forces under Demetrios Poliorketes moving on slow-moving hodological vectors, arriving when ‘the opportunity had passed and finding that the enemy had sailed away’.⁴²⁰ Demetrios’ cavalry is lost to exhaustion in the attempt to match hodological with maritime vectors. Time and space are distorted, the Ptolemaic navy almost teleporting to the land-based viewer, jumping from one place to the next. Seibert argued that such an ability to strike the coast was superficial and did not dramatically change the military equation.⁴²¹ However, as Wheatley and Dunn note, it had ‘disproportionate propaganda value’, highlighting Antigonid impotence.⁴²² A ‘zone of insecurity’ allows those with the faster, more agile vectors to maintain spatial dominance.⁴²³ The use of naval vectors in Ptolemaic imperial geography projected the appearance of power beyond the military reality. Nodes such as those at Kypros were integral to this communication of dynamic seaborne power.

B. The Propontis-Euxine vector

We have already seen how the Ptolemies used maritime vectors as a dromological accelerator, appearing to outflank rivals. But Ptolemaic vectorial geography was to prove even more ambitious, constructing a powerful sea vector through the Hellespont and Propontis to the other ends of the Euxine Sea. Such a naval route would appear to bind the distant points of the Kimmerian Pontos and Kolchis to the Ptolemaic centre. The same spatialising gesture would appear to sever land-based movement to Europe from Asia, undermining Seleukid and Antigonid rival claims to universal kingship.

Ptolemy II Philadelphos’ forays into the Propontis and Euxine Seas occurred in the late 270s, a time in which rival claims to this area were in flux. The Ptolemies’ maritime approach to territorialising the area was to extend vectors from secure locations. The regime already had political control of the Aegean Sea, through the Nesiotic League, and naval muscle, in the form of the base at Samos, giving weight to geopolitical claims further north.⁴²⁴ As we have seen, Timosthenes’ survey of the Mytilene strait absorbed Lesbos and the Asian coast opposite into the imperial map.⁴²⁵ Furthermore, his detailed description of the deep harbour at Artarke

⁴²⁰ ὕστερήσας δὲ τῶν καιρῶν καὶ καταλαβὼν ἀποπεπλευκότας τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπανῆλθε συντόμως ἐπὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον, ἀποβεβληκῶς τῶν ἵππων τοὺς πλείους κατὰ τὴν ὁδοιπορίαν’, Diod. Sic. 19.80.2.

⁴²¹ J. Seibert (1969) 147-8.

⁴²² Wheatley & Dunn (2020) 60.

⁴²³ Virilio (1977) 62, 70.

⁴²⁴ *IG* 12.7.506.4-8 (=Austin 256); I.L. Merker (1970) 148, 151-154.

⁴²⁵ Presence in Lesbos: Ptolemy honours: *IG* 12 Suppl. 115; Arsinoë *IG* 12.2.513; Ptolemeia: *IG* 12 Suppl. 115.

(Mysia) treats the lands beyond the Troad as a naval asset.⁴²⁶ The coast through the Propontis and into the Euxine Sea is assimilated by his imperial gaze, claimed as property of the Ptolemaic navy.

For the bastion-like Byzantion, a more diplomatic approach utilising euergetism was adopted. A temple and cult to the deified Ptolemy was established in exchange for money, grain, artillery, and, significantly, 'lands in Asia' bequeathed to the city.⁴²⁷ Through this gift of land, both sides of the sea were effectively treated as Ptolemaic.⁴²⁸ The new maritime vector gains primacy as the organising principle of the region.⁴²⁹ In contrast, the Antigonid and Seleukid claims, despite political alliances through marriage, appear severed, Grainger noting that the Ptolemaic vector 'threaten[ed] both at the junction of their power'.⁴³⁰ The continents are divided and controlled by the sea. Furthermore, reference to grain in the gifts to Byzantion (*frumentique multas myriades*) publicises the Ptolemies' control of the 'grainways' of the Mediterranean.⁴³¹ These fed not only the Propontis, but the Greek mainland beyond. The Ptolemies' euergetism highlights this naval vector, encouraging us to view the *oikoumenē* through a thalassocratic lens. Ptolemaic maritime space is central, while other claimants to the universal empire are repositioned as peripheral. The power of vectoral imperial geography is on full display here—the king who controls the sea, we are encouraged to believe, controls the entire *oikoumenē*.

The Ptolemies naval reach was demonstrated at the far ends of the Propontis-Euxine vector, on the northern and eastern edges of the Euxine Sea. Kimmerian Bosphoros seems to have received a spectacular visit by the new would-be maritime hegemon. A striking 15m² fresco of the 'Isis ship', uncovered by Soviet archaeologists in 1982 at a sanctuary of Aphrodite and Apollo, suggests that contact was significant.⁴³² The fresco features over 80 ships, including a rare 1.2m depiction of an early to mid-third century galley clearly labelled *Isis*, featuring the goddess proudly on the *stolos* of the prow.⁴³³ Grač's initial reading identified this ship as an Egyptian trireme.⁴³⁴ However, the visit seems to have been more spectacular than initially thought. Basch's detailed analysis, supported by Vinogradov and Grainger, reveal towers to the fore and aft, complex decking, and oars positioned deep in the hull, suggesting that it is a Ptolemaic 'hyper-galley' of the sort outlined in Athenaios' descriptions of Philadelphos'

⁴²⁶ Timosth. F31 (=Steph. Byz. s.v. 'Aproixn).

⁴²⁷ '...διώξαι τοὺς ὑπὸ Πτολεμαίου σταλέντας Αἰγυπτίους ἄχρι θαλάσσης, καὶ λαβεῖν τὰς ἀγκύρας τῶν νεῶν αὐτῶν,' Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἄγκυρα. Gifts: 'Etenim Byzantiis Ptolemaeus in Asia regionem frumentique multas myriades et sagittas et pecunias dederat', Dion. Byz. Fr. 28 (Müller (1855) 2.34) ; Will (1986) 147; M.D. Gyğax (2016) 40-8.

⁴²⁸ Gyğax (2016) 6.

⁴²⁹ Grabowski (2020) 133.

⁴³⁰ Grainger (2010) 92-3.

⁴³¹ K. Buraselis (2013) 103-6. 5th C. precedent: Xen, *Hell.* 2.2.1-2.

⁴³² *SEG* 34-756. N.L. Grač (1984) 81-88, English summary: 88.

⁴³³ Ship nos.: 30; L. Basch (1985), ships dated by *stolos* style: 134-137, 140; revised to 83 ships: Höckmann (1999) 303-23.

⁴³⁴ Trireme: Grač (1984) 81-88. Murray emphasises ram, however, omits decks, towers: W.M. Murray (2001) 250-56.

fleet.⁴³⁵ The painting reveals the scale of the geographic performance; the Ptolemies insist on superlative maritime reach, the naval sea-lanes on the Ptolemaic imperial map stretching uninterrupted from Alexandria to the very edges of the *oikoumenē*.

As we have seen, Timosthenes' *On Harbours* uses a *periplous* gaze of the interior to project the Propontis-Euxine vector into the Kaukasos, with an eye to the northern Ocean itself. Timosthenes does not merely claim to have reached Kolchis in the far east of the Euxine Sea, but to have detailed knowledge of its ethnography. The peoples of Kolchis are presented as gathering at Dioskouria, some 300 peoples.⁴³⁶ This figure, Strabo suggests, is grossly exaggerated, bandied around by those 'who care nothing for the facts'.⁴³⁷ However, geographical facts may not have been the main aim of Timosthenes' account. Strabo emphasises the geographical significance of the city, which was proverbially understood as the 'farthest voyage' and 'the beginning of the isthmus' which leads to the Kaspian Sea and the northern ocean.⁴³⁸ The act of gazing claims the interior, the misleading certainty of Timosthenes' figure suggesting familiarity which was beyond his reach in reality. Authority is asserted through cataloguing, the gathering of peoples from the edge of the world in one place to be sorted by the admiral. The 'long... arm' of the Ptolemaic navy touches the lands which reach the northern Ocean itself.⁴³⁹ The vector is being pushed to the limits of credibility.

C. The Aegean-Attic vector

The Aegean-Attic vector extended from Samos, through the Kyklades and into the western Aegean, including claims on the Greek mainland, culminating in the disastrous Khremonidian War (268/7-61).⁴⁴⁰ The motivation for this war has divided scholars. Ptolemaic involvement has traditionally been understood as intentionally impermanent, the settlements on the mainland described like wartime bases to be torn up at the end of the campaign.⁴⁴¹ For proponents of a defensive Ptolemaic foreign policy, the involvement in a war on mainland Greece must necessarily be understood in terms of forward defence, as a reaction to the 'menace' of resurgent Antigonid naval power.⁴⁴² Yet, the aggressive policy can more cohesively be understood as a manifestation of the imperial propaganda loudly mooted in the Khremonidian decree itself (268/7). Ptolemy is portrayed here as following the policies of 'his

⁴³⁵ Hyper-Galley: Basch (1985) 143, 148-9; (1987) 493; J.G. Vinogradov (1999); Grainger (2010) 93-4; Ath. 5.203c-d.

⁴³⁶ Timosth. F25; Plin. *HN* 6.5.15.

⁴³⁷ 'συνέρχεσθαι γούν εις αὐτὴν ἑβδομήκοντα, οἱ δὲ καὶ τριακόσια ἔθνη φασίν, οἷς οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων μέλει', Strabo 11.2.16.

⁴³⁸ 'ἔσχατος πλοῦς', Strabo 11.2.16; 'ἀρχὴ τοῦ ἰσθμοῦ τοῦ μεταξύ τῆς Κασπίας καὶ τοῦ Πόντου', 11.2.16.

⁴³⁹ Polyb. 5.34.8-9.

⁴⁴⁰ Dating: Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.277, n.2

⁴⁴¹ Bagnall (1976) 121.

⁴⁴² Bevan (1927) 67-8.

ancestors and of his sister’, as defender of Greek freedom.⁴⁴³ Whether this was, indeed, a genuine manifestation of Arsinoë’s claims to the Macedonian throne, or deft use of the late Queen’s claims as part of the expansionist propaganda, it nonetheless reveals intent to assimilate the Greek mainland, connected to Alexandria via an extension of the Aegean vector.⁴⁴⁴ Yet, the imperial map, with its elegant lines arcing from Alexandria to the Greek mainland, would prove to sit in uncomfortable dissonance with geopolitical realities. Strategic failures at the vector’s endpoints exposed the limits of Ptolemaic vectorial propaganda.

The expansion of the Aegean vector beyond the Nesiotic league of the Kyklades is evident in the profusion of divine honours for the Ptolemaic *nauarch-Philos*, Patroklos, throughout the Aegean in the 260s.⁴⁴⁵ In Keos and Thera, Patroklos is honoured for providing order on behalf of Ptolemy II Philadelphos.⁴⁴⁶ In Krete, Iitanos celebrates his visit by bequeathing him the titles of *proxenos*, benefactor, and citizen.⁴⁴⁷ He is described as King Ptolemy’s *stratēgos*, highlighting the military nature of the visit.⁴⁴⁸ More than ‘regulating the security of his rear’, as Bagnall depicted it, these honours treat Patroklos and the Ptolemies as a permanent feature in an expanding hegemony.⁴⁴⁹

The subsequent establishment of a series of settlements around Attika, what Bagnall calls ‘Patroklos’ ring’, is likewise traditionally framed in impermanent terms, following Pausanias’ depiction of a deliberate auxiliary role for the Ptolemies.⁴⁵⁰ However, archaeological evidence suggests something more substantial. Arsinoë-on-Keos and Arsinoë-Methana are established as permanent strategic sentinels, the dynastic nomenclature powerfully asserting territorial claims upon land and sea.⁴⁵¹ Furthermore, archaeological evidence in Attika itself suggests a significant campaign, challenging the backseat position as characterised in Pausanias’ account.⁴⁵² Excavations at the Koroni peninsula in Attika identified an acropolis fortress with 1.5m thick stone walls and towers, numismatic finds dating it to Philadelphos’ campaigns.⁴⁵³ Evidence of coins and sling-bullets at Vouliagmeni and Helioupolis deep in Attika suggest the military activity was substantial and widespread, launching in a range of directions from

⁴⁴³ ‘...τε βασιλεύς Πτολεμαῖος ἀκολούθως τεῖ τ- /ῶν προγόνων καὶ τεῖ τῆς ἀδελφῆς προ[α]ιρέσει φανερός ἐστ- / ιν σπουδάζων ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς τ[ῶν] Ἑλλήνων ἐλευθερίας’, *Syll.* 3.434/435.15-17, *Austin* no. 61. ‘Guerra di Arsinoë’, G. Longega (1968) 95. For Khremonidean war, see: Pausanias 1.1.1, 7.3; 3.6.4-6; Polyaeus *Strat.* 4.6.20 *Just. Epit.* 26.2.1-11.

⁴⁴⁴ Ptolemaic dynastic claims to Antigonid diadem: Tarn (1912); (1923b); B. van Oppen (2010) 148-9.

⁴⁴⁵ Paus. 1.1.1.

⁴⁴⁶ Keos: *IG* 12.5.1061; *Syll*³.562; Thera: *IG* 12.3.320 (*OGIS* 44).

⁴⁴⁷ *IC* 3.4.2.19, 3.17-18.

⁴⁴⁸ *IC* 3.42.4-8.

⁴⁴⁹ Bagnall (1976) 121.

⁴⁵⁰ Bagnall (1976) 135; D. Gill (2007) 58-9; Hauben (2013) 58.

⁴⁵¹ See: Ch. 3.2.III.

⁴⁵² Paus. 1.1.1, 3.6.5; Strabo 9.1.21.

⁴⁵³ Excavations revealed 1.5m walls, towers, storerooms: Vanderpool et al. (1962) 26-61. Coins *in situ*: 75% Ptolemaic, 80% r. Philadelphos: 57-59%.

this stronghold.⁴⁵⁴ This was not mere interference or auxiliary support, but an attempt to pry Attika from the sphere of Philadelphos' Antigonid rivals.

The Khremonidian war highlights the geopolitical limitations for the Ptolemies, something not apparent on the vectoral map. The fortress of Ramnous, garrisoned by Ptolemaic forces, appears to be a clear attempt to close the net on Antigonid claims to Attika. In conjunction with Arsinoë-on-Keos, it suggests an aim to control northern shipping lanes to Attika from Macedonia and appears on the map as perfectly capable of cleaving Attika from the Antigonid domain.⁴⁵⁵ However, a Ramnousian decree reveals, with remarkable *parrhēsia*, the limits of Ptolemaic imperialism. Unlike the *poleis* of Krete, it does not honour the Ptolemaic *nauarch* Patroklos. Rather, it celebrates the Athenian *stratēgos*, Epichares, for bringing in 'the troops who have come from Patroklos' that are billeted at the stronghold.⁴⁵⁶ The seas, far from controlled Ptolemaic space, are characterised as rife with pirates.⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, the countryside is being pillaged by Antigonid forces, and it is only Epichares' practical fortifications, negotiations with bandits, and acts of piety, which keep Ramnous going.⁴⁵⁸ The implicit criticism of the limited Ptolemaic power is evident. Unlike Pausanias' account, in which the Ptolemies are mere auxiliaries, the Ramnous decree reveals that the Ptolemies did indeed have troops garrisoned, but they were evidently ineffective at controlling land or sea.⁴⁵⁹ Rather than a lack of royal will, as Pausanias suggested, the military failures of the Khremonidian war suggest overstretched logistical and communication lines.⁴⁶⁰ This may well have been the product of a misplaced faith in the vectors so confidently marked on the imperial map. The Ramnous decree neatly exposes the limits of the Ptolemaic imperial force on the far end of these apparently powerful naval vectors. The Ptolemies, it seems, were victims of their own geographic propaganda, logistical realities not bending to the prescriptions of the imperial map.

From Alexandria, the maritime vectors seemed to touch the far reaches of the *oikoumenē*. With such a 'long... arm', the assimilation of the Greek mainland may have seemed easily within grasp.⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, the Aegean-Attic vector was, as Meadows notes, relatively lightly garrisoned, a state of affairs which could only be sustained through the confidence of free movement for the navy along these vectors.⁴⁶² And yet, as Errington observes, the movement of a full-scale army across to Greece proved to be a 'logistical nightmare'.⁴⁶³ What appeared

⁴⁵⁴ Gill (2007) 59 n.30; Hauben is less certain: (2013) 61.

⁴⁵⁵ Gill (2007) 59.

⁴⁵⁶ Austin 62.24-5 at 133-134 (=SEG 24 154); Hauben (2013) 60.

⁴⁵⁷ Austin 62.21-23; Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.283.

⁴⁵⁸ Austin 62.10-20; C. Habicht (1992) 73.

⁴⁵⁹ Paus. 3.6.5.

⁴⁶⁰ Paus. 1.7.3; Tarn (1913) 298-301; Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.278-280, 282-284; Meadows (2013) 38.

⁴⁶¹ Polyb. 5.34.8-9.

⁴⁶² Meadows (2013) 35.

⁴⁶³ R.M. Errington (2008).

like *oikoumenē*-spanning vectors proved to find their limits in the old Greek heartland, the Ptolemies deceived by their own imperial geography.

II. Religious territorialisation of the sea: Arsinoë

Diffusion of the cult of Arsinoë II, the late sister-wife of Philadelphos, was intended to territorialise the seas as Ptolemaic space. The cult was cultivated along maritime vectors, consolidated with the foundation of at least fifteen port-cities named Arsinoë, numerous dedications and shrines, unifying the sea under the watchful gaze of the powerful imperial deity. The maritime aspects of the Ptolemaic goddess were not invented whole cloth. Rather, elements of Aphrodite Euploia and Aphrodite Zephyritis, already popular maritime goddesses, were incorporated for imperial ends. This section will first consider the imperial claims of Arsinoë while living, which legitimised the regime's expansion. We will then consider the more long-lasting effects of Arsinoë after death, the Arsinoë cult territorialising the Mediterranean and Aegean seas as Ptolemaic space.

A. Arsinoë's geopolitical claims

Initially queen to Lysimachos (ca. 300-281), Arsinoë is presented in Memnon's otherwise hostile account as a figure with widespread imperial interests. A range of territories on the Pontic coast including Amastris, Tion, and Memnon's hometown of Heraklea-Pontika were directly under the queen's 'institutionalised power', supported by her own *Philoï* network.⁴⁶⁴ The Trogean source presents her as in control of the royal city of Kassandreia. Strabo and Stephanos record that Ephesos was renamed Arsinoë. At Samothrace the spectacular rotunda shows the imprint of her imperial presence.⁴⁶⁵ Later Ptolemaic euergetism at Heraklea-Pontika suggests Arsinoë's claims may have paved the way for extending the Propontis-Euxine vector along the Pontic coast. As queen to Lysimachos, Arsinoë's imperialism was already on display.

When Arsinoë arrived in Alexandria in 280/79 or 277/6, her former claims to the Macedonian mainland, the northern Aegean, and the coast of the Euxine sea were not necessarily relinquished.⁴⁶⁶ According to the Trogean source, Arsinoë initially seems to have been a popular symbol of resistance to Ptolemy Keranos' takeover, the usurper not able to approach her city of Kassandreia without a marriage proposal, promising to make Arsinoë's eldest son, also called Ptolemy, his heir.⁴⁶⁷ Following Keranos' villainous murder of her youngest

⁴⁶⁴ Memnon: *BNJ* 434 F1 (=Phot. *Bibl.* 224.222b.9-239b.43); Just. *Epit.* 17.1; Paus. 1.10.3-4. Power: Carney (2013) 37; Nilsson (2012) 2-3; Longega (1968) 36-9; *contra*: Lund (1992) 195.

⁴⁶⁵ Kassandreia: Just. *Epit.* 24.2; Carney (2013) 37, 50-52. Ephesos: Strabo 14.1.21; Steph. Byz. s.v. "Ἐφεσός"; Longega (1968) 31-2, 42-44. Samothrace Rotunda dating uncertain: W. Burkert (1993) 147.

⁴⁶⁶ Dating arrival is uncertain: Fraser (1972) 1.117; Carney (2013) 63.

⁴⁶⁷ Marriage deal: Just. *Epit.* 17.2, 24.2-3.

children in an apparent power-grab, Arsinoë escaped to Samothrace, then Egypt.⁴⁶⁸ With tragic tones, the Trogean account presents Ptolemy Keranos as an aberration, ‘the crimes of Ptolemy’ being punished by the gods through Gallic invasions. This is a view sympathetic to Arsinoë’s dynastic concerns; her claims to the Macedonian throne remain.⁴⁶⁹ According to the Diodoros-Duris source, this right may have found expression through the campaigning of Arsinoë’s lone surviving adult son, also called Ptolemy, possibly one of several figures who subsequently ruled, albeit briefly (βραχὺ κραιτεῖν), in the anarchy which followed Keranos’ death.⁴⁷⁰ While Antigonos II Gonatas ultimately emerged victorious, he too could, through a Ptolemaic lens, be understood as making illegitimate claims on Arsinoë’s unrelinquished territory.⁴⁷¹ The ‘normative and unremarkable’ tone of the Khremonidian decree, in which Philadelphos’ anti-Antigonid war is explained as ‘in accordance with the predilection both of his ancestors and of his sister’, strongly suggests that the attack on the Greek mainland was part of an ongoing claim to the Macedonian throne.⁴⁷²

B. The cult of Arsinoë in Alexandria

The cult of Arsinoë Philadelphos, from its inception shortly before or after her death (d. 271/70 or 269/8), assumed different guises for different audiences.⁴⁷³ The Mendes stele presents Arsinoë’s apotheosis in Pharaonic terms as one who received the double crown.⁴⁷⁴ Greek worship involved civic ritual echoing Aphrodite-worship, Alexandrians making sacrifices ‘in the street along which the canephore passes.’⁴⁷⁵ The *kanephore* is integrated into administration at the highest level from an early stage, seen in the dating formula of a contract from the Fayoum in 268 BCE.⁴⁷⁶ A concerted effort at disseminating the cult seems to have been underway from shortly after the queen’s death.

It is in the assimilation of particular maritime aspects of Aphrodite-worship that the Arsinoë cult’s territorialisation of the sea develops. Aphrodite Euploia (of good sailing) and Aphrodite Zephyritis (of the west wind) were among the aspects of Aphrodite most valued by sailors

⁴⁶⁸ Just. Epit. *Prol.* 24; Carney (2013) 64.

⁴⁶⁹ ‘Ptolomeo inulta scelera fuerunt...’, Just. Epit. 24.3; Tarn (1913) 135.n.48.

⁴⁷⁰ Diod Sic. 22.4; cf. Porphyry describes anarchy: *BNJ* 260 F3 (= Eus. *Chron.* §109.8-113.32); Tarn (1913) 290-1; Tarn (1926) 161; Longega (1968) 93-5; Carney (2013) 63-4; Hammond & Walbank (1988) 3.248. E.E. Rice (1983) 41.

⁴⁷¹ Antigonid Victory: *JG* 2.5.371b; Diog. Laert. 2.141.

⁴⁷² *JG* 2³.1.912.16-18. Normative: Carney (2013) 93. B. van Oppen (2010) 148-149; Tarn (1934) 28-9; (1923b) 7.705-6.

⁴⁷³ Dating problems re. Ptolemy’s calendar reforms. Including co-rule, Arsinoë’s death trad. date: 271/0. Followed by: Macurdy (1932) 117; Longega (1968) 92; S.B. Pomeroy (1984) 18. However, Grzybek places death at 269/8: E. Grzybek (1990) 103-12, 117-20; O’Neil (2008) 68-71. Overview: R.A. Hazzard (1987) 140-158.

⁴⁷⁴ *Mendes* In.11 (*Cairo* 22181); H. Brugsch (1875); J. Quaegebeur (1988) 43-44.

⁴⁷⁵ *P.Oxy.* 2465 2.1 (tr. Dunand (2007) 262).

⁴⁷⁶ ‘κανη[φόρου Ἀρσινόης Φιλαδέλφου...’, *P.Sorb.* inv. 2440.14-15 in Cadell (1966) 32-33; Fraser (1972) 1.214; Quaegebeur (1988) 42.

and admirals alike.⁴⁷⁷ Aphrodite Euploia already had strong associations with the protection of sailors, worshipped by the Knidians and, after 394, with a more martial emphasis, at Piraeus, the goddess credited with Athenian victory at sea.⁴⁷⁸ Her role as a protector of sailors went beyond naval victories. Polycharmos of Naukratis' *On Aphrodite* records how one Herostratos 'who was involved in trade and sailed to various places' had a Kyprian Aphrodite statuette which calmed the seas.⁴⁷⁹ Like her 'fragrant' temples and 'sweet-smelling' altars, the goddess filled the storm-tossed fleet with the scent of myrtle and quelled the storm.⁴⁸⁰ Aphrodite Euploia is a saviour and protector of not only naval fleets but individual merchants. This universal appeal would prove invaluable for the propagation of the imperial cult of Arsinoë.

While previously known epigrams of the court poet had made implicit associations between Aphrodite Euploia and Arsinoë, those of the *Milan Papyrus* makes such assimilation explicit, as the new goddess, Arsinoë Euploia, protector of seafarers.⁴⁸¹ This is evident in Poseidippos' dedication, *AB* 39, in which the establishment of the temple to Arsinoë-Zephyritis-Euploia on the headlands of Cape Zephyrion near Alexandria is celebrated. It is established, we are told, by the nauarch, court *Philos*, and eponymous priest, Kallikrates of Samos.⁴⁸² We are assured that Kallikrates 'put her here, sailor, especially for you'.⁴⁸³ Arsinoë's protection is for myriad seafarers, 'others, in need of good sailing, looked to her'.⁴⁸⁴ Her protection secures travel 'on your way in, then, or out,' giving us a sense of free and easy movement along maritime vectors.⁴⁸⁵ Like in Timosthenes' *On Harbours*, the temple adjacent to Alexandria becomes the beginning and end of journeys. Furthermore, religious territorialisation is evident, the maritime space is sanctified as 'the godly sea'.⁴⁸⁶ This is now the imperial goddess' territory.⁴⁸⁷ The traditional prayers offered to Aphrodite Euploia are now directed at Arsinoë Euploia, the Ptolemaic queen now the 'protectrice des marines'.⁴⁸⁸ The religious territorialisation is clear, the goddess looking over the Ptolemaic fleet and the ordinary seafarers alike.

The cult at Cape Zephyrion is explicitly associated with Aphrodite Zephyritis, and through her, Arsinoë Zephyritis. The Zephyros wind had long been tied to Aphrodite's maritime birth,

⁴⁷⁷ Marquaille (2001) 194; P. Bing (2003) 246.

⁴⁷⁸ Paus. 1.1.3.

⁴⁷⁹ 'πολίτης ἡμέτερος ἐμπορία χρώμενος καὶ χώραν πολλήν', Ath. 15.676a.

⁴⁸⁰ 'ἐπλήρωσεν τὴν ναῦν ἤδη ἀπειρηκόσι τοῖς ἐμπλέουσιν τὴν σωτηρίαν', Polycharmos *BNJ* 640 F1 (=Ath. 15.676). Cf. Kyprian associations: *Hymn. Hom.* 5.58-59.

⁴⁸¹ 'ἀνθεματικά' Poseidippos *AB Dedications* 39.2; Bing (2003) 256-7.

⁴⁸² Kallikrates' foundation: L. Robert (1966a) 199-202, 208; Bing (2003) 243-4, 255-9. Kallikrates also *theoi adelphoi* priest: Hauben (2013) 39. Kallikrates' previous promotion of living Arsinoë: *OGIS* 27; Bing (2003) 254.

⁴⁸³ '...ναυτίλη, σοὶ τὰ μάλιστα· κατ' εὐπλοίαν δὲ διώκει / τῆςδε θεοῦ χρήζων πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλος ἀνὴρ', *AB* 39.5-6 (eds C. Austin & G. Bastianini (2002))(tr. F. Nisetich (2005)).

⁴⁸⁴ See n.137.

⁴⁸⁵ '...εἴνεκα καὶ χερσαῖα καὶ εἰς ἄλλα δῖαν ἀφειεῖς', *AB* 39.7.

⁴⁸⁶ See n.139.

⁴⁸⁷ L. Robert (1966a) 201.

⁴⁸⁸ L. Robert (1966a) 201-2; Bing (2003) 245.

bringing the goddess to her home of Kypros.⁴⁸⁹ However, in Philadelphos' court, her location has shifted, Kallimachos calling her 'Aphrodite Zephyritis who dwells on the shore of Canopus'.⁴⁹⁰ In an epigram by Poseidippos to the temple, the assimilation is more apparent. We are introduced to the temple first as a 'windy spur' on a land 'reaching far toward the breath of Italian Zephyros'.⁴⁹¹ It is here, we are told, that Kallikrates named the temple 'Queen Cypris Arsinoë's temple'. This is a queen 'who will be called Aphrodite Zephyritis'.⁴⁹² We find a more martial tone in an epigram-dedication from Poseidippos in which Arsinoë Zephyritis is depicted with spear and shield.⁴⁹³ Carney argues that this martial aspect is associated with the Khremonidian War in Greece and, if all goes well, Macedonia.⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, Ptolemaic claims on this wind is seen in Alexandrian *technē*.⁴⁹⁵ Hedylos describes the temple of Arsinoë 'φιλοζεφύρου', where an ingenious hydraulic rhyton sings like the wind itself when wine is poured.⁴⁹⁶ The Zephyros now becomes, essentially, a Ptolemaic wind. This is perhaps most fittingly expressed in Poseidippos' poem to the Pharos lighthouse, where this beacon's communication with distant sailors is associated with Arsinoë Zephyritis.⁴⁹⁷ The imperial surveillance of Arsinoë Zephyritis, like the Pharos, reaches far across her territorialised seas.

C. The harbours of Arsinoë

On the coasts of the Ptolemaic seas, at least eleven Arsinoës acted as nodes which formed a powerful religious-geographic network stretching across the Mediterranean and Aegean.⁴⁹⁸ As Marquaille observed, all these Arsinoës have excellent harbours, projecting the security of the Ptolemaic goddess over what appeared to be a unified maritime space.⁴⁹⁹ More than singular points on the map, these cities are situated in strategic locations throughout the seas, allowing ships to move from Arsinoë to Arsinoë, never leaving the goddess' protective gaze or, indeed, Ptolemaic space. This section will consider the effect on the imperial map of these key nodes.

Kypros, a pistol pointed at Syria, and traditional home of Aphrodite, would become a vital hub for Arsinoë's surveillance of the eastern Mediterranean. According to Strabo, it featured three Arsinoës. These sat adjacent to sites traditionally sacred to Aphrodite, ideally located

⁴⁸⁹ *Hymn. Hom.* 5.3-5.

⁴⁹⁰ 'αὐτή μιν Ζεφυρίτις ἐπὶ χρέος / ...Κ]ανωπίτου ναίετις ἀ[ἱγιαλοῦ', Callim. *Aet.* F110.58.

⁴⁹¹ '...τὴν ἀνατεινομένην εἰς Ἴταλὸν Ζέφυρον', *AB* 116.4 (tr. F. Nisetich (2005) with adaptation).

⁴⁹² '... βασιλίσσης / ἱερὸν Ἀρσινόης Κύπριδος ὠνόμασεν. ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν Ζεφυρίτιν ἀκούσομένην Ἀφροδίτην', *AB* 116.5-7; K. Gutzwiller (2019) 356.

⁴⁹³ *AB* 36.5-6.

⁴⁹⁴ Carney (2013) 9; Gutzwiller (2019) 358.

⁴⁹⁵ *LSJ* s.v. τέχνη ΑΙ, III.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ath.* 11.497d; A. Sens (2015) 42; A. Kuttner (2005) 148. Cf. Arsinoë's double-cornucopia: *Ath.* 2.497c.

⁴⁹⁷ *AB* 116.1-4. Gutzwiller (2019) 356.

⁴⁹⁸ *Sauf* non-coastal Arsinoë-Konope in Aetolia (Strabo 10.2.22). Survey of Arsinoës: Marquaille (2008) 176-192.

⁴⁹⁹ Marquaille (2008) 188, 190.

for the projection of religious vectors in three directions across the sea. The southwestern Arsinoë, with its own *temenos* and harbour, was near the temple of Paphian Aphrodite and the Zephyria promontory, where the newly born Aphrodite Zephyritis was blown ashore. It looked out in a clear line to Cape Zephyrion beside Alexandria, about 3600 stadia, by Strabo's reckoning, linking the two points of the maritime goddess.⁵⁰⁰ A second Arsinoë was rebuilt on the ruins of Marion in the northwest, Philadelphos turning the city destroyed by his father into a beacon of Ptolemaic religious territorialisation. As Strabo notes, it sits next to Soli, which was to be home to the Aphrodite complex at Soli-Cholardes where early Hellenistic sculptures of Aphrodite-Arsinoë speak to a carefully constructed syncretism.⁵⁰¹ This location links the Kyprian hub northwest to the trade routes of Rhodes, and the Aegean beyond. Finally, Arsinoë-near-Salamis in the east also sits adjacent to a site sacred to Aphrodite, the promontory of Pedalium which surveys the coast of Koelē-Syria.⁵⁰² Kypros is transformed from the home of Aphrodite into a geo-religious hub for Arsinoë, the imperial goddess surveying maritime vectors in all directions.

The coastal sea route from Kypros to the Aegean is likewise secured by Arsinoë's gaze. Opposite Kypros' northern coast, Arsinoë-near-Nagidos is created from scratch as a colony with land confiscated from nearby Nagidos.⁵⁰³ An inscription from the reign of Ptolemy III reveals it to be 'a strategic place' for 'a city [called] Arsinoë named for the mother of the king.'⁵⁰⁴ The inscription was erected in duplicate at the temple of Arsinoë and the temple of Aphrodite. It outlines Arsinoë-near-Nagidos' special privileges - the right to establish its own laws and fine the Nagidians on behalf of the Arsinoë cult temple—giving a sense of the sacred city's primacy over the territory.⁵⁰⁵ Further west along the southern Anatolian coast, we come to Arsinoë-in-Pamphylia, a city well-situated to oversee the harvesting and exporting of lumber for ships.⁵⁰⁶ Further westward again, we arrive at Arsinoë-in-Lykia (Arsinoë-Patara), a city with a large harbour which secures the route towards Rhodes. Strabo describes the city, originally called Patara after Apollo's son, and notes that it is renamed Arsinoë under Philadelphos' rule.⁵⁰⁷ Arsinoë's presence was ubiquitous, sailors from Alexandria to Koelē-Syria to Lykia protected by the imperial goddess in what was presented as uninterrupted Ptolemaic domain.

Further west, the two Arsinoës of Krete create the appearance of a unified thalassocratic space from the eastern Mediterranean to the Aegean, circumventing disruptions by an increasingly independent (and occasionally hostile) Rhodes.⁵⁰⁸ Stephanos of Byzantium refers to one

⁵⁰⁰ Strabo 14.6.3.

⁵⁰¹ Strabo 14.6.3; D.B. Thompson (1955) 205.

⁵⁰² Strabo 14.6.3.

⁵⁰³ Marquaille (2001) 182-183.

⁵⁰⁴ '...πόλιν ἔκτισεν Ἀρσινόην ἐπώνυμον / τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως', *SEG* 39.1426.20-21.

⁵⁰⁵ *SEG* 39.1426.44-45.

⁵⁰⁶ Strabo 14.5.3.

⁵⁰⁷ Strabo 14.3.6.

⁵⁰⁸ Battle of Ephesus (ca. 260-50s), Rhodes under Agathostratos defeats Ptolemies: Polyaeus *Strat.* 18; Grabowski (2020) 143; Reger (2017) 155-77; Tarn (1913) 377-378.

Arsinoë-Lyktou.⁵⁰⁹ Cohen locates this harbour near Lyktos in eastern Krete, and Marquaille proposes that it may have been south-facing, ‘as a departure point from Crete to both Cyrenaica and Alexandria’.⁵¹⁰ This would create a new, alternative vector to that of Rhodes. In northern Krete, we have a possible Arsinoë-Rithyma, almost directly south of Arsinoë-on-Keos, founded by either Ptolemy II or IV, speculation based on fairly tentative numismatic evidence.⁵¹¹ Combined, these Arsinoës form a bridge between the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, ‘a transition point between Greece and Alexandria’.⁵¹² In reality, Rhodes continued to be a centre for Mediterranean trade, sitting at a natural nexus of north-south trade routes, including the ‘golden sea route’ from Rhodes to Alexandria.⁵¹³ But for all their practical limitations, the new Arsinoës formed a confident Ptolemaic vector on the imperial map, the swift-moving maritime goddess uninterrupted in her movement from the eastern Mediterranean to the Aegean.

The two Arsinoës on either side of Attika stretch the religious territorialisation of the Arsinoë cult to a region which was not securely Ptolemaic space, using the Arsinoë brand in a bold act of prescriptive geography. Arsinoë-on-Keos, established during the Khremonidian war, acts as a sentinel over the sea-lanes from Macedonia to Greece. The northern port of Koressos (Koressia) was renamed Arsinoë with an *epistates* of Patroklos appointed to reside in the city.⁵¹⁴ The royal nomenclature suggests permanency, ‘un plus large avenir’ for Arsinoë-on-Keos, a new star in the Arsinoë constellation.⁵¹⁵ Yet, despite the ideal strategic location for territorialising the seas off the Greek mainland, the reality on the ground suggests something less grand than what appears on the imperial map.⁵¹⁶ Numismatic evidence is mostly from Philadelphos’ reign, declining sharply in the decades that followed.⁵¹⁷ This may reflect the loss of naval suzerainty in the 250s and 240s following the apparently disastrous battles of Andros and Kos.⁵¹⁸ Despite this, the royal name for Arsinoë-on-Keos was maintained until the second century, suggesting an enduring significance in the imperial geographic imagination.⁵¹⁹ Keos was an important link to the Greek heartland, featuring in Kallimachos’ poetry, an exquisite shell travelling from Keos to Egypt on what is clearly a mystical, religious vector.⁵²⁰ The retaining of the civic name, Arsinoë, allows the Ptolemies to continue to assert specious control over a region in which they no longer had reasonable claims to geopolitical rule. It

⁵⁰⁹ Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀρσινόη... ἐνάτη Λύκτου’.

⁵¹⁰ G. Cohen (2006) 132-139; Le Rider (1968) 230; Grabowski (2013) 70-1 n.83; Marquaille (2001) 178.

⁵¹¹ Ptolemy IV in Krete: Strabo 10.4.11 ; Le Rider (1968) 239; Bagnall (1976) 201. Or Ptolemy II: Marquaille (2001) 178-179.

⁵¹² Marquaille (2001) 187.

⁵¹³ ‘ἔστι δ’ ἀπὸ Ῥόδου διάγραμμα εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν βορέα τετρακισχιλίων που σταδίων, ὃ δὲ περίπλους διπλάσιος’, Strabo 2.5.24; V. Gabrielsen (2013) 71.

⁵¹⁴ *IG* 12.5.1061.1-5; Hauben (2013) 57. See also *IG* 12.5.533/1066 *SEG* 48.1130; P. Pashides (2008) 428-34.

⁵¹⁵ Robert (1960) 156; Marquaille (2008) 39-64.

⁵¹⁶ Hauben (2013) 57; Bagnall (1976) 141.

⁵¹⁷ J.F. Cherry & J.K. Davis (1991) 9-28. Decline: 23-5; *cf.* Strabo 14.3.6.

⁵¹⁸ Battles of Kos & Andros: Just. *Epit.* Prol. 27, Plut. *Pelop.* 2; Meadows (2013) 38; McKechnie (2017) 629-647.

⁵¹⁹ Ἀρσινόειζ’ as distinct from Ioulis, Ptol. IV, V (*SIG* 562.1.78); Cherry & Davis (1991) 14.

⁵²⁰ Callim. *Epigr.* 5 (=Ath. 7.318); Bing (2003) 264-265.

was in the imperial map of the Ptolemaic imagination, rather than geopolitical reality, that Arsinoë-on-Keos would remain a beacon of Ptolemaic imperialism off the Greek mainland throughout the third century.

Sitting almost directly west of Keos on a volcanic outcrop in the Argolid, Arsinoë-on-the-Peloponnese stakes a bold claim on the Greek mainland itself.⁵²¹ This has traditionally been presented as part of a temporary occupation during the Khremonidian War, the so-called ‘ring around Attika’, little more than a defensive counterpoint to an Antigonid fleet at Corinth.⁵²² However, excavations in 2008 uncovered a Dorian inscription, in the dialect of the third century, which would appear to challenge these assumptions. The inscription to Poseidon sits under one of two statues for Arsinoë and Ptolemy at the sanctuary.⁵²³ Their position within a permanent religious *temenos* suggests something more than an ephemeral base, the ‘symbolic investment’ in the reciprocal relationship between god and supplicant speaking to a permanent claim to the territory.⁵²⁴ The nomenclature is emphasised, the goddess Arsinoë effectively putting her stamp twice on the location. The Ptolemaic cult had a home on the Greek mainland.

Turning westwards, the reassertion of Ptolemaic control over Kyrenika with Ptolemy III’s marriage to Berenikē II was affirmed on the map with new civic nomenclature. Taucheria became another Arsinoë, named ‘after the sister and wife of Ptolemy Philadelphos’.⁵²⁵ This city, ‘whose territory comes down to the sea’ according to Herodotos, was described in modest terms.⁵²⁶ Yet under Ptolemaic rule, its harbour was transformed substantially. Surveys by Davidson, Little, and Yorke in 1972 indicated a substantial harbour with two quays, two harbours, and a 220m mole, built at the same time as the Hippodamian street plan.⁵²⁷ More thorough excavations are needed, but even this preliminary survey and excavation hints at the outward nautical lens associated with the city named after Arsinoë. The land itself was transformed to create a nodal point for the expanding web of Arsinoë-naval vectors. The entire eastern Mediterranean and Aegean would now be presented as claimed territory, thanks to the divine goddess of the maritime vector.

The location and frequency of the Arsinoës have a profound territorialising effect over the entire sea. Through the movement of sailors, merchants, and naval fleets, these religious-political nodes form a network of seemingly rapid maritime vectors. This sense of movement

⁵²¹ Strabo 1.3.18; Paus. 2.34.2; Gill (2007) 57-58.

⁵²² Bagnall (1976) 135-6; for Corinth: Tarn (1913) 341-2; Spartan assaults: P. Cartledge & A. Spawforth (1989) 33.

⁵²³ ‘Βασιλῆ Πτολεμαῖον καὶ Ἀρσινόαν Φιλάδελφον ἃ πόλις ἃ τῶν Ἀρσινόεων ἀπὸ Πελοποννάσου Ποσειδᾶνι’, J. Wallensten & J. Pakkanen (2009) fig. 6. at 161.

⁵²⁴ Dedications: J. Kindt (2012) 125-130; S. Price (1984) 29-30; *temenos* significance and permanency: ‘cannot be moved lightly’, Burkert (1985) 84-87.

⁵²⁵ ‘...ἀπο τῆς τοῦ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Φιλαδέλφου ἀδελφῆς καὶ γυναικός’, Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἀρσινόη (1); Strabo 17.3.20.

⁵²⁶ Hdt 4.171.

⁵²⁷ R. Yorke (1972) 3-4.

creates a new type of space, a 'telesthesia' in which all points, no matter how distant, share a connection with the Ptolemaic goddess.⁵²⁸ With the myriad vectors from Arsinoë to Arsinoë, the entirety of the space is territorialised—Arsinoë's presence is ubiquitous throughout the seas.

III. Drawing in: centripetal geography

A centripetal geography in which the royal court is the heart of the world has been a powerful feature in many imperial maps.⁵²⁹ In pre-imperial China, the idea of the 'middle kingdom' (中國) already emphasised the primacy of the geographical centre, the barbarians (夷) delegated to the world's periphery.⁵³⁰ In later dynasties, the court at the Forbidden City was seen as an earthly reflection of the celestial centre.⁵³¹ For the Ptolemies, Alexandria-by-Egypt would act as a centre in geographical treatises, court poetry, and public pompes. This vortical mentality underscored much of Ptolemaic diplomacy and colonialism. In the Aegean, careful diplomacy tied the Nesiotic League to Alexandria via Samos. In the south, waterborne vectors from the Erythraean Sea to the Nile canal presented a rapid movement of resources and people from the periphery to the centre. The speed and malleability of waterborne travel allowed the Ptolemies to transcend traditional boundaries with new lines that led inexorably to the Alexandrian centre.

A. Alexandria-centricity in geography

A centripetal map with Alexandria at the centre, once constructed, would prove to have remarkable saliency. For Dio Chrysostom's audience in the Alexandrian theatre, Rome may have conquered, but the Ptolemaic geo-centripetal map lived on:

‘ὥστε τὰς ἐμπορίας οὐ νήσων οὐδὲ λιμένων οὐδὲ πορθμῶν τινων καὶ ἰσθμῶν, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἀπάσης τῆς οἰκουμένης γίγνεσθαι παρ’ ὑμῖν. κεῖται γὰρ ἐν συνδέσμῳ τινὶ τῆς ὅλης γῆς καὶ τῶν πλείστον ἀπαρκισμένων ἔθνων, ὥσπερ ἀγορὰ μιᾶς πόλεως εἰς ταὐτὸ ξυνάγουσα πάντας καὶ δεικνύουσα τε ἀλλήλοις καὶ καθ’ ὅσον οἶόν τε ὁμοφύλους ποιῶσα.’

The result is that the trade, not merely of islands, ports, a few straits and isthmuses, but of practically the whole world is yours. For Alexandria is situated, as it were, at the crossroads of the whole world, of even the most remote nations thereof, as if it were a market serving a single city, a market which brings together into one place all manner

⁵²⁸ Wark (1994) 10.

⁵²⁹ Harley's 'rule of ethnocentricity': Harley (1992) 236.

⁵³⁰ Esherick (2006) 232.

⁵³¹ H.-L. Chan (1998) 1.270-1, 300-4.

of men, displaying them to one another and, as far as possible, making them a kindred people.

Dio. Chrys. 32.36 (tr. J.W. Cahoon & H.L. Crosby (1940))

This vision of the world has its origins in the imperial geography of the early Ptolemies. In Timosthenes' *On Harbours*, Alexandria-by-Egypt is the undisputed centre of the map. *On Harbours* elevates Egypt and Alexandria to centre stage, sitting apart from the continents, as a 'fourth' land, in the centre, as it were, of Libya, Asia, and Europe.⁵³² This was not entirely new; according to Herodotos, Greeks usually divided the *oikoumenē* into three continents—Libya, Asia, and Europe—however, opinion was divided regarding the demarcation of boundaries. Was the partition of Asia and Libya at the Sinai Peninsula, or the Nile? According to Herodotos, certain Ionians saw the Nile as the border, creating a fourth landmass, the Egyptian Delta, between continents.⁵³³ Timosthenes seems to have followed this model, which gains new ideological significance for the Ptolemaic empire. Rather than confining the Ptolemies to Egypt as some sort of home base, Timosthenes' division liberates Alexandria, elevating it to a more central position in the middle of his thalassocratic map.⁵³⁴ As we have seen, Timosthenes' Alexandria is the point of departure at the beginning of the *periplous*, with a measurement across the country that is, in this model, the Egyptian Delta.⁵³⁵ At the treatise's end, it seems we return to the same harbour.⁵³⁶ All roads, we are compelled to agree, lead to Alexandria-by-Egypt.

This centripetal geography is expressed performatively in the grand pompe of Ptolemy II Philadelphos (279/8 or 275/4), a spectacle that Carney rightly describes as 'an ekphrasis of Ptolemaic monarchy'.⁵³⁷ It is recorded by the contemporary (or near-contemporary) account of court historian Kallixenos of Rhodes.⁵³⁸ The superlative gravity of Ptolemy's imperial pull permeates the pompe. A fantastical imperial claim to the eastern edge of the *oikoumenē* is made with the martial 'Return of Dionysus from the Indies' figure presented astride an elephant, suggesting Ptolemaic conquest of India, followed by similarly improbable conquests of Arabia, with camels, and a range of spices on display.⁵³⁹ In much the same way, suppliants arrive from the southern extremes of the *oikoumenē*, Aithiopian gift-bearers bringing, in addition to coin and gold-dust, some 2000 tusks of ivory, exotic caged parrots, panthers, giraffes, and a rhinoceros.⁵⁴⁰ The powerful pull on the Aegean and the Greek heartland is

⁵³² '...quidam in quattuor adiecto Aegypto, ut TimostFGrHist V 2051 F1 (=Scholia on Lucan 9.411); Pompon.: 1.8-10, 20.

⁵³³ Hdt. 2.16; a view followed by Polybios: Polyb. 3.36.6.

⁵³⁴ Egypt as domestic territory: Bevan (1927) 58-59; Tarn (1913) 215-6; Bagnall (1976).

⁵³⁵ Timosth. *FGrHist* V 2051 Fr. 16. (=Ptol. *Geog.* 1.15.5).

⁵³⁶ Marquaille (2008).

⁵³⁷ Carney (2013) 86. Dating: Foertmeyer (1988) 92-95.

⁵³⁸ Autoptic: Rice (1983) 30. *Contra* the Penteterides archives: Ath. 197d; Burstein (2008) 140.

⁵³⁹ 'ἡ περιεῖχε τὴν ἐξ Ἰνδῶν κάθοδον Διονύσου': *BNJ* 627 F2 (=Ath. 5.26.200c-d) (tr. P. Keyser (2014)); Arabia: 5.200f-201a; Rice (1983); J. Pàmias (2004).

⁵⁴⁰ Ath. 5.26.201a-c.

likewise on display. The personification of Korinth ‘was standing by Ptolemy crowned with a golden diadem’.⁵⁴¹ Here we have a performative representation of the Ptolemaic imperial claims to mainland Greece, neatly overlooking the geopolitical realities of Philadelphos’ own reign, in which Korinth was once more under Antigonid rule.⁵⁴² Next are women dressed as various *poleis* from Asia and the islands ostensibly liberated from tyranny.⁵⁴³ This centripetal section of the pompe concluded with divine representations of Alexander and Ptolemy, affirming claims to universal empire.⁵⁴⁴ The world’s cities, like its people and resources, coalesce at the Alexandrian court around Ptolemy. We are compelled to accept the geographical fiction that all the world’s prizes move inevitably towards a Ptolemaic centre.

Ptolemaic court poetry is infused with a similar sense of centripetal geography. In Poseidippos’ *On Stones*, water moves valuable resources to the centre where human *technē* transforms them into wonders for the court. In *AB* 11, a Persian shell emerges ‘from the shores of the sea’, evoking Aphrodisian themes.⁵⁴⁵ In *AB* 12 we have more mother-of-pearl which begins by emerging out of the sea before Alexandrian craftsmanship, elevated to an art, captures its wonder, ‘mounted skilfully with [gilded] stone’, bringing and transferring *charis* onto the Alexandrian audience.⁵⁴⁶

Rivers too, act as conveyors, a particularly potent form of centripetal geography for the royal city at the end of the Nile.⁵⁴⁷ Poseidippos presents anthropomorphic rivers, a ‘storm-swollen r[iver] swiftly [sweeps]’ the gem of *AB* 7 from an Arabian mountain to a craftsman hand before fulfilling its purpose on Nikonoë’s neck.⁵⁴⁸ Kuttner notes the ‘imperialist overtones’ of *On Stones*, distant and often historicised jewels acting as symbolic gifts for the court.⁵⁴⁹ Their movement towards the regime’s epicentre is as natural and inevitable as the flow of water.

The sea itself is presented as powerful yet tamed by Alexandria to assure a happy homecoming. In *AB* 19-20, Poseidippos leaves us in awe at a giant boulder which is tossed by Poseidon to the coast, yet Ptolemy’s shore remains ‘unshaken’.⁵⁵⁰ In *AB* 115, the harbour of Alexandria is presented as welcoming, evoking themes of *nostos*, as ‘a breakwater, level with the ground, welcomes her ships’.⁵⁵¹ The welcoming is further ameliorated by human ingenuity, the Pharos lighthouse ‘cutting through the breadth and depth of heaven beacons

⁵⁴¹ ‘Κόρινθος δ’ ἡ πόλις παρεστῶσα τῷ Πτολεμαίῳ ἐστεφάνωτο διαδήματι χρυσῶι’, *BNJ* 627 F2 (=Ath. 5.26.201d).

⁵⁴² Krateros’ Antigonid loyalty: Plut. *Mor.* 486’Aa; cf. his son’s later anti-Antigonid stance: Just. *Epit. Prol.* 26.

⁵⁴³ Ath. 5.201e; Hazzard (2000) 69-70.

⁵⁴⁴ Alex. and Ptol.: Ath. 5.33.201d; cities ‘liberated’: 5.33.201d-e; Hazzard (2000) 59-79; Rice (1983) 104-110.

⁵⁴⁵ *AB* 11.2,5-6; Kuttner (2005) 143.

⁵⁴⁶ *AB* 12.1-2; Kuttner (2005) 145-150.

⁵⁴⁷ Nile bringing life: Mendes (*Cairo* 22181.2); Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.5. Pharaonic tradition: T. Oestigaard (2020) 260; M. Clagett (1989) 1.265-266.

⁵⁴⁸ *AB* 7; Kuttner (2005) 145, 151.

⁵⁴⁹ Kuttner (2005) 162.

⁵⁵⁰ *AB* 19-20.1-6 cf. ln.19-20.

⁵⁵¹ *AB* 115.3-4. cf. *Od.* 4. 454-9; Nisetich (2005) 60, 115 n.2; Gutzwiller (2019) 355-6.

to the farthest distances'.⁵⁵² The audience is placed as a 'sailor borne on the waves' at night from a distance, where the lighthouse acts as a target supplied by Zeus Soter and Proteos.⁵⁵³ Nature, human *mechanē*, and divine guidance all conspire to make Alexandria the centripetal target towards which all waterborne vectors coalesce.

This centripetal conception of the world was a powerful feature in the geopolitical organisation of the Ptolemaic empire. The Nikourian decree assimilates the Nesiotic League into a Ptolemaic framework, gathering at Samos, rather than Delos, to send religious delegates to the epicentre, Alexandria, for the first *Ptolemaia*.⁵⁵⁴ Lone divine honours by *poleis* for Ptolemy and his representatives had been a feature of the Aegean for a number of years, however, in the Nikourian decree we see a reorganisation of honours along Ptolemaic naval vectors at the behest of two prominent Ptolemaic *Philo*i.⁵⁵⁵ The first of these, King Philokles of Sidon, is sometimes described as a Ptolemaic 'viceroy' of the Aegean, commanding the military and geopolitical organisation of the Aegean and Anatolian coast for the Ptolemies.⁵⁵⁶ The second is the *nesiarchos*, Bacchon, who collected funds for the Ptolemaic regime and appointed judges 'in accordance with the instructions of king Ptolemaios'.⁵⁵⁷ The Nikourian decree is clear concerning the role of the *Philo*i in drawing the synod together at Samos. 'Concerning the matters about which the king of the Sidonians [Philokles] and Bacchon [the *nesiarchos* wrote] to the cities': we are told the League's members are to send delegates to Samos.⁵⁵⁸ This suggests a different structure to the euergetic relationship between king and the *poleis*. Rather than ostensibly spontaneous honours organised by particular *poleis*, this new policy saw the regime explicitly direct these honours from above.⁵⁵⁹

This summons brought together the islands along new geopolitical vectors. Instead of the islands gravitating towards sacred Delos, the religious centre of the Kyklades, the members of the League instead 'should send delegates to Samos to discuss the (question of the) sacrifice, the sacred envoys (*theoroi*) and the contest which King Ptolemy (II) is instituting in honour of his father in Alexandria.'⁵⁶⁰ The meeting point of Samos, the naval base of the Ptolemies, was not merely a 'convenient' gathering place, as sometimes argued.⁵⁶¹ Delos, as an already

⁵⁵² AB 115.5-6.

⁵⁵³ AB 115.7-10.

⁵⁵⁴ Date disputed: 279/8, 275/4, or 271/70: Carney (2013) 86, n.31.

⁵⁵⁵ Early honours: e.g. Zenon 286/5 at Ios (IG 12.5.1004 (=OGIS 773); Merker (1970) 143.

⁵⁵⁶ Viceroy: SIG 337 col. 2.11, 19; SIG col.2.11, 19; 'plenipotentiary viceroy of the north': Hauben (2013) 42-5. Philokles' military role: Polyaeus *Strat.* 3.16.

⁵⁵⁷ '— — καὶ ἐν τῷ παρε- / ... — — Βά]κχωνα ἐπιμ... / τῷ ταῦτα ποιο[ῦν]- / ... [τι? — — — — — Βά]κχων? τοῖς συνέδροι[ς] / [— — — — — δεδόχθαι?] τοῖς συνέδροις: [vacat] / — Πτολεμαῖον' IG 11.4. 1039.6-10; OGIS 43.

⁵⁵⁸ 'ὑπὲρ ὧν / [Φιλοκλῆ]ς ὁ βασιλεὺς Σιδονίων καὶ Βάκχων ὁ νη- / [σίαρχος ἔγρα]ψαν πρὸς τ[ὰ]ς πόλεις', IG 12.7.506.1-3.

⁵⁵⁹ S. Price (1984) 36-7; Gyga (2016) 2, 13-14.

⁵⁶⁰ 'ὅπως ἂν ἀπο- / [στ]ε[ί]λῃσιν συνέδρους εἰς Σάμον, οἵτινες / [χρημ]ατιοῦσιν ὑπὲρ τῆς θυσίας καὶ τῶν θεω- / [ρῶ]ν καὶ τοῦ ἀγῶνος, ὃν τίθησιν ὁ βασιλεὺς Πτο- / [λεμ]αῖος τῷ πατρὶ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ', IG 12.7.506.4-8 (=Austin no.256). *LSJ* s.v θεωρός A I, 2.

⁵⁶¹ Merker (1970) 157.

established centre, was hardly less convenient. Rather, Samos allowed the *synnodoi* to witness the awesome power of the fleet—the quadquiremes, quinquiremes, and perhaps larger hypergalleys—which would have been on full display for the arriving delegates.⁵⁶² The delegates come together under the Ptolemaic shadow.

It is from this nexus point that our gaze is then turned southwards along the Samos-Alexandria vector. The *synnodoi* discuss sacrifices, the sending of *theoroi*, and the contest ‘which King Ptolemy is instituting in honour of his father in Alexandria’.⁵⁶³ Then, they enthusiastically agree with Ptolemy’s wishes.⁵⁶⁴ The *theoroi* moving along the vector to the royal centre, Alexandria, act as supplicants before an imperial deity. Any sense that the map is divided into discrete local identities is replaced by the power of this vectoral web under the gravitational pull of a Ptolemaic summons.⁵⁶⁵ The assimilating vectoral geography feels as irresistible as the divine will of Ptolemy itself.

B. From the ends of the Earth: the Erythraean Sea-Nile canal vector

We have considered how the regime used vectors to express movement of people and resources to the Alexandrian centre. Much of the focus so far has been on the Mediterranean. We will now look southwards, to Ptolemy II’s and III’s attempts to construct an entirely waterborne vector from the edge of the torrid zone to Alexandria via the Arabian Gulf and Nile, a conduit for elephants, ivory, and other precious cargo. The first of these legs was from Ptolemaï’s Thēron (on the coast of modern Sudan or Eritrea) to a new port of Arsinoë (modern Suez).⁵⁶⁶ From there, an ostensibly new and ingeniously constructed canal would move goods seamlessly to the Nile Delta. This section will show how the project was promoted in imperial geographic propaganda, despite its significant functional limitations. We will also consider a more effective but less publicised alternate hybrid vector, via the southerly port of Berenikē and a desert road network to Apollonopolis Magna (Edfu) and Koptos (Qift) on the Nile. Despite the success of this latter vector, it was less audibly publicised, fitting awkwardly within the rapid, waterborne vectoral map.

Our main sources for this vector are the Pithom Stele and the Alexandrian archives via the second century geographer, Agatharchides. Possibly having fled the persecutions of scholars in Alexandria under Ptolemy VIII, he produced *On the Erythraean Sea*.⁵⁶⁷ Only Books One and Five of Agatharchides’ geography survive in fragments from Photios, Strabo, and Diodoros.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶² Ath. 5.203d-e. Supervised synod: *IG* 12.7 506.8-9.

⁵⁶³ ‘ὄν τίθησιν ὁ βασιλεὺς Πτο[λεμ]αῖος τῶι πατρὶ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείαι’, *IG* 12.7.506.4-6. *LSJ* s.v. σύνοδος A1,2.

⁵⁶⁴ ...μετὰ πάσης] προθυμία[ς ψηφίσα]σθα[ι]...’ *IG* 12.7.506.32.

⁵⁶⁵ Authoritarian vectors: Wark (1994) 34-8; metropole-colonial vectors: Virilio (1977) 125.

⁵⁶⁶ Strabo 17.25-6.

⁵⁶⁷ Purge of Museum: *BNJ* 270 F9 (=Ath. 4.83.184b-c); Agatharchides F112 (*Bibliotheca* 250.460b (ed. Burstein (1989))); Russo (2001) 29-30; Burstein (1989) 15-17.

⁵⁶⁸ Burstein (1989) 23-6.

Agatharchides' geography may reveal concerns which echo early Ptolemaic imperial ideology, with Ptolemy II and III, in particular, featuring as domesticators of the southern periphery. The Pithom Stele, uncovered in Naville's excavations of Pithom in the 1880s, presents similar themes to those recorded in Agatharchides' archive, but in Egyptian terms, the king moving resources from the profane periphery to the sacred centre.⁵⁶⁹ In both these sources the waterborne vector is presented as an unprecedented means of drawing precious commodities effortlessly to the centre.

The periphery of the *oikoumenē* had traditionally been a place of exquisite wonders and formidable hazards in the Greek geographic imagination. Herodotos explains 'the most distant parts of the world... should have those things which we deem best and rarest', being inevitably the most exclusive.⁵⁷⁰ This is exemplified by Arabia, which contains not only monstrous winged serpents, but also frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon, and gum-mastich.⁵⁷¹ Early Hellenistic scholars like Theophrastos identified the southern coast of Arabia as the location where these precious aromatics are harvested.⁵⁷² Yet Arabia was understood as large and inaccessible by land. Attempts to circumnavigate it by Nearchos, Oneskritos, and Hieron failed.⁵⁷³ However, the eastern coast of the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea) was apparently soon measured by Anaxikrates successfully.⁵⁷⁴ The Ptolemies, masters of the maritime vector, were well-placed to attempt what Alexander could not. The control of the Arabian Gulf would provide a rapid sea route to facilitate this movement of resources from this resource-rich and inaccessible land.

The Aithiopias were equally peripheral for Greek geographers and imperialists, lands near the torrid zone replete with exotic wonders.⁵⁷⁵ They were viewed through a lens of potential exploitation, as sources of cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, gold, wood, ivory and, critically, elephants.⁵⁷⁶ In the first decade of Philadelphos' rule, the king may have followed his father's policy of military campaigning in Kush, although Theokritos' claim that Ptolemy 'took his share' (ἀποτέμνεται) of Aithiopia is unclear in geographical terms.⁵⁷⁷ Significantly, it is in this same decade that faster, waterborne vectors were established, ports at Arsinoë, Philotera in Troglodyte country, and, much more successfully, Ptolemaïs Thēron on the Sudanese coast. This rapid vector appears to bend around terrestrial and fluvial impediments with the rapidity of sea travel, fast-tracking resources from the periphery to the centre.

Ptolemaic colonisation of the south is cloaked in terms of wonder and intellectual curiosity befitting a sympotic king, and the nodes of the new waterborne vector aptly support such a

⁵⁶⁹ Naville (1885).

⁵⁷⁰ 'αἱ δὲ ὤν ἐσχατιαὶ οἴκασιν... τὰ κάλλιστα δοκέοντα ἡμῖν εἶναι καὶ σπανιώτατα ἔχειν αὐταί'. Hdt. 3.116.

⁵⁷¹ Hdt. 3.107, 109-10.

⁵⁷² Theophr. *Caus. pl.* 9.4.4.

⁵⁷³ Arr. *Anab.* 7.20; Tarn (1929) 9, 13; Burstein (2012) 1.

⁵⁷⁴ Strabo 16.4.4; Arr. *Ind.* 43; Tarn (1929) 13-14.

⁵⁷⁵ Wonders: Hdt. 3.17-23; Plin. *HN* 6.34.174.

⁵⁷⁶ Strabo 2.5.35; Van Beek (1960) 73-5.

⁵⁷⁷ Theoc. *Id.* 17.86-87; Burstein (2008) 137-9.

characterisation. Agatharchides suggests that Philadelphos' hunting trips were fuelled by his disposition, being 'passionately fond' (φιλοτιμηθεῖς) of the hunt.⁵⁷⁸ According to Agatharchides, Ptolemy III likewise extends southerly nautical reach to the strait of Deirē (Bab-el-Mandeb), fuelled by an urge to hunt.⁵⁷⁹ These expeditions return with wonders (παρὰδόξους), but also knowledge (γνώσιν ἐλθεῖν), supported with evidence which is brought to Alexandria for display.⁵⁸⁰ Strabo explains Philadelphos' procurement of beasts from the periphery in similar terms, 'since he was of an inquiring disposition, and on account of the infirmity of his body was always searching for novel pastimes and enjoyments'.⁵⁸¹ Fittingly, it was the role of favoured court *Philo*i to lead these expeditions, acting as the extension of the king.⁵⁸² Satyros, under Philadelphos, and Simias, under Euergetes, were trusted *Philo*i sent to make 'a thorough investigation of the nations lying along the coast'.⁵⁸³ Philo, in addition to his up-Nile journey to Meroë where he observed, with a *gnomon*, the sun at solstice, also explored the African coast and the Erythraean Sea. He reached the island of 'Topazos', home of the precious topaz, which was to be given as a token to the Queen Mother and used in a temple for Arsinoë.⁵⁸⁴ The colonisation of distant lands is framed in sympotic terms, as a gift to the throne. The vector is being paved by trusted *Philo*i, linking it intimately to the court in Alexandria.

C. The illusion of speed: the Erythraean Sea-Nile canal vector

The Arabian Gulf formed a potential plane on which southerly imperial vectors could stretch to the southern and eastern edges of the *oikoumenē*. It is described as the 'Egyptian sector' by the early Hellenistic sources used by Arrian.⁵⁸⁵ Civic nomenclature marked Ptolemaic claims along the Arabian Gulf. Three Arsinoës were established to project the goddess' protective and territorialising gaze across the Arabian Gulf; one at Suez (considered below), another in the Troglodytic country and, according to Strabo, a third founded a generation later by Ptolemy III near the straits of Deirē.⁵⁸⁶ Berenikē, Philotera, and Ptolemaïs Thēron complete the dynastic religious claims to the sea.⁵⁸⁷ Further religious territorialisation can be seen in Agatharchides' reference to the establishment of an altar by Ariston for Poseidon Pelagios on

⁵⁷⁸ 'περί τε τὴν τῶν ἐλεφάντων κυνηγίαν φιλοτιμηθεῖς', Diod. Sic. 3.36.3.

⁵⁷⁹ Agatharchides F41b (Diod. Sic. 3.18.4). Hunting, Bab-el-Mandeb: Artemidoros (Strabo 16.4.14); Adoulis Inscription: *OGIS* 54.10-13.

⁵⁸⁰ Agatharchides F80b (=Diod. Sic. 3.36.2-3); tamed: F80a (Photius, *Cod.* 250.78, 456a).

⁵⁸¹ '...φιλοστορῶν καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τοῦ σώματος διαγωγὰς αἰεὶ τινας καὶ τέρψεις ζητῶν καινοτέρας', Strabo 17.1.5; Burstein (2008) 147.

⁵⁸² Dio Chrys. *Or.* 107-8.

⁵⁸³ 'ἐξήτασε τὰ κατὰ τὴν παραλίαν ἔθνη', Agatharchides F40b (=Diod. Sic. 3.18.4); F82c (=Strabo 16.4.5); Roller (2015) 112-113.

⁵⁸⁴ Philo at Meroë: Strabo 2.1.20; Topazos: Juba *BNJ* 275 F75 (=Plin. *HN* 37.37.107-108); for Arsinoë: Plin. *HN* 37.108-109.

⁵⁸⁵ Arr. *Ind.* 43.7; early source: Tarn (1929) 10.

⁵⁸⁶ Strabo 16.4.14; Fraser (1972) 2.304-5 n360.

⁵⁸⁷ Arsinoë-of-the-Troglodytes, Berenikē, and Philotera: Strabo 16.4.5; Fraser (1972) 1.178, 2.303n.356.

the tip of the Sinai. This location, land jutting into the great southern expanse of the Ocean, would appear to echo Alexander at the Indus Delta. It perhaps performs a similarly grand territorialising gesture for the Ptolemies over the Erythraean Sea.⁵⁸⁸ Such claims smoothly overlook the ongoing piracy, wayward currents, reefs, and other shipping hazards associated with the region in the third century.⁵⁸⁹ Instead, the Arabian Gulf is integrated into the imperial map with confidence in all the media of the Ptolemies. This paved the way for an ostensibly fast-moving and uninhibited maritime vector.

The Ptolemaic claim to the southerly edge of the *oikoumenē* was established with the fortified port of Ptolemaïs (epi-)Thēron. It became a resource-hub for the transport ships headed north, providing aromatics, spices, wood, ivory, and live animals, especially forest elephants for the regime.⁵⁹⁰ The power of Ptolemaïs Thēron to claim this southern space is voiced in the Pithom Stele. Royal colonial claims on land are explicit: 'He built a great city to the king with the illustrious name of the king, the lord of Egypt, Ptolemy'.⁵⁹¹ The territory is domesticated through this unprecedented colonisation: 'he made there fields and cultivated them with ploughs and cattle; no such thing took place there from the beginning'.⁵⁹² Greek accounts place more emphasis on military engineering, the colonists 'enclosed a kind of peninsula with a ditch and wall', communicating permanent claims for a Greek audience.⁵⁹³ This was accompanied by diplomacy expressed in terms of *philia*, with indigenous opponents transformed into friends, the territory no longer a contested space.⁵⁹⁴ Yet Ptolemy's 'hunting lodge', which supplied exotic resources, remained on the edge of the world.⁵⁹⁵ According to Agatharchides, the arctic constellations are no longer visible and there are no twilight hours.⁵⁹⁶ This is territorialised space, but on the fantastic edge of the habitable zone. Yet even out here we are within Ptolemy's universal imperium.

For ordinary Egyptians, this port was certainly seen as the end of a far-reaching vector. An elegant elegiac couplet graffito from the late third century gives thanks to Pan Euagros Epēkoōs who saved the author's wayward ship in its course through the Erythraean Sea before it finally reached the sanctuary of Ptolemaïs' harbour.⁵⁹⁷ This was an arduous journey which evidently needed divine guidance. Similarly, the tone in a letter from one Marnes to his colleague stationed at Ptolemaïs Thēron is less triumphant than the official propaganda. Marnes' colleagues have apparently faced the sinking of an elephant ship (ἐλεφαντηγός), one

⁵⁸⁸ Agatharchides F87A (=Diod. Sic. 3.42.1). Roller (2015) 112; cf. Alexander: n.1250.

⁵⁸⁹ PHI 219412 (*Paneion d'el-Kanaïs* 8); A. Bernand (1972); *P. Petr.* II 40(a), III 53(g); Diod. Sic. 3.43.5.

⁵⁹⁰ Burstein (2008) 136-46; (2012) 9. Tentative archaeology, possibly Adobona: Sidebotham (2011) 187; Kotarba-Morley (2017) no.32 at 744.

⁵⁹¹ *Pithom.23* (*Cairo* 22183.23) (tr. Naville (1885)).

⁵⁹² *Cairo* 22183.11-12.

⁵⁹³ 'λάθρα περιβαλομένου χερρονήσω τινὶ τάφρον καὶ περίβολον', Agatharchides Unplaced F4 (Burstein (1989)) (=Strabo 16.4.7)); Mueller (2006) 164-174.

⁵⁹⁴ Agatharchides Unplaced F4 (=Strabo 16.4.7).

⁵⁹⁵ Hunting lodge: Strabo 16.4.7; Plin. *HN* 6.34.171; Aithiopian resources traded: 6.34.173.

⁵⁹⁶ Agatharchides F107a (Photius *Cod.* 250.105, 459b-460a); Plin. *HN* 6.34.171.

⁵⁹⁷ *THI* 85.8 (=Paneion d'el-Kanaïs 8.4-9).

of the only references we have of one of these vessels. There is also reference to scarcity of grain suggesting that, contrary to the assertions of the Pithom Stele, the port was not comfortably self-sustainable. Marnes tells them, ‘Do not be fainthearted, but keep up your spirits. You have only a little time left, for your relief is being made ready, and the hunters who will come with the *stratēgos* are (already) selected.’⁵⁹⁸ Like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, one’s mind as well as one’s health is under threat from the posting on the periphery, and only return to the centre will bring rejuvenation.⁵⁹⁹ These glimpses of ordinary perspectives contrast sharply with the accessible station seen in the official accounts.

Another key feature of this ambitious vector is the Nile-Arsinoë canal, or ‘Ptolemaic’ canal after Philadelphos, which linked the Suez Gulf to the Pelousian branch of the Nile. Only in Ptolemaic sources is it presented as a triumphant Ptolemaic achievement, facilitating a seamless waterborne movement from sea to delta. Other sources challenge this. The Chalouf Stele (c.515-c.495 BCE) presents the Nile Canal as an emphatic expression of power established under Achaemenid rule.⁶⁰⁰ King Dareios proclaims:

I ordered to dig this canal from the river that is called Nile and flows in Egypt, to the sea that begins in Persia. Therefore, when this canal had been dug as I had ordered, ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia, as I had intended.

Louvre AO 2251 (=DZc 2-6) (tr. J. Lendering (2005))

The power of the great king’s canal is unimpeachable, uniting Persia to Egypt, the shipping lanes of the world transformed through imperial will. Dareios had four stelae erected, probably along the course of the canal, loudly proclaiming this triumph over the landscape.⁶⁰¹ This account is supported by Herodotos, suggesting the canal was commenced by Necho II in the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, who stopped due to prophecy, before the canal was, indeed, completed by Dareios.⁶⁰² Herodotos describes the canal as ‘dug wide enough for two triremes to move in it rowed abreast’.⁶⁰³ The unifying language of the Chalouf Stele contrasts with the martial themes in the Herodotean account, in which the canal is a symbol of Achaemenid military might in Egypt. These sources, predating Ptolemaic imperial concerns, are explicit in attributing this transformative canal to the Achaemenids.

The importance of canal construction as ‘a statement of raw power and imperial intent’ was not a foreign notion for a Greek audience.⁶⁰⁴ In the Greek tradition, canal-building is an

⁵⁹⁸ ‘...[ἡμ[ῖν ...]σιν | οἱ. [...].ικ.. [] | Μὴ οὖν ὀλιγοψυχῆσητε, | ἀλλ’ ἀνδρίζεσθε, ὀλίγος | γὰρ χρόνος ὑμῖν ἐστίν, ἐτοιμά|ζεται γὰρ ἡ διαδοχη | καὶ οἱ κ|υνηγοὶ ἐπιλεγμένοι | εἰ[σὶ οἱ] μέλ[λο]ντες παραγενέσ|θαι [με]τὰ τοῦ στατηγοῦ’. ‘Letter to Egyptian elephant hunters on the Red Sea coast. 224 BC’ (Eidem, et al. 1998), no. 120 at 572-4 (= *P. Petr.* II 40(a), III 53(g)).

⁵⁹⁹ J. Conrad (1899) 138-9.

⁶⁰⁰ G. Posener (1936) 48-87.

⁶⁰¹ Redmount (1995) 127-128.

⁶⁰² Hdt 2.158.

⁶⁰³ ‘εὔρος δὲ ὠρύχθη ὥστε τριήρας δύο πλέειν ὁμοῦ ἐλαστρευμένας’. Hdt. 2.158.

⁶⁰⁴ J.P. Cooper (2009) 206.

expression of *mechanē*, mastering the landscape.⁶⁰⁵ While famously viewed as *hybris* by Herodotos, it is celebrated by Aristobulos, who presents the divine Alexander as transforming barren Assyrian lands through redirecting the Euphrates.⁶⁰⁶ In Aristobolos, it is both a military and engineering marvel, closely linked to Alexander's subsequent exploration of the sea.⁶⁰⁷ Geo-formation is, it seems, a high-stakes game, *hybris* for all but a divine king. The divine Ptolemy, like Alexander, would distinguish himself through his power to transform the landscape and unite waterborne vectors.

Our Ptolemaic representations do not merely omit Achaemenid achievements. Rather, they undermine them. For Agatharchides, Ptolemy II's apparent construction of the Nile canal is remembered in sharp contradistinction to the failed attempts of former imperialists. Diodoros emphasises that Necho II failed in the attempt and Dareios 'left it [the canal] unfinished', warned off by false counsel that he would flood Egypt.⁶⁰⁸ Strabo likewise suggests Dareios had 'been persuaded by a false notion [and] abandoned the work when it was already near completion; for he was persuaded that the Erythraean Sea was higher than Egypt'.⁶⁰⁹ The importance of good counsel and geographical understanding appears to be key, things Dareios evidently lacked. It is immediately juxtaposed with Ptolemy II, who has the wise counsel of the Mouseion-Library's scientists behind him and 'built an ingenious kind of lock' at just the right place.⁶¹⁰ In both our sources, the *mechanē* and *technē* of the regime are explicitly emphasised, providing power to control the vector, 'so when they wished they could sail out without hindrance into the outer sea and sail in again'.⁶¹¹ The account provides qualified *epainos* for Ptolemy II and, equally, a warning for later kings to listen to wise counsel, something evidently lost on Ptolemy VIII Physkon who was content to purge the Library of scholars such as Agatharchides. In Agatharchides' account, Philadelphos' *mechanē*, the product of wise counsel, allows absolute power over the vector, which he could control at his divine will.⁶¹²

The Pithom stele also presents the canal construction as the creation of a new vector, transforming the landscape, linking it with the Erythraean Sea.⁶¹³ The first reference, although geographically unclear, describes the eastern canal as an expression of power.⁶¹⁴ The canal returns gods from foreign lands to Egypt. Ptolemy 'made them navigate through their sands,

⁶⁰⁵ *LSJ* s.v. μηχανή 4.

⁶⁰⁶ Hdt. 7.22, 178, 188-192. Alexander's canal: Aristobolos: *BNJ* 139 F56 (=Strabo 16.1.12); Arr. *Anab.* 7.21.

⁶⁰⁷ Bosworth (1988) 57-60.

⁶⁰⁸ '...εἶασεν αὐτὴν ἀσυντέλεστον', (*BNJ* 86 F 19 (= Diod. Sic 1.33.9-10)).

⁶⁰⁹ '...καὶ οὗτος δὲ δόξη ψευθεῖ πεισθεὶς ἀφῆκε τὸ ἔργον περὶ συντέλειαν ἤδη· ἐπέισθη γὰρ μετεωροτέραν εἶναι τὴν Ἐρυθρὰν θάλατταν τῆς Αἰγύπτου', Strabo 17.1.25 (tr. H.L. Jones (1932) with adaptation).

⁶¹⁰ '...κατὰ τὸν ἐπικαιρότατον τόπον ἐμηχανήσατό τι φιλότεχνον διάφραγμα', *BNJ* 86 F 19 (= Diod. Sic 1.33.11).

⁶¹¹ 'ὥστε, ὅτε βούλοιντο, ἐκπλεῖν ἀκωλύτως εἰς τὴν ἔξω θάλατταν καὶ εἰσπλεῖν πάλιν'. Strabo 17.1.25; cf. *BNJ* 86 F19 (=Diod. Sic. 1.33.11-12).

⁶¹² Although cf. Plin. *HN* 6.166.

⁶¹³ Quack (2008) 279; Cf. other canal use: Mendes Stele (*Cairo* 22181.8).

⁶¹⁴ Naville (1885) 18.

on the great canal on the East of Egypt.⁶¹⁵ Our second reference to a canal is from the sixteenth regnal year (270/69). It outlines the geography more clearly. 'Its beginning is the river arm north of Heliopolis, its end is in the Lake of the Scorpion, it runs towards the great wall on its eastern side'.⁶¹⁶ Having linked the Pelousian branch of the Delta to the Bitter lakes, we then find ourselves in the next extant lines founding a royal city, 'he founded there a large city to his sister and gave it the great name of the daughter of King Ptolemy. A temple was built in honour of Queen Arsinoë Philadelphus.'⁶¹⁷ The most straightforward reading of this is Cooper's, that the city referred to is Arsinoë, completing the geography of the Nile canal.⁶¹⁸ Ptolemy has linked the sea, surveyed by Arsinoë, to the empire's centre. Next, in line 24, we are presented with an active, centripetal vector, following the return of elephants from Ptolemaïs Thēron. They are brought 'on his transports on the sea', followed by a journey 'also on the Eastern Canal; no such thing had ever been done by any of the kings of the whole earth.'⁶¹⁹ In less than a single line we have elephants brought from the periphery through a seamless sequence of vectors and nodes: sea—canal—king. The king has transformed the landscape in unprecedented terms, a new vector from edge to centre.

Yet this canal was far from the seamless conduit presented in the Ptolemaic geography. The tentative archaeology suggests intermittent use in the Hellenistic period.⁶²⁰ Cooper argues that when the Nile canal was actually functional, it was effectively seasonal, the flow of the Nile closed January through to September, leaving a very narrow window for use.⁶²¹ This works effectively for the seasonal grain harvest, but is hardly the dynamic centripetal vector for exotic resources presented in the Pithom Stele and Agatharchides' geography. Sidebotham goes further, arguing that the events of the Pithom Stele may, in fact, have been a 'onetime public relations stunt'.⁶²² The powerful media of the stele transforms a seasonal, or even ephemeral event, into a permanent fixture on the imperial map, giving us a misplaced confidence in the smooth waterborne movement from periphery to centre.

The lynchpin of this sea vector is the new city of Arsinoë where the canal meets the Gulf of Suez. Agatharchides explains that Arsinoë is at the 'mouth' of the Nile canal, and 'in the recess of the Arabian Gulf towards Aegypt', forming a conduit between the two.⁶²³ Erythraean Sea shipping is caught, netlike (ἐν τῷ μυχῶ), by Arsinoë at the apex of the gulf. This is the hub at which all southern maritime vectors converge before being channelled into the controlled

⁶¹⁵ *Cairo* 22183.11-12 (tr. Naville (1885)); Quack (2008) 279.

⁶¹⁶ *Cairo* 22183.16.

⁶¹⁷ *Cairo* 22183.23-24.

⁶¹⁸ Cooper (2009) 197; J. Quaegebeur (1988) 47. Contra: Quack (2008) 282.

⁶¹⁹ *Cairo* 22183.24.

⁶²⁰ Intermittent use: Sidebotham (2011) 51; Cf. Roman/Arab canal: Ptol. *Geog.* 132; *P.Oxy* 4070 ll. 5-9. Redmount (1995) 129-133; (1989) 188-195.

⁶²¹ Cooper (2009) 204-6.

⁶²² Sidebotham (2011) 51.

⁶²³ Gulf: 'ἐν τῷ μυχῶ τοῦ Ἀραβίου κόλπου τῷ πρὸς Αἴγυπτον' Strabo 17.1.26; mouth of canal: '...ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ἐκβολῆς πόλιν ἔχει τὴν προσαγορευομένην Ἀρσινόην'. *BNJ* 86 F19 (Diod Sic. 1.33.12).

space of the 'Ptolemaic' lock-canal system.⁶²⁴ As we have seen occur elsewhere, Arsinoë sanctifies the water and facilitates movement.⁶²⁵ Ptolemy receives the gifts of the world, moved from the profane periphery to the sacred centre along Arsinoë's divine vector.⁶²⁶

Yet the success of this apparently smooth and rapid vector proved to be a geographical fiction, more effective on the imperial map than the real world. The northerly location of Arsinoë, for all its appeal as a node close to the Ptolemaic centre, seems to have been poorly situated in practical terms. This may explain why it seems to be underutilised in the early Ptolemaic period.⁶²⁷ Pédech, Sidebotham, and Burstein observe the difficulties of the Gulf of Suez and the far northern Arabian Gulf (north of 18°/20° north latitude). The frequent strong northerly winds make a north-south trip easy enough, but a south-north trip, vital for transporting resources from periphery to centre as proclaimed in the imperial geography, was anything but easy.⁶²⁸ An administrator's letter from the *Petrie Papyri* (224 BCE) reveals outward movement of supplies to Ptolemaïs Thēron, however, major resources seem not to flow inward on the same vector. Instead, the elephant ships are associated with the port of Berenikē, further south:

Ἐπαρέσται δ[ὲ ὑμῖν] καὶ ἐξ Ἡρωῶν πόλε[ως πορ]εῖα | συντόμως ἄγοντα ..
πυρῶν | καὶ ἡ ἑλεφαντηγὸς | ἡ ἐν Βερε|νίκη τέλος ἔχει καὶ αὐτὴ (lacuna of
several lines)...

*There will also shortly come to you from Heroonpolis [frei]ghters carrying [...] of wheat,
and the elephant ship in Berenice is ready too [...]*

P. Petr. II 40(a), III 53(g) (tr. Eide et al. (1996) 120)

Tellingly, the shipments are no longer being sent from Arsinoë, but the older city of Heroöpolis. The divine port of Arsinoë no longer rates a mention a generation on, suggesting this is not the grand vector envisioned by its creators. Excavation at Arsinoë in 1930-32 found little Ptolemaic evidence, and the harbour itself is yet to be located.⁶²⁹ As Marquaille observes, the lacklustre port may well have been abandoned.⁶³⁰ The potential for Arsinoë as an expression of dromocratic power was not, it seems, to be realised.

Furthermore, the far north of the Arabian Gulf was home to other dangers for shipping. Sinai is home to spectacular coral reefs which would have been especially dangerous for the elephant-bearing vessels. Agatharchides speaks of the general hazard of reefs to elephant ships which 'bring upon their crews great and terrible dangers'.⁶³¹ He warns that they can

⁶²⁴ *BNJ* 86 F19 (= Diod. Sic. 1.33.12).

⁶²⁵ Ch. 2.2.II.

⁶²⁶ Mueller (2006) 173.

⁶²⁷ M.A. Woźniak et al. (2021) 259.

⁶²⁸ Sidebotham (2011) 8, 178-9; Burstein (2008) 143; P. Pédech (1976) 85.

⁶²⁹ B. Bruyere (1966) 6-8, 49-52; Sidebotham (2011) 178 n22; Woźniak et al. (2021) 259.

⁶³⁰ Marquaille (2001) 185-9.

⁶³¹ '...μεγάλους καὶ δεινοὺς ἐπιφέρουσι κινδύνους τοῖς ἐν αὐταῖς πλέουσι'. F85b (=Diod. Sic. 3.40.4).

'strike against rocks and be wrecked or sometimes run aground on slightly submerged spits.'⁶³² Such hazards must have been even of greater concern among the infamous reefs of the Suez Gulf. The administrator's letter in the *Petrie Papyri* likewise mentions the perils of elephant-ships.⁶³³ Strabo specifically emphasises the difficulty of navigating the far northern regions of the Erythraean sea.⁶³⁴ For an already arduous journey, the leg north to Arsinoë was especially fraught. This was not ideal for the would-be port of all the southern *oikoumenē's* resources.

Although the movement through this vector may have been problematic, its purpose appears to have been performative as much as functional. As Virilio showed in his study of later European empires, the appearance of rapidity was a fundamental aspect of asserting maritime power.⁶³⁵ The Ptolemies promoted a fast-moving waterborne vector, combining speed with *mechanē* to move goods effectively to the centre. On the map, at least, such movement was elegant and efficient. However, in reality, alternative, less glamorous vectors were sought to get elephants and other cargo from periphery to imperial centre.

D. Slow and steady: the Berenikē road-Nile vector

An elegant, exclusively waterborne vector via Arsinoë may have made for a potent dromocratic expression on the imperial map. But it was not the only, nor the most successful, means of moving resources, especially the prized elephants, from the southern edge of the *oikoumenē* to the centre. A slower but more practical hybrid vector was established: captured elephants were shipped a shorter distance from Ptolemaïs Thēron to the hyper-arid port of Berenikē (Troglodytika) where they were housed. Then, they were transported along the Eastern Desert road network, a greatly expanded hodological route developed from mining roads already in place since Ptolemy I, to Apollonopolis Magna or Koptos in Upper Egypt.⁶³⁶ They were subsequently placed on barges and transported down the Nile for the long journey via Thebes and Memphis to the imperial centre.

With Arsinoë's limited success, the arid and unlikely shipping node of Berenikē Troglodytika came to the fore as a primary naval hub in what would be a slower, more circuitous, but ultimately more reliable hybrid vector of sea, road, and river. Established by Philadelphos, possibly as early as 275 BCE, the port was located some 825 kilometres to the south of

⁶³² '... διάρσει γὰρ ιστίων θέουσαι καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν πνευμάτων βίαν πολλάκις νυκτὸς ὠθούμεναι, ὅτε μὲν πέτραις προσπεσοῦσαι ναυαγοῦσι, ποτὲ δ' εἰς τεναγώδεις ἰσθμοὺς ἐμπίπτουσιν', Agatharchides F85b (=Diod. Sic. 3.40.4).

⁶³³ 'γράψατέ μοι, τί[ς] παρ' ὑ]μῖν | τιμὴ ἐγένετο τοῦ σίτου, | ἀφ' οὗ ἡ ἐλεφαντηγὸς κατεποντίσθη...', *P. Petr.* II 40(a), III 53(g) (= Eide et al. (1996) 120 at 572-3).

⁶³⁴ Strabo 17.1.45.

⁶³⁵ Virilio (1977) 70.

⁶³⁶ Wadi Hammamat route from Koptos, see: Sidebotham (2011) 24-27. Mining roads: Agatharchides F23a-29b; Faucher & Redon (2016a) 10-24; (2016b) 20-22; (2015) 17-19.

Arsinoë.⁶³⁷ It was considered a distant part of the world, reflected in its other-worldly astronomy—it was on the tropic and, like Syene (260 kilometres to its west), had no shadow at the summer solstice.⁶³⁸ The port was situated south of cape Ras Benas on a reef-limestone peninsular which formed a large south-facing lagoon prone to silting.⁶³⁹ Initially harbourless (ἀλίμενον) according to Strabo, the topography and hostile climate made for an unlikely port.⁶⁴⁰ Berenikē received a meagre (<25mm) annual rainfall, and so was dependent on supplies by the hodological network which would connect it to the Nile.⁶⁴¹

Despite its unattractively southern location, Berenikē, not Arsinoë, became a hub for resources from the south of the *oikoumenē*, and is currently the only Ptolemaic *emporion* in the Red Sea for which we have archaeological evidence.⁶⁴² Magnetic surveys (1999, 2000, 2010-11), accompanied by substantial excavations (especially 1999-2001 and 2014-2019) have uncovered a complex of workshops and stores enclosed by substantial fortifications on the landward side, securing the colony in what was essentially Troglodytic space.⁶⁴³ Woźniak and Harrell have recently demonstrated occupation throughout the third century, before climate change conspired with political instability resulting in the port being temporarily abandoned.⁶⁴⁴ The finds confirm that early Ptolemaic Berenikē had all the hallmarks of a successful colonial port. Papyrological evidence refers to elephant-transport ships travelling from Berenikē to Ptolemaïs Thēron.⁶⁴⁵ Furthermore, excavations at Berenikē have uncovered an animal pen, replete with holding trenches and elephant molars *in situ*.⁶⁴⁶ This was evidently a substantial gateway for Ptolemy's elephants. The significant infrastructure corroborates Strabo's clear-eyed assessment, the geographer noting that Berenikē was founded 'because the Erythraean Sea was hard to navigate, particularly for those who set sail from its innermost recess'.⁶⁴⁷ It was here, not Arsinoë, that elephants were unloaded, before a long journey on road to the Nile.

Although slower than the glamorous sea vector, the Berenikē-Nile road network was a sophisticated development of previous infrastructure, successfully accommodating the movement of elephants—animals notoriously vulnerable to arduous marches—across the

⁶³⁷ 'circa 275 BC', S.E. Sidebotham & R.E. Zitterkopf (1995) 40; 275-260 BCE: Woźniak & Harrell (2021).

⁶³⁸ Eratosth. F40-43; Woźniak, Sidebotham et al. (2021) 251-2.

⁶³⁹ For 1st construction phase, 270s -250: Woźniak, Sidebotham et al. (2021) 255, 275-260; topography: now-silted harbour substantially larger pre-2nd C CE: Kotarba-Morley (2017) 61-92, esp. 66 fig. 2.

⁶⁴⁰ Strabo 17.1.45; Later ref. harbour: Plin. *HN* 6.26.103.

⁶⁴¹ Woźniak, Sidebotham et al. (2021) fig.5 at 253; ceramics overwhelmingly (> 70%) Nile-silt amphoras from central Egypt and Fayoum: fig.4 at 260-2.

⁶⁴² Woźniak, Sidebotham et al. (2021) 247.

⁶⁴³ Workshops/Stores: Woźniak & Rądkowska (2018) 1-3; fortifications: 1-7; Woźniak & Harrell (2021) fig.4. at 355; 'massive walls', Woźniak, Sidebotham et al. (2021) 254.

⁶⁴⁴ Woźniak & Harrell (2021) 349-366.

⁶⁴⁵ *P. Petr.* II 40(a), III 53(g).

⁶⁴⁶ Woźniak, Sidebotham et al. (2021) 255; Sidebotham & Wendrich (2001) 41.

⁶⁴⁷ 'τοῦτο δὲ πράξει διὰ τὸ τὴν Ἐρυθρὰν δύσπλουον εἶναι, καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ μυχοῦ πλοῖζομένοις', Strabo 17.1.45.

hostile terrain between Berenikē and the Nile.⁶⁴⁸ The network, developed from Ptolemy I's mining roads, were further extended with water-stations (ὕδρεῖα), linking and supplying Berenikē with Apollonopolis Magna and Koptos through a hyper-arid terrain.⁶⁴⁹ The hodological network was indeed extensive: a substantial survey by the University of Delaware in the 1990s established a clear network of stations from the early- to mid-third century.⁶⁵⁰ The stations, some fortified, usually lay on low-lying water sources more often than atop hills and seem to have been positioned, on average, a day's walk apart.⁶⁵¹ The Ptolemies managed to make a hostile terrain traversable; however, the nature of desert for Egyptian and Greek audience alike, was a self-evidently harsh and undomesticated space. In contrast to the waterborne vectors, these desert roads were in the dromological slow lane.⁶⁵² A logistical triumph it may be, but it did not make for elegant imperial geography.

Unlike the *Pithom* and *Chalouf stelai*, which so confidently marked the Ptolemaic canal, the roads of this hodological network are not so clearly defined. The unpaved roads were usually marked by cairns, readily swallowed by the desert when they fell into disuse.⁶⁵³ Instead of stelai, we have a Ptolemaic milestone. It is a notably humble affair at Bir 'Iayyan, an unfortified *hydreuma* on the Berenikē-Apollonopolis Magna road.⁶⁵⁴ The milestone, dated to 257 BCE, measures the distance to the Nile, presenting certainty for travellers in an otherwise formidable terrain.⁶⁵⁵ Sidebotham and Zitterkopf observe that the inscription, is rough, 'bearing little resemblance to professionally-cut stones of the period'.⁶⁵⁶ Indeed, the brief inscription provides equal space to promote one Lysmachios, a local 'toparch', as it does for King Ptolemy himself.⁶⁵⁷ It is hardly a powerful imperial geographic marker. With little in the way of grand celebrations in the epigraphical record, this is a relatively humble claim for such a pivotal conduit.

Even without booming imperial media, graffiti confirms the use of these roads by elephant transport teams from Berenikē to Apollonopolis Magna and Koptos. A striking graffito, which Bernard dated to ca. 270-264, is from Dorion, a carpenter of Eumedes' elephant corps:⁶⁵⁸

Ἐλωρίων τέκτων / τῶν μετ' Εὐμήδου ἀνα- / ζεύξας ἐπὶ τὴν θήραν/ τῶν
ἐλεφάντων / καὶ ἐσωώθην / εἰς Αἴγυ- / -πτον.'

⁶⁴⁸ Tarn (1940) 87-89.

⁶⁴⁹ Water stations: Strabo 17.1.45; Plin. *HN* 6.26.102-3; Ostraca & inscriptions (Berenikē-Apollonopolis route): Cuvigney (2017) 111-28; Graffiti (Berenikē-Koptos route): Sidebotham & Zitterkopf (1995) 42.

⁶⁵⁰ Sidebotham & Zitterkopf (1995) 39-51. Ptolemaic cisterns at Bir 'Iayyan: Bagnall et al. (1996) 319.

⁶⁵¹ Fortified/unfortified stations: Sidebotham & Zitterkopf (1995) 42-3; distances: 42-44.

⁶⁵² Virilio (1977) 14-16, 69-70, 78-9.

⁶⁵³ Sidebotham & Zitterkopf (1995) 42, 45; cf. Mediterranean roads: Sidebotham (2011) 28, 138-140, 263-4; A. Bülow-Jacobsen (1998) 63.

⁶⁵⁴ *SEG* 46.2120.2-3; Bagnall et al. (1996) 319-22.

⁶⁵⁵ Date: *SEG* 46.2120.4-7; distance: 1-3: 'Ἀπὸ ποταμοῦ ἕως τού- / του στάδιοι τετρα - / κόσιοι ἐξήκοντα εἶς', (= 97.7 km).

⁶⁵⁶ Bagnall et al. (1996) 320-3; cf. Paneion inscription: pl.1 at 321.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. Ptolemy (In.4-6), & Lysmachios (In. 8-11); cf. measurement In 1-3.

⁶⁵⁸ Woźniak et al. (2021) 252.

Bernard proposes that this is the same Eumedes which founded Ptolemais Thēron.⁶⁵⁹ Dorion's thanks-offering for safe return demonstrates pride, with the profile petroglyph of an elephant asserting his identity as part of this mission as loudly as he can. The hodological route may not be a rapid vector on the imperial map, but for Dorion, his return is rightfully considered the *nostos* of a hero's journey.

The next leg of the elephants' journey runs from far-upper Egypt to the Delta on barges down the Nile. We get a glimpse into the logistics of this long journey in *Hibeh Papyrus 110*, where one Demetrios is described as 'officer in charge of supplies for the elephants, in the Thebaid ('...Δημητριῶ[ι] / τῶι πρὸς τῆι χορηγία[ι] τῶν ἐλεφάντων[ν] / εἰς τὴν Θηβαίδα).⁶⁶⁰ Burstein suggests this is an oblique reference to the shipment of elephants from the south to Thebes, and then on to Memphis, where they were trained, to be brought further north when needed. This evidently required substantial administration and a dedicated team of specialists, but the labour produced results in a way the Erythraean Sea-Nile Canal could not. Indeed, Burstein observes that Ptolemy II's ninety-six elephants in his famous pompe would probably have made such a journey.⁶⁶¹ This slower system evidently worked.

The contemporary evidence we have for this vector, especially the hodological and fluvial aspects, is mostly from ordinary voices: Ptolemaic administrators and the graffiti of the elephant-hunters themselves. So why the muted references in the imperial geography? This makes little sense in terms of economy: the Erythraean Sea–Berenikē–Road–Nile route was evidently lucrative.⁶⁶² A solution can be understood in considering these vectors in terms of their respective value to the vectoral map. As we have seen, on the imperial map, the waterborne vector presented dromocratic power through speed and directness. The complex hybrid nature of this alternate vector fails in that respect, lacking the simplicity and speed of the Erythraean Sea–Nile Canal vector. The success of the hybrid vector actually highlights the limits of the waterborne vector, and in turn highlights the limits of Ptolemaic geographic power. Even the Ptolemies, it seems, needed to bend to the realities of the landscape. It is these limits that Eratosthenes would highlight, his geography disrupting these maritime vectors in an act of geographical *parrhēsia*, something which will be considered in the following chapter.

⁶⁵⁹ Strabo 16.4.7.

⁶⁶⁰ *P. Hibeh 110*, 78-80 (eds. B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt (1906)).

⁶⁶¹ Burstein (2008) 143-5.

⁶⁶² For later Ptolemaic-Roman periods: Sidebotham et al. (1991) 573.

2.3 Roots

The ‘Janus faced’ Ptolemies were adept at associating the regime with parallel Greek and Egyptian religious traditions.⁶⁶³ Geography had an important role to play in this existential project. Pausanias showed how places could gain new meaning through ‘mystic viewing’, geographical markers providing secure roots to a more profound myth-historical past.⁶⁶⁴ In this section, we will consider how geographic location, and relocation, were utilised to securely graft the Macedonian regime onto Egyptian and Greek traditions. Siwa served as a vital function in the religious landscape; Alexander’s god, Amun-Zeus, passing his universal imperial mantle onto the Ptolemies. The impossible fertility of the place acted as proof of this god’s presence and the authority of his oracle, something exploited by the Ptolemies. We will then consider the cultivation of Greek roots by the regime with the audacious transplant of Homer to Alexandria. The Poet gains new status as a god in his unlikely new home—the Ptolemaic imperial centre. The grafting proves a triumph: relocation and deification of Homer bears fruit for the Ptolemies as would-be heirs and defenders of Greek traditions. Establishing the ideological significance of Siwa and Homer for the Ptolemies will leave us well placed to consider Eratosthenes’ scientific challenges to this divine geography in the following chapter.

I. The oracle of Siwa

The oracle of Siwa had a significance in Greek and Egyptian traditions long before the Ptolemies. But the epic journey of Alexander to meet his divine father made the oasis a unique place to lend legitimacy to the young dynasty. Court historian Kleitarchos, and Ptolemy I himself, were no strangers to promoting Ptolemaic divine kingship, but their most potent propaganda relates to the Siwa oasis as a place touched by Amun-Zeus, the god who legitimises universal empire.⁶⁶⁵

For a Greek audience, Siwa had long been established as a significant and isolated place of oracular revelation. Linked to Dodona through a shared Theban origin story, it was nonetheless unique as the farthest of oracles, flourishing in inland Libya, a distant land of hostile elements and monsters.⁶⁶⁶ Its geographic inaccessibility makes for the ultimate hero’s journey, with Herakles and Perseus consulting the oracle of Amun-Zeus for guidance on their monster-slaying missions.⁶⁶⁷ The hostile landscape surrounding the isolated oasis acts as a divine shield to protect the god from the impious. In Herodotos, the hubristic madness of Kambyses manifests in his impious campaign to destroy the oracle with a 50,000 strong army.

⁶⁶³ M. Goyette (2010) 2.

⁶⁶⁴ J. Elsner (1995) 88-124.

⁶⁶⁵ Ptolemy in Arrian: as reliable (trad. view): e.g. Bevan (1927); Tarn (1948); Pearson (1960); *contra*, as ‘propaganda’: Bosworth (1976) 117-18; Welles (1963); R. Errington (1969) Barbartini (2014); Heckel (2016). Kleitarchos as Ptolemaic propagandist: see esp. Alex. & Ptol. as kin: Diod. Sic. 17.103; Curt. 9.8.22-7; Barbartini (2014) 233; Heckel (1994) 4-7. Dating Kleitarchos is contentious: one fragment for Ptol. IV’s reign (*BNJ* 137 T2 (P.Oxy. 4808)), all others, Ptol. I’s reign.

⁶⁶⁶ Hdt. 2.52-58. Medea’s Curse to Jason: Pind. *Pyth.* 4.13-16.

⁶⁶⁷ Arr. *Anab.* 3.1-2.

The army ‘disappeared from sight’ in a sandstorm and perished.⁶⁶⁸ This notion of the Libyan desert as a protective shield for the god’s oracle had remarkable saliency. Lucan’s Cato, unlike Kambyses, realised that if he continues to approach the oracle at Siwa he would ‘pay the penalty to that unknown Power which loathes the traffic of nations’.⁶⁶⁹ The hostile landscape is not a natural phenomenon but a divinely constructed barrier, and any attempt to breach it is presented as an attempt to challenge the sanctity of Amun-Zeus’ space.

Yet these same barriers are cleft apart for the divine king. Ptolemy inserts talking snakes as guides to help Alexander overcome the hostile geography.⁶⁷⁰ As Alexander and his army march from the coast to Siwa, they are presented with the traditional barriers to reaching the oracle. The wind is at war with hodology: the south wind ‘makes a great heap of sand on the route and obscures its marks, and one cannot get one’s bearings in a sort of ocean of sand’.⁶⁷¹ Disoriented, direct intercession by the god allows Alexander to overcome a landscape where hodological vectors are impossible to establish. Kleitarchos, following Aristoboulos, presents a flight of crows acting as guides.⁶⁷² Yet, significantly, Ptolemy diverges from the consensus, replacing crows with fabulous talking snakes:

Ἰπτολεμαῖος μὲν δὴ ὁ Λάγου λέγει δράκοντας δύο ἰέναι πρὸ τοῦ στρατεύματος φωνὴν ἰέντας, καὶ τούτοις Ἀλέξανδρον κελεῦσαι ἔπεσθαι τοὺς ἡγεμόνας πιστεύσαντας τῷ θείῳ, τοὺς δὲ ἡγήσασθαι τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν τε εἰς τὸ μαντεῖον καὶ ὀπίσω αὐθις’

Ptolemy son of Lagos says that two serpents preceded the army giving voice, and Alexander told his leaders to follow them and trust the divinity; and the serpents led the way to the oracle and back again.

BNJ 138 F8 (=Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.5) (tr. Brunt (1976))

In most Greek traditions, Libya’s snakes were additional barriers of the landscape, born of Medusa’s blood as Perseus flew overhead.⁶⁷³ Yet Ptolemy inverts their role; these same creatures, which keep mortals at bay, guide Alexander through to meet his divine father.

These snakes may work as a device to bind Alexander to the pharaonic tradition and the Egyptian gods adapted by the Ptolemies. Thompson notes that the snake was ‘the Egyptian royal reptile’ and argues that their miraculous role as guides highlight the relationship

⁶⁶⁸ ‘τρόπω τοιούτῳ ἀφανισθῆναι’, Hdt. 3.27; Plut. *Alex.* 27.

⁶⁶⁹ ‘quisquis superum commercia nostra perosus hinc torrente plaga’, Luc. *Phars.* 9.854-862.

⁶⁷⁰ Hyperaridity: Abdel-Shafy et al. (1992) 299.

⁶⁷¹ ‘...τῆς ψάμμου ἐπιφορεῖ κατὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ ἐπὶ μέγα, καὶ ἀφανίζεται τῆς ὁδοῦ τὰ σημεῖα οὐδὲ ἔστιν εἰδέναι ἵνα χρῆ πορεύεσθαι καθάπερ ἐν πελάγει τῇ ψάμμῳ’, Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.4; landscape, threatening: Gregory (2001) 102-3.

⁶⁷² ‘κόρακας δύο προπετομένους πρὸ τῆς στρατιᾶς, τούτους γενέσθαι Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τοὺς ἡγεμόνας’, Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.6; cf. Plut. *Alex.* 27.

⁶⁷³ Perseus’ significance for Ptolemies: Barbantani (2014) 218-9. Gorgon: Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.1502-31, esp. 1513-17; ‘loca serpentum nos venimus’, Luc. *Phars.* 9.854-862.

between Amun and the legitimate pharaoh as father and son.⁶⁷⁴ Alexander is assuming a pharaonic role seen elsewhere, such as at the Bahariya oasis, where Alexander in pharaonic form is explicitly the son of Amun.⁶⁷⁵ In Ptolemy's account, the snake-guide acts as a unique pharaonic vector, creating a path across the chaotic desert landscape that resists demarcation by mortals. Tarn goes further, suggesting that the two snakes may represent Thermouthis and Psois, Egyptian serpent-deities readily adapted by the Ptolemies for their worship of Isis and Serapis.⁶⁷⁶ The choice of talking snakes is no idle fabrication, but, as Thompson argues, a careful construction by 'a king with a sense of the past, who, writing history himself, was well aware of the importance of self-presentation'.⁶⁷⁷ For an Egyptian audience, Ptolemy depicts a land which is hostile to the foreigner yet can be navigated by the rightful pharaoh Alexander, assuming the role as high priest and son to the Hidden One.

The striking fertility of the oasis of Siwa provides ample material for theories of divine causation. Siwa remains today a remarkably lush depression, 'the gift of its springs', sitting deep within the Great Sand Sea.⁶⁷⁸ In contrast to other saline springs nearby, the oasis produces a mildly alkaline potable water.⁶⁷⁹ For Ptolemy and Kleitarchos, this fertile wonder is understood in divine terms. Curtius, closely following Kleitarchos, introduces the oasis as 'the abode consecrated to the god'.⁶⁸⁰ The climate is 'incredible to relate', preparing us for a sense of wonder.⁶⁸¹ It is 'situated amid desert wastes,' yet brimming with shady trees and 'many founts of sweet water, flowing in all directions' in a wondrously cool climate.⁶⁸² Diodoros, also following Kleitarchos, similarly contrasts the surrounding 'waterless waste, destitute of anything good for man' with the shady trees with many fine springs in a miraculously cool climate.⁶⁸³ The water at the Spring of the Sun is a particularly wonderful highlight (παραδόξως), becoming cooler in day and warmer at night, to suit the visitor.⁶⁸⁴ Arrian's account, usually following Ptolemy for geographical descriptions, remarks upon the geographical improbability of such fertile conditions.⁶⁸⁵ Leading from the passage of the talking snakes/crows, which Arrian 'can confidently assert' were divine in nature, we are introduced to Siwa as a tiny garden in the desert which alone catches the dew.⁶⁸⁶ He notes that

⁶⁷⁴ Thompson (2018) 15; Barbantani (2014) 209-245.

⁶⁷⁵ Alexander as Pharaoh before Amun (Bahariya Oasis): F. Bosch-Puche (2008) 37-43, esp. 39.

⁶⁷⁶ Tarn (1948) 43n.2., 120n.2. Isis-Thermouthis: *BM* 1987,0402.29; *MMA* 1976.52.

⁶⁷⁷ Thompson (2018) 15, 18.

⁶⁷⁸ Fakhry (1944) 2-5; (1950) 4. See: Appendix 4 of dissert.

⁶⁷⁹ G.P. Nabhan (2007) 31-43.

⁶⁸⁰ 'Tandem ad sedem consecratam deo ventum est'. Curt. 4.7.16 (tr. J.C. Rolfe (1946)); cf. 'τὴν δὲ ἱερὰν τοῦ θεοῦ χώραν', Diod. Sic. 17.50.

⁶⁸¹ 'Incredibile dictu...'. Curt. 4.7.16.

⁶⁸² 'inter vastas solitudines sita...multique fontes dulcibus aquis passim manantibus alunt silvas', Curt. 4.7.16-17.

⁶⁸³ 'Ἡ δὲ περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦτο χώρα περιέχεται ὑπὸ ἐρήμου καὶ ἀνύδρου τῆς ἀμμώδους, πάσης φιλανθρωπίας ἐστερημένης', Diod. Sic. 17.50.1.

⁶⁸⁴ Diod. Sic. 17.50.4.

⁶⁸⁵ Brunt (1976) 467.

⁶⁸⁶ 'καὶ ὅτι μὲν θεῖόν τι ξυνεπέλαβεν αὐτῷ ἔχω ἰσχυρίσασθαι', Arr. *Anab.* 3.4.1; garden: 3.4.2.

‘Alexander surveyed the site with wonder, and made his enquiry of the god’.⁶⁸⁷ The relationship between the god and the landscape is unimpeachable for the reader. For both Kleitarchos and Ptolemy, it is Amun-Zeus’ presence which turns a desolate waste into a paradise. The Ptolemaic court has further elevated Alexander’s journey, and Siwa, by transforming the oasis into a realm which cannot be explained by natural geography. The god alone can account for the wonder.

Crucially for Ptolemy’s own divinity was a sense of continuity, Amun-Zeus affirming the Macedonian general as a divine successor to Alexander, the universal king. Given Ptolemy’s supposed blood-connection to Alexander, it was only fitting that the religious authority to deify Ptolemy following the siege of Rhodes (305-4) would be none other than Amun-Zeus of Siwa.⁶⁸⁸ The Rhodian delegates seeking to honour Ptolemy head not to Delphi, nor nearby Didyma, but instead they make the arduous journey to Siwa:

‘τὸν δὲ Πτολεμαῖον ἐν ἀνταποδόσει μείζονος χάριτος ὑπερβάλλεσθαι βουλόμενοι θεωροὺς ἀπέστειλαν εἰς Λιβύην τοὺς ἐπερωτήσοντας τὸ παρ’ Ἄμμωνι μαντεῖον εἰ συμβουλεύει Ῥοδίοις Πτολεμαῖον ὡς θεὸν τιμῆσαι. συγκατατιθεμένου δὲ τοῦ χρηστηρίου τέμενος ἀνήκαν ἐν τῇ πόλει τετραγώνον, οἰκοδομήσαντες παρ’ ἑκάστην πλευρὰν στοὰν σταδιαίαν, ὃ προσηγόρευσαν Πτολεμαῖον.’

In the case of Ptolemy, since they wanted to surpass his record by repaying his kindness with a greater one, they sent a sacred mission into Libya to ask the oracle at Ammon if it advised the Rhodians to honour Ptolemy as a god. Since the oracle approved, they dedicated in the city a square precinct, building on each of its sides a portico a stade long, and this they called the Ptolemaeum.

Diod. Sic. 20.100.3-4 (tr. R.M. Geer (1954))

Diodoros’ passage, probably following Hieronymos or Zeno of Rhodes, seeks to explain the divine honours as reciprocal, both the will of the Rhodians and the god.⁶⁸⁹ The *theoroi* return from their journey to the god’s country with news that a shrine and cult to the new god Ptolemy were to be established.⁶⁹⁰ According to Pausanias, the sacred title of *Soter* was also given by the Rhodians at this time.⁶⁹¹ The journey to the land of the god provides legitimacy for this cult, assuring that, like his ostensible blood-kinsman Alexander before him, Ptolemy’s divine kingship was legitimised by the authority of Amun-Zeus. This is not only divinity but also a careful association with Alexander, strongly suggesting that Ptolemy is Alexander’s legitimate successor. The land of Siwa was the religious place which provided Ptolemy his divinity and rightful heir to Alexander’s universal kingship. In the next chapter we will see

⁶⁸⁷ ‘ἐνταῦθα Ἀλέξανδρος τὸν τε χώρον ἐθαύμασε καὶ τῷ θεῷ ἐχρήσατο’, Arr. *Anab.* 3.4.5.

⁶⁸⁸ Ptolemy & Alex as kin, see: Kleitarchos: Diod. Sic. 17. 103 ; Curt. 9.8.22-7.

⁶⁸⁹ Price (1984) 62-6, 77.

⁶⁹⁰ Gorgon *BNJ* 515 F19 (=Ath. 15.52.696f); Berthold (1984) 78.

⁶⁹¹ Paus. 1.8.6; Ellis (1994) 46; *contra*: Worthington (2016) 168.

how Eratosthenes' demystification of Siwa would pose a challenge to this vital foundation of Ptolemaic imperial ideology.

II. Homer and Ptolemy IV

Ptolemy IV's cultivation of the cult of Homer in Alexandria and Lower Egypt forms a powerful root for a regime intent on asserting its claim to be the cultural centre of the world. The Poet's relocation to the Ptolemaic centre took several forms. In some places, Homer appears to be grafted on to former traditions; most notably at the Memphis Serapeion, where the *dromos* of Homer and other Greek poets places an early Ptolemaic stamp on the approach to the Apis necropolis.⁶⁹² But in Alexandria itself something more fundamental appears to have taken place as part of the Ptolemy's religious innovations.⁶⁹³ Homer is transformed from venerable poet to god, complete with a temple in the city, the establishment of which was remembered as one of the key cultural achievements of the king's reign.⁶⁹⁴ According to Aelian, the temple's cult statue situated Homer as the centre of geography, Ptolemy 'set up a fine statue of the poet, and around it in a circle all the cities which claim Homer as theirs'.⁶⁹⁵ The other cities are now oriented like satellites around Homer's true cultural home, Alexandria.⁶⁹⁶ The disputed origins of the Poet are resolved through deification. As Antipater of Sidon's epigram to Homer would put it, 'heaven is your country,' Homer being not of mortal stock, but born of Kalliope.⁶⁹⁷ Homer is now greater than a mortal and his *patris* is the *oikoumenē* entire, centred, naturally enough, on Alexandria.

We see an elaborate expression of this new divine status in Archelaos of Priene's third or second century stele, the *Apotheosis of Homer*.⁶⁹⁸ The stele has the Zeus-like Poet seated, with the Iliad and Odyssey as 'offspring' kneeling beside him.⁶⁹⁹ Figures identified as Myth, History, Poetry, Tragedy, Comedy, and the Four Virtues make sacrificial offerings at an altar before him, with a child, Science, reaching up enigmatically back to the Virtues.⁷⁰⁰ All this takes place below an upper register in which Zeus, Apollo, and the nine Muses are depicted. In the left of the lower register, *Oikoumenē* and *Chronos* are in the act of crowning Homer, giving the poet claims over space and time.⁷⁰¹ Watzinger saw Ptolemy IV and Arsinoë III in

⁶⁹² See Appendix 1.

⁶⁹³ Homer's cult under Ptol. IV: Fraser (1972) 1.311, 611, 2.862; D.J. Thompson (1988) 197-200.

⁶⁹⁴ *Supp. Hell.* 11.979.2-5.

⁶⁹⁵ 'αὐτὸν μὲν καλῶς ἐκάθισε, κύκλῳ δὲ τὰς πόλεις περιέστησε τοῦ ἀγάλματος, ὅσαι ἀντιποιοῦνται τοῦ Ὁμήρου', Ael. *VH* 13.22.

⁶⁹⁶ *Vita Romana* 1-3; *Vita Scorialensis* I.2 (West, 2003); M. Heath (1998) 23-56.

⁶⁹⁷ 'πάτρα σοι τελέθει μέγας οὐρανός, ἐκ δὲ τεκούσης / οὐ θνατᾶς, ματρός δ' ἔπλεο Καλλιόπας', Antipater of Sidon 296.7-8 (W.R. Paton (1918)).

⁶⁹⁸ See Appendix 2.

⁶⁹⁹ J.J. Pollitt (1986).

⁷⁰⁰ Appendix 2 Fig. 5.

⁷⁰¹ Hunter (2018) 2, 235 n.4.; Shapiro (2020) 547-549; L. Kim (2020) 427.

these figures.⁷⁰² If Watzinger was right, then the gesture is a powerfully imperial one, assuming the regime's right to bequeath such powers onto the Poet. Furthermore, the offering of sacrifice by the Muses may associate Homer's cult with the Mouseion for an Alexandrian audience. This city, then, is where the deified Homer, with cosmos-wide control, finds his rightful home. Through the Ptolemaic Homer cult, the regime's role as the true custodians of Greek knowledge is affirmed, while its universal imperial claims are simultaneously asserted.

The *Oikoumenē* crowning the deified Homer speaks volumes about the Poet's perceived geographic omniscience. This would prove a remarkably salient notion in the centuries to follow.⁷⁰³ For Polybios, a close reading of Homer reveals an unerringly accurate geography and navigation.⁷⁰⁴ For Strabo, Homer is 'the founder of the science of geography'.⁷⁰⁵ Strabo is especially robust in his defence of Homer's geography against the critic Eratosthenes. He notes that—*sauf* Eratosthenes—'all consider his [Homer's] poems to be philosophical works' which can be trusted for their geographic accuracy.⁷⁰⁶ The infallible Homer, as fountainhead of the geographic discipline, was in a position to pass on his knowledge and power to the Mouseion and the Ptolemaic regime. In the following chapter we will consider how Eratosthenes, challenging what was now ideological and religious orthodoxy, made bold attacks against Homer as a geographer, something which effectively challenged the regime by proxy.

Conclusion

We have seen that Ptolemaic imperial geography does not reflect limited imperial ambitions. From the outset, the regime attempted to claim the world through fast moving naval vectors and prolific colonisation. Imperial geography not only reflected, but prescribed, a would-be universal empire in the tradition of Alexander. Waterborne vectors were fundamental to this new map, suggesting a speed and omnipresence which far exceeded the geopolitical reality. Similarly, the sea, canals, and rivers could be commandeered to communicate the gravitational pull of the Ptolemaic court, drawing peoples, individuals, and resources inevitably towards the divine king at the centre of his *oikoumenē*. Religious geography played a powerful role in legitimising these universal imperial claims, Arsinoë's nodes effectively territorialising maritime space. Geography also allowed the young dynasty to plant improbably deep roots. The king's divinity and claims to a universal imperium were legitimised at Siwa, the god's divine presence in the landscape continuing proof of the divine blessing for a regime which would inherit Alexander's imperial ambitions. We have seen that

⁷⁰² C. Watzinger (1903); Politt (1986).

⁷⁰³ Hunter (2018) 201-202.

⁷⁰⁴ Polyb. 9.16.1-3; 34.2.4-4.8.

⁷⁰⁵ 'ἀρχηγέτην εἶναι τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπειρίας Ὅμηρον', Strabo 1.1.2; Clarke (1999) 263-4, 293; (2017b) 16-18; L. Kim (2010) 47-84; (2020) 417-434.

⁷⁰⁶ 'τὴν γὰρ ἐκείνου ποιῆσιν φιλοσόφημα πάντας νομίζειν', Strabo 1.2.17.

the regime was not above transplanting traditions: Homer became a god who was inextricably bound to the regime via his cult in Alexandria. Through Homer's relocation, the Ptolemies became the custodians of the Greek world. All places, and all traditions, across time and space, seemed to inevitably gravitate to the Ptolemaic court at the centre of the world.

It would be a bold *Philos* to challenge these aspects of imperial geography, given their centrality to Ptolemaic ideology. Yet the disparity between geographic propaganda and geopolitical reality created the ideal tensions for just such a performance of geographical *parrhēsia*. In the next chapter we will see how the polymath and elite *Philos*, Eratosthenes of Kyrene, would produce geography which challenged the imperial reach, centrality, and religious roots of the Ptolemies' imperial geography.

Chapter 3: Geography as *parrhēsia* in the Ptolemaic empire: the case of Eratosthenes

The Ptolemaic court of the third century was home to paradoxical tensions. The ideology of universal kingship sat uneasily alongside the court's sympotic traditions in which elite *Philoi* were expected to not only praise, but also challenge their royal patrons.⁷⁰⁷ The previous chapter demonstrated how this ideology found expression in the regime's geographic propaganda, asserting hyperbolic reach and an *oikoumenē*-wide centripetal pull towards the Alexandrian centre. Promoters of this normative geography were equipped with the resources of the Mouseion-Library complex, the product of unprecedented royal patronage.⁷⁰⁸ Yet this powerful institution may also have provided ammunition for geographical *parrhēsia*, seen in the geographical treatises of the Librarian, royal tutor, and polymath, Eratosthenes of Kyrene (b. 276/3 – d. ca. 190s).⁷⁰⁹ In contrast to the imperial gaze cultivated in the geographies of Timosthenes, Theokritos, and imperial *stelai*, we will see that Eratosthenes' treatises effectively disrupt, rather than affirm, the Ptolemaic imperial perspective. The geographer appropriates spatial and descriptive geographical tools to emphasise the regime's limitations in terms of reach, centrality, cultural superiority, and control.

This chapter will begin by examining how Eratosthenes' geographical treatises have been understood in traditional and propagandistic readings, including a consideration of the unresolved problems within such approaches (3.1). I will then provide an alternate approach. This will begin with the identification of ideologically unorthodox concerns in Eratosthenes' poems, letters, and other literary works which appear to express *parrhēsia* (3.2). These will act as thematic markers for an investigation of *parrhēsia* in Eratosthenes' landmark *Geographika*. The disruptive effects of the geographer's descriptive digressions will be examined (3.3). I will show how Eratosthenes' digressions allow the reader to wander away from the assimilating imperial focalisation with alternate cultures elevated, religious *kolakeia* challenged, and natural forces emphasised, diminishing any sense of imperial control. Turning to spatial geography (3.4), I will identify Eratosthenes' use of counter-cartographic tools and demonstrate how they effectively disrupt Ptolemaic hegemony, not only undermining claims to *oikoumenē*-wide control, but also challenging Ptolemaic imperial claims even closer to home.

3.1 'Beta': a polymath's life and sources

Historians have traditionally searched for Eratosthenes' authorial concerns in his early life, attempting to reconcile the summative account of the *Souda* with a few hints in Strabo. His youth in Kyrene and, especially, his time spent in the philosophical milieu of Athens, have provided ample room for speculation as to the polymath's influences. Probably moving to Athens in the 260s, Eratosthenes spent some two decades there before he was invited to

⁷⁰⁷ See: Ch. 1.2, 3.

⁷⁰⁸ Mouseion-Library, Ptolemaic power: Fraser (1972) 1.306-16, 483-4; Hölbl (2001) 26; J.V. Luce (1988) 23-37; P.T. Keyser & G. Irby-Massie (2006) 242. For value of scholarship: Vitruvius *De arch.* 9. praef. 1.1-3; Tarn (1929) 246-60; Erskine (1995) 41, 45-6; cf. rivals: Erskine (2011) 177-187.

⁷⁰⁹ *BNJ* 241 T1 (= *Souda* s.v. 'Ερατοσθένης); T5 (= Censorinus *DN* 15.2) (Pownall (2009b)).

Alexandria by Ptolemy III (ca. 245).⁷¹⁰ His time in Athens does not seem to be affiliated with a particular school. To the contrary, he seems to have savoured the diversity, the polymath himself fondly recalling that ‘philosophers gathered together at this particular time as never before within one wall or one city.’⁷¹¹ His attitude limits any attempt to definitively establish his philosophical concerns through a biographical approach, despite attempts of scholars to emphasise the significance of one particular school over another, usually to support a favoured interpretation of his later works.⁷¹² To his ancient critics, Eratosthenes was notorious for his lack of affiliation. Strabo pejoratively defines his position as ‘vacillating’.⁷¹³ The *Souda* records his nicknames, with the unflattering ‘beta’ and ‘pentathlete’ perhaps hinting at such vacillation.⁷¹⁴ More recent scholarship has been kinder, cautiously characterising him as ‘eclectic’.⁷¹⁵ Evidently, he had no dogmatic allegiances, but this characterisation only provides us with an impressionistic sense of his concerns. We can perhaps discover a clearer understanding of the geographer’s concerns by turning to the time after 245, when he accepted Ptolemy III’s invitation to assume the role of Librarian, and possibly the role of tutor to the future Ptolemy IV, in Alexandria.⁷¹⁶

Whatever his feelings about the sparring Athenian schools, as Librarian, Eratosthenes was exposed to an unprecedented range of sources at the Mouseion-Library complex, which, since at least since the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphos, had possessed a staggeringly large archive of literary and scientific resources under enthusiastic royal patronage.⁷¹⁷ The range of sources is seen in his geographical work, drawing on geographies from different courts, military reports, and less glamorous sailors’ accounts.⁷¹⁸ Strabo laments such openness. Eratosthenes’ use of ‘fabricators’ (ψευδολόγοι), such as the Seleukid geographers Deimachos and Megasthenes for India, are especially criticised.⁷¹⁹ Little better is his use of Nearchos and Onesikritos.⁷²⁰ Strabo does approve of Patrokles, which Eratosthenes used for the northeast of the *oikoumenē*, while Pytheas of Massalia, which Eratosthenes depended upon for northern

⁷¹⁰ Chronological difficulties: acquainted with Zeno only in Strabo (1.2.2); cf. Diog. Laert. 7.2.28. b. 126th Olympiad (276/3) (*Souda* s.v. Ἐρατοσθένης (=BNJ 241 T1)). Fraser (1972) 1.308 (1971) 9, 11; Pownall supports *Souda* over Strabo: F. Pownall (2009b). Cf. *Souda’s* dating problems: R. Pfeiffer (1968) 153-4.

⁷¹¹ ‘ἐγένοντο γάρ, φησίν, ὡς οὐδέποτε, κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν ὑφ’ ἓνα περίβολον καὶ μίαν πόλιν’, Strabo 1.2.2; Fraser (1972) 1.483-484; (1971) 7, 9.

⁷¹² Platonist: F. Solmsen (1942) 192, 97, 200-1, 5; D.W. Roller (2010) 12. Fraser ‘mildly Platonic’ (1971) 8-9; yet decidedly not (1972) 1.483-4, 2.698 n.9.31. Moderate Sceptic: Tarn (1939) 52-4, 58. Stoic: M.H. Fisch (1937) 129-151. Moderate Peripatetic: P. McKechnie (2013) 140. Philology supporting Peripatetic: F. Benuzzi (2019) 125-6. Philosophically-detached ‘scientist’: Pfeiffer (1968) 156-7, 163; Sarton (1959) 28.

⁷¹³ ‘...μέσος ἦν τοῦ τε βουλομένου φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ τοῦ μὴ θαρροῦντος ἐγχειρίζειν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν ταύτην’, Strabo 1.2.2.

⁷¹⁴ ‘διὰ δὲ τὸ δευτερεύειν ἐν παντὶ εἶδει παιδείας τοῖς ἄκροις ἐγγίσαντα βῆτα ἐπεκλήθη· οἱ δὲ καὶ δεῦτερον ἢ νέον Πλάτωνα· ἄλλοι Πένταθλον ἐκάλεσαν’, BNJ 241 T1 (= *Suda*, s.v. Ἐρατοσθένης).

⁷¹⁵ S.M. Oberhelman (2006) 269-70; Fraser (1971) 7.

⁷¹⁶ Librarian role: BNJ 241 T7 (=POxy. 10, 1241, col. 2); cf. *Souda* s.v. Ἀπολλώνιος Ἀλεξανδρεὺς. Eratosthenes as tutor, Ptol. IV: Pfeiffer (1968) 142; Roller (2015) 121. Fraser presents two opposing views: Fraser (1972) 2.127. Cf. Fraser (1971) 10-11. Contra: F. Pownall (2009b). Debate due to P.Oxy 71.4808 (BNJ 137 T1b) which has Kleitarchos, not Eratosthenes, as tutor. But this contradicts other Kleitarchos sources: Prandi (2012) 15-26.

⁷¹⁷ Ptolemy III: Gal. *Comm. Hipparch.* iii (17 a 606-607); Library’s scale: Ps.-Aristeas, 1.10; Amm. Marc. 22.16.13; Sen. *Tranq.* 9.5; Fraser (1972); (1972) 1.320-327.

⁷¹⁸ Propagandistic sources: Prontera (2013) 207-215. Normative sources: Stephens (2005) 231-2. Varied sources: Blomquist (1992) 54-5; Geus (2002) 227-8; ‘merchants’ as source: Roller (2003) 232. Seleukid sources: Geus (2002) 281-2.

⁷¹⁹ Eratosth. F22 (=Strabo 2.1.9); J. Engels (2010); A. Primo (2009) 82-5.

⁷²⁰ Onesikritos, Nearchos: Eratosth. F22 (=Strabo 2.1.9); F74 (=Strabo 15.1.13-14).

Europe, was conversely maligned by Strabo and Polybios, a position increasingly challenged by modern scholars.⁷²¹ Eratosthenes' account of western Libya to sub-Saharan west Africa seems to be at least partially informed by the *Periplus* of the Carthaginian navigator, Hanno, a work which follows the coast up to an uncrossable zone of fire in the tropics.⁷²² To the more immediate south, the Librarian had access to data coming along the Ptolemaic Arabian Gulf vector, and Philo's *gnomon* measurements from Meroë.⁷²³ Eratosthenes referred to earlier maps yet did not hesitate to challenge them with fresh data, frequently drawing on his own autoptic measurements.⁷²⁴ Martianus Capella, a late source, suggests that he even had hodological measurements courtesy of royal *bematistai* (pacers), although whether these were contemporary and under the geographer's direct control, as Knaack and Fraser assert, is far from certain.⁷²⁵ What is certain is that Eratosthenes' range of sources were not restricted to Ptolemaic normative geography, as is sometimes claimed.⁷²⁶ From Alexander historians, Seleukid geographers, and Carthaginian explorers, to merchants' reports, and his own autoptic data, Eratosthenes' range of sources were unprecedented in their diversity, providing scope to promote, but also challenge, Ptolemaic imperial geography.

Eratosthenes' geographical treatises have traditionally been treated as great achievements of Hellenistic science, divorced from ideological concerns. The geographer's geodesic treatise, *On the Measurement of The Earth*, was celebrated by later ancient scholars and is still often understood through an almost teleological lens, as a mathematical triumph *sans* political context.⁷²⁷ Eratosthenes' landmark *Geographika* is likewise presented as a work somehow unaffected by ideological concerns.⁷²⁸ The *Geographika*, which we will examine closely in this chapter, was probably divided into three books, surviving in 155 fragments by Roller's reckoning, the vast majority preserved by the 'elliptical' Strabo.⁷²⁹ Book One appears to have been an agonistic introduction which situated Eratosthenes' works within the geographic tradition. The geographer takes particular aim at the newly deified Homer, something traditionally explained as a scholar taking exception to the Poet's geographical 'mistakes'.⁷³⁰ Book Two of the *Geographika* assumes an elevated perspective to explore spatial geography and is traditionally presented in strictly rationalist terms. According to this approach, Book

⁷²¹ For Patrokles' credibility, see Ch 4.3.1. Pytheas 'misled' (ὕφ' οἷ παρακρουσθῆναι) Eratosthenes, among others: Polyb. 34.5.7 (=Strabo 2.4.2 = Eratosth. F14); F34 (=Strabo 2.5.8); F153 (=Strabo 3.2.11) cf. F131 (=Strabo 2.1.41); Polyb. 34.10.6 (=Strabo 4.2.1). Pytheas revived: Roller (2006) 62-3, 74-91; (2015) 84-90; Walbank (2002) 35-6.

⁷²² Hanno, infernal torrid zone: 'ὡς δὲ δὴ ἐς μεσημβρίην ἐξετράπετο, πολλῆσιν ἀμηχανίησιν ἐνετύγχανεν ὕδατος τε ἀπορίῃ καὶ καύματι ἐπιφλέγοντι καὶ ῥύαξι πυρὸς ἐς τὸν πόντον ἐμβάλλουσιν', Arr. *Ind.* 43.9-13; cf. *Periplus of Hanno* 15-17 (tr. Schoff (1912)); Roller (2006) 26-43; Carthaginian sources, difficulties: Geus (2002) 284.

⁷²³ Philo's measurements at Meroe: Eratosth. F40 (=Strabo 2.1.20).

⁷²⁴ Autopsy: Eratosth. F51 (=Strabo 2.1.11); F128 (=Strabo 2.5.24); F139 (=Strabo 8.7.2); F140 (=Strabo 8.8.4).

⁷²⁵ Mart. Cap. 6.596-8; *LSJ* s.v. βῆμα 1-2. βηματισταί: Strabo 15.2.8; G. Knaack (1907), 365; Fraser (1972) 1.415; Blomquist (1992) 65. Eratosthenes' silence, given his promotion of autopsy, makes Knaack's claim unlikely.

⁷²⁶ Prontera (2013).

⁷²⁷ 'ἐπιγραφομένῳ Περί τῆς ἀναμετρήσεως τῆς γῆς' Heron *Dioptra* 25 (ed. I. Thomas (1941)). For fragments, see: Roller (2010) Appendix 1. Teleological, positivist treatments: Sarton (1959) 102, 111-113, 172-3; G.E.R. Lloyd (1973) 2-5; 21-33. Positivist lens, problems: T. Unwin (1992) 31-42, 152-7; J. Habermas (1971).

⁷²⁸ Roller (2010) esp. 12-14, 17, 30-33, 5; commentaries without ideological reference, 11-220, *sauf* F155 (at 220).

⁷²⁹ For summary of fragment history and difficulties, see: Roller (2010) 33-7

⁷³⁰ Eratosth. F5 (=Strabo 1.2.15); F3 (=Strabo 1.2.7); Fraser (1971) 3, 32; Geus (2002) 263-6.

Two's omission of geopolitical boundaries and creation of parallels and meridians is understood as a mathematical exercise to realise the 'fundamental' elements of the new discipline.⁷³¹ Book Three contains a closer look at the geographer's *sphragides* (σφραγίδες).⁷³² These are a novel form of spatial organisation, usually translated as 'seals' or 'sealstones', reflecting their irregular quadrilateral nature. The *sphragides* have been traditionally explained as an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by Eratosthenes to rationalise the *oikoumenē*, his unorthodox choices of demarcation for these *sphragides* treated as errors born of poor data.⁷³³ The geographer dedicates substantial parts of his work to descriptive digressions. Many of these involve quite damning critiques of Ptolemaic gods such as Alexander, Herakles, Dionysos, Amun-Zeus, and Homer, yet are traditionally characterised as little more than a sensible rejection of superstition, an important aside before we return to the main business of rational geography. The characterisation by Fraser and others is of a scholar who stoutly 'resist[s] nonsense'.⁷³⁴ The Eratosthenes that emerges in this traditional approach almost risks becoming a scholarly parody, informed more by nineteenth and twentieth century rationalism than by the concerns of the Ptolemaic court.

This traditional approach to Eratosthenes' *Geographika* fails to consider the ideological context of the work as a product of the Ptolemaic court. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, critical geography of recent decades has identified the ideology inherent in state-sponsored maps.⁷³⁵ Wood shows how the process of selection for cartographic reference points and topographic features directs the viewers' terms of reference, guiding us to share the authoritative perspective of the geographer.⁷³⁶ Gregory argues that demarcation provides a framework for the 'domestication' of claimed space, sorting people and places through an omnipotent colonial lens.⁷³⁷ Harley observes that even blank spaces are infused with meaning, depicting an uncivilised space ripe for conquest.⁷³⁸ Using these approaches from the modern discipline, much needed critical geographic revisions of Eratosthenes' geographical treatises have recently been undertaken by Kosmin, Bianchetti, Visscher, and others.⁷³⁹ These have tended to understand the work in propagandistic terms, the geographer using imperial geographic tools to organise the *oikoumenē* under a centralised and panoptic imperial gaze.⁷⁴⁰ For Kosmin and Visscher, the prime meridian, presented as running through Alexandria, positions Ptolemaic space at the centre of the map, around which the world is oriented.⁷⁴¹ The

⁷³¹ Fraser (1971) 19; von Humboldt (1848) 2.281; Bunbury (1883) 1.627-633.

⁷³² *LSJ* s.v. σφραγίς. For varied use, see: n.744.

⁷³³ Roller (2010) 190-192, 211-212.

⁷³⁴ '...resist nonsense': Fraser (1971) 32, see also: 3, 28-9; A.B. Bosworth (1986) 118; Bunbury (1883) 1.615-16, 619. *cf.* Geus describes Eratosthenes' 'sarcastic' criticisms: Geus (2003) 243.

⁷³⁵ Harley (1988a); (1988b); Pickles (1992); (2004); Gregory (2009); Unwin (1992); Wood (1992); Monmonier (1991); Turnbull (1994).

⁷³⁶ Selection: Wood (1992) 1-2, 24, 57, 193; Pickles (1992) 199.

⁷³⁷ D. Gregory (2001).

⁷³⁸ Harley (1988b) 66, 70-1.

⁷³⁹ Most extensively: P. Kosmin (2017). Also: Bianchetti (2016) 137-9; Visscher (2020) 63-70; and briefly: Strootman (2017) 145-6.

⁷⁴⁰ Panoptic surveillance: Foucault (1977) 195-228; (1980).

⁷⁴¹ Alexandria's 'central position': Visscher (2020) 65, 70; in Ptolemaic 'Given': Kosmin (2017) 87-88.

sphragides are understood as domesticating the *oikoumenē* in Ptolemaic imperial terms.⁷⁴² Eratosthenes' controversial omission of geopolitical and continental demarcation is seen as serving immediate imperial concerns for Kosmin, aggressively denying the Seleukid 'King of Asia' his empire, or, in Bianchetti's reading, as a defence of Ptolemaic geopolitical space.⁷⁴³ Language, too, is analysed for potential propagandistic intent. Eratosthenes' description of a 'chlamys-shaped' *oikoumenē* is seen as a nod to Alexandria's centrality and reach. The city, after all, was also described in just such terms although, as Zimmerman and Préaux demonstrate, this description seems to have occurred only centuries later, providing serious difficulties for those claiming propagandistic intent by Eratosthenes.⁷⁴⁴ The term *sphragides* is understood as drawn from the Ptolemaic administrative lexicon, domesticating the entire *oikoumenē* as Ptolemaic space.⁷⁴⁵ The Librarian, this reading proposes, was reimagining the world to suit his royal patron.⁷⁴⁶

But a closer look reveals nagging difficulties with this propagandistic reading. As we will discover in this chapter, spatialising features do more to undermine than support Ptolemaic imperial claims. An elevated perspective highlights limitations instead of reach. The primary spatialising feature is not the prime meridian but the prime parallel, a line which powerfully displaces Alexandria from its former centre on the map.⁷⁴⁷ The *sphragides*, too, far from domesticating space, appear to undermine imperial control. Lines of demarcation distance Alexandria from its faltering thalassocracy, enclosing the royal city uncomfortably within Egypt and limiting any sense of imperial reach. Through a survey of the *sphragides*, we will discover an emphasis on natural and geometric features to the detriment of geopolitical cohesion, providing a platform for the geographer's alternate, potentially subversive, way of seeing. Furthermore, the propagandistic reading studiously avoids treatment of the descriptive elements of the *Geographika*, giving us a misleading sense of a unifying, primarily spatial, geographical treatise. Eratosthenes' prolific use of descriptive geographical elements, from emplotment to extended digressions, deserve our attention, having a profoundly disruptive effect on the imperial gaze. A new reading which accommodates these disruptions, both spatial and descriptive, is required to gain a clearer understanding of Eratosthenes' authorial intent.

Radical, alternate, and counter-geographies may provide a more useful approach to understand the geopolitical disruption seen in Eratosthenes' geographical treatises.

⁷⁴² Bianchetti (2016) 137-9; Kosmin (2017) 90; Visscher (2020) 68-9.

⁷⁴³ Kosmin (2014) 125; Seleukid use: Ogden (2017). Bianchetti (2016) 138-9; 'the silences in maps': Harley (1988b) 66, 70-71.

⁷⁴⁴ K. Zimmermann (2002) 34-35; C. Préaux (1968) 177-8; *contra*: Roller (2018) 947.

⁷⁴⁵ Kosmin (2017) 88, 90. See: Eratosth. F66 (=Strabo 2.1.22). Eratosthenes' usage is far from certain. *LSJ* s.v. σφραγίς IV (governmentally defined land), but *cf.* other possible meanings which Kosmin rejects without cause: A I (*sphragis*), 'seal', 'signet' (Hdt. 1.195); used by: Roller (2010); (2015); IIa. 'impression of signet-ring', IIb. 'any mark', V medicinal 'pastille'. For *sphragis* as personal stamp in literature, see: H. Thesleff (1949) 121-8.

⁷⁴⁶ Bianchetti (2016) 138-9.

⁷⁴⁷ 'καὶ ἡ μὲν τῶν παραλλήλων ἔσται μία, ἡ δὲ τῶν μεσημβρινῶν', F46 (=Strabo 2.5.16); parallel's primacy: 'καθιστάμενος τὸν τῆς οἰκουμένης πίνακα γραμμῆ τινι διαιρεῖ δίχα ἀπὸ δύσεως ἐπ' παραλλήλω τῇ ἰσημερινῇ γραμμῇ', F47 (=Strabo 2.1.1-3); F48 (11.12.4-5); F49 (2.1.31); F66 (2.1.22). *Cf.* Possibly following Dikaiarchos' prime parallel: Agathem. 1.5 (Diller (1975) 61), although Diller urges caution: (1975) 72.

Détournement, pioneered by the Situationists of the 1950s and 1960s, appropriated hegemonic geographic techniques for potentially subversive ends, frustrating the dominant gaze and opening the space for alternate ways of seeing.⁷⁴⁸ More recent critical and radical geographers have appropriated or omitted traditional geographic features in ‘counter-mapping’ projects, allowing for different, often subversive, views of familiar landscapes.⁷⁴⁹ Counter-mapping problematises the dominant orthodox geographic lens, providing pedagogical or political critique.⁷⁵⁰ Areas of Eratosthenes’ spatial geography which resist a propagandistic reading may provide a similar critique for his court audience.

Eratosthenes’ descriptive geography, which has confounded traditional and propagandistic readings alike, can be reconciled through an alternate geographic lens. Anarchist geographies for more than a century have demonstrated how descriptive geography can subvert any sense of imperial control over the landscape.⁷⁵¹ Eratosthenes’ emplotments and digressions which elevate natural forces and celebrate barbarian cultures and alternate political structures at the expense of Ptolemaic supremacy can be understood through such a lens, diverting his audience from the hyperbolic claims of Ptolemaic imperial control. Through an alternate geographic lens, the elements of Eratosthenes’ descriptive, as well as spatial geography, which disrupt rather than affirm imperial concerns can be identified and analysed for effect on the court audience. With these disruptive effects examined, we can draw on our findings from Chapter One to consider the work as a performance of *parrhēsia*, the court *Philos* placing sobering limits on Ptolemaic imperial claims of reach, centrality, and control.

3.2 *Parrhēsia* in Eratosthenes’ non-geographical texts

Far from a detached scholar or uncritical propagandist, this section will demonstrate that Eratosthenes’ various works reveal a court scholar adept at blending praise and self-promotion with striking elements of *parrhēsia*. Looking at ideologically unorthodox elements of Eratosthenes’ non-geographical works will allow us to identify parrhēsiastic patterns and consider the potential impact of these within a court context. We should ask: What were the elements of Ptolemaic ideology that the polymath felt the greatest urgency to challenge in various works? With these concerns identified, we will be better placed to confidently identify similar concerns in his geographical texts.

I. The *Katasterismoi*

Eratosthenes’ astrological poems—the *Katasterismoi*—place limits on Ptolemaic religious ideology, even as they are ostensibly affirmed.⁷⁵² The polymath uses the playful and flexible

⁷⁴⁸ K. Knabb (1959).

⁷⁴⁹ Pickles (2004) 177-188; W. Bunge (1975) 149-81.

⁷⁵⁰ Mogel (2008) 118; Crampton & Krygier (2004) 13-14.

⁷⁵¹ E. Reclus (1905); P. Taylor (2002); N. Willems (2016).

⁷⁵² The *Katasterismoi* manuscript, epitomisation: T. Condos (1971) 2-5. Authenticity: Pfeiffer (1968) 168; Geus (2002) 211-213; J. Pàmias (2004) 194, esp. n12. For Eratosthenes via Hyginus, see: R. Hard (2015) xxvii. Greek

genre of myth to subvert our expectations.⁷⁵³ Pàmias' analysis of *The Crab* identifies criticisms of the Ptolemaic regime's imperial claims through the diminished agency of Dionysos. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Dionysos of Ptolemaic ideology assumed a distinctly martial quality, on full display in the triumphant 'Return of Dionysos from the Indies' figure of Ptolemy II Philadelphos' famous pompe.⁷⁵⁴ Drawing on Euripidean themes of Dionysos Bromios, the procession presents the god atop an elephant, armed with a *thyrsos*-lance and leading a fantastical army of Maenads, golden-armoured Satyrs atop golden-armoured donkeys, and elephant-drawn chariots.⁷⁵⁵ In Eratosthenes' *The Crab*, however, these themes are subverted. The gigantomachy is recalled, with Dionysos, Hephaistos, and a Bacchic host approaching the Giants. Yet the martial scene is soon undermined. It would not be the gods, but the donkeys which demonstrate agency in the scene, albeit inadvertently. 'The asses were overcome with panic and brayed very loudly...so [the Giants] all took flight'.⁷⁵⁶ Pàmias argues that these comical creatures, like the 'damned donkey' of Aristophanes *Frogs*, become the ironic heroes of Dionysian warfare, distancing us from the imposing imperial god of Ptolemaic propaganda.⁷⁵⁷

In *The Lion* and *The Crown*, Eratosthenes takes aim at the most ideologically significant of the constellations, Berenikē's Lock, characterising its apparent discovery as shameless court *kolakeia*. In the original telling by Kallimachos—which survives as papyrological fragments and, more substantially, in Catullus' *Coma Berenice*—the court astronomer Konon was observing the whole sky 'within the lines and where [the stars] are carried', when he discovered a miracle.⁷⁵⁸ Konon had observed that a sacrificial lock of hair from the divine queen Berenikē II Euergetes, which had disappeared from the altar at Arsinoë-Zephyritis, 'came to the abodes of the gods...[becoming] a new constellation among the ancient stars'.⁷⁵⁹ The ostensible discovery functions as powerful imperial propaganda, extending Ptolemaic imperial reach beyond the world to the firmament itself.⁷⁶⁰ Conversely, Eratosthenes' account encourages scepticism. Berenikē's Lock is described dismissively as 'seven faint stars' in *The Lion*, overshadowed by the constellation Leo.⁷⁶¹ In the Hyginus fragment, we can hear Eratosthenes' criticism of scientific *kolakeia* informing his scepticism, 'Conon, in the hope of gaining the king's favour... pointed to seven stars that did not belong to any constellation,

follows C. Schaubach (1795); Hyginus' Latin follows Grant (1960), tr. & order follow R. Hard (2015).

Eratosthenes' astronomy: Geus (2002) 211-22.

⁷⁵³ Subversive, ironical myth: Theoc. *Id.* 15; Burton (1995); Callim. *Epigr.* 51; E.-R. Schwinge (1986) 72.

Technical/mythology aspects 'bildeten eine organische Einheit': Geus (2002) 217-18.

⁷⁵⁴ See: Ch. 2.2.III.A.

⁷⁵⁵ *BNJ* 627 F2 (= Ath 5.31.200c-e). Cf. Martial Dionysos: Eur. *Bacch.* 302, 308-9; evoking fear: Eur. *Cycl.* 1.

⁷⁵⁶ '... αὐτοῖς τῶν Γιγάντων πλησίον ὄντες ὠρκήθησαν οἱ ὄνοι, οἱ δὲ Γίγαντες ἀκούσαντες τῆς φωνῆς ἔφυγον', Eratosth. *Cat. Epit.* 11.

⁷⁵⁷ Comical: Pàmias (2004) 195-6. Cf. 'νή τὸν Δί' ἐγὼ γοῦν ὄνος ἄγω μυστήρια', Ar. *Ran.* 159.

⁷⁵⁸ Scientific surveillance: 'Πάντα τὸν ἐν γραμμαῖσιν ἰδὼν ὄρον ἧ τε φέρονται', Callim. *Aet.* F110A (tr. D.L. Clayman (2022)); cf. 'qui stellarum ortus comperit atque obitus', Catull. 66.2.

⁷⁵⁹ '...uvidulam a fluctu cedentem ad templa deum me sidus in antiquis diva novum posuit', Catull. 66.4-5 (tr. F.W. Cornish (1962)).

⁷⁶⁰ West (1985) 61-66; É. Prioux (2011) 2012-14; 'an elegant piece of propaganda', D.L. Selden (1998) 327-9.

⁷⁶¹ 'ὀρῶνται δὲ ὑπὲς αὐτὸν ἐν τριγώνῳ κατὰ τὴν κέρκρον ἀμαυροὶ ἐπτὰ', Eratosth. *Cat.* 22; cf. bright stars of Dionysos' donkeys: Cat 21 (Vat. epit. 11).

saying these must surely be her hair'.⁷⁶² The aetiology of this constellation is denigrated, the scientist transformed from the authoritative imperial surveyor of Kallimachos' telling, into a shifty *kolax* who deludes the king. Furthermore, in what must have been a surprise to the Ptolemaic court audience, Eratosthenes revives earlier aetiology for these same stars in his constellation *The Crown*, highlighting that Berenikē's Lock is not so much a discovery as a usurpation. Eratosthenes is clear: 'the lock of hair that can be seen below the Lion's tail is that of Ariadne'.⁷⁶³ Unlike Berenikē's Lock in *The Lion*, these stars are no longer described as faint (ἀμαυροί), gaining brightness and, perhaps, legitimacy, in the context of this traditional myth. Such surprising emphasis on the older myth had clear ideological ramifications, the Ariadne story being a staple of the Antigonid court.⁷⁶⁴ The target, then, is not simply Konon, but the Ptolemaic miracle itself.⁷⁶⁵ In these playful poems, Eratosthenes appears confident to challenge what he views as the hyperbolic claims of Ptolemaic imperial reach. His concern is a sympotic one—science should serve as *paideia*, not as flattery to prop up the delusions of the king.

II. Eratosthenes' *Letter to King Ptolemy*

While astrological poems provide space for Eratosthenes to challenge Ptolemaic gods, scientific *kolakeia*, and hyperbolic claims of imperial reach, his *Letter to King Ptolemy* may challenge the very notion of divine kingship itself. Preserved in a commentary of Archimedes' *On the Sphere and Cylinder*, the public letter accompanied a *mesolabos*—a mechanical instrument for solving the old problem of doubling the cube—which was a gift for his royal patron.⁷⁶⁶ Following an intimate and mutually flattering greeting, the letter's preamble shifts tone, introducing the problem with the tragic figure of King Minos:⁷⁶⁷

‘Τῶν ἀρχαίων τινὰ τραγωδοποιῶν φασιν εἰσαγαγεῖν
τὸν Μίνω τῷ Γλαύκῳ κατασκευάζοντα τάφον, πυθόμενον
δέ, ὅτι πανταχοῦ ἑκατόμπεδος εἶη, εἰπεῖν·
 μικρόν γ' ἔλεξας βασιλικοῦ σηκὸν τάφου·
 διπλάσιος ἔστω, τοῦ καλοῦ δὲ μὴ σφαλεῖς
 δίπλαζ' ἕκαστον κῶλον ἐν τάχει τάφου.
ἔδόκει δὲ διημαρτηκέναι...’

*They say that one of the old tragic authors introduced Minos,
building a tomb to Glaucos, and, hearing that it is to be a hundred
cubits long in each direction, saying:*

'You have mentioned a small precinct of the tomb royal;

⁷⁶² 'Quod factum cum rex aegreferet, ut ante diximus, Conon mathematicus cupiens inire gratiam regis, dixit crinem inter sidera uideri conlocatum et quasdam uacuas a figura septem stellas ostendit, quas esse fingeret crinem'. Cat 22 (=Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.24.16-20; tr. M. Grant, (1960)).

⁷⁶³ '...οἱ κατὰ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ ὄψεως τοῦ διὰ τῶν Ἄρκτων', Cat. 11.

⁷⁶⁴ Ariadne myth: Arat. *Phaen.* 71-3.

⁷⁶⁵ Geus alludes to political motivations: (2002) 222.

⁷⁶⁶ Authenticity: 'Brief und Epigramm sind die beiden einzigen komplett erhaltenen Werke des Eratosthenes', Geus (2002) 195-6, esp. n.241. Gift: Strootman (2007) 224; *contra* unilateral letters from king to polis: P. Ceccarelli (2013) 297-330; (2018) 146-184.

⁷⁶⁷ For complete letter, see Appendix 3.I & II of dissert.

*Let it be double, and, not losing its beauty,
Quickly double each side of the tomb.'
He seems, however, to have been mistaken...*

Eutocius' *Commentary to Archimedes' On the Sphere and the
Cylinder II* (ed. J.L. Heiberg and E. Stamatis (1915) 88 ln.5–
11; tr. Netz (2004) 294)

The choice of myth is illuminating. It explores the flawed judgement of a grief-stricken king who ignores his seer's advice and punishes this wise counsellor for his expression of *parrhēsia*.⁷⁶⁸ In Euripides' account, the king's construction of the tomb is madness (μαίνονται) fuelled by grief.⁷⁶⁹ The imperial king, over-confident and paradoxically weakened by his royal power, fails in his endeavour.⁷⁷⁰ In Eratosthenes' retelling, however, the emphasis has shifted. Minos' folly is now due to erroneous thinking (διημαρτηκέναι) rather than madness, what Leventhal aptly characterises as 'a tragic lack of mathematical knowledge'.⁷⁷¹ The king, despite his apparent power, failed to seek expert scholarly advice and thus failed in his endeavour.⁷⁷² In this set-up for the subsequent *parrhēsia*, Eratosthenes carefully challenges the position of kingship through proxy. Criticism of a legendary king, sired by Zeus, undermines any sense that divine kingship is a guarantee of wisdom or effective leadership. If Zeus' son is indeed a flawed king, then we find ourselves tacitly demoting the significance of the Ptolemies' own divine pedigree.⁷⁷³ We are positioned to feel that kingship is precarious, dependent for its success not on divinity, but on the heeding of wise counsel.⁷⁷⁴

Once the solution to the mathematical problem is presented and its imperial benefits promoted, the treatise concludes with what Pfeiffer calls a 'perfect epigram'.⁷⁷⁵ But what ostensibly appears as direct *epainos* may contain an important dose of *parrhēsia*, which harks back to the thematic concerns of the letter's preamble:⁷⁷⁶

‘εὐαίων, Πτολεμαῖε, πατήρ ὅτι παιδὶ συνηβῶν
πάνθ', ὅσα καὶ Μούσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσι φίλα,
αὐτὸς ἔδωρήσω· τὸ δ' ἐς ὕστερον, οὐράνιε Ζεῦ,
καὶ σκήπτρων ἐκ σῆς ἀντιάσειε χερός.
καὶ τὰ μὲν ὡς τελέοιτο, λέγοι δέ τις ἄνθεμα λεύσσω·
τοῦ Κυρηναίου τοῦτ' Ἐρατοσθένεος.’

*O Ptolemy, happy! Father, as youthful as son:
You have given him all that is dear to the muses
And to kings. In the future—O Zeus!—may you give him,*

⁷⁶⁸ Alternative versions: Hyg. *Fab.* 136; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.3.1-2; Aesch. *Cretan Women* F116-20 (Sommerstein (2008)); Soph. *Prophets* (F389a-400, Lloyd-Jones (1996)). Criticism of king: Eur. *Polyidus* F643, 644, 646 (C. Collard & M. Cropp (2008)).

⁷⁶⁹ Eur. *Polyidus* F640 (=Stob. 4.55.1), F634, F639.

⁷⁷⁰ F641 (=Stob. 4.32.7); Geus (2002) 201-3.

⁷⁷¹ Leventhal (2017) 53.

⁷⁷² Prince, wise counsel: Isoc. 2.27.

⁷⁷³ Hom. *Il.* 13.450; cf. mortal kings: Hdt. 3.122.

⁷⁷⁴ Ptolemaic divine kingship: *OGIS* 54; Fraser (1972) 2.344, n.106. Pharaonic divinity: J.G. Manning (2010) 42, 57, 80-2.

⁷⁷⁵ Pfeiffer (1968) 155-6, 68.

⁷⁷⁶ Berrey (2017) 158-9.

*From your hand, this, as well: a sceptre.
May it all come to pass. And may him, who looks, say:
'Eratosthenes, of Cyrene, set up this dedication.*

Eutocius, *Commentary to Archimedes' On the Sphere and the Cylinder II* (ed. J.L. Heiberg and E. Stamatis (1915) 96 ln.22-27) (tr. Netz (2002) 298)

Pfeiffer understood this as a straightforward blessing, while Kosmin saw it as a propagandistic metaphor for imperial abundance.⁷⁷⁷ Yet, this wish (ὡς τελέοιτο) leaves us with a sense of uncertainty. The gifts of the Muses, an apparent allusion to the achievements of the Mouseion-Library complex, are foregrounded as vital for the dynastic succession to proceed effectively.⁷⁷⁸ Like Theokritos, wise kingship is equated with patronage of the arts.⁷⁷⁹ Yet in Eratosthenes' letter, the blessing functions as *parrhēsia*, with imperial continuity dependent on *paideia* and *technē*. The continuing support of the Mouseion-Library by Eratosthenes' pupil, the future Ptolemy IV, will be fundamental to a successful reign.⁷⁸⁰ This disrupts the ideology of divine kingship. As in the Minos myth, the king's power is dependent on listening to his sage.⁷⁸¹ Eratosthenes will return to this precarious and qualified notion of kingship several times in the descriptive digressions of the *Geographika*. The *Letter to King Ptolemy* compels the reader to conclude that the king's rule is dependent on good counsel and, if Ptolemy is wise, he should turn to the guidance of his elite *Philoï* at the Mouseion.

III. The *Arsinoë*

As we saw in Chapter One, Eratosthenes' lost biography, *Arsinoë*, criticises Ptolemy IV for his transgression of elite sympotic customs in pursuit of reckless Dionysian religious innovation.⁷⁸² The surviving fragment is worth reviewing within the context of religious developments under Ptolemy IV. The passage begins by emphasising this very context, characterising the religious innovations of the king as unrestrained and dangerous. The new religious festivals are of 'all kinds' and the author makes note of their Dionysian bent, being 'especially in honour of Dionysos.'⁷⁸³ The danger of such innovative liberality is seen through the eyes of Queen Arsinoë III. The passage has strangers invade the court in order to revel *sans klinai* and *kratēr*, and the queen's objection emphasises the 'sordid' (ὀυπαρά) nature of the revelry, composed of unidentifiable commoners (παμμυγοῦς ὄχλου).⁷⁸⁴ The passage

⁷⁷⁷ Pfeiffer (1968) 155; Geus (2002) 202-5; Kosmin (2017) 86.

⁷⁷⁸ Pfeiffer (1968) 155.

⁷⁷⁹ S. Stephens (2006) 95-96.

⁷⁸⁰ Pfeiffer (1968) 155.

⁷⁸¹ Power taken away: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.3.2

⁷⁸² *BNJ* 241 F16 (=Ath. 7.2.276a-c) (tr. Powell, 2009b). Biography: Fraser (1972) 2.699 n.38, 2.737 n.130; Biography-encomium: Blomquist (1992) 54; Dating uncertain, during Ptol. III or IV: Fraser (1972) 1.203-4; Hazzard (2000). *Contra* Geus (2002) 65-8. See Ch 1.1 of dissert.

⁷⁸³ 'τοῦ Πτολεμαίου κτίζοντος ἑορτῶν καὶ θουσιῶν παντοδαπῶν γένη καὶ μάλιστα περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον', *BNJ* 241 F16 (=Ath. 7.2.276.b).

⁷⁸⁴ F16 (=Ath. 7.2.276b-c); Hazzard (2000) 119.

concludes by comparing these new court festivals to the Athenian *Choes*, another excessively inclusive festival.⁷⁸⁵ There is certainly evidence for significant new Dionysian patronage in Ptolemy IV's reign at the time of Eratosthenes' writing. The emerging *technitai* of Dionysos—travelling actors associated with the god's cult—were patronised by Ptolemy IV.⁷⁸⁶ His administrative creation of eight Dionysian demotics within a Dionysian *phylē* had the effect of including ordinary citizenry in honouring the god as 'the founder of the king's family'.⁷⁸⁷ Indeed, Fraser argues that Ptolemy IV endeavoured to replace private Bacchic worship with more public Dionysian revelries associated with the regime.⁷⁸⁸ At court, Ptolemy IV's apparently indiscriminate selection of drinking companions had Dionysian overtones: according to the *Histories of Philopator*, he 'collected' (συνάγεσθαι) symposiasts in every city called 'laughter-makers' (γελοιαστάς).⁷⁸⁹ Contrary to elite sympotic tradition, the king's symposiasts were to be far from carefully selected. Amid such developments, Eratosthenes' *Arsinoë* gains new meaning. No mere biography, it becomes a means to express his conservative *parrhēsia*: the text conveys a sense that the innovations of Ptolemy IV, the 'New Dionysos', threaten to undermine the sympotic *philia* of the royal court.⁷⁹⁰

We have seen that Eratosthenes challenged his royal patron in the nongeographical texts. In his playful *Katasterismoi*, the polymath brought the martial Dionysos down to size and undermined the hyperbolic imperial reach propagated by scientific *kolakes*. In his *Letter to King Ptolemy*, Eratosthenes offered the gift of *parrhēsia* to accompany the *mesolabos*, encouraging his audience to question divine kingship and emphasise royal dependence on the counsel of court scholars. And in the *Arsinoë*, Ptolemy IV's many Dionysian innovations are criticised through an appeal to sympotic tradition. These examples of *parrhēsia* can work as markers for our investigation of Eratosthenes' *Geographika*. Their presence beyond the geographical texts can provide additional confidence that we are indeed dealing with recurring concerns of the author. Areas of the geographical text which use geographical techniques to disrupt Ptolemaic notions of hyperbolic imperial reach, divine kingship, or excessive religious innovation, should alert us to the possibility that we have arrived at places in the text expressing the *parrhēsia* of an elite scholar for his royal *philos*.

⁷⁸⁵ Although ending is disputed: 'παρασκευάζων' corrected to 'παρασκευάζουσα ἡ βασιλεία' by S.D. Olson (2008) 271-3; Pownall (2009b).

⁷⁸⁶ Dionysian *technitai*: *C.Ord.Ptol.* 29 (=Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung P.11774); ambivalence towards: E. Harris (2020) 55; popularity: R. Rehm (2007); Fraser (1972) 1.203-4.

⁷⁸⁷ Dionysian *phylē*: *P.Oxy.* 28.2465; 'τούτου μηνύει Διόνυσσον ἀρχηγέτην γεγονέναι', Satyros *BNJ* 631 F1 (=Theophilos *Apology to Autolykos* 2.7); Fraser (1972) 1.43-44, 2.120-1 n.48.

⁷⁸⁸ Fraser (1972) 1.204, 2.345 n.114.

⁷⁸⁹ *BNJ* 161 F2 (=Ath. 6.48.246c).

⁷⁹⁰ '...τοῦ νέου Διονύσου', Euphronios *Priapeia* 1 (Powell (1925) 176-7).

3.3 'Outbreaks': descriptive geography as *parrhēsia* in the *Geographika*

Eratosthenes' *Geographika* is a hybrid work blending descriptive and spatial geographies. We will begin by considering the descriptive aspects of the work, where cultural and natural digressions provide room to divert from imperial orthodoxy.⁷⁹¹ The disruptive effect of descriptive geography has long been understood by geographers. For von Humboldt, descriptions of distant lands highlighted the limits of our control over the landscape and evoked a liberating yet terrifying sense of the sublime.⁷⁹² For the British imperial surveyor Ralph Bagnold, however, geographical descriptions of the Libyan desert presented a frustrated colonial gaze, the surveyor battling 'grotesque' natural forces which supplant human agency.⁷⁹³ Far from supporting the imperial gaze, digressions embed the protagonist within a landscape via glimpses, emersed in a world neither fully observable nor controllable.

Not all geographers are so pessimistic. The potentially subversive effects of descriptive digressions have been celebrated by more radical geographers. For Reclus, the diminution of control was part of an anarchist awakening, intent on challenging the imperial map.⁷⁹⁴ The Situationists of the 1950s and '60s explored the subversive effect of the *dérive*, a 'playful-constructive' approach to geography, in which individual experiences diverge from traditional vectors and challenge the dominant geographical lens.⁷⁹⁵ Later postmodern geographers found a similar value in individualised lenses, Unwin observing that they provide distance from the 'illusory coherence' of a unified geography.⁷⁹⁶ Far from problematic, these alternate geographical approaches understand digressions as a tool to challenge assimilating tendencies of orthodox geography.

Digressions and emplotment form an essential element of ancient descriptive geography, the audience lowered from an elevated perspective of control to a less specialised and authoritative view, allowing for potential divergence from the surveillance of the imperial gaze.⁷⁹⁷ For Pausanias, digressions were a means of 'religious gazing', inviting us to view the cosmos in terms which undermine the privilege granted to the historical present in imperial geography.⁷⁹⁸ Pausanias' digressions distance us from 'rationalist strictures', emphasising what Elsner calls the 'myth-historical essence' of the terrain.⁷⁹⁹ At Delphi, we are taken on a tour of the material votive offerings and find ourselves descending into mytho-historical digressions, observing Orpheus' triumph and Hesiod's dismissal in a single passage.⁸⁰⁰ At Olympia, emplotment is utilised as we approach the hippodrome, effortlessly moving us from

⁷⁹¹ Clarke (1999) 22-25, 36-9, 44-5, 91-4, 199-202. *LSJ* s.v. ἐκβολή λόγου (e.g. Arr. *Ind.* 6.1).

⁷⁹² Von Humboldt (1818) 83; E. Burke (1766) 95-161.

⁷⁹³ R.A. Bagnold (1941) xxi; C. Duffy (2013) 35-173; 'threatened to overwhelm' the surveyor: Gregory (2001) 102-3; Cartographic anxieties: Crampton & Krygier (2004) 20.

⁷⁹⁴ E. Reclus (1905).

⁷⁹⁵ Debord (1959) 62-66; N. Thompson (2008) 18. 'playful... with pedagogical potential', Mogel (2008) 118; H. Lefebvre (1991).

⁷⁹⁶ T. Unwin (1992) 162-185; E.W. Soja (1989) 223.

⁷⁹⁷ Tension with spatial geography: Entrikin (1991); movement from elevated to descriptive: Merrifield (1993); for panoptism: M. Foucault (1975) 197-230; (1980) 172-82; cf. J. Bentham (1787-8) 31-95.

⁷⁹⁸ Kindt (2012) 39-40; cf. 'mystic viewing', J. Elsner (1995) 88-124.

⁷⁹⁹ T. Whitmarsh (2010) 403; Elsner (2001) 6.

⁸⁰⁰ Paus. 10.7.4-8.

the present, with the wonderous starting mechanism, back to the legends of Oinomaos and Pelops as we pass the mound of Taraxippos, before returning us once more to the present in a single circuit of the track.⁸⁰¹ Emplotment and temporal digression oblige the reader to share Pausanias' mytho-historical concerns.⁸⁰² The imperial map of the present all but evaporates through Pausanias' use of temporal digressions.

The digressions of Strabo's geography allow for remarkable elements of *dérive*, effectively diverting the reader from the work's ostensible aim as a practical text (ὠφέλεια) for commanders and statesmen.⁸⁰³ We are introduced to the digressions through emplotment. The reader is embedded in the text on ships passing islands on each side, or travelling on roads, with sea 'on the right' and mountains looming 'on the left' of us.⁸⁰⁴ The digressions go further; Clarke examines how Strabo's sometimes extensive digressions require us to shift temporal lenses, each place having a unique 'historical rhythm'.⁸⁰⁵ At Krete, we digress into a cyclical history in which the civilising force of King Minos passes into political fragmentation, followed by piracy, before order is established once more.⁸⁰⁶ In the land of the Amazons, Strabo observes the unique strangeness of time there which allows history and myth to blur.⁸⁰⁷ India, too, assumes its own autonomous temporal lens.⁸⁰⁸ Universal chronology and its associated sense of control is disrupted. Instead, we encounter a fragmented heterotopia only successfully navigated through compartmentalised digressions.⁸⁰⁹ As we will discover below, Eratosthenes' emplotment and cultural digressions provide a similar jolt to the elevated, universalising lens.

I. 'Bad' Greeks and 'refined' barbarians: cultural digressions which challenge the Ptolemies

Book Three of Eratosthenes' *Geographika* presents the *oikoumenē* as an ideologically complex landscape in which digressions effectively distance the reader from Ptolemaic imperial concerns. We begin each *sphragis* from an elevated perspective, observing its unorthodox delimitation, before we descend, via emplotment and digression, into the landscape to explore geographical and ethnographic features.⁸¹⁰ These digressions allow other cultures to be explored, and potentially juxtaposed, with Ptolemaic Egypt and its court.⁸¹¹ Eratosthenes'

⁸⁰¹ Paus. 6.20.11-19.

⁸⁰² S.E. Alcock (1996) 241-67; Clarke (2017b) 14-31; cf. time-space: E.T.E. Barker et al. (2023).

⁸⁰³ Strabo 1.1.1; Clarke (1999) 202-3; tensions (2017b) 18-21. cf. M. Hazimichali (2017) 12. For *dérive*: Debord (1959); for Strabo's literary purposes, see: Clarke (1999); cf. Dueck (2000) 154-165; (2017) 220-2.

⁸⁰⁴ Sailing: 'ἐν δεξιᾷ ἔχοντι τὸ Αὐσόνιον πέλαγος, ἐν ἀριστερᾷ δὲ τὴν Ἥπειρον,...', Strabo 7.7.5; also 9.1.9. hodological emplotment: '...ταύτην δὴ τὴν ὁδὸν ἐκ τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἐπίδαμνον καὶ τὴν Ἀπολλωνίαν τόπων ἰοῦσιν ἐν δεξιᾷ μὲν ἐστὶ τὰ Ἥπειρωτικὰ ἔθνη... ἐν ἀριστερᾷ δὲ τὰ ὄρη τὰ τῶν Ἰλλυριῶν', Strabo 7.7.4; Clarke (1999) 23-4, 202-5.

⁸⁰⁵ Clarke (1999) 305; past remaining in place (2017b) 17-18.

⁸⁰⁶ Strabo 10.4.8-9; cf. Hom. *Od.* 19.178.

⁸⁰⁷ Amazons: Strabo 11.5.3; Clarke (1999) 250.

⁸⁰⁸ Strabo 15.1.1-10. Clarke (1999) 305.

⁸⁰⁹ Clarke (1999) 294, 304-307. Distance, effect: K. Geus & K. Guckelsberger (2017) 166-7, 169, 173; temporal lens: Wood (1992) 63-5. Cf. Foucault's 'heterotopia': (1967) 15-19.

⁸¹⁰ Cf. Eratosth. F77 (=Strabo 15.2.1) & F78 (=Strabo 15.2.9-9); F86 (=Strabo 15.3.1) & F87 (=Strabo 16.1.21); F92 (=Strabo 2.1.32) & F94 (=Strabo 16.3.2-6).

⁸¹¹ Blending genres: Geus (2002) 286-7.

digression of Arabia is the most extensive and unbroken of the surviving fragments, providing an opportunity to hear Eratosthenes' voice clearly from within Strabo's text.⁸¹²

Eratosthenes' Arabian digression seems intent on confounding the assumptions of his audience, presenting the land as tantalisingly near yet nonetheless difficult to access. The geographer introduces us to Arabia as grouped with Egypt in the fourth *sphragis*, yet split by the Arabian Gulf, the famous vector of Ptolemaic imperialism acting more as a barrier than the conduit we saw in the previous chapter.⁸¹³ Eratosthenes' digression draws our focus away from imperial geography, commencing our own *dérive*, not via the Arabian Gulf vector as a colonial lens would demand, but instead via a curiously circuitous hodological route from Heroöpolis via Syria and through the hyper-arid Nadj plateau. The digression is found in Strabo, following Strabo's own brief and moderately ambivalent introduction of Arabia, which 'is subject both to rains and to scorching heat'.⁸¹⁴ For him, Arabia is an uncertain terrain of shifting marshes, impossible to pin down.⁸¹⁵ Arrian similarly depicts a hostile land resistant to conquest.⁸¹⁶ Yet in Eratosthenes' fragment, hodological emplotment is employed to gain precarious access through this inhospitable country, as we follow Nabatean tracks from Heroöpolis. First we travel northeast 'in the direction of the summer sunrise' (πρὸς ἀνατολὰς θερινάς), then we turn south and head through arid farmland and across the Nadj Plateau, a land only traversed successfully by local 'tent-dwellers and camel-herds' (ἄραβες καὶ καμηλοβοσκοί).⁸¹⁷ On this precarious trail we are dependent on their expertise, accessing water 'by digging, as is the case in Gedrosia', an allusion to the notorious death march of Alexander's army.⁸¹⁸ As nineteenth century British explorers would observe in the Australian interior, the desert is understood as fundamentally resistant to imperial penetration, and only accessible via indigenous knowledge.⁸¹⁹ Contrary to the pretensions of control asserted in the Pithom Stele, Eratosthenes' entrance to Arabia Eudaimon via this circuitous and precarious hodological journey denies any sense of Ptolemaic control over the lands beyond the desert.⁸²⁰

Finally, we enter Arabia Eudaimon, a naturally blessed land, and we observe that it is 'watered by summer rains and [is] sowed twice, like India'.⁸²¹ Drawing on the tradition of Arabia Eudaimon as a land of opulence, Eratosthenes provides examples which engage the senses: we are told of 'places for making honey' (μελιτουργεία δαψιληῆ), with domesticated

⁸¹² Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2-4). Fragment unusually clearly defined for Strabo, opening at 16.4.2 (φησί...) & concluding 'τὰ μὲν δὴ τοῦ Ἐρατοσθένους περὶ τῆς Ἀραβίας τοιαῦτα' some seventy-five lines later. *Sauf* 16.4.4 (Strabo's Gaza interpolation).

⁸¹³ See: Ch. 2.2.III.

⁸¹⁴ 'δυσάερος οὔσα καὶ ὀμιχλώδης καὶ ἐπομβρος ἅμα καὶ καυματηρά' although '...καλλίκαρπος ἐστὶν ὁμῶς' Strabo 16.4.1.

⁸¹⁵ Strabo 16.4.1; Cf. uncertain, unstable terrain: Tac. *Germ.* 1, 30; Tan (2014).

⁸¹⁶ *Sauf* Alexander: Arr. *Ind.* 43.9-13.

⁸¹⁷ Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2); cf. Diod. Sic. 2.54.1-6.

⁸¹⁸ '...καὶ ὀρυκτὰ ὕδατα, καθάπερ καὶ ἡ Γεδρωσία', F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2-4).

⁸¹⁹ Central Australia: '...Nature had intentionally closed it upon civilized man, that she might have one domain on the earth's wide field over which the savage might roam in freedom', C. Sturt (1848) 2.1. Cf. King 'falls in with the natives' and thus survives: Wills (1862) ch. 13. For Arabian shield as 'featureless' peneplain: W. M. Davis (1899): 497; contra: Edgell (2006) 347-9; deserts as (misleading) cartographic buffers: H. Soffner (1942) 473.

⁸²⁰ *Cairo* 22183.11; although geographical uncertainties: Tarn (1929).

⁸²¹ '...βρέχεται τε θερινοῖς ὄμβροις καὶ δισπορεῖται παραπλησίως τῇ Ἰνδικῇ', Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2). Cf. India: F74 (=Strabo 15.1.13-14).

animals in ‘abundance’ (παντοῖα).⁸²² The land is bountiful with exotic spices, frankincense and myrrh.⁸²³ Roller observes Eratosthenes’ use of ‘exaggeration’ to evoke ‘a sense of idealism’.⁸²⁴ Yet our journey to get there has further amplified this sense of wonder. From hostile desert to land of plenty, we are enticed and soon captivated by this vibrant landscape.

Eratosthenes’ journey reveals a robust counter-cartography which undermines the imperial map. The four Arabian kingdoms are relatively located: first, the Minaeans of the city Karna by the Arabian Gulf; then the Sabaeans, with their metropolis of Mariaba; then, the Kattabanians who straddle the straits; and, furthest east, the Chatramotitae at Sabata.⁸²⁵ We now discover that these are ‘lying opposite to Aithiopia’, the circuitous nature of our journey suddenly apparent: we have trekked some 12,000 stadia via Koelē-Syria to reach lands which should have been easily accessible via the rapid Ptolemaic Arabian Gulf–Nile Canal vector.⁸²⁶ These nearby autonomous kingdoms appear to replace and supersede imperial geographical claims, especially the Kattabanians, who, from their ‘royal seat’ of Tamna, control the strait ‘across the Arabian Gulf’ at Deirē.⁸²⁷ The Arabian Gulf–Nile Canal vector of the Ptolemies appears to have been erased. Indeed, the geographer uses a historical digression to show that Egyptian control of the space is something of the distant past, that it is only the ancient pharaoh Sesostris who ‘crossed into Arabia, and thence invaded the whole of Asia’.⁸²⁸ We pause to view a stele which ‘tells in hieroglyphics of [Sesostris’] passage across the gulf’.⁸²⁹ Like Pausanias, the temporal portal contrasts the glories of the past with the limitations of the Ptolemaic present. This juxtaposition sits uneasily beside the contemporaneous Ptolemaic propaganda—Ptolemy IV’s triumphal Raphia Stele depicts the pharaoh, supported by Amun, dominating even distant lands of the Assyrians and Medes.⁸³⁰ Yet Eratosthenes’ digression gives us the sense that even nearby Arabia Eudaimon is beyond imperial control. The limits of Ptolemaic imperial reach have been explicitly highlighted.

To further emphasise these limitations, a counter-cartographic use of emplotment presents the Ptolemaic Arabian Gulf vector in a state of profound dysfunction, a space which frustrates, rather than facilitates, movement. Our gaze is drawn over the Arabian Gulf in the direction of Berenikē and Ptolemaïs Thēron, on the other side of the narrow strait. Although we are tantalisingly close to imperial ports, Arabia is depicted as a land that Egyptian merchant vessels struggle to reach. Perhaps reflecting some of the all too real difficulties of sailors we saw in the *Petrie Papyrus* last chapter, Eratosthenes has us follow Egyptian merchants on a treacherous voyage.⁸³¹ We navigate a minefield of islands via ‘extremely narrow passages’.⁸³²

⁸²² Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2). Abundant Arabia Felix: Diod. Sic. 2.48.

⁸²³ Cf. Diod. Sic. 2.49; Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 9.4.2-3.

⁸²⁴ Roller (2018) 923

⁸²⁵ Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2).

⁸²⁶ ‘τὰ δ’ ἔσχατα πρὸς νότον καὶ ἀνταίροντα τῇ Αἰθιοπία’, F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2).

⁸²⁷ ‘καθήκοντες πρὸς τὰ στενὰ καὶ τὴν διάβασιν τοῦ Ἀραβίου κόλπου, τὸ δὲ βασίλειον αὐτῶν Τάμνα καλεῖται’, F95 (=Strabo 16.4.2).

⁸²⁸ ‘...εἶτα διαβὰς εἰς τὴν Ἀραβίαν, κἀντεῦθεν τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐπελθὼν τὴν σύμπασαν’, Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.4); cf. Ptolemaic imperial claims to Arabia: *Cairo* 22183.11; Artemidoros (=Strabo 16.4.14); Fraser (1972) 2.304-5. n360. R. Gmirkin (2006) 162.

⁸²⁹ ‘μηνύουσαν ἱεροῖς γράμμασι τὴν διάβασιν αὐτοῦ’, Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.4); cf. Hdt. 2.102-11.

⁸³⁰ R. S. Simpson (1996) 242-257 (=CM 31088).

⁸³¹ For *P. Petr.* II 40(a), III 53(g). See: Ch2.2.III.

⁸³² ‘ἐξ δὲ νῆσοι συνεχεῖς ἀλλήλαις τὸ διάγραμμα ἐκπληροῦσαι στενοὺς τελέως διάπλους ἀπολείπουσι’, Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.4).

When these are successfully negotiated, we then follow the coast, with the sinuosities of numerous bays (ἐγκολπιζουσι) making the landscape increasingly unchartable.⁸³³ This is not the bountiful coast of Theophrastos' account, brimming with unguarded frankincense and myrrh.⁸³⁴ Rather, it is one that resists cartography. Further on, movement lurches to a halt. We are thwarted by a coast without ports for 5000 stadia, beyond which none have returned (οὐδένα ἀφιχθαί).⁸³⁵ Unlike the rapid Ptolemaic vectors of the orthodox imperial map, Eratosthenes' sea voyage is one of inhibited movement by ships denied access to the interior.⁸³⁶ The counter-cartographic emplotment has deftly subverted the tools of the imperial *periplous*, presenting a land which is nearby yet resolutely inaccessible.⁸³⁷

Eratosthenes' Arabian digression uses implicit juxtaposition to compare Arabian cities and their governments to those back home. His description of cities immerses us in the streetscape, where we first marvel at the similarities, the buildings 'like those of the Aegyptians in respect to the manner in which the timbers are joined together'.⁸³⁸ These cities match Alexandria in grandeur, being 'beautifully adorned with both temples and royal palaces'.⁸³⁹ Yet the similarities end here. In terms of governance, these bustling Arabian kingdoms are characterised as living in peace and autonomy, something which contrasts with the Ptolemies' perennial war-footing.⁸⁴⁰ The digression builds to a remarkable challenge to Ptolemaic royal ideology, highlighting the inadequacies of dynastic succession. The reader is encouraged to ask how these 'prosperous' Arabian cities are governed.⁸⁴¹ We are primed to receive the answer as a comparison with Egypt:

‘χώραν δ’ ἐπέχουσιν οἱ τέτταρες νομοὶ μείζω τοῦ κατ’ Αἴγυπτον Δέλτα· διαδέχεται δὲ τὴν βασιλείαν οὐ παῖς παρὰ πατρός, ἀλλ’ ὅς ἂν πρῶτος γεννηθῆ τινὶ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν παῖς μετὰ τὴν κατάστασιν τοῦ βασιλέως· ἅμα γὰρ τῷ κατασταθῆναί τινα εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀναγράφονται τὰς ἐγκύους γυναϊκὰς τῶν ἐπιφανῶν ἀνδρῶν, καὶ ἐφιστᾶσι φύλακας· ἥτις δ’ ἂν πρώτη τέκη, τὸν ταύτης υἱὸν νόμος ἐστὶν ἀναληφθέντα τρέφεσθαι βασιλικῶς, ὡς διαδεξόμενον.’

The four jurisdictions cover more territory than the Aegyptian Delta; no son of a king succeeds to the throne of his father, but the son of some notable man who is born first

⁸³³ F95 (=Strabo 16.4.4); cf. Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 9.4.4-6.

⁸³⁴ Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 9.4.4.

⁸³⁵ Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.4).

⁸³⁶ Agatharchides *On the Erythraean Sea* F41b (=Diod. Sic. 3.18.3-4); Burstein (2012). *Cairo* 22183.2-25; compare with Ptolemy III's 'thorough investigation' of the region: Diod. Sic. 3.18.3-4. Cf. Sea voyage in Strabo: Strabo 9.1.9; Clarke (1999) 23-4, 202-5. Tan shows how Tacitus' Germany similarly resists orientation and movement: Tac. *Ger.* 2.2, 5.1-3, difficulties with reaching/locating groves: 7.3, 9.2, 10.2, 39.1; Tan (2014) 188-91.

⁸³⁷ Counter-cartography co-opting imperial tools: Mogel (2008) 107; negating original value: Knabb (1959) 67. Misleading cartographic representations of inaccessibility: Soffner (1942) 469-70.

⁸³⁸ 'αἶ τε οἰκίαι ταῖς Αἰγυπτίαις εἰκόασι κατὰ τὴν τῶν ξύλων ἔνδουσι', Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.3).

⁸³⁹ 'κατεσκευασμένα καλῶς ἱεροῖς τε καὶ βασιλείοις', F95 (=Strabo 16.4.3); cf. Strabo's Alexandria: 'ἔχει δ' ἡ πόλις τεμένη τε κοινὰ κάλλιστα καὶ τὰ βασιλεία', Strabo 17.1.8.

⁸⁴⁰ Kingship & Prosperity: 'Μοναρχοῦνται δὲ πᾶσαι καὶ εἰσιν εὐδαίμονες', spice trade: 'καὶ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀρώματα μεταβάλλονται τοῖς ἐμπόροις'. Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.3). Ptol IV's Seleukid conflict: Burstein (2008) 146; J.D. Grainger (2010).

⁸⁴¹ 'Μοναρχοῦνται δὲ πᾶσαι καὶ εἰσιν εὐδαίμονες, κατεσκευασμένα καλῶς ἱεροῖς τε καὶ βασιλείοις' ...χώραν δ' ἐπέχουσιν οἱ τέτταρες νομοὶ μείζω τοῦ κατ' Αἴγυπτον Δέλτα', Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.3).

after the appointment of the king; for at the same time that someone is appointed to the throne, they register the pregnant wives of their notable men and place guards over them; and by law the wife's son who is born first is adopted and reared in a royal manner as future successor to the throne.

Eratosth. F95 (=Strabo 16.4.3) (tr. H.L. Jones (1917))

The passage begins with a comparison to the Ptolemaic heartland, positioning us to compare Arabia with Ptolemaic Egypt. Eratosthenes' use of the impersonal—κατασταθῆναί τινα—suggests that all aristocrats are similarly worthy of assuming the diadem, challenging notions of hereditary succession fundamental to Ptolemaic ideas of divine kingship.⁸⁴² Unlike the inherited greatness immortalised by Theokritos' panegyric (ἐκ πατέρων), Eratosthenes instead emphasises *paideia*: an aristocratic boy is 'reared in a royal manner' (ἀναληφθέντα τρέφεσθαι βασιλικῶς), echoing the themes we first encountered in the *Letter to King Ptolemy*.⁸⁴³ Eratosthenes' implicit criticism of divine hereditary succession appears to be drawing on Peripatetic traditions, in which absolute kingship is contrary to nature and law, while hereditary succession is almost always 'disastrous'.⁸⁴⁴ We have seen such anxieties already in Eratosthenes' *Arsinoë*, where an undisciplined Ptolemy IV goes unchecked.⁸⁴⁵ In contrast, all aristocratic families of Arabia Eudaimonia are presented as equally capable of effective kingship. The message is clear: it is the *paideia* received from the royal tutor, not the king's divine ancestry, which assures stable succession. Implicit juxtaposition in the Arabian digression functions as effective *parrhēsia*, challenging the assumptions of divine hereditary kingship in Ptolemy's court.⁸⁴⁶

Less intact, but adopting a similar approach which encourages unflattering comparisons, Eratosthenes' descriptive digression of India appears to build on Megasthenes' accounts of a naturally endowed land utilised by an exemplary civilisation.⁸⁴⁷ Like Megasthenes, Eratosthenes describes India as essentially a massive alluvial plain 'deposited by the rivers'.⁸⁴⁸ Eratosthenes emphasises the fecundity of the land, drawing our attention to the Indus valley. We are encouraged to make comparisons with the Ptolemaic heartland, the Indus Delta being 'similar to the Delta of Egypt'.⁸⁴⁹ But here the similarities end—Eratosthenes takes particular interest in the river as a causal agent of the monsoon, a natural engine for Indian abundance. This is no *paradoxia*, rather, it is examined in natural terms; the monsoon is the product of fluvial vapour, the plains becoming flooded and lush, producing, like Arabia, two yearly harvests, in contrast with Egypt's one.⁸⁵⁰ Probably following Megasthenes, Eratosthenes observes a dizzying array of crops which make even the Nile Delta's harvest appear relatively diminutive.⁸⁵¹ The reference to multiple harvests gives us a sense of a civilisation making abundant use of exceptional resources. This runs counter to the Egyptian exceptionalism seen

⁸⁴² Echoes of Bion's depictions of Kush: 'Αιθίορες τοὺς βασιλέων πατέρας οὐκ ἐκφαίνουσι', (BNJ 668 F1 = *Schol. Acts*; *Anecdota Graeca*).

⁸⁴³ Theocr. *Id.* 17.13-33; A. Kampakoglou (2019) 176-7; court education: I. Savalli-Lestrade (2017) 102-105.

⁸⁴⁴ Arist. *Pol.* 3. 1287a-b; *sauf* king with superlative virtue: 1288a, 1283b-13-27; J. Miller (1998) 501-3.

⁸⁴⁵ Echoed in Polybios: Polyb. 7.6.7; re. Ptol IV: 5.34, 42, 87; 14.12.3-5.

⁸⁴⁶ Implicit juxtaposition: U. Wolf-Knuts (2003).

⁸⁴⁷ See: Ch. 5.2, 5.4 of dissert.

⁸⁴⁸ '... ἐκ τῶν ποταμῶν προ<σ>κεχωσμένον', Eratosth. F71 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.2-3).

⁸⁴⁹ '...παραπλησίαν τῷ κατ' Αἴγυπτον Δέλτῳ', F74 (=Strabo 15.1.13-14).

⁸⁵⁰ F75 (=Strabo 15.1.20). Cf. F95.

⁸⁵¹ F74 (=Strabo 15.1.13).

in the works of court poets like Theokritos who boasts that no other country ‘produces as much as the lowlands of Egypt when the Nile in flood soaks and breaks up the soil, and none has so many cities of skilled craftsmen.’⁸⁵² In contrast, the *dérive* of Eratosthenes’ descriptive geography encourages us to look closely at barbarian countries in a way which diminishes the brilliance of the Ptolemaic kingdom.

The surviving fragments of Eratosthenes’ Arabian and Indian digressions challenge notions of Ptolemaic supremacy in terms of culture and resources. This culminates powerfully at the end of Book Three with Eratosthenes’ famous levelling manifesto, ‘withholding praise from those who divide the whole multitude of mankind into two groups, namely, Greeks and Barbarians’.⁸⁵³ Traditionally treated as a rationalist appeal, we may now approach it with additional insight.⁸⁵⁴ Drawing on Stoic and Cynic traditions, the appeal provides a veiled challenge to the Ptolemaic court.⁸⁵⁵ Eratosthenes compares ‘refined’ (ἀστείους) barbarians and ‘bad’ (κακούς) Greeks; yet he is remarkably vague about who, precisely, the ‘bad’ Greeks are, when effective propaganda would, quite naturally, nominate the Antigonids or Seleukids as illustrative examples.⁸⁵⁶ Instead, we are left to drift in speculation, and the Ptolemies are not explicitly excluded from the pejorative category. In contrast, no such speculation is needed for the ‘refined’ barbarians, with clear examples given. They are ‘Indians and Arians... Romans and Carthaginians, who carry on their governments so admirably’.⁸⁵⁷ The reason for their refinement is, among other things, *paideia*. These barbarian peoples are ‘law-abiding and [have] political instinct, and the qualities associated with education (παιδείας) and powers of speech, whereas in other people the opposite characteristics prevail!’⁸⁵⁸ The *dérive* of Eratosthenes’ cultural digression has taken us on a journey in which Ptolemaic cultural assumptions have been inverted. Barbarian cultures have been elevated, with the Ptolemies’ cultural supremacy, economic and administrative superiority, and even divine hereditary succession, seriously challenged.

II. ‘Nonsense’: digressions undermining religious ideology

The Ptolemaic kings lived in a world where gods walked the earth. As we saw in the previous chapter, Alexander and Ptolemy I Soter had their divinity confirmed by Amun-Zeus at Siwa.⁸⁵⁹ Ptolemy III claimed lineage from Herakles and Dionysos via Alexander and Soter, a

⁸⁵² ‘...ἀλλ’ οὔτις τόσα φύει ὅσα χθαμαλὰ Αἴγυπτος, Νεῖλος ἀναβλύζων διεράν ὄτε βῶλακα θρύπτει, οὐδέ τις ἄστεα τόσσα βροτῶν ἔχει ἔργα δαέντων’. Theocr. *Id.* 17.79-81. A. Kampakoglou (2019) 177; cf. divine Nile flood: Callim. *Hymn* 1.18-27; A.A. Stephens (2003) 96-102. See also *Hymn IV* (Philae, Temple of Isis, Room X, north wall): L.V. Zakbar (1988) 50-52.

⁸⁵³ ‘...οὐκ ἐπαινέσας τοὺς δίχα διαιροῦντας ἅπαν τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πλῆθος εἷς τε Ἑλληνας καὶ βαρβάρους’, Eratosth. F155 (=Strabo 1.4.9).

⁸⁵⁴ Tarn (1948) 2.438-448; A.B. Bosworth (1988) 101-12; cf. Plut. *De Alex. Fort.* 1.329-330; Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.1252b, 1.6.1255a.

⁸⁵⁵ Cynic precedents: Diog. Laert. 6.61; Stoic precedents: Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 1.6.349a-d.

⁸⁵⁶ Eratosth. F155 (=Strabo 1.4.9).

⁸⁵⁷ ‘καθάπερ Ἰνδοὺς καὶ Ἀριανούς, ἔτι δὲ Ῥωμαίους καὶ Καρχηδονίους, οὕτω θαυμαστῶς πολιτευομένους’, F155 (=Strabo 1.4.9).

⁸⁵⁸ ‘ὡσπερ δι’ ἄλλο τι τῶν οὕτω διελόντων, τοὺς μὲν ἐν ψόγῳ τοὺς δ’ ἐν ἐπαίνῳ τιθεμένων, ἢ διότι τοῖς μὲν ἐπικρατεῖ τὸ νόμιμον καὶ τὸ πολιτικόν καὶ τὸ παιδείας καὶ λόγων οἰκεῖον, τοῖς δὲ τάναντία’. F155 (=Strabo 1.4.9).

⁸⁵⁹ See Ch. 2.3.I.

genealogy echoed loudly by a generation of court poets.⁸⁶⁰ Ptolemy IV, among his many other religious innovations, substantially expanded the role of Dionysos, and turned Homer into a god, who was now to be relocated to Alexandria.⁸⁶¹ Eratosthenes' digressions challenge these very myths. As we will see, the geographer distances us from a divine role in the formation of the landscape. Instead, powerful natural forces are seen to act as engines of change. Eratosthenes is certainly not the first elite scholar to present such religious scepticism. Xenophanes of Kolophon scoffed at gods that walked the Earth with 'a voice and body'.⁸⁶² Platonists, too, had a long record of ambivalence towards myths.⁸⁶³ Peripatetics identified efficient, formal, and material causes, creating an aetiological distance between divine will and the landscape.⁸⁶⁴ Drawing on these traditions, Fraser understands Eratosthenes' criticisms of myth as a wholesale rejection of mythological causation 'on rational grounds'.⁸⁶⁵ Yet a survey of his scepticism reveals a remarkable precision to his criticisms. Dionysos', Herakles', and Alexander's divinity are challenged, while other traditional Greek gods are left alone by the geographer. Oracular scepticism is reserved for Amun-Zeus at Siwa, which is assaulted with all the tools of Peripatetic causation at Eratosthenes' disposal, yet Delphi, Dodona, and other oracles are not mentioned. The newly deified Homer finds himself a frequent target of Eratosthenes' ironic remarks, whereas other venerable poets are unscathed. Eratosthenes' choice of targets guides the parameters of our gaze, giving focus for our concerns. Far from a scattergun shot fired against mythology in the tradition of Xenophanes, a much more precise attack is revealed: the deities targeted are those most vital for the propping up of Ptolemaic religious ideology.

A. 'Incredulous': the geographic *kolakeia* of the imperial Dionysos

As we have seen, Dionysos loomed large in early Ptolemaic imperial ideology, the regime especially emphasising his martial aspects.⁸⁶⁶ The myth of an imperial Dionysos was ancient but had gained new significance in the accounts of Alexander's conquests of India.⁸⁶⁷ Arrian recalls the tales of Alexander following in the footsteps of an all-conquering Dionysos in India, the historian acknowledging their potential resistance to rational analysis. The impossible becomes feasible 'when one adds the divine element to the story'.⁸⁶⁸ In his accounts, Eratosthenes is the extreme sceptic. Arrian piously distances himself from Eratosthenes' stance, although he nonetheless seems influenced by Eratosthenes' agenda.⁸⁶⁹

Indeed, Eratosthenes' scepticism permeates our main sources, Arrian and Strabo. Both were evidently following a passage which emphatically rejected Dionysian legends, particularly

⁸⁶⁰ *OGIS* 54.4-5; Theocr. *Id.* 17.19-23.

⁸⁶¹ Ptol. IV & Homer: Ch 2.3.II.

⁸⁶² '... ἔχειν φωνήν τε δέμας τε', F14 (Leshner (1992)).

⁸⁶³ Contra myth-poetry: Pl. *Leg.* 7.801c-e, 829c-d.; Pl. *Resp.* 2.378b-383c, 10.595c; 10.606e-607b; Pl. *Ion* 534b-d, 537a-542b; Pl. *Euthyph.* 5e-6b; T. Gould (1990) 210-219.

⁸⁶⁴ αἰτία: Arist. *Ph.* 2.3, 8.4; *Gen an.* 1.1; humans, other animals, from nature: *Part. an.* 1.1, 4.11; natural causes: Arist. *Mete.*: wind (2.2); earth (2.7-8); sea (2.1-5); M. Matthen & R.J. Hankinson (1993) 19-33; Goldhill (2002) 98-104, 115-6.

⁸⁶⁵ Fraser (1971) 24-26.

⁸⁶⁶ See: Ch. 2.2.III & Ch. 3.2.I of dissert.

⁸⁶⁷ Eur. *Bacch.* 1; Hom. *Il.* 6.132. Aristodemos *BNJ* 383. Alexander cult, Alexandria: Hölbl (2001) 92-5.

⁸⁶⁸ '...ἐπειδὴν τὸ θεῖόν τις προσθῆ τῷ λόγῳ...', Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.2.

⁸⁶⁹ A.B. Bosworth (1988) 67.

those concerning Alexander.⁸⁷⁰ Arrian outlines the Dionysian miracles discovered by Alexander's entourage which are criticised by Eratosthenes: the land of the god's youth, Nyssa, is identified and located in India by Alexander's historians and, significantly, promoted by the Ptolemaic court historian Kleitarchos in his *Histories on Alexander*.⁸⁷¹ Testimony comes from Nyssa's leader, Akouphis, who apparently traces his city's origins to Dionysos' conquest.⁸⁷² The miraculous proof (τεκμήριον) of Dionysos' presence is discovered in the ivy and laurel found in the forest canopy around them.⁸⁷³ The enthusiastic Macedonians ascended the mountain, where they are 'transported with Bacchic frenzy'.⁸⁷⁴ Eratosthenes' attitude to these miraculous events is one of derision. Arrian describes him as 'incredulous' (ἀπιστεῖ), a stance Arrian is careful not to follow all the way.⁸⁷⁵

For Eratosthenes, it is *kolakeia*, that most malign of court hazards, which is responsible for these delusions. Strabo agrees with the 'most trustworthy' Eratosthenes that the geographical and botanical associations with Dionysos are not only misplaced, but outright 'fabrications of the flatterers of Alexander'.⁸⁷⁶ Likewise, in Arrian, divine influence is magnified by those wishing 'to please Alexander'.⁸⁷⁷ Eratosthenes highlights the wilful deception of the king: an ambitious *kolax* would either distort 'some local legend' or even 'make it up themselves' to ingratiate himself with Alexander.⁸⁷⁸ The language and the archetypes adopted are those of the *symposion*. Eratosthenes condemns false friends which blind even the most powerful of kings with geographic propaganda. More insidiously still, we discover a king willingly seduced (ἤθελε πιστὰ εἶναι).⁸⁷⁹ There is enough blame, then, to go around.

Rather than a divine founding god of the Ptolemaic regime, Alexander emerges as a vulnerable and all-too-mortal figure subject to the same moral hazards as Eratosthenes' own Ptolemaic patrons.⁸⁸⁰ The parallels would be difficult for Eratosthenes' audience to miss. The 'New Dionysos', Ptolemy IV, was developing his own links to Dionysos and, it is implied, was possibly vulnerable to the same excesses as Alexander, blinded by the distorting lens of imperial science presented by court *kolakes*.⁸⁸¹ Eratosthenes' *Geographika* is one in which mortal

⁸⁷⁰ Arrian's moderate scepticism (Arr. *Anab.* 5.2.1-7) 'inspired chiefly by Eratosthenes', P.A. Brunt (1983) 435. It is unfortunately cut from Berger-Roller's fragments, although Bosworth attributes all to Eratosthenes: Bosworth (1986) 143 n.28, see also 122, n.111; (1988) 63, 67; (1995) 2.210-219. Followed by explicit Eratosthenes fragment (F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.-4)).

⁸⁷¹ Alexander historians distinguish Nysa (city) from Meros (mountain). *Contra*: Mt. Nysa: Hom. *Il.* 6.133; Eur. *Bacch.* 556. Kleitarchos *BNJ* 137 F17 (Schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.904). Arrian contrasts Kleitarchos, Megasthenes with Eratosthenes: Bosworth (1988) 40-5, 70-2.

⁸⁷² Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.1-2, 6; Strabo 15.1.8; Plut. *Alex.* 58. N.G.L. Hammond (1993) 248-9.

⁸⁷³ Strabo 15.1.7; Arr. *Anab.* 5.1.6, 5.2.6; Kleitarchos *BNJ* 137 F17. Osiris-Dionysos plants ivy in India: Diod. Sic. 1.19.5-8.

⁸⁷⁴ '...καὶ ἀνευάσαι τὸν θεὸν καὶ βακχεῦσαι', Arr. *Anab.* 5.2.6-7; Bosworth (1986) 123; (1988) 70-1.

⁸⁷⁵ Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1-4); Curt. 8.10.16-18; contra unaffected Alex: Just. *Epit.* 12.7.8.

⁸⁷⁶ 'Ὅτι δ' ἐστὶ πλάσματα ταῦτα τῶν κολακευόντων Ἀλέξανδρον', Strabo 15.1.9, following trustworthy sources (πιστότατα), esp. Eratosthenes: cf. F21 (15.1.7).

⁸⁷⁷ '...λέγει πάντα ὅσα ἐς τὸ θεῖον ἀναφέρεται ἐκ Μακεδόνων πρὸς χάριν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐς τὸ ὑπέρογκον ἐπιφημισθῆναι', Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1).

⁸⁷⁸ '...καὶ τινα μῦθον ἐπιχώριον ἀκούσαντας ἢ καὶ αὐτοὺς ξυνθέντας φημίσαι', F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1-4).

⁸⁷⁹ Arr. *Anab.* 5.2.1; Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1); Bosworth (1995) 2.207-8; (1986) 123.

⁸⁸⁰ Alex. cult & eponymous priesthood: W. Clarysse & G. Van der Veken (1983) 4-52.

⁸⁸¹ Ptol. IV Dionysian innovations: see Ch. 2.2 III of dissertation; for Eratosthenes' criticisms of court science as *kolakeia*: 3.2 I.

kings are sorely in need of *parrhēsia* from a trusted *Philos* as an antidote to the seductive flattery of the court.⁸⁸²

B. 'Nothing to do with the Kaukasos': dismantling the geography of Herakles

Herakles, the imperial god who made the *oikoumenē* safe for civilisation, was the other great ancestor god of the Ptolemies via Alexander.⁸⁸³ By the reign of Ptolemy III, this divine lineage was broadcast on *stelai*, the king being 'the descendant on the father's side of Herakles, son of Zeus'.⁸⁸⁴ Like Ptolemy III, Herakles is a 'benefactor of all mankind'.⁸⁸⁵ Also like Ptolemy, Herakles' benefaction was an imperial one, the hero having 'by his own labours... brought under cultivation the inhabited world'.⁸⁸⁶ In Ptolemaic hands, Herakles served as a god of imperial geography.

Herakles' imperial reach and power secured the maritime perimeter of the *oikoumenē*. By one account, the boundary of the Pillars of Herakles acquired their name after the eponymous hero 'narrow[ed] the passage' to deny sea-monsters access to the middle sea.⁸⁸⁷ With the 'deep-eddying Ocean' relegated to the periphery, the inner sea is secured for conquest.⁸⁸⁸ Dionysos Skytobrachion, probably writing in Alexandria, goes further in emphasising Herakles' domesticating role, placing Herakles, instead of Jason, in command of the argonauts, civilising the once-savage places along the coasts of the Mediterranean and Euxine.⁸⁸⁹ In this way, Herakles' deeds can serve as a foundational myth, bolstering Ptolemaic thalassocratic claims. The geography of the Ptolemaic admiral, Timosthenes, became a fulfilment of this process, confidently organising and partitioning the interior as Ptolemaic space in the footsteps of the putative ancestor.⁸⁹⁰

Such achievements by Herakles are dismissed, with a stiff dose of *parrhēsia*, as 'absurdities' (διαβάλλων τὴν φλυαρίαν) by Eratosthenes.⁸⁹¹ The Pillars are of great geographical significance for the geographer, marking the beginning of the prime parallel which acts as the primary demarcation of his *oikoumenē*, and he seems eager to emphasise the powerful natural, rather than supernatural, forces behind their creation.⁸⁹² Eratosthenes encourages us to view the Pillars from an elevated perspective, far above Herakles' earth-bound exploits. From this height we discover the Pillars are part of a much bigger process of natural causation.

⁸⁸² Phld. *Peri Parrhēsia* F15; Berrey (2017) 106-7.

⁸⁸³ Ptolemaic Alexander-Herakles genealogy: A.D. Nock (1928) 139 n22.

⁸⁸⁴ 'τὰ μὲν ἀπὸ πατρὸς Ἡρακλέος τοῦ Διός', *OGIS* 54 (tr. Bevan (1927) 192-3)); Fraser (1972) n.106, 2.344.

⁸⁸⁵ '...Ἡρακλῆς καὶ ἀναμφιλόγως εὐεργέτης ἐγένετο τῶν ἀνθρώπων', Ael. *VH* 5.3; Diod. Sic. 4.8-30.

⁸⁸⁶ 'ἔτι κατ' ἀνθρώπους ὄντα τοῖς ἰδίους πόνοις ἐξημερῶσαι τὴν οἰκουμένην', Diod. Sic. 4.8.5; kingship: 4.9.4. 'Mobile heroes' in geography: Clarke (2017b) esp. 19-21. Domestication as colonial geography: Gregory (2001) 85-9; Harley (1988a) 282.

⁸⁸⁷ '...συναγαγεῖν τὸν πόρον εἰς στενόν', Diod. Sic. 4.18.5. Diodoros' refers to several unnamed sources for Herakles account: possibly Matris of Thebes, Timaeus of Tauromenium, & Dionysius of Mitylene, (the latter fl. in 2nd C. Alexandria), C. H. Oldfather (1935) ix-x. cf. Pillars, alternative accounts: Strabo 3.5.5; Pomp. Mela. 1.27.

⁸⁸⁸ Hom. *Il.* 18.7-8; J. Romm (1992) 20-26.

⁸⁸⁹ *BNJ* 32 F6a (=Apollod. *Bibliotheca* 1.118); F14 (=Diod. Sic. 4.40).

⁸⁹⁰ See: Ch. 2.1. of dissert.

⁸⁹¹ Eratosth. F13 (=Strabo 1.3.1); F14 (=Strabo 2.4.2).

⁸⁹² The prime parallel: Eratosth F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31), F55 (=Strabo 2.1.37); F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31); F82 (=Strabo 2.1.31). Cf. Aristotle's scepticism less emphatic, nomenclature honouring Herakles euergetism: Ael. *VH* 5.3 (=Arist. F678).

Following Strato of Lampsakos' theories, Eratosthenes shows that it is the Mediterranean Sea, flooded by the fluvial waters in the faraway Euxine, which carved this breach into the external Ocean in the distant past.⁸⁹³ In comparison, the heroic exploits of Herakles seem diminished and almost parochial. The elevated lens allows us to move with ease, away from the Pillars to the Euxine Sea, and back again, in our Peripatetic search for causation. Traditionally a tool of imperial geography, here, the elevated perspective has been subverted. Both the significance and the credibility of the Ptolemies' divine ancestor are fundamentally challenged.

Eratosthenes is equally hostile to Herakles' interference with geography in the east. For this, we should return to the same passage in which the geographer challenges Alexander's Dionysian epiphany in India.⁸⁹⁴ And once more we are encouraged to focus on geography as *kolakeia*. The spurious evidence that Herakles conquered India is emphatically rejected.⁸⁹⁵ This is followed with a more targeted criticism. Eratosthenes' ire is directed at cartographic propaganda—wilful distortions of the map made to flatter the king. We are told that the Indian mountain Paropamisos was renamed Mount Kaukasos by the Macedonians, 'though it has nothing to do with Caucasus'.⁸⁹⁶ Through this geographical fabrication, Alexander is linked to Herakles, who released Prometheus, that original friend of humankind, from bondage at Mount Kaukasos.⁸⁹⁷ Furthermore, this distortion makes an audacious spatialising gesture, suggesting that Alexander 'actually crossed Mount Caucasus', walking in the footsteps of Herakles.⁸⁹⁸ Eratosthenes, it seems, does not allow for us to dismiss this as cartographic error, reiterating that this was done 'all for the glory of Alexander', something which emerges in both our main sources.⁸⁹⁹ As with the Dionysian revelry, it is *kolakeia*, appealing to the king's vanity, that has confounded and disoriented Alexander, undermining his ability to accurately locate himself in the world. Eratosthenes' royal patron is in a similar danger of being misled. This digression serves as a warning, a sobering draught of *parrhēsia* to rescue his royal *philos* from a fate similar to that of Alexander.

C. A 'reasonable explanation': the oracle of Siwa

Eratosthenes uses the tools of natural causation and his selective scepticism to dismantle only one oracle, that of Amun-Zeus at Siwa. As we saw last chapter, this oracle at the seemingly miraculous oasis deep in the Libyan desert was where Alexander and Ptolemy I had their divinity and universal kingship confirmed.⁹⁰⁰ In a departure from the oracular traditions of Aristoboulos, Kleitarchos, and Ptolemy, Eratosthenes seems determined to find alternative natural explanations for this ostensibly god-touched land. Following the science of Strato, Eratosthenes provides evidence that demystifies the landscape. In doing so he transforms this

⁸⁹³ Eratosthenes follows Strato: Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.3-4); Strabo ultimately supports Eratosthenes: Strabo 3.5.5. Natural Flood: Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.3-4); F16 (=Strabo 1.3.11-15), F17 (=Strabo 1.2.31); Cf. Arist. *Mete.* 1.14. *Contra*. Divine flood, e.g.: Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.2; NRSV Gen. 7-9.

⁸⁹⁴ Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1-4); Arr. *Ind.* 5.10-13; Strabo 15.1.7-9; Bosworth (1995) 2.213-19; (1986) 143..

⁸⁹⁵ Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.4, *Ind.* 5.12-13.

⁸⁹⁶ '...οὐδέν τι προσήκοντα τοῦτον τῷ Καυκάσῳ', Arr. *Ind.* 5.10-11.

⁸⁹⁷ Hes. *Theog.* 526-535.

⁸⁹⁸ '...ὡς ὑπὲρ τὸν Καύκασον ἄρα ἐλθόντα Ἀλέξανδρον', Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1); Hes. *Theog.* 525-6.

⁸⁹⁹ '...τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκα δόξης', Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1); Strabo 11.5.5; for a rationalist reading: Roller (2010) 139; Bosworth (1986) 118.

⁹⁰⁰ See: Ch. 2.3.I.

ideological foundation of the Ptolemaic dynasty into a geographical curio, an archaic victim of shifting coastlines.

Eratosthenes' investigations of Siwa feature in an extended fragment in Strabo, in which he is presented as following Strato's arguments for natural causation. Strato of Lampsakos, the *'physikos'*, initially was patronised at the court of Ptolemy II, and maintained lifelong connections with Arsinoë II.⁹⁰¹ It was from the relative safety of Athens' Lykeion that we see his most controversial work, fleshing out a system of natural causation which 'shattered the old authority'.⁹⁰² Strato's world was one of jostling particles, where 'all things have, as it were, been produced spontaneously, not by any craftsman or originator'.⁹⁰³ It is Nature, a force 'without any consciousness', which is the causal agent encouraging both growth and decay.⁹⁰⁴ Mortals, along with the rest of matter, are at the mercy of unconscious natural forces.⁹⁰⁵ Strato provides the scientific tools with which Eratosthenes can challenge the sacred oracle of the Ptolemies.

Eratosthenes follows Strato to present a Peripatetic analysis in which Siwa appears as the product of natural, rather than divine, phenomena.⁹⁰⁶ We are encouraged to adopt a deep temporal lens and envisage the effects of the flood before the Pillars were breached an age ago, when Mount Kasion 'was once washed by the Sea' while the lowlands near Pelousion were connected with shoal-water to the Arabian Gulf.⁹⁰⁷ Yet coastlines shift. He observes that 'the temple of Ammon was formerly on the sea, but is now situated in the interior because there has been an outpouring of the sea'.⁹⁰⁸ This deep temporal lens allows us to explain its isolation, for it could only be as 'distinguished and so well-known as it is if it was situated on the sea, and that its present position so very far from the sea gives no reasonable explanation of its present distinction and fame'.⁹⁰⁹ The oracle's location amid a Libyan desert landscape emphasises its obscurity and smallness as a victim of greater natural forces.⁹¹⁰ It is presented

⁹⁰¹ *LSJ* s.v. φυσικός: A.II.2. All Strato fragments follow Sharples (2011): Biography: F1 (=Diog. Laert. 5.58-64); direct patronage: Diog. Laert. 5.3.58. Letters, Arsinoe: 5.3.60.

⁹⁰² Strato F8. '... vehementius etiam fregit quodam modo auctoritatem veteris disciplinae', F8B (=Cic. *Acad. post.* 1.33-34).

⁹⁰³ '...omnia quasi sua sponte esse generata, nullo arti ce nec auctore', F19C (=Lactant. *De Ira Dei* 10.1); also: F50A (=Stob. *Ecl.* 1.14.1h); F50B (=Simpl. *In Cael.* 1.8 277a33-b9); F40 (=Simpl. *In Phys.* 5.6.230b21-28); P.T. Keyser (2011a) 293-312.

⁹⁰⁴ 'quae causas gignendi augendi minuendi habeat sed careat omni et sensu et figura', Strato F19A (=Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.35); Polybios' criticisms: F10 (=Polyb. 12.25c3); Repici (2011) 415-20.

⁹⁰⁵ Strato F18 (=Cic. *Acad.* 2.121; *Cf. Contra*: Pl. *Leg.* 10.888 b-c).

⁹⁰⁶ Geus (2002).

⁹⁰⁷ 'ὅτι δοκοίη καὶ τὸ Κάσιον ὄρος περικλύζεσθαι θαλάττη', Eratosth. F16 (=Strabo 1.3.13). Eratosthenes, unlike Strato, argues for series of events, the sea uneven.

⁹⁰⁸ 'τάχα δὲ καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἄμμωνος ἱερὸν πρότερον ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάττης ὃν ἐκρύσεως γενομένης νῦν ἐν τῇ μεσογαίᾳ κεῖσθαι', F15 (=Strabo 1.3.4).

⁹⁰⁹ 'εἰκάζει τε τὸ μαντεῖον εὐλόγως ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον γενέσθαι ἐπιφανές τε καὶ γνώριμον ἐπὶ θαλάττη ὃν τὸν τε ἐπὶ πολὺ οὕτως ἐκτοπισμὸν ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάττης οὐκ εὐλογον ποιεῖν τὴν νῦν οὔσαν ἐπιφάνειαν καὶ δόξαν', F15 (=Strabo 1.3.4); The passage's pronouns are unclear. First, Eratosthenes presents archaeological evidence for Siwa flooded (1.3.4). Then Eratosthenes praises (ἐπαινεῖ δόξαν) Xanthos' and Strato's views (1.3.4). The concerns immediately after (Mt. Kasion), are those of Eratosthenes elsewhere (Eratosth. F16 1.3.13), but without clear signposting by Strabo here. Roller claims it for Eratosthenes (F15, (2010)), Sharples for Strato (F54 (2011)). Possibly Strato's discussion, used to by Eratosthenes' to support his argument, reported by Strabo.

⁹¹⁰ See Appendix 4. *cf.* Bagnold (1941) xxi.

as a geographical absurdity, the mighty oracle which deified Alexander and Ptolemy is now reduced to a geographical anachronism.⁹¹¹

Eratosthenes went to significant lengths to prove this. His account places us beside him in the landscape at Siwa, looking for archaeological and geological evidence to support Strato's theory of natural flux:

‘Μάλιστα δέ φησι ζήτησιν παρασχεῖν, πῶς ἐν δισχιλίοις καὶ τρισχιλίοις ἀπὸ θαλάττης σταδίοις κατὰ τὴν μεσόγαιαν ὁρᾶται πολλαχοῦ κόγχων καὶ ὄστρέων καὶ χηραμύδων πλῆθος καὶ λιμνοθάλατται, καθάπερ φησὶ περὶ τὸ ἱερόν τοῦ Ἄμμωνος καὶ τὴν ἐπ’ αὐτὸ ὁδὸν τρισχιλίων σταδίων οὔσαν· πολλὴν γὰρ εἶναι χύσιν ὄστρέων, ἄλας τε καὶ νῦν ἔτι εὐρίσκεσθαι πολλούς, ἀναφυσήματά τε θαλάττης εἰς ὕψος ἀναβάλλειν, πρὸς ᾧ καὶ ναυάγια θαλαπτίων πλοίων δείκνυσθαι, ἃ ἔφασαν διὰ τοῦ χάσματος ἐκβεβράσθαι, καὶ ἐπὶ στυλιδίων ἀνακεῖσθαι δελφῖνας ἐπιγραφὴν ἔχοντας Κυρηναίων θεωρῶν.’

Eratosthenes says further that this question in particular has presented a problem: how does it come about that large quantities of mussel-shells, oyster-shells, scallop-shells and also salt-marshes are found in many places in the interior at a distance of two thousand or three thousand stadia from the sea - for instance (to quote Eratosthenes) in the neighbourhood of the temple of Ammon and along the road, three thousand stadia in length, that leads to it? At that place, he says, there is a large deposit of oyster-shells, and many beds of salt are still to be found there, and jets of salt-water rise to some height; besides that, they show pieces of wreckage from seafaring ships which the natives said had been cast up through a certain chasm, and on small columns dolphins are dedicated that bear the inscription: ‘Of Sacred Ambassadors of Cyrene’.

Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.4) (tr. H.L. Jones (1917))

Eratosthenes uses the full force of autopsy to dismantle the mysticism associated with the oracle's location. Seashells are found all around the temple (περὶ τὸ ἱερόν), something immediately evident for visitors to the region today.⁹¹² Shipwrecks and saltwater springs are additional remnants of a lost sea. Furthermore, seafaring Kyrenians, we are to suppose, carved the dolphins which featured in their immediate surroundings. Modern excavations suggest that Eratosthenes would not have encountered a thriving complex celebrating the cults of Alexander and Ptolemaic dynastic cults in third century Siwa.⁹¹³ Instead, he found a temple-complex past its peak. There, he did not have to look hard to find the archaeological evidence for a universe of flux and decay. This foundation of Ptolemaic dynastic religion withers under the autopsy of the court geographer.

Eratosthenes' oracular scepticism is apparently directed at the oracle of Amun-Zeus at Siwa alone. We have no indication that he similarly targeted Delphi, Dodona, or Lebadia, despite the geographer making many other natural digressions concerning the Greek mainland.⁹¹⁴ Strabo's explanation for the origins of the oracle at Dodona makes reference to Homer, and it

⁹¹¹ Central geography for oracle: M. Scott (2010) 14-17; Kindt (2016) 2, 12.

⁹¹² See appendix 4, esp. fig. 2a-b, 7A-D.

⁹¹³ A. Fakhry (1950) 35; K.P. Kuhlmann (1988); Gill (2016) 137-140, 416-421. Cf. elaborate Alexander cult, Bahria oasis: Fakhry (1942) 2.45.

⁹¹⁴ Eratosth. F136 (=Strabo 1.2.20); F139 (=Strabo 8.7.2); F140 (=Strabo 8.8.4).

would be in keeping with Strabo's style to counterpoint this with Eratosthenes, if the latter had had anything substantive to say to challenge the Homeric tradition.⁹¹⁵ Strabo's discussion of Delphi is similarly mute on Eratosthenes' views. In addition to its religious importance, Strabo considers its central and accessible location as informing its initial foundation in western Phokis.⁹¹⁶ Such a digression would be ideal for a sceptical observation by Eratosthenes, if one existed. Yet again at the oracle of Trophonios at Lebadia we appear to have an ideal target for Eratosthenes' irony, as seen in the anecdote of Semos used by Athenaios.⁹¹⁷ However, these oracles are far too distant, both geographically and ideologically, to be exposed and dismantled by Eratosthenes' scientific lens. Far from the universal sceptic portrayed by Fraser, Eratosthenes' criticisms in his descriptive geography are evidently reserved for undermining the ideological structures which support Ptolemaic divine kingship. This can be most coherently understood as descriptive geography performing as *parrhēsia*, a sobering dose of frank speech to challenge the excessive claims of Eratosthenes' *philos* and patron.

D. 'Homer knew nothing': taking on the newly deified Poet

The introduction of Eratosthenes' *Geographika* provides significant space for denigrating the geographic authority of Homer. The agonistic stance is, in itself, not especially remarkable: the introductions to Archimedes' *The Sand Reckoner* and Eratosthenes' own *Letter to King Ptolemy* promote the author's science at the expense of his rivals, including posthumous ones.⁹¹⁸ Like his letter-treatise, Eratosthenes' *Geographika* also places itself in opposition to former geographers. But here the former geographer most clearly targeted for denigration is the recently deified Homer.⁹¹⁹ Eratosthenes explicitly challenges Homer's geography in the introduction with criticisms infused with sardonic wit. In doing so, Eratosthenes uses his geographical treatise to undermine a foundation of the religious ideology of Ptolemy IV's court. The *Geographika* encourages the reader to question the now-divine Poet's status as a fountainhead of all knowledge. Homer's mortal failings are on show in his erroneous geography.⁹²⁰

Eratosthenes' attacks on Homer survive exclusively in Strabo's hostile representations.⁹²¹ Strabo's Homer is the unimpeachable figure of the Stoic tradition, being described as 'the founder of the science of geography'.⁹²² For Strabo, Homer 'knows and clearly describes' not only the Mediterranean but the very ends of the *oikoumenē*.⁹²³ In contrast, Eratosthenes'

⁹¹⁵ Origins of Dodona: Strabo 7.7.5, 7.10-11; Hom. *Od.* 16.403-5; Hom. *Il.* 16.233; H.W. Parke (1967) 35-9.

⁹¹⁶ 'καὶ ἅμα ἡ θεῖσις τῶν χωρίων ἀρχὴν ὑπαγορεύει φυσικὴν' Strabo 9.3.2. For Strabo, Delphi's location geographically convenient & religiously significant: Strabo 9.3.2, 7.

⁹¹⁷ Ath. 14.614a-b; Strabo 9.3.9.

⁹¹⁸ *Contra* prior scholarship: Eratosthenes' letter-treatise see: 3.2.II of this chapter. Archimedes: 'Οἴονται τινες, βασιλεῦ Γέλων, τοῦ ψάμμου τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἄπειρον εἶμεν τῷ πλήθει... Ἐγὼ δὲ πειρασοῦμαι τοι δεικνύειν δι' ἀποδειξιῶν...', Archim. *Sand reckoner* 1 (Heiberg (1913) 2.216); Berrey (2017) 55-6, 133-19. Cf. poetic belatedness: Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004).

⁹¹⁹ 'considerable assault', L. Kim (2010) 50-1.

⁹²⁰ Eratosthenes' criticism of Homer's geography and causation opposed by Strabo: Eratosth. F2 (=Strabo 1.2.3); F3 (=Strabo 1.2.7); F5 (=Strabo 1.2.15); F6 (=Strabo 1.2.11-14); F10 (=Strabo 1.2.22-4).

⁹²¹ Dueck (2000) 34-40, esp. 39; Geus (2002) 264-8; Roller (2010) 115.

⁹²² '...ἀρχηγέτην εἶναι τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπειρίας Ὅμηρον', Strabo 1.1.2.

⁹²³ 'Ὡσπερ οὖν τὰ ἔσχατα καὶ τὰ κύκλω τῆς οἰκουμένης οἶδε καὶ φράζει σαφῶς ὁ ποιητής', Strabo 2.1.10. Strabo defence of Homer's geography is prolific, e.g.: 1.1.11, 1.2.3-24, 2.1.30, 3.2.12; 3.4.4, 13.1, 14.2.28, 17.1.5 etc. Kim (2007); D.M. Schenkeveld (1976) 64; Dueck (2000) 31-40.

criticisms of Homer, which draw on a sceptic philosophical tradition, blend serious technical criticism with playful humour, ostensibly concerning the geographical accuracy of the Poet's works.⁹²⁴ According to Eratosthenes, Homer is only familiar with Greece and Ionia, so those who follow Homer as an accurate geographer for distant places 'stand convicted of error.'⁹²⁵ These errors can be seen at Alexandria's very doorstep; the position of Pharos island which, as we have seen, loomed large in the imperial geographic consciousness of the court, is erroneously described by Homer as a full day's travel from the coast.⁹²⁶ The court audience, able to stroll to Pharos in under an hour, is encouraged to chuckle at this verifiable example of Homer's basic geographic limitations.

However, Eratosthenes' survey of Homer's errors reveals more than concerns regarding cartographic accuracy.⁹²⁷ The geography of mytho-historical figures and monsters—the location of the Gorgons, Sirens, Giants, and the various places of Menelaos' and Odysseus' wanderings—are dismissed by Eratosthenes as Homeric 'nonsense' (φλυάροϋς).⁹²⁸ This scepticism of Homer and his mythic lens is exemplified in Eratosthenes' quip: 'You will find the scene of the wanderings of Odysseus when you find the cobbler who sewed up the bag of the winds.'⁹²⁹ Mocking Aeolos' bag of winds, Eratosthenes replaces the divine with Peripatetic wind theory: winds being natural forces explained by condensation, evaporation and flux.⁹³⁰ The geographer understands the importance of the winds for navigation as much as geography, using them to account for inconsistencies in sailors' reports.⁹³¹ In contrast to this more serious analysis, the deified Homer's geography is to be laughed at, and dismissed.⁹³²

Eratosthenes' challenge to Homeric geography is a bold stance in a court which explicitly deified the Poet.⁹³³ As we saw in the previous chapter, the deified Homer, an omniscient figure entwined with Ptolemaic centripetal geography, was of profound ideological significance for the Ptolemies.⁹³⁴ In sharp juxtaposition, Eratosthenes' *Geographika* pointedly reveals Homer's ignorance of the *oikoumenē*, in a geographical and temporal sense. Far from a detached scepticism, his criticisms of Homer function as *parrhēsia*, disrupting ideological orthodoxy. Indeed, Eratosthenes' readers find themselves complicit in questioning the geographic value of Homer, laughing along at the expense of Ptolemy IV's favoured new god. The king,

⁹²⁴ Trad. *Contra Homer*: Xenophanes contra Homer's anthropomorphism: Xenophanes F11, F12 (Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.193, 1.289) (ed. Leshner, 1992); Roller (2018) 10. Plato's ambivalence re. Homer: Pl. *Resp.* 10.606e-607b; Pl. *Ion.* 530a, 531a-c, 532c-e; 539e-542a. Gould (1990) 20-28.

⁹²⁵ Only Greece accurate: Eratosth. F8 (=Strabo 7.3.6-7); '...τοὺς δὲ μὴ πεπλάσθαι λέγοντας ἀλλ' ὑποκεῖσθαι ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ μὴ συμφωνεῖν ἐλέγχεσθαι ψευδομένουσ', F3 (=Strabo 1.2.7).

⁹²⁶ F10 (=Strabo 1.2.23); cf. Pharos: *Od.* 4.354-7; Egypt: 14.258, 17.427. Today, Pharos (Fort Qaitbey) is only an hour's walk (3.9kms) from the palace (Lochias peninsula). For Pharos' & imperial geography, see: Ch. 2.2.II.B, III.A of dissert.

⁹²⁷ Roller (2010) 114, 118-19; (2018) 22.

⁹²⁸ Eratosth. F3 (=Strabo 1.2.7). *Contra Jason, Menelaos, Odysseus*: F13 (=Strabo 1.3.1-2), F17 (=Strabo 1.2.31); *Contra Sirens & Gorgons*: F6 (=Strabo 1.2.12), F3 (=Strabo 1.2.7). cf. *Od.* 12.39-54; *Il.* 5.735; Hes. *Theog.* 275-9; 'undefined by Homer', Roller (2010) 117.

⁹²⁹ 'φησὶ τότ' ἂν εὐρεῖν τινα, ποῦ Ὀδυσσεὺς πεπλάνηται, ὅταν εὕρῃ τὸν σκυτέα τὸν συρράψαντα τὸν τῶν ἀνέμων ἄσκόν'. Eratosth. F5 (=Strabo 1.2.15); bag of winds: *Od.* 10.16-25, 46-70.

⁹³⁰ Wind: Eratosth. F45 (=Strabo 2.3.2); F11 (=Strabo 1.2.20-1); Arist. *Sit. Vent.* 1-25; Vitruvius *De arch.* 1.6.9.

⁹³¹ Eratosth. F128 (=Strabo 2.5.24).

⁹³² Irony as *parrhēsia*: Phld. *Peri Parrhēsia* F26.

⁹³³ Homer's cult: Fraser (1972) 1.311, 611, 2.862; *Supp. Hell.* 11.979 at 493; Hunter (2018) 2.

⁹³⁴ See: Ch. 2.3.II of dissert.

Eratosthenes suggests, would be better served following the findings of his scholars than looking for geographic guidance from an ancient poet whose aim, after all, was ‘to entertain, not to instruct’.⁹³⁵

III. ‘Broken through’: natural digressions as *parrhēsia* in descriptive geography

In Eratosthenes’ digressions, powerful natural forces resist imperial control. Natural forces had always loomed large in Greek literary traditions, initially assuming a divine form in Hesiod, with ‘broad-breasted Earth’ (Γαῖ’ εὐρύστερονος) giving birth, *inter alia*, to high mountains, Ocean, and ‘violent hearted’ (ὑπέρβιον ἦτορ) Thunder and Lightning.⁹³⁶ Yet natural forces in Herodotus assume a more impersonal shape, the historian encouraging his audience to assume a long-sighted temporal lens to understand natural processes. For Herodotus, the venerable land of Egypt is the product of slow but powerful forces, the Nile Delta only ‘lately’ coming into existence.⁹³⁷ Aristotle observes long-term natural causation shaping the landscape. Shifting coasts are the result of long-term changes in rainfall.⁹³⁸ The water cycle is a natural process happening imperceptibly before us: the sun, a great engine of change (μεταβολῆς), causes evaporation which counterbalances the fluvial influx into the sea.⁹³⁹ Mythological associations function as a way of dismissing opposing theories, such as Demokritos’ subterranean rivers which Aristotle likens to Aesop’s fables.⁹⁴⁰ As we have seen, Strato of Lampsakos pushed the boundaries of Peripatetic causation further, the gods having vacated the field, while a non-sentient Nature alone shapes the landscape. This scientific tradition provides Eratosthenes with an alternate authority with which to challenge Ptolemaic imperial geography.

The use of natural forces to subvert imperial geography features in modern and ancient counter-geographies. For Reclus, nature was a force fundamentally hostile to imperial control. This subversive lens manifests itself directly in Genzō Sarashina’s descriptions of Hokkaido, in which the elements threaten to overwhelm human agency, leaving us in little doubt of nature’s awesome power.⁹⁴¹ Two millennia before these reflections, Tacitus’ *Germania* presented territory beyond the Rhine in similarly powerful terms, an unmappable landscape definitively beyond imperial control.⁹⁴² *Germania* in Tacitus’ treatment is a labyrinth of relative geography, forests and groves confounding hodological orientation, leaving the reader ‘without any means to retrace her steps’.⁹⁴³ Such disorientation is more familiar in paradoxographical novels like those of Lucian, where the reader is immersed in a world of

⁹³⁵ ‘... στοχάζεσθαι ψυχαγωγίας, οὐ διδασκαλίας’, Eratosth. F2 (=Strabo 1.2.3). Cf. Polybios’ ambivalence: 4.40.2.

⁹³⁶ Hes. *Theog.* 117-119, 126-142; continents: 357-9; landscape: Hes. *Op.* 116-18; J.S. Clay (2009); S. A. Nelson (1998) 68-76.

⁹³⁷ Hdt. 2.3-4, 2.10, 15; Delta’s harvest: Hdt. 2.14.

⁹³⁸ Arist. *Mete.* 1.14 (352a); 2.3.356b-357a.

⁹³⁹ Arist. *Mete.* 2.2 (254b, 355b).

⁹⁴⁰ Arist. *Mete.* 2.3 (356b).

⁹⁴¹ Reclus (1905) 1.1; Sarashina (1930); Willems (2016) 76-7; nature as overwhelming: Gregory (2001) 102-3.

⁹⁴² Unchartable landscape: Tac. *Ger.* 7, 12, 14, 18-19, 29.

⁹⁴³ Tan (2014) 190-191, 195; cf. Caes. *B. Gall.* 6.25.

untamed nature which the protagonist somehow navigates.⁹⁴⁴ However, in Tacitus' *Germania*, this sense of an overwhelming nature is utilised for counter-geographic purposes, undermining the imperial gaze of an elite Roman audience.

In the court of the Ptolemies, Eratosthenes adopts similar tools to Tacitus, using hydrological and geological investigations to diminish imperial agency. Adopting the natural causation of Strato, Eratosthenes repeatedly reminds us of our diminished agency when positioned beside 'the action of water, fire, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other similar agencies'.⁹⁴⁵ As we move through Eratosthenes' *sphragides*, these elements create myriad 'irregularities' on the earth's surface, wilfully frustrating a sense of order for an imperial audience.⁹⁴⁶ The sea is a surprisingly disruptive force, the reader encouraged to appreciate its full impact by adopting a deep temporal lens.⁹⁴⁷ Following Xanthos and Strato, Eratosthenes carries us into a distant past, where we observe rivers steadily filling the Euxine sea until the banks of the Hellespont are breached.⁹⁴⁸ This in turn floods the basin that becomes the Mediterranean Sea. Ultimately, this too cannot be contained; the banks of the Pillars of Herakles were 'broken through' (ἐκραγῆναι) by the relentless water in a chain of natural causation, and 'the places that had hitherto been covered with shoal-waters were left dry'.⁹⁴⁹ As we have seen, such elemental forces can have profound consequences for the Ptolemies, resulting in the isolation of an ideologically significant oracle, and the dismissal of the role of Herakles, all achieved through Eratosthenes' use of Peripatetic causation. Natural forces in the Euxine Sea, rather than Ptolemaic gods, shape the landscape. Eratosthenes, it seems, is resurrecting older geographic works, emphasising prickly examples which, adapted to the new ideological context, contain fresh, ideologically disruptive meanings.

Elsewhere, Eratosthenes uses natural forces to diminish our sense of human agency more directly. In his Moasada-Sodom digression, Strabo contrasts local folklore with Eratosthenes' account of the destruction of the metropolis and its twelve colonies. Strabo's vivid emplotment has us pass cliffs dribbling (σταγόννας) pitch and rivers stinking (δυσώδεις) of sulphur, intermittently passing 'ruined settlements here and there'.⁹⁵⁰ On our journey, we listen to locals who say fire and sulphur 'swallowed up' (καταποθεῖεν) the cities.⁹⁵¹ Almost as a sobering afterthought, he observes that Eratosthenes disputes such accounts.

⁹⁴⁴ Lucian, *Ver. Hist.*: untameable nature, 1.6-7, 10, 19, 31-2, 35-6; monstrous plants: 1.7, 22; beasts: 1.11, 13-18, 22, 30-1. A. Georgiadou & D.H.J. Larmour (1998).

⁹⁴⁵ '...οἱ συμβαίνουσιν ἐκ τε ὕδατος καὶ πυρὸς καὶ σεισμῶν καὶ ἀναφυσημάτων καὶ ἄλλων τοιούτων', Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.3-4).

⁹⁴⁶ 'οὐχ ὡς ἐκ τόνου δέ, ἀλλ' ἔχει τινὰς ἀνωμαλίας', Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.3-4). Peripatetic observation: natural change over long duration: Arist. *Mete.* 1.14.

⁹⁴⁷ Eratosth. F47 (=Strabo 2.1.1-3); natural Ocean encircling *oikoumenē*: F39 (=Strabo 1.1.8-9); F33 (=Strabo 1.4.6-8); F69 (=Strabo 15.1.10); cf. Arist. *Mete.* 2.5.

⁹⁴⁸ As well as Strato, Eratosthenes closely follows the botanist Xanthos: Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.4); cf. Xanthos' submarine study: *BNJ* 765 F3a (=Plin. *HN* 25.14); A. Paradiso (2018). Compare also: 'true cause' of Hellespont: Polyb. 4.39.7-42; Clarke (1999) 82-4.

⁹⁴⁹ '...καὶ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα τὸν κατὰ Στήλας ἐκραγῆναι πόρον, πληρωθείσης ὑπὸ τῶν ποταμῶν τῆς θαλάττης, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἔκρυσιν ἀνακαλυφθῆναι τὰ τεναγώδη πρότερον', Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.4); further developed: Polyb. 4.39, 42.

⁹⁵⁰ '... κατοικίας τε ἀνατετραμμένας σποράδην', Strabo 16.2.44.

⁹⁵¹ Strabo 16.2.44; cf. *NRSV Gen.* 19.24; *Deut.* 29.22; *Matt.* 10.15.

Eratosthenes takes us back to a strikingly different landscape when ‘the country was a lake’.⁹⁵² Adopting the tools of Strato, we can see that far-reaching geological movements led to ‘outbreaks’ of water, the lake draining and exposing this wasteland.⁹⁵³ We are lifted above immediate and local concerns, an elevated view used to distance us from divine intervention and human agency alike. We are small in the landscape without a god in sight, the achievements of civilisation precariously dependent on the whims of mindless natural forces.

The Greek heartland is not spared from Eratosthenes’ natural forces with earthquake, tsunami, and deluge thumbing their noses at human agency. With the authority of autopsy, Eratosthenes acts as our guide, showing us the treacherous strait where the city of Helikē was sunk. Ferryman and fishermen inform us of journeys dogged by subsurface relics of an inundated civic landscape, ‘perilous for those who fished with nets’.⁹⁵⁴ Eratosthenes then takes us to the Stymphalian Lake, a karst basin which floods seasonally. We discover that it reacts violently when blocked by engineers, who try in vain to seal the inlets with special pits (ζέρεθρα or βάραθρον).⁹⁵⁵ Conversely, the opening of these pits is equally fraught, the water ‘rushes out of the plains all at once’, leading to flooding, even of temples in distant Olympia.⁹⁵⁶ Further tumult is witnessed in the flow of the Erasinos, which ‘sinks and flows beneath the mountain [Chaon] and reappears in the Argive land’.⁹⁵⁷ The water’s subterranean movement seems impervious to any human claims to the landscape. The reassuring fluvial flood, so familiar to an Egyptian audience, has been turned on its head in Eratosthenes’ natural digressions.⁹⁵⁸ Denying us any sense of control over the landscape, water is pitted against human agency and emerges triumphant. The geographer’s digressions bring us up close to defiant and subversive natural forces which transgress boundaries and disrupt the audience’s sense of imperial order.⁹⁵⁹

3.4 The ‘spinning whorl’: spatial geography as *parrhēsia*

Spatial geography, usually associated with an elevated gaze of imperial control, does not function as expected in Eratosthenes’ *Geographika*. Rather than asserting centrality, reach, and control, the geographer’s parallels, meridians, and *sphragides* disrupt the assimilating imperial gaze, providing an alternate lens through which to view the *oikoumenē*. A way to understand this unorthodox use of spatialising gestures can be found in alternate and radical geography. Counter-cartographical representations use what the Situationists called *détournement*—appropriating and reimagining imperial geographic features to encourage alternate, often

⁹⁵² ‘λιμναζούσης τῆς χώρας’, Eratosth. F18 (=Strabo 16.2.44).

⁹⁵³ ‘ἐκρήγμασιν ἀνακαλυφθῆναι τὴν πλείστην’, F18 (=Strabo 16.2.44); Strato’s earthquakes were build-up of pressure, heat/cold: Strato F53 (=Sen. *QNat.* 6.13.1-6).

⁹⁵⁴ ‘...κίνδυνον φέροντα τοῖς δικτυεῦσιν’, Eratosth. F139 (=Strabo 8.7.2).

⁹⁵⁵ F140 (=Strabo 8.8.4); Roller (2010) 215.

⁹⁵⁶ ‘Ερατοσθένης δέ φησι ...πάλιν δ’ ἀναστομυμένων ἄθρου ἐκ τῶν πεδίων ἐκπεσόν εἰς τὸν Λάδωνα καὶ τὸν Ἀλφειὸν ἐμβάλλειν, ὥστε καὶ τῆς Ὀλυμπίας κλυσθῆναι ποτε τὴν περὶ τὸ ἱερόν γῆν, τὴν δὲ λίμνην συσταλῆναι’, F140 (=Strabo 8.8.4).

⁹⁵⁷ ‘ὑποδύντα ὑπὸ τὸ ὄρος, ἐν τῇ Ἀργείᾳ πάλιν ἀναφανῆναι’, F140 (=Strabo 8.8.4).

⁹⁵⁸ ANET370 (*The Hymn to the Aten*) at N. Wyatt (2001) 82-3; Kanobos decree: Cairo 22187.7-8.

⁹⁵⁹ Wood (2010) 222-3.

subversive, views of familiar landscapes.⁹⁶⁰ These alternate geographies serve carefully constructed pedagogical purposes, to problematise, criticise, and provide alternatives to the dominant geographic lens.⁹⁶¹

While historians of ancient geography have become increasingly interested in the disruptive effect of descriptive geography, spatial geography still tends to be overlooked. It has more often been treated as the lens which asserts the imperial gaze.⁹⁶² However, Tan's revision of Tacitus' *Germania* may provide an approach to identify counter-cartographic tendencies in ancient spatial geography. The German perimeter is 'obtuse' and the interior hostile to partition and organisation, with stations and roads replaced by uncertainly located barbarian groves.⁹⁶³ Tan observes that this resistant counter-cartography encourages the audience to consider the 'nature and possibility' of independence and *libertas* beyond Roman imperium, a concern also found in his works elsewhere.⁹⁶⁴ This section of the chapter will demonstrate that Eratosthenes similarly adopted spatial geographical tools to express geographical *parrhēsia*. In the *Geographika*, we are encouraged to assume an alternate focalisation which appropriates the imperial techniques of elevation, displacement, partition, demarcation, and omission to challenge the imperial map. Eratosthenes' focus on unattainable areas of the globe combines with his use of alternate mathematical and topographical demarcation to build a tapestry which limits, obfuscates, and frustrates imperial geographic claims.⁹⁶⁵

I. Gazing beyond 'the limit': observation and frustration in Eratosthenes' spatial geography

Eratosthenes' spatial geography uniquely highlights lands explicitly beyond imperial reach. Peripheral boundaries of the habitable world had long been defined on ancient maps with remarkable confidence, presenting uncolonised space as fundamentally beyond mortal realm. For the Neo-Babylonian imperial gaze, the delimiting boundary of the world was the 'bitter river' (*mar-ra-tum*), depicted elegantly in the *mappamundi* as a perfect circle of habitable imperial space with only abstractions beyond.⁹⁶⁶ For Homer, Ocean 'bounds' (πείραθ') the edge of the mortal realm.⁹⁶⁷ With the emerging belief in a spherical globe by Eleatics, Platonists, and Peripatetics, the ocean became diminished in its liminal capacity.⁹⁶⁸ Indeed, Eratosthenes is closely following Aristotle when he argues that the ocean is theoretically, if not practically, traversable.⁹⁶⁹ In its place, the *oikoumenē* is hemmed in by climate zones (*klimata*) based on the meteorological understanding of the curved globe; the tropic of Cancer

⁹⁶⁰ *Détournement*: Knabb (1959) 67-8; 'counter-mapping' Pickles (2004) 177-188; Bunge (1975); Crampton & Krygier (2004) 11-33; Gregory (1989) 67-96.

⁹⁶¹ Mogel (2008) 118; Pickles (2004) 12.

⁹⁶² Foucault (1980).

⁹⁶³ Tac. *Ger.* 2.2, 5.1-3, difficulties reaching/locating groves: 7.3, 9.2, 10.2, 39.1; Tan (2014) 181, 188-91; Cf. confident partitions in Caesar's Gaul: Caes *BGall.* 1.1-2, 6, 8,, 10, 12.

⁹⁶⁴ Tan (2014) 201-2; cf. J.B. Rives (1999) 42-56. Cf. Tac. *Agr.* 1.21.

⁹⁶⁵ Alternate focalisation: Gregory (2001) 85-97.

⁹⁶⁶ *BM* 92687.14-17; Text, obv.3-4, 9; R. Rochberg (2019) 32-34; F. Horowitz (1988).

⁹⁶⁷ *Od.* 11.13-20; *Il.* 18.7-8; Romm (1992) 12-13; cf. Hdt. 4.36.2.

⁹⁶⁸ Round Earth: Diog. Laert. 9.21; Pl. *Phd.* 108e-109a.

⁹⁶⁹ '...εἰ μὴ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ Ἀτλαντικοῦ πελάγους ἐκώλυε...' Eratosth. F33 (=Strabo 1.4.6); cf. 'εἰ μὴ που κωλύει θαλάττης πλήθος, ἅπαν εἶναι πορεύσιμον', Arist. *Mete.* 2.5 (362b).

to the south and the Arctic Circle to the north becoming the limits of habitation.⁹⁷⁰ This had a lasting effect on imperial geography. For Polybios' and Appian's history, concerned with geopolitical control, the map ends here.⁹⁷¹ Strabo is critical of Eratosthenes' excessive consideration of the world beyond these boundaries.⁹⁷² For imperial geographers, the edge of the *oikoumenē* was the edge of the relevant world.

In contrast, Eratosthenes encourages us to adopt a far-seeing gaze beyond the *oikoumenē* in his highly fragmented poem *Hermes*.⁹⁷³ From a height far above the globe, the *klimata* are no longer the map's edge, but a harmonious 'fil conducteur' in a panoramic vision of the world.⁹⁷⁴ Our attention is first drawn to the 'burned' (πυρόωσιν) zone of the equator, then to the arctic and antarctic zones, where ice falls from the very heavens.⁹⁷⁵ The poem concludes with a diplopic vision of two equal temperate zones, divided by the impenetrable torrid zone. Significantly, both these temperate zones are blessed by the fertility of Demeter.⁹⁷⁶ The view is Platonically symmetrical, diminishing imperial space and disrupting the viewer's sense of a unified, let alone centripetal, imperial map.⁹⁷⁷ Far from the centre of the world, we are but one part of a larger whole, definitively removed from lands as significant as our own. The elevated lens of spatial geography, traditionally used to assert imperial control, has been appropriated for subversive ends.⁹⁷⁸

In the *Geographika*, this same approach is more thoroughly developed, the *klimata* used to frustrate imperial reach. We are first raised up high above the earth to a point where local features, both human and natural, 'disappear from consideration, because they are small in comparison with the great size of the earth and admit of being overlooked'.⁹⁷⁹ Elevation functions here like Van Sant's satellite photography, to create 'cartographic silence', effectively distancing the audience from geopolitical concerns.⁹⁸⁰ Our imperial vision effectively wiped clean, Eratosthenes then directs us to observe the 'sphere-shaped' earth in its entirety.⁹⁸¹ Echoing the concerns of the *Hermes*, we observe the antipodes as 'another inhabitable world', the globe being possibly 'inhabited all the way round'.⁹⁸² Yet such an extensive gaze, traditionally used to express reach in imperial maps, is pointedly frustrated in the *Geographika*

⁹⁷⁰ Κλίματα: *LSJ* s.v. κλίμα 4. Arist. *Mete.* 2.5; torrid: 2.5 (361); arctic: 2.5 (362).

⁹⁷¹ Polyb. 1.2.7; also 1.1-2, 3.7.4; App. *B.Civ.* Praef. 1-5.

⁹⁷² Strabo 1.1.1; 1.4.1 (=Eratosth. F25), 2.5.13 (=Eratosth. F31), 2.5.5. Strabo's imperial geography: Dueck (2010) 236-51. Geography of conquest: Unwin (1992) 52.

⁹⁷³ M.A. Powell (1925), 'Eratosthenes, Ἑρμῆς', 62 F16.

⁹⁷⁴ Rochette (2014) 141-2.

⁹⁷⁵ Torrid: 'Ἡ μὲν ἔην μεσάτη, ἐκέκαυτο δὲ πᾶσα περι[πρὸ] / τυπτομένη φλογμοῖσιν, ἐπεὶ ῥά ἐ Μαΐραν ὑπ' αὐτὴν / κεκλιμένην ἀκτῖνες ἀειθερέες πυρόωσιν', *Hermes* F16 6-8; Arctic: 'οὐ μὲν ὕδωρ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν κρύσταλλος', 11-12 (Powell (1925) F16).

⁹⁷⁶ Two equal temperate zones: 'δοιαὶ δ' ἄλλαι ἕασιν ἐναντία ἀλλήλησι / μεσηγὺς θέρεός τε καὶ ὑετίου κρυστάλλου, / ἄμφω εὐκρητοὶ τε καὶ ὄμπνιον ἀλδήσκουσαι / ἄμφω εὐκρητοὶ τε καὶ ὄμπνιον ἀλδήσκουσαι / καρπὸν Ἐλευσίνης Δημήτερος', *Hermes* F16; also: 15-19; Rochette (2014) 141-142.

⁹⁷⁷ Platonic symmetry: Pl. *Tim.* 92a; Solmsen (1942) 192-213; Geus (2002) 203-5.

⁹⁷⁸ Cf. elevation for panoptic control: Harley (1992) 244; (1988b) 57-76; Pickles (1992) 194-5, 201.

⁹⁷⁹ 'συγκρῦπτοιο γὰρ ἂν τὸ ἐξέχον τῆς γῆς ἐν τῷ τοσοῦτῳ μεγέθει μικρὸν ὄν καὶ λαυθάνειν δυνάμενον', Eratosth. F30 (=Strabo 2.5.5); Geus (2002) 268.

⁹⁸⁰ Silence: Harley (1988b) 57-76; satellite photography, distancing effects: H. Blume (1990); Wood (1992) 55-56.

⁹⁸¹ 'ὅτι εἰ σφαιροειδῆς ἡ γῆ, καθάπερ καὶ ὁ κόσμος, περιοικεῖται...', Eratosth. F25 (=Strabo 1.4.1).

⁹⁸² Other *oikoumenē* speculated in southern hemisphere & across Atlantic: 'ἀλλ' ἐκείνην ἄλλην οἰκουμένην θετέον', F31 (=Strabo 2.5.13); F33 (1.4.6); F25 (1.4.1); Geus (2002) 270.

by the impenetrable nature of the torrid *klimata*.⁹⁸³ This zone is uncrossable: when one travels 3,000 stadia south of Meroë, the land is ‘uninhabitable on account of the heat’.⁹⁸⁴ This is the same latitude as the Cinnamon-Bearing Country, which is defined as ‘the limit’ of habitation.⁹⁸⁵ Beyond this liminal realm, the torrid zone is described as clearly ‘inaccessible’ (ἀπρόσιτον).⁹⁸⁶ The interrupted cartographic perspective, as Monmonier has observed, discourages any sense of global interaction, let alone control.⁹⁸⁷ The elevated panoptic perspective which should be asserting authority over the map has been co-opted, the geographer integrating *klimata* to frustrate, rather than affirm, the imperial gaze.⁹⁸⁸ Imperial space becomes regional, rather than universal, distancing us from Ptolemaic pretensions to universal kingship.⁹⁸⁹ Spatial orientation has been used to humble the royal patron’s imperial vision in a sobering act of geographical *parrhēsia*.

Having established the limits of territorial expansion, Eratosthenes nonetheless takes us, much to the irritation of his imperially-minded critics, southwards into to the torrid zone’s very heart, the equator.⁹⁹⁰ Here, we pause to focus on a slender strip, temperate on elevated equatorial mountains.⁹⁹¹ In contrast to the hellish equator of Hanno’s accounts, these equatorial highlands are lush.⁹⁹² Eratosthenes’ focus on this region, most probably informed by Simonides and Bion, seems to have supported his argument that the Nile came from a southern source, not a western one.⁹⁹³ Eratosthenes traces the river’s shape as a reverse nu (‘I’), which, despite its ponderous curves, ultimately comes from the south, its source in the elevated equatorial zone.⁹⁹⁴ This, we learn, is fed by monsoonal rains.⁹⁹⁵ The source of the Nile, tantalisingly cut off by the thousands of burning stadia, sits uneasily alongside the court poetry of Poseidippos and Theokritos, in which ‘all the roaring rivers... [are] ruled by Ptolemy’.⁹⁹⁶ There are no triumphant inbound Ptolemaic vectors from the Kush in Eratosthenes.⁹⁹⁷ Instead, Ptolemaic impotence is on public display. The geographer’s focus on the Nile’s idyllic, unattainable source, somehow sustained in the heart of the impenetrable tropics, undermines the claims of Ptolemaic reach and control.

⁹⁸³ Distant gaze to control: Wood (1992) 12-13, 44-6.

⁹⁸⁴ ‘...τῶ ἀοικήτῳ διὰ θάλλπος’, Eratosth. F30 (=Strabo 2.5.5-6); F34 (=Strabo 2.5.7). *cf.* 2.5.3.

⁹⁸⁵ ‘...πέρας καὶ ἀρχὴν δεῖ τίθεσθαι τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς οἰκουμένης πρὸς μεσημβρίαν’, F34 (=Strabo 2.5.7); Geus (2002) 279.

⁹⁸⁶ Eratosth. F100 (=Strabo 17.3.1-2).

⁹⁸⁷ Monmonier (1991) 107, esp. Fig. 7.16 ‘Spheres of Influence’.

⁹⁸⁸ Elevated lens: Eratosth. F25 (=Strabo 1.4.1); F28 (=Plin. *HN* 2.247-8); F29 (= *GGM* 1.519); F30 (=Strabo 2.5.5-6); F31 (=Strabo 2.5.13); F33 (=Strabo 1.4.6-8); F34 (=Strabo 2.5.79); F37 (=Strabo 1.4.5). Co-option of geographical tools: Debord (1959) 62-66; N. Thompson (2008) 16-19.

⁹⁸⁹ Contextual diminution on map: Soffner (1942) 469-72.

⁹⁹⁰ Eratosthenes’ temperate equator: Eratosth F45 (=Strabo 2.3.2). For Strabo, Eratosthenes goes beyond his remit: ‘ἀλλοτριολογεῖν ἂν δόξειεν’, Eratosth. F25 (=Strabo 1.4.1).

⁹⁹¹ Further developed by Polybios: Polyb. 34.7, 8 (=Eratosth. F45); & C. Ptolemy: Ptol. *Geog.* 44.6-8.

⁹⁹² Hanno *Peripl.* 16; Plin. *HN* 2.108, 5.47, 6.163; Roller (2006) 39-41; (2010) 159.

⁹⁹³ Simonides *BNJ* 669 T1 (= Plin. *HN* 6.183); Bion of Soloi’s *Aithiopia*: *BNJ* 668 T1 (=Diog. Laert. 4.58); Burstein (2009). Western source of Nile: Hdt 2.31-35.

⁹⁹⁴ I shaped Nile: Eratosth. F98 (=Strabo 17.1.2).

⁹⁹⁵ Nile from southern rainy territory: Eratosth. F41 (= Plin. *HN* 2.183-5); F99 (= Procl. *In Ti.* 37b.); Arist. *Mete.* 1.13; Monsoon: Eratosth. F74 (=Strabo 15.1.13).

⁹⁹⁶ Theoc. *Id.* 17.92; *Cf.* Poseidippos *Lithika* (P. *Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309 AB7).

⁹⁹⁷ G.J. Shaw (2017) 25-7, 79-81.

Finally, the geographer shifts our elevated gaze to our *oikoumenē*. Yet Eratosthenes provides a new way of seeing this familiar space.⁹⁹⁸ He omits traditional geopolitical boundaries and constructs an alternate lens governed by mathematical and topographical features. For his critics, like Strabo, this omission is fraught: demarcation is a necessary ‘amputation’ to clearly define territory.⁹⁹⁹ Strabo provides examples to illustrate the dangers of geopolitical omission: disputes over Oropos on the Boeotian-Attic border had ‘resulted through ignorance of the boundaries’.¹⁰⁰⁰ On a continental level, Strabo says, such omissions could be potentially catastrophic, ‘for there might arise also in case of the continents a controversy between great rulers, for example, one ruler who held Asia and another who held Libya, as to which one of them really owned Egypt.’¹⁰⁰¹ Yet Eratosthenes’ resistance is illuminating, revealing an awareness of the geopolitical impact of his counter-cartographic decisions. The Librarian defends his controversial omission of traditional geopolitical boundaries, arguing that ‘he does not see how this investigation [of geopolitical boundaries] can end in any practical result’.¹⁰⁰² Further, he characterises imperial geographers who insist on such boundaries as living on ‘a diet of disputation’.¹⁰⁰³ As if to emphasise the smallness of their vision, he cites petty disputes over the Athenian deme boundary of Kolyttos and Melite, which, although evidently significant to the local demesmen, is far beneath the stratospheric vision of Eratosthenes and his far-seeing audience.¹⁰⁰⁴ With our elevated spatial geographic lens, all geopolitical claims become equally petty and, like local topographical features, ‘disappear from consideration’.¹⁰⁰⁵ Wood observes that such omissions have a powerful impact on the observer, presenting ‘the earth... without people’.¹⁰⁰⁶ The elevated gaze, far from simply affirming an ‘authorised’ imperial gaze, is utilised by Eratosthenes to present geopolitical concerns as parochial, petty, and ultimately fleeting.¹⁰⁰⁷ Omission provides an ostensibly neutral map for Eratosthenes to explore alternate organising principles based on vast mathematical expressions and natural forces of the *longue durée*. Meanwhile, more immediate imperial concerns are all but erased from our vision.

Eratosthenes replaces geopolitical and continental boundaries with a new cartographic system, dominated by parallels and meridians. These features, blending topographical and geometric concerns, disrupt the tendril-like vectors of the imperial map. Possibly following the work of Dikaiarchos, Eratosthenes made the prime parallel the primary organising feature.¹⁰⁰⁸ Strabo notes, perhaps with a touch of wonder at the audacity, ‘the inhabited world has been happily divided by Eratosthenes into two parts by means of the Taurus Range and

⁹⁹⁸ Geus (2002) 262.

⁹⁹⁹ ‘καθάπερ γὰρ ἢ κατὰ μέλος τομῆ τῆς ἄλλως κατὰ μέρος διαφέρει...’, Strabo 2.1.30. On these grounds, he approves only of Eratosthenes’ First *sphragis* (India): Eratosth. F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31).

¹⁰⁰⁰ F33 (=Strabo 1.4.8).

¹⁰⁰¹ ‘γενοίτο γὰρ ἂν καὶ ἐπὶ τούτων ἡγεμόσι μεγάλοις ἀμφισβήτησις, τῷ μὲν ἔχοντι τὴν Ἀσίαν, τῷ δὲ τὴν Λιβύην, ὁποτέρου δὴ¹ ἔστιν ἡ Αἴγυπτος δηλονότι ἢ κάτω λεγομένη τῆς Αἰγύπτου χώρα’. F33 (=Strabo 1.4.8)

¹⁰⁰² ‘οὐχ ὁρᾶν φησι, πῶς ἂν εἰς πρᾶγμα τι καταστρέφοι ἢ ζήτησις αὐτῆ’, F33 (=Strabo 1.4.8).

¹⁰⁰³ ‘ἀλλὰ μόνον ἔριν διαιτῶντων...’ Eratosth. F33 (=Strabo 1.4.8).

¹⁰⁰⁴ /G I³.1.1055 A & B; G.V. Lalonde (2006) fig.1. at 84, fig.3 at 86.

¹⁰⁰⁵ ‘συγκρούποίτο γὰρ ἂν τὸ ἐξέχον τῆς γῆς ἐν τῷ τοσοῦτῳ μεγέθει μικρὸν ὄν καὶ λανθάνειν δυνάμενον’, Eratosth. F30 (=Strabo 2.5.5).

¹⁰⁰⁶ Wood (1992) 63-9.

¹⁰⁰⁷ ‘authorised’ focalisation of elevated, spatial geography: Clarke (1999) 23, 202-3.

¹⁰⁰⁸ In striking contrast to his *The Measurement of the Earth*: Geus (2002) 262. *Contra*: Kosmin argues for ‘mesh’ of Parallel and Meridian: (2017) 92. Kosmin overlooks parallel’s primacy, esp. seen at Eratosth. F48 & 59. For Dikaiarchos, see: n.747.

the sea that stretched to the Pillars'.¹⁰⁰⁹ Eratosthenes emphasises the significance of this division, 'calling them the southern part and the northern part'.¹⁰¹⁰ The northern and southern *sphragides* hang like ribs on this spine, the only land crossing between these two worlds available at the Kaspian gates.¹⁰¹¹ At sea, this partition rends Ptolemaic thalassocratic claims in two. The vector from Alexandria to 'Ionia and the Hellespont and Thrace', defined as Ptolemaic territory in the Adoulis Stele, is now violently severed from the imperial core.¹⁰¹² Our court in Alexandria and its immediate maritime surrounds are on a different *klimata* to these territories, which now seem more naturally part of the Antigonid sphere. Closer to home, Ptolemy IV's attempts to colonise Krete with Arsinoë colonies no longer looks like the development of trans-maritime vectors.¹⁰¹³ Rather, they appear limited in scope, remaining on our Egyptian side of the prime parallel. The grand vectors of the imperial map lie in pieces, victims to an *oikoumenē*-wide mathematical partition.

The Alexandria-centric vectorial map of the Ptolemies faces further assaults, the royal city displaced from the map's centre. Instead, cities like Rhodes and Athens, both on the prime parallel, gain ascendance as geographical markers in a multipolar world. At Rhodes, where the prime parallel and prime meridian meet, the Euclidean geometry is at its clearest, right angles highlighting the singularity of this epicentre.¹⁰¹⁴ This choice for Eratosthenes' spatial centre was a bold move given the political climate at the time of writing. Rhodes, once subject to the Ptolemies' hegemony, was now a naval and economic rival.¹⁰¹⁵ Following the earthquake of 224 BCE, Rhodes received lavish gifts from many states to help them rebuild, from Syracuse, the Antigonids, and the Ptolemies, all of whom were vying for influence with this emerging power.¹⁰¹⁶ On Eratosthenes' map, the primary spatialising features draw our gaze to this new challenger. Yet elsewhere, it is Athens which serves as a spatial anchor. One fragment, referring to a location on the far eastern Kaukasos, is described as 'on the parallel of Athens', the venerable city acting as point of reference on the prime parallel.¹⁰¹⁷ In contrast, Alexandria pointedly sits on a second tier, sharing a secondary parallel with Kyrene.¹⁰¹⁸ This multipolar map does not elevate any single city but, nonetheless, the demotion of Alexandria from its centre is unmistakable. In a remarkable *détournement*, Eratosthenes has appropriated

¹⁰⁰⁹ 'Ἡ μὲν οὖν οἰκουμένη διχα διήρηται τῷ τε Ταύρω καὶ τῇ ἐπὶ Στήλας θαλάττῃ καλῶς', Eratosth. F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31).

¹⁰¹⁰ 'Ερατοσθένης δέ, πεποιημένος τὴν διαίρεσιν εἰς τὰ νότια μέρη καὶ τὰ προσάρκτια καὶ τὰς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ λεγομένας σφραγίδας...', F48 (=Strabo 11.12.4-5) (my trans.); *sphragides* see also: F71 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.2).

¹⁰¹¹ Kaspian Gates as divider: F48 (=Strabo 11.12.4-5); as geographic marker: F37, 51-2, 55-6, 60, 62-4, 77-80, 83-6, 108. Cf. Arr. *Anab.* 3.20; Diod. Sic. 2.2; Polyb. 5.44; A.R. Anderson (1928) 133; J. Standish (1970) 17-24.

¹⁰¹² *OGIS* 54.14.15. See: Appendix 5.I of dissert.

¹⁰¹³ See: Ch. 2.2.II.C of dissert.

¹⁰¹⁴ Euc. *Elements* 1. Def. 22, 23 & Prop. 5. Eratosthenes' channelling Euclid re. Rhodes: 'φαίνεται γὰρ τὸ παράλληλον ἐκ πολλῶν, ὅταν μηδετέρωσιν σύμπτωσις ἀπελέγχηται', Eratosth. F51 (=Strabo 2.1.10); Roller (2010) 164-5; (2015) 129; Geus (2002) 275. See: Appendix 5.I.

¹⁰¹⁵ Rhodes' earlier divine honours for Ptol. I: Diod. Sic. 20.100.3-4; Paus 1.8.6; Lindian Chronicle: XLII.D.100-102. Continuing trade: Rhodian amphorae (233-220 BCE) at Berenikē Trogloditya: Woźniak & Harrell (2021) 359; emerging Rhodian hegemony: Strabo 14.2.1,2; Ps.-Skylax 99; *Syll.* 354; end of 3rd C: Polyb. 18.2.4-5.

¹⁰¹⁶ Gifts following earthquake (ca. 229-6): Diod. Sic. 26.8.1; Polyb. 5.88.5-8.

¹⁰¹⁷ 'ὥσθ' ὁμοίως καὶ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ δι' Ἀθηνῶν ἰδρῦσθαι παραλλήλου καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ Στηλῶν μέχρι δεῦρο θάλατταν'. Eratosth. F47 (=Strabo 2.1.1).

¹⁰¹⁸ F60 (=Strabo 2.5.38).

elevation, omission, and partition—traditionally tools of imperial geography—to undermine the very imperial vision they were designed to serve.¹⁰¹⁹

II. ‘Wholly untraceable’: alternate demarcation as *parrhēsia*

Eratosthenes’ *Geographika* replaced geopolitical units with his novel *sphragides* which have puzzled later readers of his work, both ancient and modern. Understood by Bunbury and Fraser as an attempt to rationalise the *oikoumenē*, these features have more recently been understood in propagandistic terms, as assertions of Ptolemaic *contrôle juridico-politique* over distant lands.¹⁰²⁰ Yet a closer look will reveal that these features disrupt, rather than affirm, imperial gazing, encouraging an alternate focalisation which undermines Ptolemaic imperial concerns. Like in the *Hermes*, we begin from an elevated vantagepoint where geopolitical concerns are indiscernible, distancing us from traditional markers. Eratosthenes instead partitions the landscape with irregular, roughly quadrilateral *sphragides*, using a blend of geometric parallels and meridians, and natural features, such as the Himalaya-Kaukasos-Tauros mountain range, major rivers, and the coast of the ocean.¹⁰²¹ The geographer’s *sphragides* ride roughshod over orthodox boundaries in ways which distance us from Ptolemaic imperial concerns.

The first of Eratosthenes’ *sphragides*, India, is the most palatable for Strabo, who generally disapproved of Eratosthenes’ novel partitions. Strabo required demarcation to be done neatly ‘at the joints’, and this first *sphragis* appears to meet this standard in a number of important ways.¹⁰²² It is ethnically homogeneous and clearly demarcated by the Himalayas, Indus river, and the Erythraean and eastern seas.¹⁰²³ Furthermore, the massive territory is ‘rhomboidal’, the topographical boundaries neatly mirroring geometric concerns.¹⁰²⁴ However, in the second *sphragis*, Ariana, Eratosthenes takes the radical step of demoting ethnic demarcation entirely. Three of Ariana’s four boundaries are topographical, ‘bounded on the south and on the north by the same sea and the same mountains as India, as also by the same river, the Indus’.¹⁰²⁵ The mountains also serve as a geometrical border, the prime parallel of the *oikoumenē*, an elegant

¹⁰¹⁹ Knabb (1959) 67-68.

¹⁰²⁰ Traditional proto-rationalist: Bunbury (1883) 1.654; Fraser (1972) 1.529-32, 538; for novelty: Bosworth (1995) 2.242; for propaganda: Visscher (2020) 67-69; following Kosmin (2017) 90; Bianchetti (2016) 137-9; for geography as expression of *contrôle juridico-politique*: Foucault (1980) 176-7. Partitions as imperial geography: M. Harley (1988a) 282; panoptic partition: J. Bentham (1787-8) Letter XXI.

¹⁰²¹ Topographical & geometric boundaries: *Sphragis* I (India): Eratosth. F69 (=Strabo 15.1.10); F71 (=Arr. *Ind.* 3.1-5); *Sphragis* II (‘Ariana’): F71 (=Strabo 15.2.1), F78 (=15.2.8-9), F80 (=2.1.28-9); *Sphragis* III (Mesopotamia): F82 (=Strabo 2.1.31), F83 (=2.1.23-6), F86 (=15.3.1); *Sphragis* IV (Arabia-Egypt): F92 (=Strabo 2.1.32); see also Plin. *HN* 6.108. Northern *sphragides* are not extant but explicitly referred to (F48 (=Strabo 11.12.4-5)) suggesting *oikoumenē*-wide system. *Contra*: Roller believes it was abandoned (2010) 175, 185, 192; Visscher argues Seleukid-only partition (2020) 67-69. For Euclidean (geometric) influence: Fraser (1972) 1.483; Solmsen (1942) 193-195. Metaphor for ‘irregular quadrilateral’ shape: H.L. Jones (1917) 333 n1.

¹⁰²² ‘καθ’ ἄπερ γὰρ ἢ κατὰ μέλος τομὴ τῆς ἄλλως κατὰ μέρος διαφέρει’, Strabo 2.1.30; Dueck (2000) 43-4.

¹⁰²³ Homogeneous: Arr. *Anab.* 7.10-12; Hdt. 3.99-106. *Contra*, diversity: Diod. Sic. 2.38.1. India, rhomboidal: Eratosth. F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31); Megasthenes *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.35.1). South & East Boundary, Ocean: F66 (=Strabo 2.1.22); R. Indus, Himalaya: F72 (=Arr. *Ind.* 3.1-5).

¹⁰²⁴ ‘ὥστε καὶ τετράπλευρος ὀρθῶς λέγεται καὶ ῥομβοειδής’, Eratosth. F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31); cf. Euc. *Elements* 1. Def. 22. Roller (2010) 164.

¹⁰²⁵ ‘τὰ μὲν νότια καὶ τὰ ἀρκτικά μέρη τῆ αὐτῆ θαλάττῃ καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὄρεσιν ἀφοριζομένη, οἷσπερ καὶ ἡ Ἰνδική, καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ ποταμῷ...’, Eratosth. F77 (=Strabo 15.2.1).

synthesis of the mathematical and topographical delineating approaches.¹⁰²⁶ However, the disruptive effect of the new demarcation becomes apparent in the west, where we have ‘the line drawn’ (γραφομένης γραμμῆς) from the Kaspian Gates down to Karmania at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.¹⁰²⁷ This is ‘confused’ (συγκέχυται) as it disrupts traditional ethnic boundaries.¹⁰²⁸ As if to further distance us from traditional markers, we are taken on a hodological journey upcountry which disorients, rather than stabilises the audience’s perspective.¹⁰²⁹ Fixed positions for *ethne* are problematised, the imperial gaze unable to pin subject peoples to a particular place.¹⁰³⁰ With ethnographic markers disrupted, we are encouraged to search for better, more permanent features to secure our spatial orientation.

At the northern perimeter of the second *sphragis*, disruptive topographical demarcation is favoured to the detriment of geopolitical coherency. The *sphragis*’ boundary ‘extend[s] to a part of Persia and of Media, as also to the Bactrians and Sogdians on the north’.¹⁰³¹ The Bactrians and Sogdians are lumped in with the Persians and Medians, and ‘speak approximately the same language’.¹⁰³² Yet much of Bactria and Sogdiana is placed on the other side of the Kaspian gates, relegating it to a separate *sphragis* in the northern half of the *oikoumenē*.¹⁰³³ Strabo understands this as a sort of carelessness.¹⁰³⁴ But these are unlike the usual criticisms concerning Eratosthenes’ use of data.¹⁰³⁵ Rather, it is this distinct lack of concern for traditional boundaries that seems to confuse Strabo. Eratosthenes has rearranged the map to reveal new concerns, creating a new ‘frame’ which privileges topographical and mathematical lenses to the detriment of the imperial gaze.¹⁰³⁶

The third *sphragis* of Mesopotamia is, according to Strabo, similarly confused and ‘wholly untraceable’, mathematical boundaries in the north, east, and south conspiring with the western fluvial boundary of the Euphrates to do havoc to the political map of the region. The southern boundary is ‘taken very inaccurately’, and somehow ‘run[s] through its very centre’.¹⁰³⁷ Fraser argues that Eratosthenes’ data on the area were limited, and Roller supports this view, although Eratosthenes’ familiarity with the region in his Arabian digression would seem to suggest otherwise.¹⁰³⁸ The disruption of Eratosthenes’ *sphragides* have divided ancient

¹⁰²⁶ Synthesis: Roller (2010); Geus (2002) 273-8.

¹⁰²⁷ F77 (=Strabo 15.2.1).

¹⁰²⁸ F82 (=Strabo 2.1.31); F83 (=Strabo 2.1.23-6); F77 (=Strabo 15.2.1); ‘διὰ τὸ ἐπαλλάττειν ἀλλήλοις τὰ ἔθνη, γραμμῆ τινι ὁμῶς δηλοῖ’. F79 (=Strabo 2.1.22); Roller (2010) 181-185.

¹⁰²⁹ Eratosthenes’ hodological sources: ‘ὡς ἐν τοῖς Ἀσιατικοῖς σταθμοῖς ἀναγράφεται’, F78 (=Strabo 15.2.8); *Stages of Asia*: Amyntas *BNJ* 122 F1-3.

¹⁰³⁰ A subversive aspect for Reclus (1905) 1.8-9.

¹⁰³¹ ‘ἐπεκτείνεται δὲ τοῦνομα τῆς Ἀριανῆς μέχρι μέρους τινὸς καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων καὶ ἔτι τῶν πρὸς ἄρκτον Βακτριῶν καὶ Σογδιανῶν’, F78 (=Strabo 15.2.8).

¹⁰³² ‘εἰσὶ γὰρ πῶς καὶ ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν’, F78 (=Strabo 15.2.8).

¹⁰³³ ‘καὶ τὰς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ λεγομένας σφραγίδας, τὰς μὲν βορείους καλῶν, τὰς δὲ νοτίους, ὅρια ἀποφαίνει τῶν κλιμάτων ἀμφοῖν τὰς Κασπίους πύλας’, F48 (=Strabo 11.12.5). Much of Sogdiana in northern half of *oikoumenē*: Eratosth. F108 (=Strabo 11.8.8-9). *Contra* Persian internal vector: Arr. *Anab.* 3.20. Kaspian gates: see n.1010.

¹⁰³⁴ Strabo 11.12.5.

¹⁰³⁵ Hipparchos’ criticisms concerning erroneous data: Eratosth. F80 (=Strabo 2.1.28-9).

¹⁰³⁶ Geographic framing: Wood (1992) 21.

¹⁰³⁷ ‘καὶ ἡ νότιος πλευρὰ ἀργότατα εἴληπται’ οὔτε γὰρ περιγράφει τὴν σφραγίδα, διὰ μέσης τε αὐτῆς βαδίζουσα, καὶ πολλὰ μέρη ἀπολείπουσα πρὸς νότον, οὔτε μῆκος ὑπογράφει τὸ μέγιστον’, Eratosth. F82 (=Strabo 2.1.31); F83 (=Strabo 2.1.24).

¹⁰³⁸ Fraser (1996) 80-82, n.10, 11; Roller (2010) 186-8.

Babylonian lands, something which concerned Strabo. The cartographic damage, Strabo argues, is profound, having ‘rend asunder so famous a nation by such a line of cleavage in this region, and to join the parts thus dissevered to the parts that belong to other tribes’.¹⁰³⁹ Further, the river distorts the *sphragis*’ shape, Strabo observing mournfully that it is ‘nowhere near a straight line’, meandering from the northwest to southeast.¹⁰⁴⁰ This evidently caused Eratosthenes little embarrassment, Strabo noting that ‘Eratosthenes makes clear the river’s lack of straightness when he describes the entire *sphragis* as like a rower’s cushion (ὕπηρεσίω)’.¹⁰⁴¹ Like modern counter-mappers have discovered, the meandering trail of rivers can challenge orthodox cartographic organisation, making a headache for surveyors.¹⁰⁴² In Eratosthenes’ third *sphragis*, the restless and recalcitrant fluvial trail is immortalised in the disruptive perimeter of the *sphragis*, a monument to Eratosthenes’ interest in subversive fluvial power.

Eratosthenes’ use of rivers for the demarcation of the third *sphragis* draws our attention to the nature of these transgressive entities which ignore political boundaries, a recurring interest of Eratosthenes. Unlike the Euphrates subjugated successfully by Aristoboulos’ Alexander, these rivers in Eratosthenes’ geography do not ultimately adhere to human agency nor function as effective demarcation. Eratosthenes’ Euphrates is a recalcitrant behemoth in the face of imperial agency: ‘when the water is deprived of exits it opens up underground passages’.¹⁰⁴³ It emerges in distant Koelē-Syria, ‘pressed up’ by its own momentum in Rhinokolura and Mount Kasios on the Egyptian border.¹⁰⁴⁴ Eratosthenes’ digression highlights the disruptive nature of his fluvial boundary, a natural force expressing powerful resistance, even indifference, to imperial concerns. The Tigris digression is even more pointed in this regard. We begin at the third *sphragis*’ northern intersection with the prime parallel, ‘where Alexander crossed it’, echoing the Alexander historians, who portray Alexander as facing ‘no opposition’ from Dareios, yet being challenged by the ‘swiftness’ of this fluvial impediment to conquest.¹⁰⁴⁵ Having reminded his audience of the Tigris’ power to challenge divine kingship, we then follow the river as it drives ‘through the middle of Lake Thopitis’ undiminished.¹⁰⁴⁶ Next, Typhon-like, ‘it sinks underground with upward blasts and a loud noise’.¹⁰⁴⁷ The river then ‘flow[s] for a considerable distance invisible ...[and] rises again’ forcing ‘impetuously’

¹⁰³⁹ ‘τὸ δὲ ἐνταῦθα μέντοι τοιοῦτω μερισμῷ διασπᾶν ἔθνος γνωριμώτατον καὶ τὰ μέρη συνάπτειν τοῖς ἀλλοεθνεσίην ἤκιστα ἂν πρέποι’, Eratosth. F82 (=Strabo 2.1.31); partition which disrupts: Monmonier (1991) 107-112.

¹⁰⁴⁰ ‘δῆλον δ’ ὅτι οὐδ’ ὁ Εὐφράτης, ὃ τὸ ἐσπέριον ἀφορίζει πλευρόν, σύνεγγύς ἐστιν εὐθεία γραμμῆ’, Eratosth. F83 (=Strabo 2.1.23-6).

¹⁰⁴¹ ‘...ὕπηρεσίω παραπλήσιον’, Eratosth. F83 (=Strabo 2.1.23); H.L. Jones translates as ‘like a galley’ (1917) but see *LSJ*: ὑπηρέσιον 1. ‘the cushion on a rower’s bench’, following Thuc. 2.93, Isoc. 8.48, etc. For ‘rower’s cushion’ see: Roller (2010) 87, 186-187.

¹⁰⁴² ‘These maps offer an opportunity to re-orient, to identify with and within the patterns of nature’, L.R. McManus (2023); Wood (2010) 223-4.

¹⁰⁴³ ‘Ερατοσθένης... φησὶ τὸ ὕδωρ ἀπορούμενον διεξόδων ἀνοῖξει πόρους ὑπὸ γῆς καὶ δι’ ἐκείνων ὑποφέρεσθαι μέχρι Κοιλοσύρων’, Eratosth. F97 (=Strabo 12.1.1).

¹⁰⁴⁴ ‘...ἀναθλίβεσθαι δὲ εἰς τοὺς περὶ Ῥινοκόλουρα καὶ τὸ Κάσιον ὄρος τόπους καὶ ποιεῖν τὰς ἐκεῖ λίμνας καὶ τὰ βάραθρα’. F96 (=Strabo 16.1.12); Roller (2010) 198.

¹⁰⁴⁵ ‘ὄπου Ἀλέξανδρος διέβη’, Eratosth. F83 (=Strabo 2.1.24); cf. Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.5; Curt. 4.9.7,12, Diod. Sic. 17.55; Bosworth (1980a) 1.286-7.

¹⁰⁴⁶ ‘διαρρεῖ δ’ ὁ Τίγρις τὴν Θωπῆτιν καλουμένην λίμνην κατὰ πλάτος μέσην’, Eratosth. F87 (=Strabo 16.1.21-22).

¹⁰⁴⁷ ‘...κατὰ γῆς δύεται μετὰ πολλοῦ ψόφου’, F87 (=Strabo 16.1.21).

through Lake Gordyaea.¹⁰⁴⁸ This power is further proven, Eratosthenes says, by the fresh water as it emerges. Comparable to Homer's Xanthos, this is a powerful entity, but an Achilles-like heroic foil is glaringly absent in Eratosthenes' *Geographika*.¹⁰⁴⁹ Like the disruptive nature of rivers and creeks observed in nineteenth century British colonial geography, Eratosthenes' rivers penetrate and transgress boundaries.¹⁰⁵⁰ They pointedly highlight the limits of imperial control. In Eratosthenes' map, not even divine kings can impose geopolitical restraints on natural forces.

The fourth *sphragis* appears to be a departure from the combination of topographical and mathematical boundaries. It is substantially more geometric in nature, demarcated by two parallels and two meridians. Strabo, always wary of mathematical geography, considers this use of geometric boundaries to be a poor substitute for descriptive data, 'irregular figures' having made it 'impossible to determine... sides' by more accurate means.¹⁰⁵¹ Roller echoes Strabo's concerns, characterising the fourth *sphragis* as a 'valiant try' to continue a failed experiment, and describing the use of four geometrical boundaries as 'astonishingly dogmatic', something we must consider unlikely for the famously eclectic Librarian.¹⁰⁵² The limited data to the south and west could perhaps support such an argument, however, to describe the northern delineation—which almost touches Alexandria—as a response to an absence of descriptive data, is clearly unsustainable.

Within these boundaries lie parts of the Persian Gulf, Arabia, Gaza, Sinai, Aithiopia, and Egypt up to the Nile. A superficial argument can be made for understanding this *sphragis* as an imperial expression; Alexandria is united with eastern territory, potentially reflecting some of the eastward geopolitical ambitions of the kingdom under Ptolemies III and IV in Koelē-Syria.¹⁰⁵³ However, a closer look reveals a *sphragis* that does not function effectively as an expression of Alexandria's centrality or control. The geographer defines the western boundary, the prime meridian, as a 'line which must needs come to an end in the regions near (περί) Canobus and Alexandria; for the last mouth of the Nile, called the Canobic or Heracleotic mouth, is situated at that point'.¹⁰⁵⁴ The Nile Delta sits in the far northwest corner of the fourth *sphragis*, while Alexandria, disturbingly, is uncertainly situated, its exact location not a concern to the geographer. Far from making Ptolemaic space the centre, as Visscher claims, the effect of this *sphragis* is to marginalise the Ptolemaic centre.¹⁰⁵⁵ Our gaze is instead drawn southeast, towards Arabia Eudaimon.¹⁰⁵⁶ Pickles argues that selective use of

¹⁰⁴⁸ '...καὶ ἀναφυσμάτων· ἐπὶ πολὺ δ' ἐνεχθεὶς ἀφανής, ἀνίσχει πάλιν οὐ πολὺ ἄπωθεν τῆς Γορδυαίας', F87 (=Strabo 16.1.21); cf. Just. *Epit.* 42.3.9.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Cf. Hom. *Il.* 21.200-297. Cf. Xerxes & the Hellespont: Hdt 7.35-6.

¹⁰⁵⁰ H. Goodall & A. Cadzow (2009) 28-30.

¹⁰⁵¹ 'ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀνωμάτων σχημάτων, ἐφ' ὧν πλευραῖς οὐ δυνατὸν ἀφορίσαι πλάτος καὶ μῆκος, οὕτω τὸ μέγεθος ἀφοριστέον', F92 (=Strabo 2.1.32). Strabo's prejudice for descriptive geography over mathematical geography: Dueck (2000) 40-62; (2012) 42-44.

¹⁰⁵² Roller (2010) 192. Eratosthenes' eclecticism: Ch 3.1 above.

¹⁰⁵³ Ptol III: *OGIS* 54 (= Austin 268); Ptol. IV: Polyb. 5.57-86; J.D. Grainger (2010).

¹⁰⁵⁴ 'ἦν ἀνάγκη καταστρέφειν εἰς τοὺς περὶ Κάνωβον καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρειαν τόπους· ἐνταῦθα γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ ἔσχατον στόμα τὸ καλούμενον Κανωβικόν τε καὶ Ἡρακλεωτικόν'. F56 (=Strabo 2.1.33). On Visscher's map Alexandria is comfortably (and erroneously) within the *sphragis*: Visscher (2020) 68, Map 4. Cf. Roller (2010) 250. See: Appendix 5.II of dissert.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Strabo 2.1.33; Visscher (2020) 69.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Subversive lens: '[the] deriviers may tend to fixate them around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back': Knabb (1959) 62.

mathematical expressions and cartographical measurements can ‘dislodge’ hegemonic orientation when once significant features are ‘consigned to the edge of the map’.¹⁰⁵⁷ Eratosthenes provides a potent example of this disruptive act, his ostensibly neutral mathematical expressions fundamentally challenging the notion of Alexandria’s centrality. We are left with an uncomfortable sense that Alexandria has been spatially demoted through the demarcation of the fourth *sphragis*.

The northern border of the fourth *sphragis* divides Alexandria from the Mediterranean Sea in a potentially profound act of geographical *parrhēsia*. The northern boundary of the fourth *sphragis* doggedly hugs the Egyptian coastline, from its northwest corner at Kanobos, across the Delta and down to Heroöpolis (Arsinoë) before shifting north to (the uncertainly located) Thapsakos on the Euphrates.¹⁰⁵⁸ Strabo was unimpressed by the crookedness, but the greater ideological concern for Eratosthenes’ audience may well have been the separation of Alexandria from Ptolemaic thalassocratic claims.¹⁰⁵⁹ Not only the vectors to the Aegean, but even those of the ‘Egyptian Sea’, including to Kypros, both direct and along the coast of Koelē-Syria, are removed from Ptolemaic space.¹⁰⁶⁰ In a counter-cartographic gesture which contradicts the Ptolemaic vectorial geography we explored in the previous chapter, the ‘long arm’ of imperial reach has been doubly severed.¹⁰⁶¹ For a regime that was increasingly limited in its naval reach near the end of the third century, Eratosthenes’ map provides little succour for his audience, spatialising gestures utilised to question the very fabric of Ptolemaic imperialism.¹⁰⁶² Alexandria is neither central, nor united with its imagined dominions. Instead, it is squeezed into one corner of one *sphragis*, which it shares with Arabia Eudaimon. Cut off from its empire and sharing a *sphragis* with an idealised Arabia, Alexandria is diminished. The excesses of Ptolemaic imperial ideology which so concerned Eratosthenes appear to have been profoundly disrupted.

Conclusion

Eratosthenes’ geographical treatises would become foundational works for the later disciplines of geography and geodesy, all too often removed from their original sympotic court context. As we have seen, traditional approaches have tended towards a positivist reading, understanding Eratosthenes as a scientist to which we are ‘indebted’, being the ‘first’ to measure the earth and use proto-longitudinal measurements with ‘fixed scientific principles’.¹⁰⁶³ This is still how many first encounter the geographer; the ‘Eratosthenes Experiment’, facilitated by the EAAE, introduces his work each year to students in just such teleological terms.¹⁰⁶⁴ Sagan’s phenomenally popular *Cosmos* series exemplified this approach,

¹⁰⁵⁷ Pickles (2004) 44-46; (1992) 196.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Eratosth. F56 (=Strabo 2.1.33); Gawlikowski (1996).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Eratosth. F55 (2.1.37); F56 (=Strabo 2.1.33).

¹⁰⁶⁰ ‘τὸ Αἰγύπτιον πέλαγος’: Strabo 2.5.54; App. *Praef.* 2; P. Arnaud (2005) 212-225.

¹⁰⁶¹ See: Ch. 2.2.1.

¹⁰⁶² Naval deterioration: Polyb. 16.2.9 (*cf.* 5.35.11); Erskine (2013) 92-6.

¹⁰⁶³ The ‘parent of scientific geography’, Bunbury (1883) 1.614.

¹⁰⁶⁴ The IAU ‘Eratosthenes’ Experiment’: EAAE (2023).

characterising him as a Greek ‘genius’ whose contemplations ‘changed the world’.¹⁰⁶⁵ Such an introduction to Eratosthenes continues to shade our historical understanding of the polymath’s geographical treatises, often approached as scientific treatises somehow divorced from the court culture in which they were produced. Yet despite its obvious limitations, this traditional reading is not entirely without value. Its emphasis on Platonist, Stoic, Peripatetic, and other philosophical concerns remain vital for understanding the critical tools which informed Eratosthenes’ geographical texts.

The propagandistic revisionism introduced by Bianchetti and developed by Kosmin attempts to correct the apolitical assumptions of this traditional approach, using a critical cartographic lens to present these works as essentially Ptolemaic propaganda. While certainly making important steps towards a fuller picture of his geographical treatises as a product of the regime’s court culture, we have seen that the weaknesses of such an approach lie in the minimisation of aspects of Eratosthenes’ geography which distance us from, and sit jarringly alongside, an imperial geographic gaze.

This chapter has shown how these ideologically unorthodox elements may be better understood as geographical *parrhēsia*, a central aspect of the sympotic traditions of court literature. To identify Eratosthenes’ concerns, we first investigated examples from Eratosthenes’ non-geographical works and found them peppered with challenges to Ptolemaic imperial ideology. His *Katasterismoi* undermined the militant Dionysos of Ptolemaic propaganda and even framed Berenikē’s Lock as scientific *kolakeia*, the excesses of imperial ideology potentially deceiving the king. His public *Letter to King Ptolemy* emphasises the king as a mortal figure dependent on his scholars’ counsel. The *Arsinoë* warns us of the excesses of Dionysian innovation which threaten to distance the king from his true *Philo*i and undermine the aristocratic traditions of the royal symposion. These challenges to royal ideology functioned as useful thematic markers which would reoccur time and again in Eratosthenes’ *Geographika*.

Identification of *parrhēsia* in Eratosthenes’ geographical works have required a diverse range of tools from radical, alternate, and counter-cartographic geographies. We have seen how emplotment and digressions in Eratosthenes’ descriptive geography undermine Ptolemaic vectors and provide space to explore and elevate barbarian cultures which are favourably juxtaposed with the Ptolemies. Natural forces are presented as overriding human and, indeed, imperial agency with ease. Eratosthenes’ spatial geography uses traditional imperial geographic techniques to paradoxically challenge empire. The elevated view has been subverted, pointedly emphasising the limits, rather than the reach, of imperial power. Geopolitical omissions obscure imperial claims on the *oikoumenē* and encourage an alternate focalisation. Novel topographical and geometric features seem intent on disrupting any sense of imperial control by severing vectors and frankly challenging Ptolemaic claims to a regional thalassocracy, let alone *oikoumenē*-wide suzerainty.

Eratosthenes’ survival at court is testament to the success of his *parrhēsia*, the octogenarian dying of old age on ‘Proteos’ shore’ during the reign of Ptolemy V.¹⁰⁶⁶ The conservative yet outspoken polymath kept his position in Alexandria when tactlessness could have proven

¹⁰⁶⁵ C. Sagan (1980).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Eratosth. *BNJ* 241 T3 (=Lucian *Octogenerians* 27); T5 (=Censorinus *DN* 15.2).

fatal.¹⁰⁶⁷ If Eratosthenes was indeed a ‘genius’ as conventionally remembered, then it was as much for his skilful expressions of court *parrhēsia* as it was his geographical triumphs.¹⁰⁶⁸ Yet the polymath was not unique in expressing such views. As we turn to the Seleukid court in the following chapters, we will find a similar sympotic dynamic at play, with geography used by scholar-*Philo*i to promote, but also to challenge, imperial claims.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See: Ch. 1.3.IV.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Sagan (1980).

Chapter 4: Geography as Propagandistic Praise in the Seleukid Empire

Traditional readings have tended to treat the successful creation of an empire by the ousted satrap turned king, Seleukos I Nikator (ca. 358-281), as a direct result of a sober and limited imperial policy.¹⁰⁶⁹ Bevan, reflecting the concerns of his own era, defines him in proto-nationalist terms, while Tarn describes an ‘outer shell’ of empire, all journeys beyond which being characterised as essentially mercantile missions.¹⁰⁷⁰ Others have argued for an *ad hoc* policy, a sort of empire built in ‘a fit of absence of mind’.¹⁰⁷¹ Recent critical treatments of Seleukid geographic sources have mostly followed the notion of limited empire.¹⁰⁷² However, this chapter will show that far from limited in his ambitions, the legends surrounding Seleukos’ divine birth speak to an ideology of divine universal kingship, emulating Alexander before him. We will see that this grand project was profoundly disrupted by Seleukid failure to successfully invade and conquer India. I argue that following a well-orchestrated coverup by Seleukid propagandists, court geographers urgently went to work on a prescriptive geography.¹⁰⁷³

Paul Kosmin’s influential work has demonstrated how geography was utilised to support Seleukid imperial ideology. This chapter builds on Kosmin’s work; however, it challenges his conclusions. First, I will argue that the limited imperial map proposed by Kosmin and others contradicts the foundational legends and the early behaviour of the empire on the world stage (4.1). The evidence for an ideology of universal kingship will be considered. This evidence will be found most vividly in what Ogden calls ‘the Legend of Seleucus’: various oracles, omens, and visitation-dreams which affirmed the king’s divine parentage and his destiny as the ‘true successor of Alexander’.¹⁰⁷⁴ These were complemented by Seleukos’ early successes in diplomatic and military campaigns, especially his *anabasis*, which neatly aligned with the ideology of a divinely sanctioned and perpetually expanding empire.

Then, I will show that this ideology associated with universal empire was undermined by the disastrous war with the Mauryan empire in the Indus valley (4.2). Imperial accounts worked to reject these real-world geopolitical limitations. Instead, pro-Seleukid writers minimised the disaster using omission, euphemism, redirection, and a dismissive colonial gaze. A critical geographic approach will demonstrate that the postwar settlement was not an equitable

¹⁰⁶⁹ Birth year: Just. *Epit.* 17.1; although: App. *Syr.* 13.63; J.D. Grainger (1990a) 1-3.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Bevan (1902) 1.53; outer shell: Tarn (1938) 4; exploration for trade: Tarn (1901); *cf.* ‘la curiosité’ Capdetrey (2007) 82; pragmatism: S. Sherwin-White & A. Kuhrt (1993) 12-13.

¹⁰⁷¹ R.A. Hadley (1974) 51; Seeley (1883) 8.

¹⁰⁷² Kosmin (2014b) 36, 32-6, 45-7, 63, 121; (2016) 3, 7-8; aspiring to emulate Achaemenid space: Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993); L. Capdetrey (2007); Visscher’s hybrid model (2020). *Cf.* universal empire argued by Strootman (2014a).

¹⁰⁷³ Hadley (1974) 51; for Seleukid use of propaganda, see: Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) esp. 22-8; (1991); Kosmin (2014b); Ogden (2017); Visscher (2020).

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ogden (2017) 40-41.

treaty, as it is sometimes presented, but a humiliating defeat for the Seleukids which created an ideological crisis for the would-be universal king.

This was soon to be followed by the most audacious aspects of Seleukid geographic propaganda, found in the treatises of *stratēgoi*-geographers, Patrokles and Demodamas (4.3). I will argue that their works adopt a range of political geographic tools to distort the periphery of the map so that it reflects the ideology of Seleukid universal kingship. Patrokles' Oceanic vector reaches from an open-mouthed Kaspian Sea to India via an imaginary northeast passage, effectively surrounding Mauryan space and territorialising the eastern *oikoumenē* through peri-circumnavigation. The open Kaspian Sea is presented by Patrokles as the nexus of a centripetal geography, with fluvial and sea vectors converging in a world harbour at the Seleukid centre. I will show that the geographer Demodamas makes similarly sweeping claims to the interior with an overarching religious vector which transcended the practical limitations with the authority of Didymean Apollo. Between them, the court *Philoī* would redraw the world map in terms which reflected Seleukos' claims of universal kingship.

Finally, I will argue that Seleukid civic planning attempted to aggregate and territorialise the disparate imperial centre through fluvial and hodological vectors (4.4). These vectors, populated with civic points and nodes, asserted Seleukos' imperial strength and significance as a prolific city-founder, transforming the imagined centre through a two-step process of civic erasure followed by domestication. I will show that many of these domesticating features were more substantial on the imperial map than in the reality.

This chapter will show that court geography not only flattered the king but functioned as part of a broader campaign by the regime to claim a universal empire in the new Seleukid Era (SE).¹⁰⁷⁵ A prescriptive map for a world empire was crafted for the divine universal king, one which would prove to have remarkable longevity. It would only be questioned by a very few within the Seleukid court, like Megasthenes (Chapter Five), who would dare to challenge these geographical fabrications.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Kosmin (2014b); (2016).

4.1 The ideology of universal kingship

The ambitious ideology of a universal Seleukid empire was evident from the regime's foundation under Seleukos I, legends of his divine origins and destiny presenting him as a latter-day Alexander.¹⁰⁷⁶ Claims to universal kingship were not without precedent. The Ur III King, Shulgi, after all, had promoted himself as 'the god of all the lands' with no equal among even the most distant kings beyond his imposing wall.¹⁰⁷⁷ Such assertions implicitly reveal the dissonance between imperial claims and reality, limitless reach contradicted by defensive fortifications. In contrast to Shulgi's boasts, the Neo-Babylonian imperialist *par excellence*, Nebuchadnezzar II, supported his claims with far-reaching conquest. We are told that 'the god Marduk gave me the shepherdship of the lands, all of them', and these were realised through year-round military campaigns from north Syria to Egypt and Arabia.¹⁰⁷⁸ In Mesopotamia at least, the early Seleukids are depicted by the Babylonian priesthood as part of this tradition. In the *Antiochos Cylinder*, the king is, *inter alia*, *šar kiššati* (king of the world) and *šar mātāte* (the King of lands). Through his imperial conquests, Antioch I is fulfilling the command of Nabû, resulting in 'permanent victories... forever.'¹⁰⁷⁹ The text goes further, showing that bricks for founding the Ezida temple were moulded by the king's own hand from the land of the Hatti, all lands evidently under one roof in Antiochos' reign.¹⁰⁸⁰ For Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, Seleukid universal kingship as depicted in the *Antiochos Cylinder* is essentially a continuity of Mesopotamian royal representation.¹⁰⁸¹ The universal kingship of Seleukos and Antiochos, like Mesopotamian kings before them, are emphatically asserted.

However, for an elite Greek audience, models for universal kingship are found not so much in Nebuchadnezzar but in the gleaming image of Alexander.¹⁰⁸² The 'Legend of Seleucus' – the collection of propagandistic oracles, omens, and dream-visions constructed by Seleukos and his propagandists – presents the king as walking in the divine Alexander's footsteps.¹⁰⁸³ These legends developed over time and survive in Appian, Justin, Diodoros, and a fragment of Euphorion via Tertullian. However, our Diodoros-Hieronimos source suggests that they may have been first cultivated during Seleukos' own rule.¹⁰⁸⁴ This is supported by numismatic evidence and dedications from Miletos-Didyma in 300/299 which make strong allusions

¹⁰⁷⁶ Capdetrey (2007).

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Shulgi A* (2.4.2.01) 1-6, *Shulgi B* (2.4.2.02), 259 (ETCSL (1997)); W.J. Hamblin (2006) 110-11.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Nebuchadnezzar II 015.i.7-14 (tr. F. Weiershäuser & J. Novotny (MOCCI) (2015)); *ABC* no. 5; Kuhrt (2008) 2.590-593.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *BM* 36277, col 1.1-2, 21- col 2.3. Translation and transliteration follows Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1991) 75-78.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Antiochos Cylinder*, i.8-13 at K. Stevens (2014), see esp. 68 n.79, 84; integration of local and imperial: Strootman (2013a) 81-83, 90-1.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Antiochos Cylinder*: Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1991) 71-86; Strootman (2012) 41. Local interpretation of Seleukid universal kingship: Price (1984) 241-3.

¹⁰⁸² Like the sun: Diod. Sic. 17.54.6; F. Chamoux (1891) 7-38, esp. 37.

¹⁰⁸³ '...heritier d'Alexandre', Capdetrey (2007) 37; D. Ogden (2017).

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ogden (2017); pre-300 BCE: Hadley (1969).

concerning divine Seleukid kingship and its relationship with the Apollonian oracle.¹⁰⁸⁵ Furthermore, several inscriptions at Ilios show that the ideology of patrilineal divinity via Apollo was full-throated and unambiguous by the end of Seleukos' reign.¹⁰⁸⁶ Far from making modest claims, the king was building his own legend, legitimising his hyperbolic imperial ambitions.

The legends blend several themes which work together as foundations for a divine kingship over universal imperial space: Laodike's conception via Apollo, association with Alexander, and anticipation of hyperbolic imperial conquest.¹⁰⁸⁷ In the Trogean source, Seleukos' mother explicitly dreams of conceiving through sexual union with Apollo, something only indirectly alluded to in Appian.¹⁰⁸⁸ In both accounts she receives an anchor signet-ring as a token of the oneiric visitation, which is then passed on to Seleukos. Appian's account anticipates the beginning of Seleukid divine kingship, Laodice discovering that 'he [Seleukos] would become king on the spot where he dropped the ring', something fulfilled in Year One SE in Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁸⁹ Euphorion's account places much weight on territorial conquest, anticipating an empire which covers all of Asia.¹⁰⁹⁰ The parallels with Alexander's own conception are compelling.¹⁰⁹¹ Much like Alexander, Seleukos' divine two-fold origin, sired by man and god, paves the way for far-reaching imperial control.¹⁰⁹²

The oracle of Apollo at Didyma would appear to serve a similar function for Seleukos as the oracle of Amun-Zeus at Siwa for Alexander. The oracular legend has the young commander, Seleukos, visiting the oracle at Didyma when on an early campaign, presumably at the time of Alexander's conquest of Miletos in 334.¹⁰⁹³ In Appian, the oracle speaks of Asia-wide conquest before alluding to an act of treachery in Europe (at the hands of Ptolemy Keraunos) which would bring him undone.¹⁰⁹⁴ This legend is clearly retrospective, but an oracular account in our Diodoros-Hieronymos source may have been earlier. The revelation is

¹⁰⁸⁵ Divinity: Seleukos w/Apollo coinage (300 BCE - 286 BCE, Antioch mint): Laureate head of Apollo; rev. 'ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ' or 'ΒΑ ΣΕ': *SC* 1.15-20. Dedications: Ilios: *OGIS* 212 (300-280 BCE), 213 (300/299); Strootman (2014a) 99. Hieronymos' account: *Diod. Sic.* 19.90; Hadley (1969) 144; Hieronymos as source for *Diod. Sic.* 18-20: J. Hornblower (1981) 32-75; Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993).

¹⁰⁸⁶ '... Απόλλωνι τῷ ἀρχηγ[ῶ] / τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ...', *OGIS* 219 (279-4 BCE); divine honours to both Seleukos and Apollo: *OGIS* 212 (300-280 BCE); K. Nawotka (2019) 281.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Capdetrey (2007) 35-6.

¹⁰⁸⁸ '...ex concubitu Apollinis concepisse...', *Just. Epit.* 15.4.1 (J.S. Watson (1853)).

¹⁰⁸⁹ *App. Syr.* 56.285. SE1 (311 BCE). For 'Seleukid Era' ideology, see: Kosmin (2016); under Seleukos I (2018) 30-35; Visscher (2020) 75-77; cf. Chrubasik & Stevens (2022) 149-181.

¹⁰⁹⁰ 'Seleuco regnum Asiae Laodice mater nondum eum enixa praevideit', Euphorion F119 (=Tert. *De anim.* 46.6) (J.L. Lightfoot (2009)).

¹⁰⁹¹ *AR* 1.6-10; *Plut. Alex* 3; Ogden (2017) 23-29.

¹⁰⁹² 'geminae originis': *Just. Epit.* 15.4.7. Cf. Alexander: *Plut. Alex.* 1-3, 27; *AR* 1.1-12, *Diod. Sic.* 17.51, *Arr. Anab.* 3.3.1.

¹⁰⁹³ *Arr. Anab.* 1.18.3-20.1; *Diod. Sic.* 17.22-3.

¹⁰⁹⁴ For early date, later reinterpreted (334-331 BCE), see: Ogden (2017) 56. 314/13BCE: Nudell (2018) 52; non-genuine oracle constructed post-281: Fontenrose (1988) 215. For Ptolemy Keraunos' murder of Seleukos: *App. Syr.* 56.283-4.

divulged by Seleukos when addressing his troops, prior to his triumphant return to Babylon in 311. It is followed by a significant vision of Alexander. The two are best read together:

‘πιστεύειν δὲ δεῖν καὶ ταῖς τῶν θεῶν προρρήσεσι τὸ τέλος ἔσσεσθαι τῆς στρατείας ἄξιον τῆς ἐπιβολῆς· ἐν μὲν γὰρ Βραγχίδαις αὐτοῦ χρηστηριαζομένου τὸν θεὸν προσαγορεῦσαι Σέλευκον βασιλέα, τὸν δὲ Ἀλέξανδρον καθ’ ὕπνον ἐπιστάντα φανερώς διασημᾶναι περὶ τῆς ἐσομένης ἡγεμονίας, ἧς δεῖ τυχεῖν αὐτὸν προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου.’

He added that they ought also to believe the oracles of the gods which had foretold that the end of his campaign would be worthy of his purpose; for, when he had consulted the oracle in Branchidae [Didyma], the god had greeted him as King Seleucus, and Alexander standing beside him in a dream had given him a clear sign of the future leadership that was destined to fall to him in the course of time.

Diod. Sic 19.90.4 (tr. R.M. Geer (1954))

The oracle makes clear, to both the characters and the audience, Seleukos’ imperial destiny. Unlike a Herodotean mortal, the god-sired protagonist can read the signs.¹⁰⁹⁵ The revelatory greeting (Σέλευκον βασιλέα), echoes Alexander’s Siwa experience.¹⁰⁹⁶ It is clarified by the vision of Alexander who is, significantly, standing beside him (ἐπιστάντα), suggesting a remarkable equivalence of status. The oracle functions as audacious propaganda, the two divine kings are in the same category above mortal men.¹⁰⁹⁷

Omens associated with Alexander were formulated as an important aspect of Seleukos’ imperial *moira*, the physical world anticipating his future destiny. In Appian’s account, this occurs in all three continents of the *oikoumenē*. In Macedonia, Seleukos’ ancestral hearth spontaneously burst into flame, suggesting his rightful claims to his homeland, yet to be realised.¹⁰⁹⁸ In Egypt, he tripped on a submerged anchor.¹⁰⁹⁹ Like in the *Alexander Romance*, the omen is initially misunderstood before the realisation dawns that it is propitious—a symbol of security (ἀσφαλείας).¹¹⁰⁰ The third omen occurred in Mesopotamia, according to Appian and Arrian, when Alexander was surveying the waterways between the Pallacotta canal and the Euphrates (323). Alexander’s diadem was blown off by a sudden gust of wind before landing on the reeds near tombs of ancient kings.¹¹⁰¹ Arrian says that in Aristobulos’ account it was then rescued by an anonymous sailor who carried it through the water on his own head. This was an inadvertently subversive act, for which he was flogged or executed.¹¹⁰² However,

¹⁰⁹⁵ G. Manetti (1993) 14-19.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Alexander discovers he is Amun-Zeus’s son: Diod. Sic. 17.51.2-3; Curt. 4.7.27-8; Plut. *Alex.* 27; Collins (1997); Worthington (2014); 180-83; (2004) 120-22.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Capdetrey (2007) 37.

¹⁰⁹⁸ App. *Syr.* 56.284.

¹⁰⁹⁹ App. *Syr.* 56.287.

¹¹⁰⁰ Alexander’s misunderstood omens: AR 32; cf. Seleukos’ misunderstood omen: App. *Syr.* 56.285.

¹¹⁰¹ Arr. *Anab.* 7.21.1-2.

¹¹⁰² Arr. *Anab.* 7.22.; cf. App. *Syr.* 56.288-290.

in another version, preserved in both Appian and Arrian, the sailor was none other than Seleukos, and his inadvertent wearing of the diadem ‘portended death to Alexander and his great kingdom to Seleucus’.¹¹⁰³ Arrian finds merit in this omen, because ‘Seleucus was the greatest king of those who succeeded Alexander, of the most royal mind, and ruling over the greatest extent of territory, next to Alexander himself’.¹¹⁰⁴ This legend is echoed in the coinage. The ubiquitous Herakles-type coins stamped with ‘ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ’ on the reverse were minted alongside, then ultimately replaced by, almost identical coins sporting ‘ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ’ instead.¹¹⁰⁵ The ideological continuity is clear. Even more explicit are the contemporaneous coin-issues which assimilate Seleukos, Alexander, and Dionysos.¹¹⁰⁶ This is not the propaganda of a king with moderate ambitions in a world of Amarna-like ‘peer’ kingdoms, as Kosmin contends.¹¹⁰⁷ Rather, it speaks to a carefully cultivated ideology of universal kingship and limitless empire in the footsteps of Alexander.

4.2 Ideological disaster: the ‘treaty of the Indus’

I. The expansion narrative

We have seen how the Seleukids used legends to establish the image of a divine and universal kingship from an early stage. In this section, we will consider how Seleukid rapid imperial expansion, which initially neatly paralleled the ideology of universal kingship, was upended by the decisive defeat at the hands of the Mauryan empire in 305-3. This resulted in an ideological crisis, one that could only be managed with prescriptive imperial geography.

The Seleukid legend broadcast an ideology of universal kingship which neatly complemented the successes of Seleukos’ early campaigns. This is seen in our pro-Seleukid sources which make such expansion seem inevitable. Immediately following his first victory in the Babylonian War (312/11-309/8), we are whisked off on an anabasis emulating Alexander’s.¹¹⁰⁸ ‘He first took Babylon, and then, his strength being increased by this success, subdued the Bactrians’, Justin notes in his typically succinct account, a sweeping summary before Seleukos

¹¹⁰³ ‘...εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ Σέλευκον λέγουσιν. καὶ τοῦτο τῷ τε Ἀλεξάνδρῳ σημῆναι τὴν τελευτὴν καὶ τῷ Σελεύκῳ τὴν βασιλείαν τὴν μεγάλην’, Arr. *Anab.* 7.22.5.

¹¹⁰⁴ ‘Σέλευκον γὰρ μέγιστον τῶν μετὰ Ἀλέξανδρον διαδεξαμένων τὴν ἀρχὴν βασιλεία γενέσθαι τὴν τε γνώμην βασιλικώτατον καὶ πλειστής γῆς ἐπάρξει μετὰ γε αὐτὸν Ἀλέξανδρον οὐ μοι δοκεῖ ἶέναι ἐς ἀμφίλογον’, Arr. *Anab.* 7.22.5.

¹¹⁰⁵ Obv.: Beardless head of Heracles right wearing lion skin headdress. Rev.: Zeus seated holding eagle, sceptre w/ ‘ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ’, Babylon Mint (320-15 BCE): *SC* 1.Ad.0039-44; (315-11 BCE): 1.80; (311-300): 1.82. Babylon Mint II (311-304 BCE): 1.96-97, 1.P4, P7-8, 1.105; Carrhae (310-290): 1.41-42.

cf. “ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ”: Babylon II (311-304): 1.95, 1.98; Carrhae (310-290 BCE): 1.42, 43, 45; Uncertain Mint (305-295): 1.293, 297-301; Uncertain Mint 2 (305 BCE - 280 BCE): 1.57. J. Shannahan (2016) 62-3.

¹¹⁰⁶ Obv.: Head of hero right (assimilating Seleucus, Alexander, and Dionysos), w/ panther helm. Rev.: ‘ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ’, Nike w/trophy (Susa Mint, 301 BCE - 295 BCE): *SC* 1.173, 1.P25, 1.174-6.

¹¹⁰⁷ Kosmin (2014b) 3, 31-7, 65-66; (2012) 21; J. Wiesehöfer (2016) 207-220.

¹¹⁰⁸ For Babylonian war: see esp. *ABC* 10 rev. 5-27; Kuhrt (2008) 2.585; Diod. Sic. 19.91-100. Plut. *Demetr.* 7; App. *Syr.* 55.

arrives in India.¹¹⁰⁹ Hieronymos' account is similarly brief.¹¹¹⁰ Even in Appian's slightly more detailed account, brevity is evident, with imperial conquest of the *oikoumenē* presented as inexorable as it is rapid, Seleukos moving effortlessly from centre to periphery:

ἔφεδρεύων δὲ αἰεὶ τοῖς ἐγγύς ἔθνεσι, καὶ δυνατὸς ὧν βιάσασθαι καὶ πιθανὸς προσαγαγέσθαι, ἤρξε Μεσοποταμίας καὶ Ἀρμενίας καὶ Καππαδοκίας τῆς Σελευκίδος λεγομένης καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Παρθυαίων καὶ Βακτριῶν καὶ Ἀράβων καὶ Ταπύρων καὶ τῆς Σογδιανῆς καὶ Ἀραχωσίας καὶ Ὑρκανίας, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ὄμορα ἔθνη μέχρι Ἰνδοῦ ποταμοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐγεγένητο δορίληπτα, ὡς ὠρίσθαι τῷδε μάλιστα μετ' Ἀλέξανδρον τῆς Ἀσίας τὸ πλεόν· ἀπὸ γὰρ Φρυγίας ἐπὶ ποταμὸν Ἰνδὸν ἄνω πάντα Σελεύκῳ κατήκουεν.'

Constantly on watch for opportunities against neighboring peoples, and both powerful in the use of force and persuasive in winning friends, Seleucus ruled over Mesopotamia and Armenia and what is known as Seleucid Cappadocia; and over Persians and Parthians and Bactrians and Arabs and Tapyri; and over Sogdiana and Arachosia and Hyrcania, and all the other adjacent peoples who had been conquered by Alexander as far as the river Indus. The result was that more of Asia fell within this man's frontiers than anyone since Alexander. For the whole world from Phrygia up as far as the river Indus answered to Seleucus.

App. Syr. 55.281 (tr. B. McGing (2019))

A seductive hodological lens is utilised by Appian, listing one land after another in a chain of implicit victories. Like we saw earlier in Ptolemaic propaganda of the same vein, the itinerary is presented as effortless for the rightful king as he moves through his *oikoumenē*.¹¹¹¹ Appian sacrifices action for certainty, the use of the aorist active verb (ἤρξε) making certain the 'narrative of success'.¹¹¹² The source hints at a less effortless movement which required negotiation (πιθανός) with satraps, following Antigonid diplomatic precedent.¹¹¹³ Nonetheless, in Appian's telling, such diplomacy complements, rather than substitutes Seleukos' military might. The notion of 'spear-won' (δορίκτητον) lands remains present.¹¹¹⁴ The anabasis was one part of a broader claim of suzerainty over Macedonians and barbarians alike.¹¹¹⁵ As Strootman notes, Appian's account is echoing the 'universalistic propaganda' of

¹¹⁰⁹ 'Principio Babyloniam cepit; inde auctis ex uictoria uiribus Bactrianos expugnauit', Just. *Epit.* 15.4.11; For Justin's succinct style: *Praef.* 4; Yardley (2003) 4.

¹¹¹⁰ 'Σέλευκος δὲ δυνάμει ἀδράς κυριεύσας καὶ φιλανθρώπως πᾶσι προσφερόμενος ῥαδίως προσηγάγετο τὴν τε Σουσιανὴν καὶ Μηδιαν καὶ τινὰς τῶν σύνεγγυς τόπων', Diod. Sic. 19.92.5.

¹¹¹¹ See: Ch. 2.1.

¹¹¹² Capdetrey (2007) 42-3; 'the itinerary itself becomes the occasion for a narrative of success' Pratt (1992) 150.

¹¹¹³ Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) 11-12; Capdetrey (2007) 39-43.

¹¹¹⁴ Alexander's spear-won territory: Diod. Sic. 17.17.2-3; Just. *Epit.* 11.5; Worthington (2014); Walbank (1982) 37, 107-8, 124. The Successors' land 'δορίκτητος': Diod. Sic. 19.85.3; Bosworth (2002) 213, 242.

¹¹¹⁵ '...πολέμους δ' ἐπολέμησε πολλοὺς Μακεδόσι καὶ βαρβάροις', App. Syr. 55.279.

the Seleukids.¹¹¹⁶ Seleukos' victorious imperial expansion, like that of his divine predecessor, legitimises control of the *oikoumenē*.¹¹¹⁷ The next step was to reclaim India for his universal empire.

II. Crisis: the failed India campaign

Up to 305 BCE, the propaganda for Seleukos had matched geopolitical reality. But this narrative of expansion came to a jarring halt at the River Indus. This abrupt change coincides with an encounter referred to in only one of our sources — Appian — as a war with the Mauryan empire. Our other two sources, Justin-Trogus and Diodoros-Hieronimos, are much less explicit.¹¹¹⁸ Hieronimos is silent on the matter entirely, ending Seleukos' anabasis at lands adjacent to Susiana and Media.¹¹¹⁹ The expansion to India and subsequent retreat are neatly excised from the record. Our Trogean account is more ambitious, engaging with the events while using the tools of digression, euphemism, and redirection to distract the reader from the geopolitical significance of the encounter. Justin has us following the triumphs of Seleukos from Babylon to Baktria, then to India, where we are directed into a temporal digression.

We have seen how the diversionary effect of temporal digressions in historical and geographical works can distance readers from the work's ostensible aims.¹¹²⁰ In Justin's digression, we are distracted from the Seleukid progress he claims to be explaining as we approach the conflict itself. Instead, we dive into local affairs, equipped with a colonial lens. We discover that India has experienced chaos and disorder since Alexander departed, the Macedonian governors killed in disorderly revolts fuelled by an unrestrained sense of *libertas*. This is followed by a brutal tyranny, under the instigator of the uprisings, one 'Sandracottus'. This is immediately followed with a return to the historical present, where the mess is cleaned up in a single line: Seleukos makes an agreement ('cum quo facta pactione') and settles affairs in the east ('conpositisque in Oriente rebus'). His next appearance is at the Battle of Ipsos (301), a battle for which Justin allows more room for detail. The use of euphemism and immediate redirection has provided no time for us to ponder the nature of these 'affairs'.¹¹²¹

We are encouraged to adopt a dismissive colonial gaze to cope with the awkward reality of the Mauryan empire. The Mauryan imperialist, Candragupta Maurya (r. ca. 321-295) is transformed from a successful empire-builder into a parochial despot.¹¹²² Appian's 'Andrakotta' is a passive regional king, inert while Seleukos 'waged war' (ἐπολέμησεν

¹¹¹⁶ Strootman (2014a) 319; Appian 'comme le porte-parole d'une propagande séleucide', Capdetrey (2007) 51.

¹¹¹⁷ Sherwin White & Kuhrt (1993) 12; emulating Alexander: Walbank (1984b) 63.

¹¹¹⁸ P. Wheatley (2014) 506-16.

¹¹¹⁹ Diod. Sic. 19.92.5.

¹¹²⁰ Clarke (1999) 202-3, 245-293; Elsner (1995) 88-124; Hornblower (2011) 55-99.

¹¹²¹ Just. *Epit.* 15.10-21.

¹¹²² Thapar (2012) 18-19; date: Stoneman (2019) 231.

Ἀνδροκόττω) upon him, resulting in clear resolution.¹¹²³ We are positioned to view the Mauryan king as a manageable, local problem. In the Trogean account, ‘Sandracottus’ is a fortune-blessed indigenous brigand ‘of mean origin’ who was sentenced to death by Alexander for *parrhēsia*.¹¹²⁴ He survives the encounter only to establish a petty tyranny following Alexander’s departure.¹¹²⁵ This translocation of Candragupta’s origins to Graeco-Indian space reduces him to a local disrupter of order. Accounts of Candragupta in Indian texts are certainly not all flattering; in *the Lives of the Jain Elders*, he is the low-born son of a peacock-seller’s wife and a wandering disgruntled ascetic; in *the Signet-ring of the Minister*, Candragupta cuts a more aristocratic figure who uses political nous and blackmail to help establish his coup against the Nanda dynasty, perhaps echoing the sophisticated *Realpolitik* we see in Kautilya’s landmark treatise, the *Arthasāstra*.¹¹²⁶ Yet these diverse traditions are clear enough in terms of the geography: Candragupta’s spectacular rise imposes on Nanda imperial space initially in the Ganges valley, some 1,500 kilometres southeast of Alexander’s easternmost territory of Gandhāra. The translocation of Candragupta diminishes his position as a rival imperialist through Seleukid eyes. In Justin’s digression, we are relieved to discover this warlord is just a local upstart born of indigenous disorder, another petty tyrant on the periphery.¹¹²⁷

This diminution of the Mauryan dynasty in the pro-Seleukid sources was far removed from the imperial realities of the subcontinent. From its first firm footings with the takeover of Nanda imperial space in the Ganges valley, Candragupta’s empire expanded aggressively to the west and south.¹¹²⁸ In Kautilya’s *Arthasāstra*, a treatise which provides instruction concerning military supply, logistics and strategy, we get the impression of a sophisticated and amply equipped military administration, something also reflected in Megasthenes’ *Indika*.¹¹²⁹ It is into this empire that the Macedonian satraps in Gandhāra and the Indus valley were subsequently absorbed.¹¹³⁰ This was followed by Mauryan assimilation of central Indian territories.¹¹³¹ The next recorded conflict is that with the Seleukids in 305-303. Following the war, the Mauryan empire went from strength to strength, gaining the Paropamisadai, Indus Valley, and parts of Arachosia and Gedrosia, according to Strabo.¹¹³² Viewed through a Mauryan ideology of growth (*Vṛddhi*), as elucidated in Kautilya’s *Arthasāstram* treatise, the conflict with the Seleukids can be understood as a seamless feature in the Mauryan’s own uninterrupted narrative of imperial expansion.¹¹³³ In the Buddhist tradition, Candragupta’s

¹¹²³ Said (1978) 97.

¹¹²⁴ ‘Fuit hic humili quidem genere natus’, Just. *Epit.* 15.4.14.

¹¹²⁵ Divine intervention: Just. *Epit.* 15.4.13, 15-21; Tarn (1938) 46-7.

¹¹²⁶ *Parishishtaparavan* 8.227-289. Cf. *Arthasāstra* 6.1-2, 7.1 (ed. R. Shamasastri (1967)). R.K. Mookerji (1928) 179-80; source issues: H. Brinkhaus (2016) 27-36.

¹¹²⁷ Indigenous disorder: Pratt (1992) 150-155; Said (1978) 36-38.

¹¹²⁸ Thapar (2002) 176; (2012) 21-22; R.K. Mookerji (1943) 33-6.

¹¹²⁹ Military organisation: *Arthasāstra*, 2.2, 2.18, 2.30-33, 5.3, 9.2.

¹¹³⁰ Capdetrey (2007) 43.

¹¹³¹ Thapar (2002) 176.

¹¹³² See: Ch.4.2.III below.

¹¹³³ *Arthasāstram* 6.2, 7.1; R.K. Mookerji (1943) 179-82; Thapar (2012) 176.

empire ultimately becomes the stage for the *cakravarti* (universal monarch), Aśoka the Great.¹¹³⁴ At the time when Seleukos' whirlwind invasion breached the Indus valley, he was encroaching on the territory of an empire in mid-expansion. Indeed, Capdetrey sees his invasion of India as forward defence.¹¹³⁵ Heading for a collision, their mutually antagonistic ideologies each provided no space for the other's empire.

The only explicit reference to the war itself is in Appian's account, and it is suspiciously brief, moving with rapidity from a martial to a sympotic tone:

‘... ὡς ὠρίσθαι τῷδε μάλιστα μετ’ Ἀλέξανδρον τῆς Ἀσίας τὸ πλεόν· ἀπὸ γὰρ Φρυγίας ἐπὶ ποταμὸν Ἰνδὸν ἄνω πάντα Σελεύκῳ κατήκουεν. καὶ τὸν Ἰνδὸν περάσας ἐπολέμησεν Ἀνδροκόττῳ βασιλεῖ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν Ἰνδῶν, μέχρι φιλίαν αὐτῷ καὶ κῆδος συνέθετο.’

... more of Asia fell within this man's frontiers than anyone since Alexander. For the whole world from Phrygia up as far as the river Indus answered to Seleucus. He even crossed the Indus to wage war on Andracotta, king of the Indians living on the river, until they concluded a treaty of friendship and a marriage alliance.

Appian Syr. 55.281-282 (tr. B. McGing (2019))

The passage is thematically comprised of two uneven parts and should be considered in sequence. Firstly, the confident narrative of conquest is emphatic, Seleukos moving ‘dans les traces d'Alexandre’.¹¹³⁶ This imperial imperative propels him across the Indus, presumably to claim Gandhāra and its great city of Taxila.¹¹³⁷

However, the final line serves up a jarring tonal shift. We are diverted from total imperial control (πάντα Σελεύκῳ κατήκουεν) with sympotic themes. *Philia* has somehow resolved the conflict (μέχρι φιλίαν) which is concluded with an enigmatic marriage arrangement.¹¹³⁸ For the court audience, results of the interaction now require no critical evaluation. An admission of failure is not needed to explain the outcome, strategy briefly set aside in the narrative as something which disrupts *euphrosyne*. With such a turn of events, any further campaigning would be a breach of the blossoming friendship.

The omission of the actual conflict undermines its significance for the readers. Bevan took a leaf out of Hieronymos' book and avoided the issue altogether, claiming the issue was unclear and, in any event, peripheral.¹¹³⁹ Many historians have tended to follow Justin and Appian in underplaying the significance or scale of the probable war. For Vincent Smith, Seleukos' expansion was simply ‘checked’ by Candragupta.¹¹⁴⁰ Walbank goes further, suggesting a

¹¹³⁴ Thapar (2002) 178-9.

¹¹³⁵ ‘de proteger les satrapies d'Asie centrale de l'expansionnisme maurya’, Capdetrey (2007) 45.

¹¹³⁶ Capdetrey (2007) 44-5, 81.

¹¹³⁷ Arr. *Anab.* 5.82.

¹¹³⁸ Kosmin (2014b) 33; Ogden (2017) 15-16.

¹¹³⁹ Bevan (1902) 1.57; Tarn (1938) 100.

¹¹⁴⁰ V.A. Smith (1901) 62.

stalemate, an ambiguity echoed by Sherwin-White and Kuhrt.¹¹⁴¹ Kosmin adds his voice of doubt, questioning whether a pitched battle ever even occurred, something followed by Ogden, who uses an unconvincing *ex silentio* argument to suggest that ‘mere contact’ with the Mauryan empire dissuaded Seleukos from a full-fledged invasion.¹¹⁴² But such readings do little to account for Seleukos’ abrupt abandonment of his *anabasis*. Thapar and Capdetrey more persuasively argue that we should consider geopolitical results of the war, rather than Seleukid propaganda, to better understand the nature of the conflict.¹¹⁴³

III. The ‘treaty of the Indus’

At the conclusion to the conflict, Justin and Appian draw our attention westward. However, Eratosthenes, who, as we have seen, was hostile to geographical *kolakeia* of all shades, provides a clearer picture:

‘Ἡ δὲ τάξις τῶν ἐθνῶν τοιαύτη· παρὰ μὲν τὸν Ἰνδὸν οἱ Παροπαμισάδαι, ὧν ὑπέρεκειται ὁ Παροπαμισὸς ὄρος, εἴτ’ Ἀραχωτοὶ πρὸς νότον, εἴτ’ ἐφεξῆς πρὸς νότον Γεδρωσηνοὶ σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς τὴν παραλίαν ἔχουσιν· ἅπασι δὲ παρὰ τὰ πλάτη τῶν χωρίων παράκειται ὁ Ἰνδός. τούτων δ’ ἐκ μερῶν τῶν παρὰ τὸν Ἰνδὸν ἔχουσί τινα Ἰνδοί, πρότερον ὄντα Περσῶν· ἃ ἀφείλετο μὲν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος τῶν Ἀριανῶν καὶ κατοικίας ἰδίας συνεστήσατο, ἔδωκε δὲ Σέλευκος ὁ Νικάτωρ Σανδροκόττω, συνθέμενος ἐπιγαμίαν καὶ ἀντιλαβὼν ἐλέφαντας πεντακοσίους.’

The geographical position of the tribes is as follows: along the Indus are the Paropamisadae, above whom lies the Paropamisus mountain: then, towards the south, the Arachoti: then next, towards the south, the Gedroseni, with the other tribes that occupy the seaboard; and the Indus lies, latitudinally, alongside all these places; and of these places, in part, some that lie along the Indus are held by Indians, although they formerly belonged to the Persians. Alexander took these away from the Arians and established settlements of his own, but Seleucus Nicator gave them to Sandrocottus, upon terms of intermarriage and of receiving in exchange five hundred elephants.

Strabo 15.2.9 (tr. H.L. Jones (1930))

Eratosthenes here is describing his fluvial boundary for the first and second *sphragides*, which characteristically bisects ethnographic boundaries, leaving Strabo unable to draw clear lines. We have ‘part’ (ἐκ μέρους) of the countries to the west bank of the Indus ceded to the Indians—although how much is unclear. For scholars sympathetic to Seleukos, this ceding

¹¹⁴¹ Walbank (1984c) 210-211; Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) 93; J. Wiesehöfer (2016) 207-220.

¹¹⁴² Kosmin (2014b) 32-33; ‘we hear nothing of it’, Ogden (2017) 16; Similarly, ‘Seleucus confronted Candragupta. The meeting ended with a treaty’, Stoneman (2019) 37. *Contra*: Grainger (1993) 25.

¹¹⁴³ Thapar (2002) 176-77; (2012) 21. Mookerji (1943) 36-8; ‘Des concessions territoriales d’une telle ampleur trahissent ce qui fut sans doute une défaite de Seleucos’, Capdetrey (2007) 46-7.

tends to be reduced to an equitable exchange: land-for-elephants and an unclear marriage arrangement to seal the deal.¹¹⁴⁴ In his influential *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, Tarn draws a conservative concession of land, a clear boundary, from the Kunar river, along the mountains to Quetta, and then south to the sea: all within the basin of the River Indus.¹¹⁴⁵ Such a boundary cedes little beyond the Indus valley itself. However, another Strabo-Eratosthenes fragment, which did not perhaps receive the level of attention it deserved by Tarn, presents something much more threatening to the Seleukids:

‘...πιστότατα εἶναι τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἐρατοσθένους ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ τῶν γεωγραφικῶν ἐκτεθέντα κεφαλαιωδῶς περὶ τῆς τότε νομιζομένης Ἰνδικῆς, ἥνικα Ἀλέξανδρος ἐπῆλθε· καὶ ἦν ὁ Ἰνδὸς ὄριον ταύτης τε καὶ τῆς Ἀριανῆς, ἣν ἐφεξῆς πρὸς τῇ ἐσπέρᾳ κειμένην Πέρσαι κατεῖχον· ὕστερον γὰρ δὴ καὶ τῆς Ἀριανῆς πολλὴν ἔσχον οἱ Ἰνδοὶ λαβόντες παρὰ τῶν Μακεδόνων.’

...[the account] in the third book of his geography by Eratosthenes of what was in his time regarded as India, that is, when Alexander invaded the country, is the most trustworthy; and the Indus River was the boundary between India and Ariana, which latter was situated next to India on the west and was in the possession of the Persians at that time; for later the Indians also held much of Ariana, having received it from the Macedonians.

Eratosth. F69 (=Strabo 15.1.10) (tr. H.L. Jones (1930))

As we saw in the previous chapter, Eratosthenes’ ‘Ariana’ *sphragis* spanned from the Indus to the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁴⁶ Whether it was ‘received’ as above, or ‘taken’, as Roller prefers to translate it, Eratosthenes gives us a much more expansive sense than Tarn’s neat boundaries.¹¹⁴⁷ This is echoed by Pliny who, following Megasthenes, observes that ‘most authorities do not put the western frontier at the river Indus but include four satrapies, the Gedrosi, Arachotae, Arii and Paropanisidae, with the river [Cophen] as the final boundary’.¹¹⁴⁸ This is echoed by Aelian, a writer who has been shown elsewhere to follow Megasthenes.¹¹⁴⁹ The postwar India does not stop at the Indus valley, but spills, worryingly for the Seleukids, deep into ‘Ariana’ beyond.

Eratosthenes and Megasthenes appear to show that the ceding of land was not merely the loss of ‘fringe satrapies’, as it is sometimes characterised, but vast territorial concessions omitted

¹¹⁴⁴ ‘...mutually beneficial’, Kosmin (2012) 17; gift of elephants saving Candragupta on fodder for homeward journey: Kosmin (2014b) 33; Stoneman emphasises value of the elephants: Stoneman (2019) 378.

¹¹⁴⁵ Continuity: Tarn (1938) 100; followed by M. Iliakis (2015); S. Wallace (2016) 207; although evidence for continuity limited to Baktria: R. Mairs (2014) 28.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ch. 4.4.II.

¹¹⁴⁷ Roller (2010) 61.

¹¹⁴⁸ ‘etenim plerique ab occidente non Indo amne determinant sed adiciunt quattuor satrapias, Gedrosos, Arachotas, Arios, Paropanisidas, ultimo fine Cophete fluvio, quae omnia Ariorum esse aliis placet’. (Plin. *HN* 6.78-9 (tr. H. Rackham (1942), with adaptation). Following Megasthenes: Smith (1901) 148-151; with qualifications: Stoneman (2021) 16-17, 78-82, 139. Cf. *BNJ* 715.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ael. *NA* 16.16; Stoneman (2021).

from the pro-Seleukid sources.¹¹⁵⁰ The loss of Gandhāra creates ideological and practical problems for the Seleukids. Its major city, Taxila, was not only 'valuable and prosperous' for its famous agricultural lands, but also concerning for its geostrategic location at the southern gateway to the Khyber Pass.¹¹⁵¹ The vulnerability may account for subsequent defensive measures taken on the Oxos.¹¹⁵² Gandhāra, having long been part of the Achaemenid sphere of influence, then Alexander's, was also valuable for its strong associations with Dionysos, with Nysa uncertainly located somewhere in its highlands.¹¹⁵³ The loss of Gandhāra then, was more than a strategic concern, it was also the relinquishment of ties to Seleukos' divine predecessors, Alexander and Dionysos.

The relinquishment of the Indus valley itself was another humiliation, profoundly compromising periegetic imperial geography of the universal king. For Alexander, the Indus had served as the fluvial conduit to the Ocean.¹¹⁵⁴ His fleet was to chart the Ocean itself, a pericircumnavigation which, like later European colonialists, would audaciously claim to territorialise swathes of the interior through a nautical journey.¹¹⁵⁵ The loss of the Indus was to dilute Seleukid claims to control the Oceanic vectors.

However, it was the loss of territories west of the Indus River which served as the most apparent blow to Seleukid ideology of universal kingship. If the ceded territory went beyond the Indus valley, as Megasthenes and our second Eratosthenes source indicate, then the imperial map is dented in the east with a concave border imposing on Seleukid space. With loss of part of the Paropamisos, any claims to Alexander's India and, indeed, Dionysos' India, are now far beyond reach. The ceding of some, or all, of the Gedrosian desert relinquishes the strategic desert shield, and contradicts the universal gaze of Alexander who, through his notorious death march, had insisted that even this empty space needed to be conquered for his world empire. Of most concern, Candragupta gained 'parts' of Arachosia (ἐκ μέρους), the strategic vulnerability matched by the damage this does to a universal imperial map, a sizable bite taken out of the empire's flank.¹¹⁵⁶ Gone is the blurred convex Oceanic edge traditionally associated with the world map. Instead of universal ambiguity, we are presented with the penetration of an external force into the map. It is little wonder that the territorial losses were omitted by pro-Seleukid sources. The ceding of these lands awkwardly show that Seleukid imperial space is neither secure nor universal.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ogden (2017) 20; Kosmin (2014b) 33; see also Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) 12.

¹¹⁵¹ Prosperous: 'πόλιν μεγάλην καὶ εὐδαίμονα', Arr. *Anab.* 5.8.2. Strategic location: Thapar (2002) 40.

¹¹⁵² Ai Khanoum initially a military node: Lyonnet (2012); Martinez-Sève (2014) 270; early: Capdetrey (2007) 77-8.

¹¹⁵³ See: Ch 3.3.II.A.

¹¹⁵⁴ Arr. *Anab.* 6.1.1, 6.14.1-5.

¹¹⁵⁵ Ocean as domesticated: *BNJ* 133 T10c (=Arr. *Anab.* 7, 25, 4). See also: Ch. 4.3.I.A below.

¹¹⁵⁶ Capdetrey (2007) 46-7.

These strategic and ideologically damaging territorial concessions were in exchange (ἀντιλαβῶν) for '500' elephants.¹¹⁵⁷ It is a gift which our pro-Seleukid sources are keen to emphasise, promptly appearing in the Battle of Ipsos in the next act to great effect. And yet the superlative value of these animals was not necessarily so evident for the Mauryan king who, if he was anything like his Nanda predecessor, may have had thousands of elephants back in the royal stables.¹¹⁵⁸ Kosmin suggests that the elephants, notoriously difficult to move long distances, may have been cheaper to give away than bring home.¹¹⁵⁹ From a Mauryan perspective, then, the exquisite gift may be better understood as a token gift in a sharply asymmetrical relationship.

For the Greeks, though, these elephants were no token gift. They were promoted by the Seleukids as the new *wunderwaffen* of the age.¹¹⁶⁰ Despite their difficulty in terms of handling, elephants could, on first contact, be used to devastating effect, something exemplified in the Battle of Ipsos, where Seleukos' elephants are presented as a decisive unit in turning the tide of battle.¹¹⁶¹ What was commonplace for the Mauryan empire was, in the west, transformative for Hellenistic warfare.¹¹⁶² However, it was in the Seleukid court's propaganda that the symbolic power of elephants most powerfully came to the fore. Elephant themes were widely disseminated in Seleukid coins, the issues from 300 onwards saturated with elephant imagery. The Alexander-in-elephant-headress motif was now even more widely promoted.¹¹⁶³ Elephants, some curiously horned, appear on issues with 'ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ' stamped on the reverse at both mints of Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, as well as Susa, Antioch, and Apameia.¹¹⁶⁴ Militant depictions of Athena Promachos atop an elephant quadriga-chariot begin to be issued.¹¹⁶⁵ The elephant legacy was inherited by Antiochos I, showcased in his legendary victory over the Kelts in the Battle of the Elephants (275), an event which Coşkun argues was more Seleukid propaganda, promoting an image of Seleukid mastery of these terror-weapons.¹¹⁶⁶ The Seleukids became synonymous with elephants, a token gift following a humiliating defeat in the east successfully transformed into a symbol of imperial might in the west.

¹¹⁵⁷ 'τοὺς πεντακοσίους ἔλεφαντας', Strabo 16.2.10; 15.2.9. Tarn calls this a 'fabulous figure', 150 elephants in reality: (1940) 84-89, 85 n.25-36; (1938) 101, 130; followed by: Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) 12.

¹¹⁵⁸ Nanda: Plut. *Alex.* 62; Mauryan: Megasthenes *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.35.1, 37); Thapar (2002) 156.

¹¹⁵⁹ Transport, difficulties: Kosmin (2014b) 33; Tarn (1940) 84-89.

¹¹⁶⁰ Burstein likens them to tanks: Burstein (2008) 140.

¹¹⁶¹ Plut *Demetr.* 29; Polyanus *Strat.* 4.9.

¹¹⁶² Terror depreciated with familiarity: Tarn (1952) 61-2.

¹¹⁶³ Obv. Head of Alexander right, in elephant headress (300 - 298 B.C.E): Babylon mint: SC 1.101; Susa mint: 1.183; Ecbatana mint: 1.219.

¹¹⁶⁴ Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, Mint 1 (296-5 BCE): SC 1.128-9; Mint 2 (296-86 BCE): 1.147; Antioch mint (300-281 BCE): 1.14; (286-1 BCE): 1.25; Susa Mint (300-298 BCE): 1.183; (291 BCE - 281 BCE): 1.181-2; 1.187; Apamea mint (300-281 BCE): 1.35.

¹¹⁶⁵ Quadriga: Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris II: (300-295 BCE) SC 1.130; 131-3, 1.155 (296 BCE - 281); biriga: 1.14 (300-281 BCE); Susa quadriga: 1.177-8 (295-280 BCE).

¹¹⁶⁶ Luc. *Zeux.* 8-11; Coşkun (2012); cf. Primo (2009) 256-7.

Not all were fooled by the Seleukid elephant propaganda. Seleukos' rival kings in the west, especially, seemed to have noticed the inherent contradictions. Demetrios' *Philo*i mock Seleukos as a trainer or master of elephants (ἐλεφαντάρχης), a title suitable for a palace *Philos*.¹¹⁶⁷ The jibe is multi-faceted: Seleukos' obsession is reduced to the concerns of a court *Philos* of the universal king, Demetrios, who need not concern himself with such small matters. Yet the joke also highlights contradiction in Seleukid imperial ideology; the widespread use of elephants as a symbol of strength and domination sits uncomfortably beside the political reality of the Mauryan settlement, in which spear-won land, the measure of a king, had been traded for beasts. For his critics, the elephants are far from a symbol of power. Rather, they are a physical reminder of Seleukos' humiliating concessions in the east.

The marriage agreement is the most unclear element of the treaty. It has nonetheless been the target for some of the most creative speculation. Strabo refers to *epigamian* (intermarriage), an unclear term.¹¹⁶⁸ For Thapar, this is a continuation of the Achaemenid-brokered treaties allowing for marriage between ethnic groups. He argues that this would serve Candragupta's imperial interests, legitimising thousands of Greek/non-Greek relationships in his now significantly expanded territory.¹¹⁶⁹ In Appian's account, we have the more personal term—*kedos*—for the connection by marriage.¹¹⁷⁰ This personal slant on the treaty reflects Appian's emphasis on the *philia* between Candragupta and Seleukos. Some have even speculated about a 'Seleucid princess' for Candragupta.¹¹⁷¹ This is a stretch, and as Grainger observes, a marriage, even a royal one, does not necessarily make an alliance. It may be an act of asymmetrical and submissive negotiation, seen in Dareios III's offer of his daughter's hand to Alexander.¹¹⁷² Or it may be, as we see with the marriage treaty of Antiochos II Theos and Ptolemy II's daughter, Berenice Syra, 'a continuation of war by other means'.¹¹⁷³ Appian's language, in contrast to Strabo's, may perhaps be better understood as echoing Seleukid interests through an appeal to *philia*. A personal marriage gives the Seleukid king more agency, responding to his own sense of *philia* rather than accommodating a triumphant opponent. Given the ambiguity, the marriage agreement is not especially useful for evaluating the war or the postwar settlement. As Kosmin rightly puts it, in the end we ultimately come back to a 'territory-for-elephants' exchange.¹¹⁷⁴

The Seleukid imperial narrative of universal kingship was severely shaken by the clash with the Mauryans. A critical review of our pro-Seleukid sources, supplemented with other accounts, allows us to reject the characterisation of the postwar settlement as an amicable agreement among friends. Instead, the Seleukids' pretensions of universal empire were

¹¹⁶⁷ Plut. *Demetr.* 25.4.

¹¹⁶⁸ *LSJ* s.v. ἐπιγαμία II B: e.g. Xen. *Cyr.* 3.2.23.

¹¹⁶⁹ Thapar (2002) 177.

¹¹⁷⁰ *LSJ* s.v. κῆδος 3 II: connection by marriage (e.g. Hdt. 7.189).

¹¹⁷¹ Tarn (1938) 152-3; Stoneman (2019) 378; Kosmin (2014b) 33.

¹¹⁷² Arr. *Anab.* 2.25.1.

¹¹⁷³ McKechnie (2022) 136; Grainger (2010) 131-3.

¹¹⁷⁴ Kosmin (2014b) 33; Wiesehöfer (2016).

undermined.¹¹⁷⁵ Yet the Seleukid spin was highly effective; the Dionysos-like return atop elephants from the east and subsequent victory at Ipsos confirmed the founding dynast as an emperor on a superhuman scale. For all the smoke and mirrors of court historians, however, it was the imperial geographers who seem to have been assigned the most ambitious task: constructing a prescriptive geography which would bend space to propagate the ideology of universal kingship for the Seleukids. It is to this geographic propaganda that we now turn.

4.3 Alternate routes to universal kingship: Patrokles and Demodamas

With the formidable Mauryan empire reduced to a local kingdom by court historians, Seleukos' *stratēgoi*-geographers could construct alternate routes so that a Seleukid universal empire could be realised. For Visscher, these universal imperial tendencies paradoxically 'coexisted' with the limited imperial ambitions of Kosmin's model.¹¹⁷⁶ However, in this section, we will show how the tools of imperial geography would achieve something much more ambitious. Spatial and descriptive geographies were used to distort the world on the imperial map until Seleukid reach spanned to the eastern edge, engulfing the *oikoumenē* and enveloping Mauryan rivals. In this section we will adopt a critical geographic approach to considering the treatises of the *stratēgoi*-geographers, Patrokles and Demodamas, who wrote in the first decades of the third century. The former, lauded for his cartographic work in antiquity, produced profound 'inaccuracies' which, it will be shown, encouraged his audience to view the world through the assimilating lens of universal empire.¹¹⁷⁷ The geographer's fictive discovery of a northern mouth to the Kaspian Sea transformed it into a world harbour where Oceanic and fluvial vectors would converge. Bolder still, his fabricated pericircumnavigation of the eastern Ocean from India back to the Kaspian would create an Oceanic vector which not only encircled and minimised Mauryan space, but also flattered his royal patron by reinforcing Seleukid claims of control over the entire eastern half of the world. After examining Patrokles' treatise, we will look at Demodamas' different method to universal empire, constructing a religious vector which transcended physical space, binding the periphery to the core through the power of the king's true father, Didymean Apollo. We will see that the *stratēgoi*-geographers used the tools of imperial geography to propagate the ideology of universal empire as powerful gestures of geographic praise, irrespective of geopolitical realities.

¹¹⁷⁵ Grainger (1993) 27.

¹¹⁷⁶ Visscher (2020) 28; cf. Kosmin (2012); (2014b); (2016).

¹¹⁷⁷ M.F. Williams (2009).

I. Patrokles' map for a universal empire

Patrokles was an elite *Philos* of the Seleukid court and a highly successful *stratēgos*. We first encounter him when he assumes a leading position in the Babylonian War, and he appears again, campaigning in Asia Minor for Antiochos I following Seleukos' death in 280.¹¹⁷⁸ At an indeterminate time between these events, he was governing Baktria-Hyrkania.¹¹⁷⁹ At around this time, too, he was sent on his voyage to investigate the Hyrkanian-Kaspian Sea and the imagined coast of the northeastern Ocean beyond. Pliny implies that his journey was at the command of Seleukos and Antiochos (*Seleuco atque Antiocho regnantibus*), which would seem to suggest the co-regency (294/3-281), placing it only a few years after the 'Treaty of the Indus'.¹¹⁸⁰ Patrokles' treatise, the title of which is uncertain, covered not only the Kaspian Sea, but also India, and the coast in between.¹¹⁸¹ The *stratēgos*-geographer's views seem to have been firmly aligned with this ideology of universal kingship, seen in the 280s, when he advised Seleukos not to compromise with the rival king, Demetrios.¹¹⁸² Seleukos may have encountered losses in India, but he nonetheless had equally ambitious designs to conquer Thrace, Macedonia, and beyond in a campaign which would ultimately prove his undoing.¹¹⁸³ Patrokles' geography, then, was produced at a time when imperial conquest to attain universal kingship was still the ideological orthodoxy, despite glaring obstructions to its fulfilment.

Patrokles' geographical treatise would be the gift of a *Philos* that eased his king's frustrations. Indeed, his geography would be remembered by later generations as a trusted geographical source, not only because of his geographical skill, but also for his intimate relationship with the king. For Plutarch, the two go hand in hand, describes Patrokles as 'a man... repute[d] for wisdom, and a trusted friend of Seleucus'.¹¹⁸⁴ Strabo depicts him as most trustworthy 'on account of his worthiness of character and on account of his being no layman in geographical matters'.¹¹⁸⁵ Of equal importance to Strabo was Patrokles' intimate relationship with Seleukos and Antiochos, who trusted in him as their *Philos*.¹¹⁸⁶ Patrokles' sources were apparently impeccable; for his geography of India, he cited no less than Alexander who apparently made

¹¹⁷⁸ *Philos*: BNJ 712 T2 (=Plut. *Demetr.* 47.4-5); *stratēgos*, Babylon: BNJ 712 T1 (=Diod. Sic. 19.100.5-6); Plut. *Demetr.* 7.2; Bosworth (2002) 84, 224-5; Wheatley & Dunne (2020) 99-100; Primo is suspicious: A. Primo (2009) 77-8. For Asia Minor: BNJ 712 T4 (=Photios, *Bibliotheca* 224-7); Kosmin (2014b) 67; cf. Bevan's doubts: (1902) 1.131.

¹¹⁷⁹ BNJ 712 F4a (=Strabo 2.1.17); Visscher (2020) 18.

¹¹⁸⁰ BNJ 712 F4c (=Plin. *HN* 2.67.176-8); Visscher is confident: (2020) 19; cf. uncertain: Roller (2010) 115; Kosmin (2014b) 67-8.

¹¹⁸¹ Geographical work: northeast Asia: T3b (=Plin. *HN*. 6.58); India: T5a (=Strabo 2.1.2); T5d (=Strabo 2.1.4-5).

¹¹⁸² Plut. *Demetr.* 47; A.B. Bosworth (2002) 264; Grainger (1993) 154.

¹¹⁸³ App. *Syr.* 56.283-4.

¹¹⁸⁴ 'ἀνὴρ συνετὸς εἶναι δοκῶν καὶ Σελεύκῳ φίλος πιστός', BNJ 712 T2 (=Plut. *Demetr.* 47.4-5).

¹¹⁸⁵ 'Πατροκλῆς ὁ μάλιστα πιστεύεσθαι δίκαιος διὰ τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ιδιώτης εἶναι τῶν γεωγραφικῶν φησί', BNJ T5a (=Strabo 2.1.4).

¹¹⁸⁶ '...τῶν βασιλέων τῶν πεπιστευκότων αὐτῷ τηλικαύτην ἀρχήν', Strabo 2.1.6.

private, ‘accurate investigations’.¹¹⁸⁷ This was something Patrokles claimed to have gained access to these via the late king’s treasurer. For his skill as much as his company, Patrokles was a geographer who was eminently credible.

And yet, this unimpeachable reputation of Patrokles sits incongruously alongside the distortions of his map in the northeastern *oikoumenē*. Those searching for the accurate geographer in his works have had to go to great lengths to apologise for his misleading coastlines. The identification of the Hyrkanian-Kaspian Sea’s northern mouth and the journey beyond is explained away as an overreliance on local hearsay, or the product of bad weather, or even a misunderstanding of his findings by our later sources.¹¹⁸⁸ As an important challenge to this empiricist approach, Kosmin highlighted that the works may instead reflect Seleukid imperial ideology.¹¹⁸⁹ He believes this ideology was one of limited empire, from the Indus to the Hellespont. However, we will see that while Patrokles’ map was certainly an expression of ideology, it was the geography of a universal, rather than a limited empire.

A. Passage to India: reach and encirclement

The idea of a northeastern sea route to India had already been floated by the last universal king, Alexander, at the Hyphasis mutiny (326).¹¹⁹⁰ The ‘eastern sea’, he insisted, was connected (ξύρροον) with the Hyrkanian-Kaspian Sea and, indeed, the Erythraean Sea all the way around to the Pillars of Herakles, ‘for the great sea encircles all the land’.¹¹⁹¹ The circular Ocean, a fearsome delimitation of mortal and immortal space for Hesiod and Homer, would soon be domesticated by Alexander’s ships as an expression of the divine king’s universal empire.¹¹⁹²

For the Seleukids, reeling from their territorial losses in India and Ariana, Patrokles’ Oceanic vector could provide an alternate means to assert Seleukos’ inherited claims to Alexander’s universal empire. Such a journey, viewed through a colonial lens, would have a claiming effect on the interior of the eastern *oikoumenē*. Pliny’s account follows Patrokles, encouraging just such a lens:

¹¹⁸⁷ ‘αὐτὸν δὲ Ἀλέξανδρον ἀκριβῶσαι, ἀναγραψάντων τὴν ὅλην χώραν τῶν ἐμπειροτάτων αὐτῶι’, *BNJ* 712 F1 (=Strabo 2.1.6).

¹¹⁸⁸ Hearsay: Roller (2010) 163; Williams (2009). Later misunderstanding: Tarn (1901) 21; (1938) 91n.4, 113; 488-491.

¹¹⁸⁹ Kosmin (2014b).

¹¹⁹⁰ Arr. *Anab.* 5.26.1-3; Curt. 9.3.13.

¹¹⁹¹ ‘ἑὼαν θάλασσαν’ ... ξυναφῆς φανεῖται ἡ Ὑρκανία θάλασσα· ἐκπεριέρχεται γὰρ γῆν πέρι πᾶσαν ἡ μεγάλη θάλασσα’, Arr. *Anab.* 5.26.1-3.

¹¹⁹² Hom. *Il.* 18.7-8; Hom. *Od.* 11.13-20; Hes. *Theog.* 767; *Op.* 165-70; Anaximander: *BNJ* 9 F2 (=Plin. *HN* 4.58); Ocean as delimiting boundary: Strabo 1.1.3-9, 17.3.24; Pompon. 1.4-5. Romm (1992); Cf. Alexander: Curt. 4.7.26. *Contra* landlocked Kaspian: Hdt. 1.203; Arist. *Meteor.* 354a3-4.

...vero ab ortu ex Indico mari sub eodem sidere pars tota vergens in Caspium mare pernavigata est Macedonum armis Seleuco atque Antiocho regnantibus, qui et Seleucida et Antiochida ab ipsis appellari voluere.

...the whole quarter under the same star stretching from the Indian Sea to the Caspian Sea was navigated throughout by the Macedonian forces in the reigns of Seleucus and Antiochus, who wanted them called Seleucis and Antiochis after themselves.

BNJ 712 F4c (= Plin. *HN* 2.167) (tr. Rackham (1938), with adaptations)

The journey is a fulfilment of Alexander's proposition, an Oceanic voyage from the Caspian Sea to the eastern regions of India. With a breathtaking audacity reminiscent of James Cook, the journey and the nomenclature on the map effectively territorialises the continental interior, creating an illusory colonial control, albeit in sharp contrast with the geopolitical reality.¹¹⁹³ For Monmonier, such naming is a cartographical 'weapon', legitimising otherwise unfounded claims for the audience.¹¹⁹⁴ In this stunning act of imagined territorialisation, the Seleukid empire is radically expanded, and the Mauryan territory is diminished and enveloped.

Adopting a dromological lens, Patrokles makes his Oceanic vector to India seem effortless.¹¹⁹⁵ For Pliny, Patrokles is firmly at the helm: 'Seleucus and Antiochus, and their admiral of the fleet Patrokles having sailed round [from India] even into the Hyrcanian and Caspian Sea'.¹¹⁹⁶ For Strabo, Patrokles' vectorial geography is the sober balm to Deimachos' outsized East.¹¹⁹⁷ In passing, Strabo refers to Patrokles' map:

‘τοῦ στόματος τῆς Κασπίας θαλάττης... δοκεῖ αὐτῆς τῆς παραλίας μέχρι τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἀρκτικώτερον εἶναι σημεῖον καὶ περιίπλουν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς δυνατόν, ὡς φησιν ὁ τῶν τόπων ἡγησάμενος τούτων Πατροκλῆς.’

The mouth of the Caspian Sea... seems to be a more northerly point than the coastline itself that runs thence to India; and to offer a practicable route of circumnavigation from India, according to Patrokles, who was once governor of these regions.

BNJ 712 F4a (=Strabo 2.1.17) (tr. H.L. Jones (1917) with adaption)

¹¹⁹³ Cook's territorialisation following 3000 km peri-circumnavigation from Kamay (Botany Bay) to Bedanug (Possession Island): 'I now once more hoisted English Coulers and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern Coast from the above Latitude down to this place by the name of New South Wales'. J. Cook (1893) entry 22nd Aug. 1770; P. Moon (2019) 254.

¹¹⁹⁴ Monmonier (1991) 90.

¹¹⁹⁵ Virilio (1977) 70.

¹¹⁹⁶ '...circumvectis etiam in Hyrcanium mare et Caspium Seleuco et Antiocho praefectoque classis eorum Patrocle...', BNJ 712 T3b (= Plin. *HN* 6.58); For Williams, 'Pliny misinterprets Strabo', but there is no clear evidence that Pliny used Strabo as intermediate source: Williams (2009).

¹¹⁹⁷ Romm (1992) 103.

Patrokles draws the easiest *periplous* possible.¹¹⁹⁸ The Caspian Sea is the ‘northerly point’, an accessible curve down to the mouth of the Ganges.¹¹⁹⁹ The land between ‘tapers’ (μείουρον), hugging the Tauros-Himalaya mountain range.¹²⁰⁰ This is a technique critical geographers call ‘smoothing’, designed to avoid any disjointed segments for ease of movement.¹²⁰¹ The effortless movement implied is crucial for imperial control. Virilio called it the ‘Oceanic vector’, allowing the colonial force to appear effortless and quick in their movements.¹²⁰² The vector indicates movement, not demarcation, allowing the Seleukids to now move rapidly around Mauryan space, enveloping it with ease.¹²⁰³

Further facilitating movement, the audience finds that eastern India has been relocated to a more accessible location. There is no massive 20-30,000 stadia behemoth stretching to the Southern Hemisphere as Onesikritos and Deimachos would have it. Instead, Patrokles presents us with a more conservative India of 15,000 stadia from the cape to the Kaukasos mountains.¹²⁰⁴ India is also diminished east-west, shaving at least 1000 stadia off, allowing more easily for his effortless ‘taper’ from the Caspian to the mouth of the Ganges.¹²⁰⁵ The effect is to redraw the map, Seleukid space now encircling Mauryan space. Modern critical geographers have demonstrated the powerful effect of encirclement in political geography, creating a sense of geopolitical vulnerability.¹²⁰⁶ Patrokles here uses encirclement to similar effect: nomenclature and territorialising gestures effectively unify the territory all around the Mauryan empire as a uniform Seleukid ‘shade’, while the vector creates an imposing motion, like the arrows on a wartime map, so that forces ‘seem completely surrounded’.¹²⁰⁷ In a powerful gift of spatial geography to the king, Patrokles has transformed the Mauryan empire from a large and encroaching threat into a land under siege by Patrokles’ imperial geography.

¹¹⁹⁸ See: Appendix 6.IV.

¹¹⁹⁹ ‘...καὶ δοκεῖ αὐτῆς τῆς παραλίας μέχρι τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἀρκτικώτερον εἶναι σημεῖον καὶ περίπλου ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς δυνατόν’, *BNJ* 712 F4a (=Strabo 2.1.17).

¹²⁰⁰ ‘ἀεὶ τι τοῦ μήκους ὑφαιρεῖ καὶ τοῦ πλάτους ἢ θάλαττα, ὥστ’ ἀποφαίνειν μείουρον πρὸς ἔω τὴν νῦν ὑπογραφομένην μερίδα τῆς Ἀσίας’, Strabo 11.11.7.

¹²⁰¹ Monmonier (1991) 25-7. *Contra*: for Visscher, Patrokles’ claim to the open sea paradoxically ‘closes the northernmost part of the Seleucid realm’, Visscher (2020) 32-4. This perhaps overlooks the universal ideology of the Seleukids.

¹²⁰² Virilio (1977) 12.

¹²⁰³ See: Appendix 6.IV. *Contra*: Kosmin (2014b) 69-72; Visscher (2020) 32-4. For fabrications and inflated reach: Monmonier (1991) 25-35; Ager (1977) 6-12.

¹²⁰⁴ ‘...φησὶ σταδίου μυρίου καὶ πεντακισχιλίου’, *BNJ* 712 F2 (=Strabo 2.1.2-6); *cf.* Onesikritos & Daimachos: *BNJ* 212 F3b (=Strabo 15.1.11-12). For comparison, see: Appendix 6.1 of this dissertation.

¹²⁰⁵ ‘...τοῦ μὲν Μεγασθένους λέγοντος σταδίων μυρίων ἑξακισχιλίων, τοῦ δὲ Πατροκλέους χιλίους λείπειν φαμένου’, *BNJ* 712 F3a (=Strabo 2.1.7); *cf.* F3b (=Strabo 15.1.11).

¹²⁰⁶ H. Speier (1941) 316-17, 326-30; Ager (1977) 9-11; Monmonier (1991) 99-102.

¹²⁰⁷ Speier (1941) Illustration 3, 329; Ager (1977). ‘Dynamic’ encircling arrows: Speier (1941) 326; Ager (1977) 8-9, 13.

B. The Kaspian harbour: the maritime and fluvial nexus

The open-mouthed Kaspian Sea in Patrokles' imperial geography was to transform it from a geographic backwater into a nexus point for Seleukid Oceanic and fluvial vectors.¹²⁰⁸ He was not the first to make the attempt to sail out of the Kaspian Sea into the Ocean beyond. According to Arrian, Alexander sent one Heraklides to Hyrkania to discover whether the Kaspian 'is joined' (ξυμβάλλει) to the sea of the Euxine in the west or the Indian sea to the East via its 'gulf' (κόλπον).¹²⁰⁹ Patrokles' expeditions were, as Silberman notes, a 'reprise d'un projet d'Alexandre', completing the universal imperial project for the Great King's rightful successor.¹²¹⁰

Perhaps the best lies are built on verifiable truths. An evidently skilled cartographer, Patrokles correctly surveyed the north-south length of the Hyrkarnian-Kaspian Sea (5000 stadia).¹²¹¹ With his audience assured, it is in the uncertain north that graphic fabrications transform the sea's significance. Patrokles appears to have utilised vivid geographic descriptions and emplotment to provide certainty for this fantastical mouth to the Ocean. In the Pomponius Mela and Curtius Rufus fragments, we descend into the geography, sailing southwards from the northern Ocean through the narrow headland, where 'a great sea rushes upon the shore, drives its waves far, and like a rising tide forms a pool of great extent'.¹²¹² The sea lane 'bursts forth' (*quasi fluvius inrumpit*) from a narrow northern strait.¹²¹³ The wash of the Volga estuary has been dramatically transformed into the heads of a massive harbour, open to the Ocean beyond.

Adopting a progressive emplotment, we are then led sequentially from the Ocean and into the Kaspian, evoking a sense of *nostos* as we come closer to the imperial core. Upon entry into the Kaspian, unifying ethnographic markers emphasise that we are entering a single land. We observe that 'on the right, as one sails into the Kaspian Sea, are those Skythians... who live in the country contiguous to Europe ... on the left are the eastern Skythians, also nomads, who extend as far as the Eastern Sea and India'.¹²¹⁴ Rather than a partition of territory, the sea is ingeniously treated very much like a harbour; we have penetrated a contiguous country. Moving south beyond these headlands, the Kaspian narrows, and we pass an unfamiliar

¹²⁰⁸ Centripetal geography: Speier (1941) 314.

¹²⁰⁹ Arr. *Anab.* 7.16.2, 7.1.2-3.

¹²¹⁰ Kosmin (2014b) 71; A. Silberman (1989) 576 n.28.

¹²¹¹ *BNJ* 712 F7a (=Strabo 11.7.1); cf. Strabo 11.6.1, 8.1-4; Capdetrey (2007) 82. For scale and orientation, see: Appendix 6V of this dissertation.

¹²¹² 'A septentrione ingens in litus mare incumbit longeque agit fluctus et magna parte exaestuans stagnat...', *BNJ* 712 F7d (=Curt. 6.4.19). All Curtius' translations follow J.C. Rolfe (1946).

¹²¹³ 'mare Caspium ut angusto ita longo etiam freto primum terras quasi fluvius inrumpit', *BNJ* 712 F7h (=Pompon. 3.5.38). Tarn argues this imagery is Patrokles: Tarn (1948) 1.88 & n.1, 104 n.1; although Pompon. also follows Nepos (Pompon. 3.45).

¹²¹⁴ 'εἰσπλέοντι δ' ἐν δεξιᾷ μὲν τοῖς Εὐρωπαϊοῖς οἱ συνεχεῖς σκύθαι νόμονται... οἱ μεταξὺ τοῦ Τανάιδος καὶ τῆς θαλάττης ταύτης, νομάδες οἱ πλείους... ἐν ἀριστερᾷ δ' οἱ πρὸς ἔω σκύθαι, νομάδες καὶ οὗτοι, μέχρι τῆς ἐώιας θαλάττης καὶ μέχρι τῆς Ἰνδικῆς παρατείνοντες'. *BNJ* 712 F7c (=Strabo 11.6.2) (tr. H.L. Jones (1928) with adaptation).

territory before we reach more familiar country. We observe lands of nomads (νέμονται) and deserted lands (εἴτ' ἐρημος πρόκειται μεταξύ) in need of domestication.¹²¹⁵ Soon we pass more familiar mountain peaks before the southerly Hyrkanian Sea opens before us. We have reached the end of an uninterrupted journey. 'The Ocean makes its way from India into Hyrcania', guiding us to harbour in a single vector.¹²¹⁶ For Visscher, this geography 'closes' the north, but the ties from India to the Kaspian via this route suggests something much more audacious.¹²¹⁷ Patrokles is using emplotment and vivid description to provide certainty to his oceanic vector as it brings us to the imperial centre. The representation acts as geographical *epainos*; Patrokles' geography makes the centripetal pull of the new Seleukid core seem natural and inevitable.

C. Rivers from India

Patrokles' periplous of the Hyrkanian-Kaspian Sea not only identified an Oceanic vector coming from India, but also fluvial vectors converging. It was here that the fictive mouths of the Oxos and Iaxartes rivers were identified by the geographer, with an emphasis on the substantial centripetal movement from the Hindu Kush to the new Seleukid centre.¹²¹⁸ Eratosthenes, following Patrokles, describes 'many Indian goods ...brought down it [the Oxos] to the Hyrkanian Sea'.¹²¹⁹ Elsewhere, Strabo following Patrokles' centripetal geographic lens, observes that the Oxos is 'so easily navigable, they say, that the Indian merchandise packed over the mountains to it is easily brought down to the Hyrcanian Sea'.¹²²⁰ Rather than debouching into the Aral Sea far beyond practical Seleukid reach as it does in reality, the river claimed by Alexander in upper Sogdiana unilaterally moved riches to the new Seleukid sea.¹²²¹ The new routes were an ideological fantasy, Kosmin noting the absence of cities and ports.¹²²² For Tarn, this is an honest mistake, but the error has a profound effect on the map.¹²²³ Like the centripetal geography of Posidippos' *On Stones*, the rivers of Patrokles' geography inevitably move treasures from the periphery to the new imperial centre.¹²²⁴

From the Kaspian, further trade to the Euxine Sea is controlled by human intervention. Having reached the Kaspian Sea by boat, pack animals are now required to travel further on

¹²¹⁵ *BNJ* 712 F7c (=Strabo 11.6.2); F7i (=Strabo 11.7.2); cf. later European depictions of empty space for colonisation: G.A. Jones & S. Naylor (1997) 287-8.

¹²¹⁶ 'ex India in Hyrcaniam Oceanum cadere', *BNJ* 712 F7d (=Curt 6.4.19).

¹²¹⁷ Visscher (2020) 32-33.

¹²¹⁸ Although Uzboy, now dry, meandered NE-SW 'a few km³ a year' from Iaxartes via Karakum desert and lagoons, largescale flow unfeasible: R. Létolle et al. (2007).

¹²¹⁹ 'εὐπλοῦν εἶναι καὶ ... πολλὰ τῶν Ἰνδικῶν φορτίων κατάγειν εἰς τὴν Ὑρκανίαν θάλατταν', *BNJ* 712 F5a (=Strabo 11.7.3); Tarn (1938) 488-9.

¹²²⁰ '... φασὶν εὐπλοῦν εἶναι, ὥστε τὸν Ἰνδικὸν φόρτον ὑπερκομισθέντα εἰς αὐτὸν ῥαδίως εἰς τὴν Ὑρκανίαν', *BNJ* 712 F5b (=Strabo 2.1.15). Similarly: Arr. *Anab.* 7.16.3

¹²²¹ See: Appendix 6.V.

¹²²² Kosmin (2014b) 72.

¹²²³ Tarn (1938) 113.

¹²²⁴ Posidippos *On Stones* AB7 (= *P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309, AB7); Tarn (1901) 19-20.

to the Euxine.¹²²⁵ Tantalisingly, there may have been canal-building at the time of Patrokles' geography; Seleukos was apparently 'contemplating' cutting a canal from the Kaspian to the Euxine Sea, 'a whole system of policy' which ultimately proved impracticable for later Seleukid kings.¹²²⁶ We are encouraged to feel the centripetal pull and are left with a clear sense of the Seleukid empire at the centre, with undisputed control of east-west traffic across the *oikoumenē*.

The prominent general and talented geographer, Patrokles, seems to have provided a potent gift of *epainos* for his *philos*, the divine king. He produced a map in which every error seems to serve the ideological needs of the Seleukid court. The audience is encouraged to view movement from India to the new Seleukid centre, the Kaspian harbour, by sea or river, as something achieved with ease. Mauryan territory is diminished and encircled in the process. The Oceanic vector serves a further role, territorialising the interior of the eastern *oikoumenē* as claimed space. If, as Wood observes, an imperial map is essentially an assertion of authority, then the Seleukid imperial map constructed by Patrokles pushes these claims to the very limit.¹²²⁷

II. Demodamas' geography: binding the periphery and centre

Patrokles was not alone in constructing geography which bound the periphery to the centre. The *stratēgos*-geographer, Demodamas of Miletos, embarked on a significant expedition of Sogdiana and beyond, performing what appear to be powerful spatialising gestures which extend across the Asian interior. His expedition, like Dionysos' and Alexander's before him, reached the Iaxartes River, which formed the outer edge of Sogdiana.¹²²⁸ Demodamas crossed this river, claiming the Skythian steppe beyond. This territory was then bound to Apollo Didymos, the father of Seleukos, through the establishment of altars, drawing a powerful religious vector which drew the untameable steppe into Seleukid orbit.

Demodamas was the ideal candidate to make religious claims beyond Sogdiana for the Seleukid's immediate ancestor, Apollo Didymos. Inscriptions from Miletos suggest that Demodamas was a powerful 'broker' between the Didymean oracle and the Seleukid court.¹²²⁹ One decree in 300/299 pays honour to Antiochos I, celebrating the Seleukid's personal relationship with Apollo, and granting 'priority access to the oracle'.¹²³⁰ The honours play their part in consolidating the Seleukos legend, suggesting a special intimacy between the royal

¹²²⁵ *BNJ* 712 F5a (=Strabo 11.7.3); F5b (=Strabo 2.1.15). Cf. Pompey's portage of this region as derivative of Patrokles' geography: Solinus' account: *BNJ* 712 F5d (=Solin. 6.52.16); *BNJ* 712 F5c (=Plin. *HN* 6.17.52); Tarn (1938) 489-90.

¹²²⁶ Plin. *HN* 6.11.31; Bevan (1902) 1.283; Tarn (1901) 19-20; Visscher (2020) 41.

¹²²⁷ Wood (1992) 52.

¹²²⁸ See: Appendix 6.V.

¹²²⁹ Visscher (2020) 21.

¹²³⁰ '...ὑπά]-/ ρχειν δὲ αὐτῶι καὶ προμα[ντεῖαν ἐν τῶι ἱερῶι τῶι ἐν] / Διδύμοις]', *PHI Didyma* 7.40-2 (=OGIS 213).

family and the god. A second decree in 299/8 has a more martial aspect, emphasising Queen Apama's protection of the Meletians in prior campaigns.¹²³¹ Apama hailed from Sogdiana, the very land from which Demodamas would cross into the unknown. Demodamas, evidently with important ties to the oracle and the Seleukid court in west and east, was the ideal candidate to build a far-reaching religious vector, binding periphery to core on behalf of Seleukos' divine father.

For the details of the campaign, we are dependent on a single passage from Pliny.¹²³² Demodamas goes further northeast than any other campaign recorded, past Baktria and Sogdiana and, briefly, into the empty map beyond the Iaxartes river:

ultra Sogdiani, oppidum Panda et in ultimis eorum finibus Alexandria ab Alexandro Magno conditum. arae ibi sunt ab Hercule ac Libero Patre constitutae, item Cyro et Samiramide atque Alexandro: finis omnium eorum ductus ab illa parte terrarum, includente flumine Iaxarte, quod Scythae Silim vocant, Alexander militesque eius Tanain putavere esse. transcendit eum amnem Demodamas, Seleuci et Antiochi regum dux, quem maxime sequimur in his, arasque Apollini Didymaeo statuit.

Beyond are the Sogdiani and the town of Panda, and on the farthest confines of their territory Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great. At this place there are altars set up by Hercules and Father Liber, and also by Cyrus and Samiramis and by Alexander, all of whom found their limit in this region of the world, where they were shut in by the river Iaxartes, which the Scythians call the Silis and which Alexander and his soldiers supposed to be the Tanais. But this river was crossed by Demodamas, the general of King Seleucus and King Antiochus, whom we are chiefly following in this part of our narrative; and he set up altars to Apollo Didymaeus.

BNJ 428 F2 (=Plin. HN 6.18.48-9) (tr. H. Rackham (1938) with adaptation)

Pliny's account, following Demodamas, presents a map of the northeastern *oikoumenē* in which we move in the footsteps of Herakles, Dionysos, and other legendary imperialists, to the banks of the Iaxartes.¹²³³ Pliny is explicit: this river at the map's edge becomes a delimiting boundary of the former conquerors' imperial movement (*finis omnium eorum ductus ab illa parte terrarium*). And yet Demodamas is positively distinguished as the sole figure to cross into the steppe beyond.

A legend of Alexander's massacre of the Branchidai serves well to lay the groundwork for Demodamas' new spatialising gesture, an idealised 'territorial cleansing' prior to the Seleukid *strategos'* assimilation of the steppe.¹²³⁴ According to Strabo, the Souda, and Curtius, Alexander had had the city of the Branchidai in Sogdiana destroyed and its people massacred

¹²³¹ PHI I. Didyma 8.5-7 (=SEG 26, 1234); Nawotka (2019) 265-66.

¹²³² BNJ 428 T1 (=Plin. HN 1.6).

¹²³³ Only Kyros is mortal.

¹²³⁴ Genocide & territorial cleansing: S.L. Egbert et al. (2016) 297-318; blood cleansing for Apollo: Paus. 10.6.7; Fontenrose (1959) 19-20; S.G. Cole (2004) 47-50.

in revenge for their betrayal of the Didymean oracle to the Persians.¹²³⁵ Curtius' account has Alexander consult Milesians before instigating the massacre.¹²³⁶ Strabo is wary of the historicity of the story, nonetheless emphasising piety as a thematic concern.¹²³⁷ Strabo is right to be wary: the story serves the purposes of Demodamas' campaign suspiciously well, raising the possibility that this tale is, as Tarn suggests, a whole cloth Seleukid fabrication.¹²³⁸ Similar themes of prior purification are suggested in our Pliny fragment, where we have 'altars set up' (*arae ibi sunt*) at Alexandria-Eschatē on the left bank of the Iaxartes. The divine imperialists of the past have paved the way for Demodamas' ultimate territorialising act.

For universal kings, Alexandria-Eschatē was never meant to be the demarcated edge of empire, as the proponents of limited Seleukid imperialism claim.¹²³⁹ According to Arrian, the Iaxartes River was always a temporary boundary for Alexander, another node leaving the universal king 'well placed for any eventual invasion of Scythia'.¹²⁴⁰ Indeed, the city ultimately became something of a byword for Alexander's universal imperial ambition, pithily observed in the *Peutinger Table*: 'usque quo Alexander'.¹²⁴¹ Alexander's failed campaign to subjugate Skythia is presented by the sources like an unfinished territorialising project. In Curtius' account, the Skythians lament his unquenchable *pothos* for a universal imperialism: 'when you have subdued the whole human race, you will wage war with the woods and the snows, with rivers and wild beasts.'¹²⁴² Alexander tries to persuade his reluctant commanders to conquer the lands beyond the Iaxartes, 'to set up trophies in what might be called another world, and suddenly to join in one victory places which Nature seems to have separated by so great a space'.¹²⁴³ In Arrian, Alexander crosses the river, but is violently ill from the water.¹²⁴⁴ The other world would have to wait, but we get no sense that this pause was demarcation of an imperial edge. Alexander's universal imperialist ideology demanded the eventual conquest of the steppe beyond the Iaxartes.

The campaigns of Demodamas would seem to complete Alexander's plans, erecting altars for Didymean Apollo in 'another world': Skythia.¹²⁴⁵ For Tarn, such altars reflect retaliatory military expeditions against the 'horde' of Skythians, something since rejected by

¹²³⁵ Curt. 7.5.28-35; Strabo 11.11.4; H.W. Parke (1985) 59-68; Hammond & Walbank (1988) 342.

¹²³⁶ Curt. 7.5.31; Parke (1985) 67-68. Cf. *Souda s.v.* ΒΡΑΓΧΙΔΑΙ.

¹²³⁷ Strabo's scepticism: 'φασί...' Strabo 11.11.4; piety: 'διὰ τὸ παραδοῦναι τὰ χρήματα τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ἐν Διδύμοις καὶ τοὺς θησαυρούς;', Strabo 11.11.4.

¹²³⁸ Fictional: Tarn (1922) 63, 65-6. For problems re. Xerxes and Apollo, see 63-4; historical aspects: Hammond & Walbank (1988) 343-344.

¹²³⁹ Kosmin (2014b) 63.

¹²⁴⁰ 'ἐν καλῷ οἰκισθήσεσθαι τῆς ἐπὶ Σκύθας, εἴποτε ξυμβαίνοι', Arr. *Anab.* 4.1.3.

¹²⁴¹ R.J.A. Talbert (2010).

¹²⁴² 'si humanum genus omne superaveris, cum silvis et nivibus et fluminibus ferisque bestiis gesturus es bellum', Curt. 7.8.13-14.

¹²⁴³ 'Et quanti aestimandum est, dum Asiam subigimus, in alio quodam modo orbe tropaea statuere et quae tam longo intervallo Natura videtur diremisse una victoria subito committere?' Curt. 7.7.14-15.

¹²⁴⁴ Arr. *Anab.* 4.4.9.

¹²⁴⁵ Capdetrey (2007) 82.

archaeological evidence.¹²⁴⁶ For Kosmin, Demodamas' altars 'indicate the edge of Seleucid sovereignty'.¹²⁴⁷ But as Visscher shows, such a reading overlooks the significance of the act of crossing of the river, emphasised by Pliny (*transcendit*).¹²⁴⁸ Far from delimiting, the crossing propagates Seleukid imperial claims which 'could be contained neither by natural boundaries nor by the borders set up by previous conquerors'.¹²⁴⁹

Certainly, such a territorialising gesture would appear to emulate Alexander's own use of altars across water to claim a world beyond. According to Arrian, following Nearchos, Alexander was driven by his *pothos* to sail into the Ocean beyond the Indian coast, 'chiefly that he might have voyaged in the great sea outside India'.¹²⁵⁰ There, on islets he made sacrifices not only to Poseidon, but also to his father, Amun-Zeus. This is no generic piety: the king performs some very particular rites here, 'in accordance with the oracle given by Ammon'.¹²⁵¹ The act of erecting altars claims the sea and the land it touches for his father, Amun-Zeus, transcending physical limitations. Demodamas' crossing of the Iaxartes appears to follow this template, having crossed into Skythia, his territorialising act appealed back to Apollo Didymos, who was to reach out on the regime's behalf across what Strabo saw as an unbroken grassland sea of the steppe to the Ocean itself.¹²⁵² In a pincer move, then, Demodamas and Patrokles have territorialised the entire northeastern *oikoumenē*.

The use of altars of Didymean Apollo not only looks outwards, but also constructs a powerful religious vector, binding periphery to the religious centre.¹²⁵³ What may be a staggering natural distance to Didyma is effortlessly traversed by the god.¹²⁵⁴ The sacred fire, presumably transported from Didyma in a *chytra*, would be ignited on the altar as *katharmos* of the unclean space, creating a sanctified node for the god of Didyma to make contact.¹²⁵⁵ Such a spatialising gesture is hardly new in Greek religious practice: the movement from a metropolis to a new colony required similar creation of new ritual spaces to link the geographically distant points, drawing the two together through the power of the deity's reach.¹²⁵⁶ We see similar examples in the spread of Theravada Buddhism, vivid manuscripts depicting the Sri Lankan religious core with the Thai religious node, creating a map of 'holy territoriality' which presented distant lands side-by-side, united by religious vectors which transcend and, significantly, supersede the natural physical distance.¹²⁵⁷ Similarly, Demodamas brings not only the

¹²⁴⁶ Tarn (1940) 93. Cf. absence of destruction layers: Bernard et al. (1976) 5-57.

¹²⁴⁷ Kosmin (2014b) 62.

¹²⁴⁸ Plin. *HN* 6.49.

¹²⁴⁹ Visscher (2020) 44-5.

¹²⁵⁰ '...ὡς πεπλευκέναι τὴν μεγάλην τὴν ἔξω Ἰνδοῦν θάλασσαν', Arr. *Anab.* 19.5. *Pothos*: Arr. *Ind.* 20; Worthington (2014) 236.

¹²⁵¹ '...καὶ ταύτας δὲ κατ' ἐπιθεσπισμὸν θύειν <ἔφασκε> τοῦ Ἄμμωνος', Arr. *Anab.* 6.19.4-5; Arr. *Ind.* 20.10-1. Stoneman (2019) 37.

¹²⁵² Strabo 2.1.17.

¹²⁵³ Tarn (1940) 93; Visscher calls it 'a Seleukid *lieu de mémoire*', (2020) 43.

¹²⁵⁴ Cole (2004) 8.

¹²⁵⁵ Fire: Hes. *Op.* 755-6; impure water: 737-41, 57-59; Thuc. 4.97; *LSJ* s.v. καθαίρω A.

¹²⁵⁶ Altars for territorialisation: Ar. *Av.* 43-4.

¹²⁵⁷ Winichakul (1994) 24, 27.

religious power of the god, but the ideology of Seleukid divinity to the most distant lands of the *oikoumenē* in a grand territorialising act. Natural geography has been superseded by the power of Apollo, the father of the divine king. Demodamas' geography functions as a performance of *epainos* which flatters the king in very intimate terms, speaking to the king's own inherited divine power.

Demodamas' imperial geography emulated the spatialising gestures of Alexander, using the power of Apollo to reach far beyond physical limitations in a sweeping move which complemented Patrokles' peri-circumnavigation of the imagined northeast Asian coast. We have also seen that the space, which had been ritually cleansed, was now established as a religious node, binding the farthest reaches of the *oikoumenē* to the religious centre of Didyma. The imperial geography of the Seleukids had turned geopolitical reality on its head, the Mauryan threat had been reduced to a regional concern, the universal empire continuing its inevitable expanse outwards. But as we saw with the creation of the Kaspian harbour, the Seleukids, like the Ptolemies, also envisaged a centripetal geography for their universal empire. The creation of a coherent centre ground would prove a challenge requiring the establishment of nodes and unifying vectors across what initially appeared, on the map at least, to be a disparate and heterogeneous imperial core.

4.4 Claiming the centre ground(s): the great rivers and new cities of the Seleukid imperial map

Seleukid imperial geography not only distorted the periphery to emphasise reach, but also invested heavily in the imperial centre, building a civic network of *poleis*, roads, ports, and fortresses from Mesopotamia, across to the Orontes River system, and up to the Mediterranean seaboard. As we have seen with the Ptolemies, domestication of the landscape is an integral aspect of imperial geography. The colonial gaze imprints its stamp on the landscape through nomenclature, demarcations, and dromocratic vectors.¹²⁵⁸ The Seleukids attempted a similar domestication of the core, drawing powerful vectors between new place-markers to aggregate previously disconnected places.¹²⁵⁹

I. Fluvial and hodological vectors

The great rivers played a significant role in the Seleukid imperial map, forming vectors across an otherwise disparate domain. They were studiously omitted by Megasthenes, but in the

¹²⁵⁸ Demarcation, partition: Gregory (2001); vectors: Virilio (1977); colonial vectors: 42-3, 69-71; new vectors: 149-155.

¹²⁵⁹ Aggregation: Monmonier (1991) 25-30.

orthodox imperial lens, the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Orontes loom large.¹²⁶⁰ Through these vectors, nodes from the Mesopotamian coast to eastern Mesopotamia would be united on the map in a way which suggested a cohesive and definite Seleukid centre spanning the heart of the *oikoumenē*.¹²⁶¹

The Euphrates functions as both vector and partition for the new map, dividing lower and upper satrapies. The Euphrates had long performed an axial role expressed in the Neo-Babylonian *Map of the World*, orienting the viewer's gaze to Babylon with other substantial lands transformed into satellites relegated to the periphery.¹²⁶² The Seleukos legends lay similar import on the Euphrates, the river becoming foundational for Seleukos' empire, affirmed through prophecy and omen. Spatial geographic representations seem to borrow from earlier models, the Euphrates acting as the demarcation between the 'upper' (eastern) satrapies ruled by Antiochos I, and the smaller, lower (western) satrapies under King Seleukos.¹²⁶³ This division creates a territorial lopsidedness acknowledged by Appian; however, the position of the axis may be prescriptive. Seleukos did not hesitate in his attempt to add Thrace and Seleukos' Macedonian homeland to his expansive empire.¹²⁶⁴ With this completed, the Euphrates would no longer be the divider of uneven parts, but would assume its centralising aspect once more, east and west balanced on either side. The division may be a bold act of prescriptive imperial geography, anticipating the harmony of an *oikoumenē*-wide imperium.

The Seleukids' construction of nodes along the Euphrates, such as Jebel Khalid and Dura-Europos, emphasised Seleukid control of hodological movement across the river and control of fluvial movement from the northwest to the southeast.¹²⁶⁵ Yet this was more concrete in the imperial propaganda than in reality.¹²⁶⁶ In the north, the topographically impractical bridge-city of Seleukeia-Zeugma, with its east-bank counterpoint Apameia, featured as a significant point of access, controlling the movement of traffic across the upper portion of this significant river-boundary, with roads coalescing at the crossing.¹²⁶⁷ Hodological movement across the river is presented as under imperial control at a supposedly singular crossing.¹²⁶⁸ However, as Grainger notes, the turbulent upper Euphrates and the flood-prone valley at this point was not especially good for developing a major nexus for crossing.¹²⁶⁹ It also proved problematic as a functional vector for river borne traffic. Archaeological finds at Jebel Khalid highlight the

¹²⁶⁰ Cf. Megasthenes' omissions, see: Ch 6.2.II.

¹²⁶¹ Capdetrey (2007) 51-84; Kosmin (2014b) 142-180.

¹²⁶² *BM* 92687.

¹²⁶³ Upper to Antiochos & Stratonike: 'πέμπω βασιλέας εἶναι τῶν ἐθνῶν ἤδη τῶν ἄνω'; Lower: 'ἤρχε τῶν ἀπὸ θαλάσσης ἐπὶ Εὐφράτην μόνων', *App. Syr.* 61.324-5, 62.329; earlier models: Sherwin-White and Kuhrt (1993).

¹²⁶⁴ *App. Syr.* 62.329-30.

¹²⁶⁵ Europos: Grainger (1990b) 46; Capdetrey (2007) 70-5.

¹²⁶⁶ Pratt (1992).

¹²⁶⁷ Plin. *HN* 5.86; Grainger (1990b) 75-7.

¹²⁶⁸ In reality, there were many other crossing points: Comfort et al. (2000) 99-126.

¹²⁶⁹ Grainger (1990b) 75.

paltry nature of river trade coming from the upper Euphrates.¹²⁷⁰ Yet as a node on the imperial map, its value is immediately apparent, appearing to extend control of both sides of the Euphrates up to the foothills of the Tauros mountains. The impracticalities have been trumped by imperial propaganda. If we don't look too closely, the map's 'postings' assert a sense of fluvial and hodological control.¹²⁷¹

The Tigris, a river which loomed large in the Greek imagination, received a similar treatment, key points tracing it as a fluvial vector and hodological chokepoint.¹²⁷² The new royal city on its western bank, Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, was at the northern most navigable point, functioning as a sort of lynchpin to imperial control of the upper satrapies which Tarn likens to a 'nerve centre'.¹²⁷³ Kosmin demonstrates the hodological 'traffic-flow lines' converging at this place.¹²⁷⁴ Of course, such vectors, which are presented in absolute terms in an assimilating *itineraria*, are profoundly exaggerated.¹²⁷⁵ Seleukos' heroic exploits in the foundational Babylonian War propagate the centrality of this nexus point. In Hieronymos' narrative, Nikanor's Antigonid forces descend the Diyala river, near the future location of Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, to confront Seleukos. The hapless Nikanor finds himself 'camped at one of the royal stations', the roads funnelling his movement.¹²⁷⁶ In contrast, Seleukos 'crossed the Tigris River and... hid his soldiers in the adjacent marshes' before ambushing and routing his foe.¹²⁷⁷ It is only Seleukos who transcends the hodological strictures of the nexus, all others being restricted by the Tigris. As with the Euphrates, the Tigris is a powerful facilitator, and controller, of movement, destined to be under Seleukos' power. The rivers of Mesopotamia perform as both vectors and boundaries, shifting pieces controlled by key Seleukid nexus points.

If fluvial vectors spoke to control of Mesopotamia and access to the upper satrapies, the Orontes river-system would do nothing less than transform the Syrian outback into a path which would bind Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean. The development of this fluvial vector seems to have been galvanised by Ptolemaic occupation of Koelē-Syria following the Antigonid defeat at Ipsos (301). What was a strategic 'buffer' for his erstwhile ally, Ptolemy, was conversely a strategic vulnerability for Seleukos. It denied him easy access to the Mediterranean and created another dangerously concave boundary.¹²⁷⁸ In the Hieronymos account, the dispute over the postwar settlement is resolved with a face-saving appeal to *philia*. Seleukos decided that 'for friendship's sake he would not for the present interfere but

¹²⁷⁰ G. Clarke et al. (2020) 265-6, 283-4.

¹²⁷¹ Wood (2010) 51-61.

¹²⁷² Hdt. 1.89.

¹²⁷³ Tarn (1938) 60, 62.

¹²⁷⁴ Kosmin (2014b) 144-145 (map 5).

¹²⁷⁵ C. Palladino (2016) 65; for Hodological itineraries see also: R. Fowler (2017) 243-360, esp. 248-250; A. Purves (2010) 144-150; following P. Janni (1984); (1998).

¹²⁷⁶ 'κατεστρατοπέδευσε πρὸς τινι βασιλικῷ σταθμῶ', Diod. Sic. 19.82.5; Capdetrey (2007) 28-31.

¹²⁷⁷ 'διαβάς δὲ τὸν Τίγριν ποταμὸν... ἔκρυψε τοὺς στρατιώτας ἐν τοῖς πλησίον ἔλεσι', Diod. Sic. 19.92.2.

¹²⁷⁸ Diod Sic 21.1.5; Worthington (2016) 116, 173-4.

would consider later how best to deal with friends who chose to encroach'.¹²⁷⁹ As with the Mauryan defeat, Seleukos used the language of *philia*, interwoven with universal kingship, to control the news of geopolitical weakness. But contrary to the redirection at the treaty of the Indus, we are encouraged by Seleukos' prescriptive language to mark this place for future Seleukid expansion.

Winding through what had previously been seen as outback by Greek imperialists, the Orontes River system would come into sudden focus as a vital fluvial conduit, linking together western Seleukid territory.¹²⁸⁰ The geography of Seleukid Syria was potentially incongruous. Firstly, it had had unclear liminal zones—the Tauros and Amanos mountains to the north, the Mediterranean coast to the west, and scrubland and desert to the Euphrates in the east.¹²⁸¹ More problematically still, the territory was obstructed by substantial mountains, the Bargylos range, which sharply divided coast from inland plains.¹²⁸² Yet, traversing the land was the Orontes river, its winding path from the borders of Ptolemaic Koelē-Syria in the south to the Mediterranean in the northwest became an organising pathway for the construction of Seleukos' colonial city-building plans. Apameia, Antioch, Daphne, and Seleukeia-by-the-Sea were all constructed with much fanfare *circa* 300.

The river itself was, in some ways, unpromising. It was not navigable for its whole length, beginning with rapids in the Lebanon ranges, followed by marshlands of the Ghab as it meanders northwards, where ancient geographers believed it went underground.¹²⁸³ Further to the north, the river regains coherency then, almost turning back on itself, winds southwesterly through the plain of Antioch before finally debouching into the Mediterranean.¹²⁸⁴ Despite its problems as a fluvial conduit, the river valley would serve as a guideline for Seleukid road-builders, developing a substantial imperial highway which ran alongside the river. This functioned as a conduit for military and economic movement, joining Apameia to Seleukeia-by-the-Sea, via Antioch.¹²⁸⁵ Despite its limitations, the Orontes was to be transformed into a major organising pathway for Seleukid Syria, aptly described by Grainger as a 'bridge' drawing Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean seaboard into a cohesive imperial core.¹²⁸⁶

As with the great rivers of Mesopotamia, the cultivation of Orontes legends, emphasising the river's apparent might, justified its imprint on the imperial map. According to John Malalas, the river was formerly known as Drakon or Typhon, suggesting something of its power.¹²⁸⁷

¹²⁷⁹ 'διὰ τὴν φιλίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος μηδὲν πολυπραγμονήσειν, ὕστερον δὲ βουλευέσθαι πῶς χρηστέον ἐστὶν τῶν φίλων τοῖς βουλομένοις πλεονεκτεῖν', Diod. Sic 21.1.5.

¹²⁸⁰ Thornley (2003) 33.

¹²⁸¹ Grainger (1990b) 50-1, 75-77, map 2 at 232.

¹²⁸² Thornley (2003) 45.

¹²⁸³ '...εἶθ' ὑπὸ γῆν ἐνεχθεῖς, ἀναδίδωσι πάλιν τὸ ρεῦμα', Strabo 16.2.7.

¹²⁸⁴ Giorgi (2016) 41.

¹²⁸⁵ Thornley (2003) 'Map 5. The Defence of the Seleucis'; Capdetrey (2007) 59-69.

¹²⁸⁶ Grainger (1990b) 51.

¹²⁸⁷ Malalas *Chron.* 8.10 (197).

Strabo recalls local legends of Typhon's flight from Zeus, the Titan 'not only cut the earth with furrows and formed the bed of the river, but also descended underground and caused the fountain to break forth to the surface'.¹²⁸⁸ The legend here celebrates the river's subterranean aspect, and subtly alters from the earlier myth in other important ways. In contrast to Hesiod, and regional Canaanite myths, where the skygod damages the earth with wayward thunderbolts, Zeus remains in control here, the Typhon thoroughly subjugated by the steady aim of Zeus.¹²⁸⁹ This control of the river in the Seleukid legend is vividly illustrated in Eutychedes of Sicyon's *Tyche of Antioch*.¹²⁹⁰ The sculpture portrays Tyche, sitting confidently on Mount Sipylos with a foot firmly on the shoulder of the personified Orontes. This river, in reality 'erratic and flood-prone', has been presented here as a beautifully subdued and eager youth, tamed by Tyche, affirming Seleukid imperial destiny to control this newly domesticated centre of the map.¹²⁹¹ This was no longer backcountry. Seleukid imperial geography elevates the river to prominence as a new and emphatically controlled vector to the sea, speaking to Seleukos' novel and divinely supported domination of the landscape.

II. Cities of the imperial core

Unlike the centripetal court of the Ptolemies, the universal empire of the Seleukids was a 'mobile' court, moving from city to city across the core of their massive empire.¹²⁹² Kosmin likened it to a 'circulatory system', and his charting of court movement from Antiochos I to Antiochos III is illuminating, the royal procession travelling with frequency from the cities of Mesopotamia, via fluvial and hodological vectors to Seleukid Syria and Anatolia.¹²⁹³ Seleukos' own domestication projects were legendary, the city-founder remembered for transforming 'rustic dwellings ... [into] cities of great strength and abundant wealth'.¹²⁹⁴ In assuming the role of city-builder, the king does something more than just circulate. He expands, civilises, and develops imperial space, emulating Alexander.¹²⁹⁵ Seleukos seems to have gone even further. First, there appears to be a process of civic erasure, the old centres demoted or erased. This creates 'blank' space 'ripe for settlement and colonisation'.¹²⁹⁶ The venerable city of Babylon was reduced to a regional centre, supplanted by Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, which became a new royal centre of Mesopotamia.¹²⁹⁷ The substantial Antigonid city of Antigoneia

¹²⁸⁸ 'φασὶ ...ποιῆσαι τὸ ρεῖθρον τοῦ ποταμοῦ, καταδύντα δ' εἰς γῆν ἀναρρῆξαι τὴν πηγὴν', Strabo 16.2.7.

¹²⁸⁹ Hes. *Thgn.* 858, 61-2; Ugharitic Myth of Ba'al (CTA 2 10-30) see: Coogan (1978) 95-6; Ogden (2017).

¹²⁹⁰ *Tyche of Antioch*: Vat. GC49.

¹²⁹¹ Giorgi (2016) 42.

¹²⁹² Strootman (2014a) 54-55.

¹²⁹³ Kosmin (2014b) 142-180, esp. 145 (Map 5), 146 (Map 6).

¹²⁹⁴ 'ex agrestibus habitaculis urbes construxit, multis opibus firmas et viribus', Amm. Marc. 14.8.6; 'πόλεις δὲ ὤκισεν ἐπὶ τὸ μῆκος τῆς ἀρχῆς...', App. *Syr.* 57.295.

¹²⁹⁵ 'cum post Alexandri Macedonis obitum successorio iure teneret regna Persidis', Amm. Marc. 14.8.5; Kosmin (2014b) 183-6.

¹²⁹⁶ Wylie (2004) 133.

¹²⁹⁷ Seleukos I and his successors blamed for Babylon's apparent decline: Strabo 16.1.5; Plin. *HN* 6.122; Bevan (1902) 1.253. See also: 'Antiochos the Prince [...] / [...] which in Babylon [...] / [...] from Babylon [...] / he caused to

in the strategic ‘crossroads’ of the Amuq valley of the Orontes river system was to be systematically dismantled and transported to create Antioch on the very same plain.¹²⁹⁸ As Wylie observes, the empty space in imperial maps serves as the ‘symbolic erasure of other possible histories’.¹²⁹⁹ There would be no continuity of former regimes or their stories.

Next, the new cities would be founded on this blank space, the dynastic nomenclature following Alexander’s policy of stamping one’s name, literally, on the map.¹³⁰⁰ These new cities were built with a rationalist Hippodamian design, acting as military and, just as significantly, cultural nodes. These superimposed a Seleukid style, a ‘replicable, rigidly uniform urbanism’, at key points on the imperial map.¹³⁰¹ This Seleukid style is exemplified in Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris. It loudly showcased Seleukid patronage of Hellenic culture, a city of more than 400 blocks, evenly spaced and measured to a harmonious 2:1 ratio (144m X 72m), covering a total of almost 550 hectares.¹³⁰² The earliest excavations by Waterman, McDowell, and Hopkins (1927-32, 1936-7), identified major thoroughfares, an eastern harbour, and a large northern agora dominated by a stoa, archive building, and theatre.¹³⁰³ The Italian expedition led by Invernizzi and Amandry in the 1960s identified, *inter alia*, clearly partitioned civic and commercial zones, the latter speaking to this characteristically Hellenistic sense of civic control.¹³⁰⁴ Their discovery of well over 25,000 *bullae*—seals for documenting trade—in the large city archive building on the northern agora revealed major commercial activity and a possible harbour tax.¹³⁰⁵ Invernizzi and Amandry, followed by Wallenfels, understand the seals as the privilege of a Greek elite, prominent among them the king’s *Philoï*, suggesting a tight relationship between the royal image and legitimate commerce.¹³⁰⁶ The archaeological evidence seems to support Josephus’ later observations that the Greek elite maintained an ‘upper hand’ over Syrian and Jewish inhabitants.¹³⁰⁷ While Babylon was retired to a regional

dwel/... Seleucia’, *ABC* 11. obv. 6-11 (for commentary: Grayson (1991) 26); *Astronomical Diaries* 273B rev. 34-38, esp. 36: ‘the citizens of Babylon went out to Seleucia’. Also 273B rev. 31: ‘from Babylon and Seleucia, the royal city’, (tr. Sachs & Hunger (1988)); Capdetrey (2007) 52-9. For ‘local’ continuity: Sherwin-White (1987) 19.¹²⁹⁸ Antigoneia as substantial: Diod. Sic. 20.108; strategic: 20.47.5-6; Giorgi (2016) 15-18; Capdetrey (2007) 68-9.

¹²⁹⁹ Wylie (2007) 133.

¹³⁰⁰ Fraser (1996) 2-3, 35; the Seleukeias: App. *Syr.* 57; Steph. Byz. s.v. Σελεύκεια.

¹³⁰¹ Kosmin (2016a) 3; Capdetrey (2007) 69-72. Grid plan developing in 5th C.: Arist. *Pol.* 1267b22-23; Diod. Sic. 12.10.6-7, Strabo 14.2.9. Olynthos: Cahill (2000).

¹³⁰² A. Invernizzi & A. Amandry (1991) 158-9; L. Waterman (1931) 7-8, 19-22, plate 1 at 19; Giorgi (2016) 46, fig. 2.9.

¹³⁰³ V. Messina (2007) 173-4; Invernizzi (1998); Harbour: C. Hopkins (1939) 443-446; Invernizzi, & Amandry (1991) 180.

¹³⁰⁴ Invernizzi & Amandry (1991) 180; following McDowell (1931). Canal as original southern boundary: Giorgi (2016) 47.

¹³⁰⁵ Bullae: Invernizzi & Amandry (1991) 181; the earliest ‘bullae’ stamps dating to 26 SE (286 BCE): McDowell (1931) 27, 54. Bulla 16: ‘λιμένο[ς?]’ suggested to McDowell harbour tax or port authority: (1931) 41-2; Messina (2014) 125.

¹³⁰⁶ Invernizzi & Amandry (1991) 183; McDowell (1931) 41-2; R. Wallenfels (2015) 55-89.

¹³⁰⁷ Joseph. *AJ* 18.8.372.

position, the new city of Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris was one of the finest examples of the regime's new cities, which spoke to prosperity, order, and, above all, imperial control.¹³⁰⁸

The cities of the 'tetrapolis' function as nodes along the Orontes-Mediterranean vector, from Apameia, to Antioch and Daphne, and Seleukeia-by-the-Sea. Apameia acts both as a conduit linking Mesopotamia to the lower Orontes beyond, and as a strategic citadel on the frontline against the Ptolemies. It is situated on a tell protruding from a limestone plateau overlooking the Ghab wetlands, where 'the greater part of the army' were kept on standby for the inevitable campaigns of westward imperial expansion.¹³⁰⁹ The omens for city-foundation were suitably martial, Zeus' eagle carrying the sacrificed heads of the victims around the would-be civic perimeter. Seleukos 'marked out the circuit of the walls with [their]... blood', the omen proof of divine support from the Typhon-slayer for the fortress-city.¹³¹⁰ The dynastic nomenclature speaks to its geopolitical significance, placing the House of Seleukos' stamp on this southerly region of the Orontes.¹³¹¹

Further northwards, Antioch, as we have seen, replaced Antigoneia, in the plain of Antioch, the great king's ability to fashion and control space with rapid civic construction on full display.¹³¹² Like Seleukeia-on-the-Tigris, the city is partitioned, speaking to Hellenistic imperial order.¹³¹³ Following the omen of Zeus' eagle, Seleukos marked out the walls and streets with wheat, in emulation of the divine Alexander at Alexandria-ad-Aegyptum.¹³¹⁴ Going a step further, the great towers of the outer walls, yet to be built, were apparently staked out by elephants.¹³¹⁵ The plain of Antioch was marked as a major royal node on the Orontes vector.

Several civic nodes explicitly associate the newly colonised space of northern Syria with the religious geography of Apollo Didymos. The suburb of Daphne, overlooking Antioch, became a new location for elements of Greek Apollonic myth, binding Seleukid Syria to the dynasty's spiritual home, the Apollonic sanctuary at Didyma.¹³¹⁶ The foundation myth of Daphne, preserved in Libanios, links the imperial success of Seleukos to his piety, following oracular direction from Didymean Apollo.¹³¹⁷ Libanios explains that 'this oracle promised him coming good fortune, and commanded him, when he won the rule over Syria, to make [the city of] Daphne sacred to the god.'¹³¹⁸ This religious connection is reinforced by mythic relocation. Seleukos personally discovers evidence that it is on this hill in Syria, not Thessaly, that the

¹³⁰⁸ Capdetrey (2007) 58-9.

¹³⁰⁹ 'Ὁ Νικάτωρ Σέλευκος τοὺς πεντακοσίους ἐλέφαντας ἔτρεφε καὶ τὸ πλεόν τῆς στρατιᾶς', Strabo 16.2.10.

¹³¹⁰ 'περιεχάραξεν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τὰ τεῖχη', *BNJ* 854 F10 (=J. Malalas 8.19.203).

¹³¹¹ *BNJ* 854 F10 (=J. Malalas 203).

¹³¹² Lib. 11.89; Strabo 16.2.4; Downey (1961).

¹³¹³ Strabo 16.2.4; W.A. Campbell (1934); cf. Giorgi (2016) 27-33.

¹³¹⁴ Strabo 5.1.7; cf. *P.Oxy.* 4.7; Bell (1946).

¹³¹⁵ Lib 11.90; *BNJ* 854 F10 (=J. Malalas, 8.4 (201)).

¹³¹⁶ Strootman (2014a) 71.

¹³¹⁷ Lib. *Orat.* 11.241-243; 60.6,9-11; Nock (1962) 307-310.

¹³¹⁸ Lib. *Orat.* 11.98-99 (tr. Downey, 1959).

‘first love of Phoebus’ turned into a tree.¹³¹⁹ Here, a sanctuary to Artemis and Apollo of great significance would be established.¹³²⁰ Numismatic evidence supports the early promotion of this association.¹³²¹ The ostensibly empty country colonised by Seleukos has undergone its own metamorphosis into sacred ground. The translocation of myth not merely domesticates the foreign space but turns the mytho-historical map on its head, moving the religious centre from Greece to Syria. No longer an empty space, Seleukos’ Syria is now a central part of Apollonic geography.

Didyma, the religious centre of Seleukos’ father, Apollo, sat awkwardly on the periphery of Seleukid geopolitical control during the reigns of Seleukid I and Antiochos I. It was closely associated with Miletos, a polis usually careful to negotiate its position amidst the zero-sum universal imperial claims of the Successor states.¹³²² This power as a religious base for the Seleukids begins with Alexander, Kallisthenes reporting that the oracle, having slumbered since the Branchidai’s betrayal, awoke.¹³²³ He said ‘that many oracles were carried by the Milesian ambassadors to Memphis concerning Alexander’s descent from Zeus, his future victory in the neighbourhood of Arbela [Gaugamela], the death of Dareius...’¹³²⁴ This strikingly clear propaganda is in contrast to Herodotean obscurity, explicitly associating the oracle, like Siwa, with a divine and all-conquering Alexander.¹³²⁵

Didyma’s oracle gained profound status as an ideological centre for the Seleukids. The revived Hellenistic temple was fundamentally transformed to assume the trappings of a Delphi-like sanctuary, potentially appropriating the role of a geographic *omphalos* for the religious map of the regime.¹³²⁶ Like Delphi, the revamped Didyma now had a female oracle at the centre.¹³²⁷ Third century architectural developments for the sanctuary showcase a theatrical panache designed to evoke wonder.¹³²⁸ The structure became appropriately grand for the religious centre of the Seleukid legend, Seleukos II observing in a royal correspondence that Didyma should be beautified as a place associated with Seleukid ‘kinship to the god himself’.¹³²⁹ Just as some of the most significant Apollonic myths had been translocated from Thessaly to Daphne, Apollo’s voice was given similar treatment, shifting from Delphi to Didyma.

¹³¹⁹ Lib. *Orat.* 11.95-6; cf. *Ov. Met.* 1.452, 1.545-553.

¹³²⁰ Strabo 16.2.6; Downey (2016) 44 n5; cf. *OGIS* 244 (= RC 44).

¹³²¹ *SC* 1.15-20.

¹³²² Wheatley & Dunn (2020) 271-2; Antigonid honours: Miletos 104.22 (= *Syll.* 322); later Seleukid honours: *OGIS* 214 (=RC 5); Lydian-Phrygian liminal zone: S. Mitchell (2018) 13-16, 20.

¹³²³ Paus. 8.46.3; Fontenrose (1988) 12.

¹³²⁴ ‘...μαντεῖα πολλὰ οἱ Μιλησίων πρέσβεις κομίσειεν εἰς Μέμφιν περὶ τῆς ἐκ Διὸς γενέσεως τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ τῆς ἐσομένης περὶ Ἄρβηλα νίκης καὶ τοῦ Δαρείου θανάτου’, Strabo 17.1.43.

¹³²⁵ Herodotean oracular obscurity: Hdt. 1.1.1.94, 3.57, 4.163-4, 7.140-3.; Kindt (2006); (2016). Propaganda, Didyma & Siwa: Worthington (2014); Greaves (2002); (2012); Nudell (2018) 44-60.

¹³²⁶ Delphi, *omphalos*: Pl. *Resp.* 4.427c.

¹³²⁷ Fontenrose (1988) 173-5.

¹³²⁸ Pollitt (1986) 236-7.

¹³²⁹ ‘διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸν θεὸν / συγγένειαν’, RC 22 (=Austin 186).

Viewed through the insatiable lens of universal kingship, the oracle of Didymean Apollo is transformed into an ideal *omphalos*, or perhaps an anchor, of world empire. Didyma's ascendent religious centrality could potentially draw otherwise disparate worlds together, the reach of Apollo binding the soon-to-be conquered lands of Europe with the expanses of territory in Syria, Sogdiana, and even the Skythian steppe beyond. Religious geography, transcending mundane physical space, could act as the ultimate Seleukid anchor, securing a universal empire.¹³³⁰

Conclusion

The geography produced at the Seleukid court can no longer be understood as information gathering, flawed men putting together a map for the purposes of military reconnaissance or 'curiosité'.¹³³¹ From the empire's inception, historians, scribes, geographers, and city-builders went to remarkable lengths to maintain the king's ideology of universal empire, not allowing the geopolitical reality to obscure their vision. Defeat at the hands of the Mauryan empire created a crisis, exponential expansion replaced with ideologically untenable retreat. Court historians skilfully massaged territorial loss into an expression of mutual royal *philia*, a distortion so successful that it still affects our understanding today.

To solve the geopolitical crisis, we have seen that court geographers used geographic tools to create an ideologically orthodox representation of the *oikoumenē*. An examination of these geographies through the lens of critical geography reveals them to be much more than simple errors. Geographers used powerful spatialising gestures to reach out beyond India, encircling the Seleukids' opponents and claiming the entire eastern *oikoumenē* for the regime.

We have also seen how geographic vectors were constructed to domesticate the Seleukid core, creating a thoroughly civilised new centre for the *oikoumenē*. Hodological and fluvial vectors were drawn in ways which were more effective on the map than they were in reality, with key nodes exaggerating their functionality. The centre was given the Kaspian harbour, an imagined centre point for Oceanic and fluvial movement in the eastern *oikoumenē*. Old religious traditions were translocated to make a new religious core under Seleukid control. The map is in many ways prescriptive; while the world was not under the rule of the universal king yet, Apollo's support and Seleukos' destiny as Alexander's true heir ensured the inevitability of a future world empire under the Seleukids.

Yet in a court with such a breathtakingly ambitious imperial ideology, there were the select few who, as *Philoï* to the king, had the right to express *parrhēsia* and challenge this authoritarian mythmaking. In the next chapter, we will consider Megasthenes' *Indika* as a text which potentially promotes the rival Mauryan court at the expense of the Seleukids. The

¹³³⁰ Winichakul (1994) 24, 27; Manetti (1993) 14-19.

¹³³¹ Bevan (1902) 1.281-283; Tarn (1940) 92-3; Capdetrey (2007) 82.

Seleukid regime may have developed a cohesive map for universal kingship, but the sympotic *parrhēsia* of the court would provide a means to challenge it.

Chapter 5: Geography as *parrhēsia* in the Seleukid empire: the case of Megasthenes

The political geography assiduously patronised by the early Seleukids was a double-edged sword. We saw in the last chapter that imperial geographers could produce powerful propaganda: Patrokles' and Demodamas' treatises distorted space to extend the Seleukid regime's reach, centrality, and control, persuasively fashioning a universal empire fit for the universal king. However, this chapter will argue that not all Seleukid geographers dished up such geographical *epainos*. Indeed, Megasthenes' *Indika* used spatial and descriptive geographic techniques to challenge, rather than propagate, Seleukid designs of universal kingship. Instead of a geography which curtails the rival imperial claims of Candragupta Maurya, the *Indika* portrays India as a vast, unified, and geopolitically cohesive space under the Mauryan king's rule. We are presented with a land abundant in natural resources. Fluvial vectors are described in spatial and descriptive terms, moving resources—and Megasthenes' audience—towards the imperial centre with a centripetal certainty. Descriptive digressions encourage the audience to consider the Ocean to the south and east of India as not only a resource, but also as a protective barrier against a maritime approach by outsiders. Hodological vectors speak to both internal control and imperial reach. The society is a product of good governance and abundant natural resources: contented, law-abiding, and orderly. The eminent imperial gods, Dionysos and Herakles, are appropriated and refashioned as deities with closer ties to Mauryan than Seleukid kingship. Most significantly for Megasthenes' Seleukid court audience, the well-organised Mauryan society is equipped for rapid and large-scale military mobilisation, should the need arise. The Seleukid empire is consistently treated as a liminal realm in geographic terms, a place between places, rather than a centre. Megasthenes' geography functions as a sobering dose of *parrhēsia* to challenge Seleukid claims to universal empire.

Hellenistic treatises concerning India have traditionally been evaluated by empiricist scholars for their accuracy, and Megasthenes' *Indika* has long been interpreted, with varying degrees of criticism, through just such a lens.¹³³² However, recent accounts have increasingly emphasised early geographies of India as part of the paradoxographical literary tradition which emphasised *ta thaumata* (wonders) over accuracy.¹³³³ Megasthenes' work has sometimes been understood as part of this tradition, essentially a geographical utopia filled with wonders.¹³³⁴ Certainly Strabo thought little of Megasthenes' reliability, lumping him together with Deimachos as one of the *pseudologoi*, but he nonetheless engaged with him as a geographer, not a fantasist.¹³³⁵ Despite some idealising tendencies, Megasthenes uses numerous Peripatetic observations, appeals to autopsy, appeals to Mauryan intel, and

¹³³² H.G. Rawlinson (1916) 33-68; Green (1990) 327; Roller (2008) commentary (*BNJ* 715 F27a); Murray (1972) 208.

¹³³³ *LSJ* s.v. θαυμάζω A1-2; A. Nichols (2018) 3-16; R. Stoneman (2021) 8; although *cf.* (2019) 137, 181, 264.

¹³³⁴ A. Zambri (1982) 71-149; K. Karttunen (1989) 97.

¹³³⁵ *BNJ* 715 (=Strabo 2.1.9).

carefully measured distances throughout the *Indika*.¹³³⁶ These are techniques more appropriate for a geographical technical treatise than a wonder-filled tale, posing unresolved difficulties for proponents of a paradoxographical reading of the text.

In contrast to the paradoxographical approach, Sherwin-White and Kuhrt introduced a political reading of the *Indika*, framing it as an apologia for the disastrous Mauryan-Seleukid war.¹³³⁷ This model is further developed by Kosmin, who treats the text as evidence of a latter-day 'Amarna diplomacy' among Hellenistic 'peer' states.¹³³⁸ Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, such a reading sits awkwardly alongside early Seleukid ideology which consistently promoted visions of universal kingship. Visscher recently adopted a different approach to the problem. He maintains that the contradictions between Seleukid universal kingship and Megasthenes' positive depiction of India can be understood as a geographic appropriation of Mauryan space, the Seleukid geographer claiming India by 'other means than conquest'.¹³³⁹ Yet Visscher's approach does not appear to meaningfully account for Megasthenes' elevation of the Mauryan court, which remains a pointed impediment to any sort of Seleukid appropriation. We still lack a scholarly approach which satisfactorily accounts for Megasthenes' text as a work of Seleukid propaganda.

In this chapter, we will see how Megasthenes' *Indika* can be more reasonably understood as an act of geographical *parrhēsia*, challenging the ideology of universal kingship. Megasthenes appears to have been particularly well-placed to express *parrhēsia* to the Seleukid king concerning India. Clement of Alexandria describes him as an intimate companion (συμβεβιωκώς) of Seleukos I, although Arrian has him residing at the regional court in Arachosia when he is not in India.¹³⁴⁰ His position as an especially elite *Philos* is further confirmed by his appointment to be ambassador to Palimbothra (*Pāṭaliputra*), something Megasthenes himself emphasised.¹³⁴¹ Dating his movements with precision is fraught, but we can establish some chronological parameters. Bosworth is almost alone in proposing an early date (319/18) for Megasthenes' visit to India and geographic writing, a claim based mainly on one confusing fragment from Arrian, an approach which Kosmin and Stoneman have thoroughly dismantled.¹³⁴² Stoneman makes the more reasonable argument, in keeping with our other sources and geopolitical events, for a *terminus post quem* of 303, the journeys to India and the writing of the *Indika* taking place after the so-called 'Treaty of the Indus'.¹³⁴³ Seleukos' *Philos* most likely produced his geographical gift under Seleukos' personal patronage, before

¹³³⁶ J. Wiesehöfer & H. Brinkhaus (2016) 1-4; Bucciantini (2016).

¹³³⁷ Sherwin-White & Kuhrt (1993) 13, 95-98; reconnaissance: Stoneman (2019) 221, 225; Bucciantini (2016) 55-6.

¹³³⁸ Kosmin (2014b) 24, 31-35, 37.

¹³³⁹ Visscher (2020) 53-62, esp. 61.

¹³⁴⁰ 'Μεγασθένης ὁ συγγραφεὺς ὁ Σελεύκῳ τῷ Νικάτορι συμβεβιωκώς...', *BNJ* 715 T1 (=Clem. Al. *Misc* 1.72.5); *BNJ* 715 T2a (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.2). Kosmin (2014b) 265-8; *contra*: Roller (2008).

¹³⁴¹ Candragupta's court: Strabo is explicit: 'ἐπέμφθησαν μὲν γὰρ εἰς τὰ Παλίμθορα ὁ μὲν Μεγασθένης πρὸς Σανδρόκοπτον... κατὰ πρεσβείαν', *BNJ* T2c (=Strabo 2.1.9); T8 (=Plin. *HN* 6.58); autoptic authority: 'πολλάκις δὲ λέγει ἀφικέσθαι παρὰ Σανδράκοπτον' T2a (=Arr. *Ind.* 5.6.2).

¹³⁴² Bosworth (1996), mainly following *BNJ* 715 T2b (=Arr. *Ind.* 5.3), & present tense (vñv) in Strabo (F11a (=Strabo 15.1.6)) which, if read literally, would make nonsense of the other sources: Kosmin (2014b) 265-71; Stoneman (2019) 131-134; (2021) 3-5; V. Bucciantini (2016) 37-62.

¹³⁴³ Stoneman (2021) 2-3; (2019) 130-132.

the king's death in 281. Indeed, this geographic gift to his patron would have been of pressing importance. As we saw in the previous chapter, it was during these same decades that Patrokles produced his persuasive cartographic propaganda which effectively reduced Mauryan significance while extending Seleukid reach. Megasthenes, supported by autopsy and unique sources, had an opportunity to produce a competing work for an eager court audience. Rather than geographical propaganda, which could have quelled royal anxieties concerning the now-porous eastern frontier, Megasthenes appears to have chosen to provide the gift of *parrhēsia* to the Seleukid court.

Megasthenes' work has come down to us in the form of 34 fragments by Jacoby's count, surviving mostly as parallel accounts from Arrian, Diodoros, and Strabo, with supplementary pieces preserved in Josephus, Pliny, Aelian, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius.¹³⁴⁴ Arrian and Strabo name him explicitly throughout the fragments, although Diodoros, true to form, does not explicitly name his source. While the possibility of intermediary sources for one or another of these sources has at times been raised, the structural similarities suggest that at least Arrian and Diodoros, and probably Strabo, had direct access to Megasthenes' *Indika* and followed it closely.¹³⁴⁵ In terms of structure, Arrian seems to follow Megasthenes closely, which can be inferred from his direct references to Megasthenes after discretely discussing Eratosthenes' work.¹³⁴⁶ Arrian's reliance on Megasthenes is uninterrupted for eight chapters from 3.7 to 11.7 in Arrian's *Indika*.¹³⁴⁷ He dutifully follows Megasthenes, even for what he feels is an unnecessary and unscientific digression, following this with his own criticism.¹³⁴⁸ Diodoros' structure is striking for its similarity to Arrian's. Strabo's fragments do not follow the same order, the Amasian geographer contrasting Megasthenes with other geographers of India in a more comparative approach than Arrian and Diodoros.¹³⁴⁹

The structure of Megasthenes *Indika* remains uncertain; Timmer and Stoneman both suggest three books, following Jacoby in rejecting Josephus' reference to a fourth book, a dismissal which Roller not unreasonably criticises for being 'totally speculative'.¹³⁵⁰ Brunt maintains that there were 'probably four books'.¹³⁵¹ For Timmer and Stoneman, the fragments are essentially ethnographic, with geography (book 1) clearly delineated from ethnographic concerns (books 2-3). But Clarke has shown that ancient geographies could adopt a more integrated approach,

¹³⁴⁴ 59 fragments (E.A. Schwanbeck (1846); McCrindle (1877)); 46 fragments: Stoneman (2021). This chapter follows *BNJ* 715 organisation of fragments unless otherwise indicated. Aelian source: Stoneman (2019); (2021).

¹³⁴⁵ Muntz has Eratosthenes as intermediary for Diodoros: C. E. Muntz (2012); (2017) 73-4. Arrian via Eratosthenes: Stoneman (2019) 186-7, although argues for direct source: Stoneman (2021) 12. Bosworth (1996); Brunt (1983) 449-51.

¹³⁴⁶ Arr. *Ind.* 3.1-6; cf. Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1-4); F70 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.2-3).

¹³⁴⁷ Explicit ref. to Megasthenes: Arr. *Ind.* 3.7 4.2, 4.6, 4.13, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.2, 7.1, 8.6, 8.11, 9.8, 10.6, 15.5-6. Interrupted (Nearchos): 11.7, 15.1, 15.8, 15.11.

¹³⁴⁸ Arr *Ind.* 6.1-2; 7.1.

¹³⁴⁹ Strabo (2.1.19-20, 76-77) compares Megasthenes with Eratosthenes, Daimachos.; cf. more continuous treatment: 15.6.1-15.9, although the final section again compared with Eratosthenes. Difficulties using Strabo: Stoneman (2019) 208, 213-214.

¹³⁵⁰ Jacoby amends book 'Δ' to 'Α': *BNJ* 715 F1A (=Joseph. *AJ* 10.227); Roller (2008): Commentary, F1A; Stoneman (2021).

¹³⁵¹ Brunt (1983) 448.

using spatial and descriptive elements together to explore a range of thematic concerns.¹³⁵² Indeed, if we follow Megasthenes through our most substantial fragments in Arrian and Diodoros, we discover a text which commences with elevated spatial geography before descending into the landscape as we follow fluvial vectors. The historical digressions along the way provide temporal and cultural depth to the landscape through which we travel. Following the arrival at the imperial centre, we are permitted the luxury of a survey of the social, administrative, and military structures with an imperial focalisation which encourages us to share the perspective and concerns of the Mauryan king. Far from clear thematic delineation, Megasthenes' blending of techniques makes our divisions of the books for his treatise uncertain. Yet clear spatial and descriptive techniques emerge from the text, revealing a striking ideological challenge to Seleukid imperial geography.

5.1 Spatial geography as *parrhēsia*: size is everything

India had long been associated in the Greek imagination with wonders at the edge of the *oikoumenē*.¹³⁵³ Fittingly, the shape and size of this land of wonders was uncertain. According to Herodotos, India was the land located furthest east, a disparate array of peoples closest to the rising sun.¹³⁵⁴ Skylax is said to have sailed in an easterly direction down the river Indus through India to the eastern Ocean before performing a peri-circumnavigation to return to the Achaemenid centre.¹³⁵⁵ This is a route which Alexander later may have believed he himself was following.¹³⁵⁶ We gain a clearer sense of its supposed size and shape from Alexander's eminent paradoxographer and *kolax*, Onesikritos, who describes Alexander's newly claimed land as 'a third part of the entire world'.¹³⁵⁷ If Alexander was indeed confounded by Skylax's geography as Pearson argues, then he may have believed that he had bisected Onesikritos' gargantuan India through his journey down the Indus.¹³⁵⁸ Territorialising this space through such a journey, Alexander ruled, by the reckoning of his flattering geographers, an additional third of the globe on top of his previous conquests.

In contrast, Megasthenes' representation of India is massive, yet more credible than the 'nonsense' of Onesikritos for his Seleukid audience.¹³⁵⁹ Megasthenes measures India with a 'line from north to south... extending twenty-two thousand, three hundred stadia at its narrowest point'.¹³⁶⁰ As seen in Appendix Six, this length stretches from central Asia deep into

¹³⁵² Clarke (1999) 202-3; (1997) 97-98; Dueck (2012) 3-7, 26-41.

¹³⁵³ Paradoxography: Romm (1992) 86-92; Nichols (2018); T.S. Brown (1955) 13.

¹³⁵⁴ Hdt. 3.98.

¹³⁵⁵ Hdt. 4.44.

¹³⁵⁶ Alexander's route: *BNJ* 133 F1 (=Arr. *Ind.* 20.1); Pearson (1960) 141.

¹³⁵⁷ 'τρίτην μοῖραν τῆς πάσης γῆς' *BNJ* 134 F6 (=Arr. *Ind.* 3.6-8); dismissed by Strabo: Strabo 2.1.9; Romm (1992) 96-7.

¹³⁵⁸ Pearson (1960) 86.

¹³⁵⁹ 'οὐδὲν λέγων, οὐδὲ Ὀνησίκριτος...', *BNJ* 133 F1 (=Arr. *Ind.* 20.1).

¹³⁶⁰ 'τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ ἄρκτου πρὸς μεσημβρίην, τοῦτο δὲ αὐτῷ μῆκος γίνεται, καὶ ἐπέχει <σταδίους> τριηκοσίου καὶ δισχιλίου καὶ δισμουρίου ἵνα περὶ τὸ στενότατον αὐτοῦ'. *BNJ* 715 F6b (=Arr. *Ind.* 3.6-8); cf. 'μετριασάντων μᾶλλον' ὑπὲρ γὰρ δισμουρίου τιθέασι σταδίου τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς νοτίου θαλάττης ἐπὶ τὸν Καύκασον', F6c (=Strabo 15.1.12).

the southern Ocean.¹³⁶¹ Megasthenes uses scientific observations and measurements which lend credibility to the staggering distances, astronomical observations revealing that Ursa Minor and Major are no longer visible from the southern extremities of India, and the shadows fall in the opposite direction, being within the tropics.¹³⁶² East-west distances are further supported with hodological measurements courtesy of the Mauryan royal road: Megasthenes is highlighting his apparently rigorous methodology which distances the work from paradoxography.¹³⁶³ The position of Megasthenes' India bends the Seleukid map, with the Seleukid heartland of the tetrapolis and Mesopotamia no longer the obvious 'metropolitan center' from which the periphery is ruled.¹³⁶⁴ A further insult is the relative size of the two kingdoms. In Megasthenes' spatial geography, the Seleukid empire is no longer a cartographical giant, towering over neighbours. Rather, it finds itself in the unusual position of being relatively dwarfed by a rival: Mauryan India. The natural boundaries of mountain and Ocean create an artificial and misleading sense of political unity within India, excluding access to outsiders.¹³⁶⁵ From this elevated perspective, we can see an apparently geographically cohesive kingdom the size of a continent. Before we enter, we have already been primed to question Seleukid pretensions to universal rule.

5.2 Descriptive geography as *parrhēsia*: descending into the landscape

Having established the external measurements of this vast space, Megasthenes brings us into the kingdom from the north and west, providing colour to a land previously portrayed in broad strokes. Most of his surviving fragments are descriptive. In contrast to the vaguely positioned deserts and swamps of Herodotos, the descriptive geography of Megasthenes' *Indika* introduces us to a fertile, wealthy, and internally cohesive kingdom, converging at the royal capital, Palimbothra.¹³⁶⁶ We descend first into the mountains, before following the fluvial geography to the imperial centre.

I. Mountains: resources and control

We begin our tour of the internal geography with India's 'many lofty mountains' which are presented in a positive light using a scientific lens.¹³⁶⁷ Megasthenes first observes that these mountains are called the Kaukasos 'by the Macedonians', creating a certain distance between his readers and the earlier accounts of Alexander's historians.¹³⁶⁸ These earlier accounts had

¹³⁶¹ See: Appendix 6.I.

¹³⁶² F7a (=Strabo 2.1.19); antipodean shadows to north: F7b (=Plin. *HN* 6.69); Bucciantini (2016).

¹³⁶³ Megasthenes' Mauryan hodological measurements: F6c (=Strabo 15.1.11-12); F31 (=Strabo 15.1.50).

¹³⁶⁴ Said (1993) 9; (1995) 36.

¹³⁶⁵ M. Blacksell (2006) 18-19.

¹³⁶⁶ Hdt. 3.98.2; K. Ruffing (2016) 169-72.

¹³⁶⁷ "πολλὰ μὲν ὄρη καὶ μεγάλα" *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.35.3).

¹³⁶⁸ '...ἄλλα ὀνομάζουσι, Μακεδόνες δὲ Κάυκασον', F6C (=Strabo 15.1.1); Arr. *Ind.* 6.4.

depicted the 'Kaukasos' as a hostile landscape which the divine king, emulating Herakles, traversed and tamed.¹³⁶⁹ Yet in Megasthenes' *Indika*, we are encouraged to view these same mountains with fresh eyes. Megasthenes provides an alternative indigenous nomenclature to compete with the Macedonian: we learn that the mountains are actually called the Paropamisos, Emodos, and Imaos by the Indians.¹³⁷⁰ Adopting a scientific lens, we find neither the hostile peaks of Alexander's campaign nor the wonders of the 'Crystal Country'.¹³⁷¹ Instead we discover the engines of fertility and prosperity for the Mauryan empire. This is where the summer rains gather, and the landscape, far from barren, 'abound[s] in fruit trees of every variety'.¹³⁷² The natural fluvial processes are presented as a product of the alpine catchment area, 'and the flow of the rivers rising there is great and turbulent'.¹³⁷³ Like a case study of Aristotle and Theophrastus, Megasthenes describes the high mountains efficiently catching the rains.¹³⁷⁴ In Diodoros' fragment, they 'come together from every side into the country lying below them, [and] gradually cause the regions to become soaked and to generate a multitude of rivers'.¹³⁷⁵ These are the natural mechanisms that help explain the Mauryan regime's wealth and power in seductively Peripatetic terms.¹³⁷⁶ The geographer presents the wonders of the empire through a scientific lens, thus defying scepticism.

The mountains, as well as supplying the Indian plains below with plentiful water, also give forth the riches of their alpine rock. Megasthenes says that these mountains are filled with 'every kind of ore'.¹³⁷⁷ The geographer rationalises the giant gold-digging Indian ants of Greek lore into miners, rather than monsters, who 'naturally burrow in the earth to make hiding holes, just as our small ants excavate a little earth'.¹³⁷⁸ These industrial quantities of gold are then gathered by the Derdai who, ignorant of how to refine it (χωνεύειν οὐκ εἰδότες), pass it on for bargain prices to Indian merchants.¹³⁷⁹ We are encouraged here to share the colonial lens, not of the Seleukids, but of the Mauryan empire; the Derdai are ripe for imperial exploitation, unknowingly serving the needs of the imperial state.¹³⁸⁰ Even up here in the high country, the hand of the Mauryan king is present everywhere. One river, we are told, is said

¹³⁶⁹ Ordeals: Curt. 4.22; A. emulating Herakles: Eratosth. F23 (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1-4); Sogdian rock: Arr. *Anab.* 4.18-19; Bosworth (1988) 32, 41. Terrain to be 'explored, charted, and finally brought under control', Said (1993) 225.

¹³⁷⁰ 'ἄπερ οἱ ἐπιχώριοι κατὰ μέρος Παροπάμισόν τε καὶ Ἡμωδὸν καὶ Ἴμαον...', *BNJ* 715 F6c (=Strabo 15.1.11).

¹³⁷¹ 'τὰ ποικίλα ὄρη τῆς κρυσταλλο', *AR* 3.21 (tr. R. Stoneman).

¹³⁷² 'μάλιστα μὲν τὰ ὄρεα, Παραπάμισός τε καὶ ὁ Ἡμωδὸς καὶ τὸ Ἰμαϊκὸν ὄρος', Arr. *Ind.* 6.4; 'ἔχει δένδρεσι παντοδαποῖς καρπίμοις πλήθοντα', *BNJ* 715 F4 (= Diod. Sic. 2.35.3).

¹³⁷³ ἀπὸ τουτέων μεγάλοι καὶ θολεροὶ οἱ ποταμοὶ ῥέουσιν', Arr. *Ind.* 6.4-5.

¹³⁷⁴ Aristot. *Mete.* 1.350a.2-14; Theophr. *Caus. pl.* 1.5.2.10.

¹³⁷⁵ 'εἰς τὴν ὑποκειμένην χώραν πανταχόθεν συρρεούσας τὰς λιβάδας ἐκ τοῦ κατ' ὀλίγον ποιεῖν τοὺς τόπους καθύγρους καὶ γεννᾶν ποταμῶν πλήθος'. F4 (= Diod. Sic. 2.37).

¹³⁷⁶ Aristot, *Mete.* 1.349b-1.350b.

¹³⁷⁷ 'παντοδαπῶν μετάλλων' *BNJ* 715 F4 (= Diod. Sic. 2.36.1).

¹³⁷⁸ 'φύσι γὰρ κατὰ τῆς ὀρύσσουσιν, ἵνα φωλεύσαιεν, κατάπερ οἱ ἡμέτεροι οἱ σμικροὶ μύρμηκες ὀλίγον τῆς γῆς ὀρύσσουσιν'. F23a (=Arr. *Ind.* 15.5); 'οἱ μεταλλεύοντες εἶεν μύρμηκες', F23b (=Strabo 15.1.44); cf. Hdt. 3.102; *Mahabharata* 2.48.4; M. Peissel (1984).

¹³⁷⁹ *BNJ* 715 F23b (=Strabo 15.1.44).

¹³⁸⁰ Passive colonised: J. Van Eeden (2004) 31.

to flow with gold—an explicitly natural phenomenon—which is sensibly taxed by the king.¹³⁸¹ We are reminded that this is not wilderness but controlled imperial space. The many and varied types of ore in these mountains are presented in terms of imperial utility, for agrarian and civic ‘necessity’, and, specifically, to supply all ‘the trappings of war.’¹³⁸² The warning to Megasthenes’ court audience is apparent: unlike other kingdoms, there are no limits to resources for Candragupta’s empire.

II. Rivers: fluvial vectors to the centre

As we have already seen in Chapter Four, rivers acted as powerful conduits in the political geography of Hellenistic kingdoms. Early on in his account, Megasthenes makes unflattering comparisons between the fluvial landscape of Indian and Seleukid space. First, he records some fifty-eight rivers in India acting as high-functioning conduits for goods and people through Indian territory to the capital and, ultimately, ‘into the eastern and southern outer sea’.¹³⁸³ But it is not just their number, but their size which is emphasised. Megasthenes asserts that ‘the Indian rivers are superior to those of all Asia’.¹³⁸⁴ We are introduced to the Ganges as a river which dwarfs the mighty Indus, which so impressed the Alexander historians.¹³⁸⁵ We then skim the surface of the map, observing some twenty tributaries flowing into the Ganges. We pass each, with peoples and cities identified along the way. Megasthenes notes that they are ‘all navigable’ (πάντας πλωτούς), a sentiment repeated throughout, until the overview is concluded with ‘none of these is inferior to the Maeander, where the Maeander is navigable.’¹³⁸⁶ The comparison is not a flattering one. The Seleukid court audience cannot help but be drawn back across Asia to upper Phrygia, where the venerable Meander is met by a small and unnavigable tributary, the Marsyas, ‘with violent and precipitate current’.¹³⁸⁷ This is a place usually treated with reverence for its associations with Apollonic myth, exemplified by Antiochos I’s foundation of Apameia-on-the-Meander.¹³⁸⁸ Yet if we follow Megasthenes’ suggestion and traverse the navigable part of the Meander downstream, we find ourselves frustrated and delayed by what Strabo calls the ‘exceedingly winding’ path of the Meander River, before we finally reach Miletos and Didyma at the river’s end.¹³⁸⁹ The comparison is revealing: the sacred Meander and the Seleukids’ cult to Apollo appear slow, small, and almost quaint beside the grandeur of India’s fluvial vectors.

¹³⁸¹ Tax/control: ‘ἐγγυτέρω δὲ πίστεώς φησιν ὁ Μεγασθένης, ὅτι οἱ ποταμοὶ καταφέρουσιν ψῆγμα χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ φόρος ἀπάγοιτο τῷ βασιλεῖ’, *BNJ* 715 F27b (=Strabo, 15.1.57-8). Cf. paradoxographical rivers of gold: Onesikritos *BNJ* 134 F32 (=Strabo 15.2.14); Timagenes: *BNJ* 88 F12 (=Strabo 15.1.57).

¹³⁸² F4 (=Diod Sic. 2.36.2).

¹³⁸³ ‘ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄλλων πολλῶν ποταμῶν οὐνόματα Μεγασθένης ἀνέγραψεν, οἱ ἔξω τοῦ Γάγγεω τε καὶ τοῦ Ἰνδοῦ ἐκδιδοῦσιν ἐς τὸν ἐϋὼν τε καὶ μεσημβρινὸν τὸν ἔξω πόντον’, *BNJ* 715 F9a (=Arr. *Ind.* 5.2).

¹³⁸⁴ ‘ποταμοὶ δὲ τοσοῖδε εἰσὶν ἐν τῇ Ἰνδῶν γῆ ὅσοι οὐδὲ ἐν τῇ πάσῃ Ἀσίῃ’, F9a (=Arr. *Ind.* 3.9).

¹³⁸⁵ F9a (=Arr. *Ind.* 4.2.1); F9b (=Strabo 15.1.35). Massive Indus in Alexander’s anabasis (=Arr. *Anab.* 5.4.2-3).

¹³⁸⁶ ‘...τούτων λέγει Μεγασθένης οὐδένα εἶναι τοῦ Μαιάνδρου ἀποδέοντα, ἵνα περ ναυσίπορος ὁ Μαιάνδρος’. *BNJ* 715 F9a (=Arr. *Ind.* 4.2-7).

¹³⁸⁷ Strabo 12.8.15.

¹³⁸⁸ Diod. Sic. 5.75.3.

¹³⁸⁹ Apameia-on-the-Meander & winding Meander: Strabo 12.8.15.

The implicit juxtapositions from an elevated vantagepoint continue, the Ganges and the Indus compared favourably to the Nile and Ister. 'It should not then be incredible that neither Nile nor Ister can be even compared with Indus or Ganges in volume of water'.¹³⁹⁰ This notion had remarkable longevity, generally accepted in Strabo's day, Megasthenes' Indian giants having clear sources whereas the sources for the Ister and Nile were less certain.¹³⁹¹ The comparison requires extreme elevation, the audience moving from one side of the *oikoumenē* to the other and back again, effortlessly skimming over the blank Seleukid space in between. The audience is encouraged, as in Herodotos, to consider the great rivers on a continental scale. Yet there is an omission in Megasthenes fluvial comparisons: the Euphrates and Tigris are nowhere to be seen.

This omission is a marked diversion from the geographic tradition. As we have seen, the Euphrates had a venerable role in Babylonian propaganda, performing a powerful centralising feature of Mesopotamian cartography.¹³⁹² Herodotos emphasised the Euphrates' depth, length, and navigability.¹³⁹³ For Herodotos, Babylon is described in relation to the river, which bisects the city, 'a river named Euphrates, a wide, deep, and swift river, flowing from Armenia and issuing into the Red Sea.'¹³⁹⁴ This is an Achaemenid breadbasket, organised with canals under imperial control.¹³⁹⁵ Similarly, Xenophon characterises the Tigris as a river notable for its length and dynamism.¹³⁹⁶ More than three centuries after Megasthenes, Josephus saw the comparison between Mesopotamia and the Indian rivers as an obvious point of comparison. The four great branches of Eden's river still permeate the *oikoumenē* and are easily identified by Josephus—Phison, Geon, Diglath, and Phoras—the Ganges, the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, respectively.¹³⁹⁷ Megasthenes' omission, then, was an unorthodox one. These rivers, the heart of the Seleukid imperial map, are deleted in a powerful geographic omission. The Seleukids seem to have inherited uninhabitable 'blank spaces' between places.¹³⁹⁸

The river Indus and, especially, the Ganges perform the role of powerful arteries, the latter bringing the bounty of India to the royal epicentre, Palimbothra. Traditionally, the Ganges was seen by the Greeks as a river not quite of this world, part of the paradoxographical realm of the geographic periphery.¹³⁹⁹ But Megasthenes moves us from the elevated view down into the landscape with fluvial emplotment and description, making the Ganges as real as it is impressive to his Seleukid court audience. We view the map now with the immediacy of a

¹³⁹⁰ 'οὐκ οὐκ ἀπιστίαν χρή ἔχειν ὑπὲρ τε τοῦ Ἰνδοῦ καὶ τοῦ Γάγγεω μὴδὲ συμβλητοῦς εἶναι αὐτοῖσι τὸν τε Ἰστρον καὶ τοῦ Νείλου τὸ ὕδωρ'. *BNJ* 715 F9a (=Arr. *Ind.* 4.13-14).

¹³⁹¹ *BNJ* 715 F9b (=Strabo 15.1.35); contra F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.35.1). Nile & Ister: Hdt. 2.28, 34.

¹³⁹² See: Ch. 3.4 and 4.4.

¹³⁹³ Hdt. 1.180, see also: 179, 185-6, 191, 193; 5.52.

¹³⁹⁴ '...καὶ τῆς Ἀρμενίης ἐστὶ ποταμὸς νηυσιπέρητος, τῷ οὐνομα Εὐφρήτης', Hdt. 5.52. Cf. Polybios saw it as diminished by canals: Polyb. 9.43.3

¹³⁹⁵ Hdt. 1.193, 196.

¹³⁹⁶ Xen. *Anab.* 3.5, 4.4; cf. Just. *Epit.* 42.3

¹³⁹⁷ *Gen.* 2.10-14; Joseph. *AJ* 1.37-9 (in the Greek: Φεισῶν = Phison (Ganges); Γήων = Geon (Nile); Διγλάθ = Diglath (Tigris); Φοράς = Phoras (Euphrates); C. Di Serio (2022) 52-3, 68-9.

¹³⁹⁸ Blank space: Harley (1988b); Greek propaganda of empty Asia had precedent: T. Harrison (2000) 72-5.

¹³⁹⁹ Filled with monsters (κῆτη): Pseudo-Krateros *BNJ* 153 F2 (=Strabo 15.1.35).

traveller headed downstream. We cannot but help but be awed by the sheer size of our vector: 'the breadth of the Ganges at its narrowest is about a hundred stadia', before we observe that 'often it spreads into lakes, so that the opposite side cannot be seen where it is low and does not rise up in hillocks.'¹⁴⁰⁰ The audience is within the landscape, diminished by our proximity to the sublime.¹⁴⁰¹

We continue to follow the fluvial vector down to Palimbothra, but the narrative is interrupted by historical digressions at this point, something made more apparent by the vocal irritation of Arrian.¹⁴⁰² Arrian complains both before and after the historical digression that perhaps Megasthenes, 'so far as I can see, did not visit much of India, though he visited more than the followers of Alexander'.¹⁴⁰³ Megasthenes claims India has a vast number of cities, but a sceptical Arrian, limited to Megasthenes' fluvial vector, observes that 'it would be impossible to record their number accurately because there are so many'.¹⁴⁰⁴ The cities we do pass are unusual for a Hellenistic audience due to their lack of stone, and their wooden nature apparently requires an explanation. Megasthenes says that 'if they were built of brick, they could not last long because of the moisture due to rain, and to the fact that the rivers overflow their banks and fill the plains with water.'¹⁴⁰⁵ This explanation is important for Megasthenes, so that we have adjusted our architectural expectations before we approach the royal city, Palimbothra, which is also made of wood. When we reach the capital, it is first defined in terms of its fluvial orientation, 'the greatest of the Indian cities is called Palimbothra ...at the confluence of the Erannoboas and the Ganges'.¹⁴⁰⁶ As if we need reminding, the size of the rivers is once more emphasised as we witness one of these giants swallow the other at the royal centre. From the mountains' tributaries, these two major fluvial vectors converge at the royal seat of power. Like the rivers of Poseidippos' *On Stones* serving King Ptolemy, Megasthenes' rivers, in this scientific geographical treatise, reinforce centripetal geography for Candragupta, bringing abundance to the king.¹⁴⁰⁷

¹⁴⁰⁰ 'εἶναι ὧν τὸ εὖρος τῷ Γάγγη, ἔνθαπερ αὐτὸς ἐωυτοῦ στενιότατος, ἐς ἑκατὸν σταδίου· πολλαχῆ δὲ καὶ λιμνάζειν, ὡς μὴ ἀποπτον εἶναι τὴν πέρην χώραν, ἴναπερ χθαμαλή τέ ἐστι καὶ σοῦδαμῆ γηλόφοισιν ἀνεστηκυῖα'. Arr. *Ind.* 4.6-7 (F8 Stoneman (2021)); 'Μεγασθένης δὲ ὅταν ἦι μέτριος καὶ εἰς ἑκατὸν εὐρύνεσθαι, βάθος δὲ εἴκοσι ὀργυιῶν τοῦλάχιστον'. *BNJ* 715 F9b (=Strabo 15.1.35).

¹⁴⁰¹ E. Burke (1767) 58-60, 96-8.

¹⁴⁰² Arr. *Ind.* 6.1.

¹⁴⁰³ 'ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Μεγασθένης πολλὴν δοκέει μοι ἐπελθεῖν τῆς Ἰνδῶν χώρας, πλήν γε <δὴ> ὅτι πλεῦνα ἢ οἱ ξὺν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τῷ Φιλίππου ἐπελθόντες', Arr. *Ind.* 5.3, 7.1.

¹⁴⁰⁴ πόλεων δὲ καὶ ἀριθμὸν οὐκ εἶναι ἂν ἀτρεκέες ἀναγράψαι τῶν Ἰνδικῶν ὑπὸ πλήθεος', *BNJ* 715 F17 (=Arr. *Ind.* 10.2).

¹⁴⁰⁵ 'ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὅσαι παραποτάμια αὐτέων ἢ παραθαλάσσια, ταύτας μὲν ξυλίνας ποιέεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐκ πλίνθου ποιούμενας διαρκέσαι ἐπὶ χρόνον τοῦ τε ὕδατος ἔνεκα τοῦ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὅτι οἱ ποταμοὶ αὐτοῖσιν ὑπερβάλλοντες ὑπὲρ τὰς ὄχθας ἐμπιπλάσι τοῦ ὕδατος τὰ πεδία', F17 (=Arr. *Ind.* 10.2-3).

¹⁴⁰⁶ 'μεγίστην δὲ πόλιν Ἰνδοῖσιν εἶναι <τὴν> Παλίμβοθρα καλεομένην, ... ἴνα αἱ συμβολαὶ εἰσι τοῦ τε Ἐρραννοβόα ποταμοῦ καὶ τοῦ Γάγγεω', F18a (=Arr. *Ind.* 10.5).

¹⁴⁰⁷ See: Ch. 2.2.III.A.

III. The sea: bounty and barrier

The fluvial conduit continues beyond Palimbothra, providing the royal centre with easy access to the sea. Strabo, evidently informed by Megasthenes' geography, tells us that the mighty Ganges 'flows past Palimbothra, a very large city, and then flows on towards the sea in that region and empties by a single outlet.'¹⁴⁰⁸ According to one later writer of paradoxographical literature, Megasthenes emphasised the fecundity of the Indian sea, stating that 'trees grow in the ocean around India'.¹⁴⁰⁹ We gain a sense of an Oceanic realm teeming with life. Significantly, it is also the place where India's most valuable resources—pearls—spring forth from oysters.¹⁴¹⁰ Having provided the mytho-historical origin for their cultivation by Herakles, we assume once more our Peripatetic lens, and are provided an alternative aquacultural account of their cultivation. They have a king or queen and if this is captured, as any apiculturist would know, the hive can also be captured. 'Should anyone by chance catch the king, he can easily cast a net around the swarm of the remaining oysters; but should the king slip through, then the others cannot be caught.'¹⁴¹¹ These treasured gems, worth much more than gold to the Seleukid court audience, are farmed with specialist knowledge in an inaccessible space.¹⁴¹² The Mauryans not only have access to abundant and rare resources, but these are under an impressive aquacultural control.

If Patrokles uses the eastern Ocean as a fabricated Seleukid vector to access India, Megasthenes' eastern Ocean conversely performs as a barrier to deny the Seleukids this self-same path. The eastern Ocean had long served as a natural barrier for explorers and conquerors alike. However, Megasthenes goes further in using natural forces to frustrate an Oceanic vector. Our Aelian source for the Indian sea merges horrors with natural geography in a way which seems to echo Megasthenes; the Ocean near Taprobane (Sri Lanka) is filled with terrifying sea monsters living alongside benign and accurately described seals.¹⁴¹³ Elsewhere, Megasthenes recruits even the smallest little fish (ιχθύδιον) to the creation of a hostile barrier. The small fish prove fatal to the uninitiated. The description evokes forensic certainty: 'anyone who touches it faints, to begin with, and later on dies.'¹⁴¹⁴ The fish cannot be seen and navigated past. Rather, it is undetectable, Megasthenes emphasising that 'when alive it is invisible'.¹⁴¹⁵ Yet he is careful not to present this deterrent as a paradoxographical wonder, following this ominous description with an explanation 'since presumably it swims down in the depths.'¹⁴¹⁶ This is not, then, a fantastical tale but a lethal fact of life, the eastern

¹⁴⁰⁸ '...παρὰ τὰ Παλίβοθρα, μεγίστην πόλιν, πρόεισιν ἐπὶ τὴν ταύτη θάλατταν,' Strabo 15.1.13.

¹⁴⁰⁹ 'Μεγασθένην δὲ τὸν τὰ Ἰνδικὰ γεγραφότα ιστορεῖν ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν Ἰνδικὴν θαλάττῃ δένδρεα φύεσθαι', *BNJ* 715 F25 (=Antigonos *Collection of Wonderful Tales* 132).

¹⁴¹⁰ F13a (=Arr. *Ind.* 8.9-10).

¹⁴¹¹ 'καὶ ὅστις μὲν ἐκεῖνον κατ' ἐπιτυχίην συλλάβοι, τοῦτον δὲ εὐπετέως περιβάλλειν καὶ τὸ ἄλλο σμήνος τῶν μαργαριτῶν', F13a (=Arr. *Ind.* 8.12).

¹⁴¹² Stoneman (2019) 229.

¹⁴¹³ Stoneman (2021) F15b (=Ael. *NA.* 16.17-19). Excluded from *BNJ*.

¹⁴¹⁴ 'οὗ τὸν ἀψάμενον λειποθυμεῖν καὶ ἐκθνήσκειν τὰ πρῶτα, εἶτα μέντοι καὶ ἀποθνήσκειν', F24 (=Ael. *NA.* 8.7) (tr. A.F. Scholfield (1959)).

¹⁴¹⁵ 'Μεγασθένους ἀκούω λέγοντος περὶ τὴν τῶν Ἰνδῶν θάλατταν γίνεσθαι τι ἰχθύδιον, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ὅταν ζῆ ἀθέατον εἶναι, κάτω που νηχόμενον καὶ ἐν βυθῷ, ἀποθανὸν δὲ ἀναπλεῖν'. F24 (=Ael. *NA.* 8.7).

¹⁴¹⁶ F24 (=Ael. *NA.* 8.7).

Ocean naturally hostile to all those unfamiliar with its dangers. Megasthenes uses science to reinforce something learnt in Homer: the Ocean is not a vector but a delimiting boundary where the living traditionally cannot pass.¹⁴¹⁷ Indeed, in travel literature, this is the Ocean of shipwrecked sailors, who come in desperate supplication to the magnanimous Mauryan king.¹⁴¹⁸ Yet Megasthenes has used the authority of descriptive geography to reinforce these old motifs, peripatetic observation undermining the feasibility of an Oceanic vector at the first hurdle. Here, descriptive geography has been used to undermine the elevated spatialising gestures of Patrokles' imperial geography. Encouraged to take a closer look, we are all but obliged to reject Patrokles' claims, the effortless reach of Seleukid vectorial geography exposed as little more than geographic *kolakeia*.

5.3 Temporal digressions as *parrhēsia*: the land of gods

We have seen how temporal digressions can be used by geographers to transfuse the present landscape with the authority of a mytho-historical past.¹⁴¹⁹ Such digressions can potentially transform the landscape for the audience, turning an alien environment into a sacred one. This is achieved to powerful effect by Megasthenes, who associates the quintessential Hellenistic imperial gods, Dionysos and Herakles, with India, diluting Seleukid associations with these same gods. Megasthenes presents Dionysos and Herakles as foundational gods of a unified and cohesive India, culture heroes who provide a venerable history to this distinct civilisation. Significantly, these digressions also provide a tacit warning, showcasing numerous mortal imperialists who failed, or wisely refused to attempt, a conquest of India. We will emerge from these digressions discouraged from any sense that this is a land ripe for conquest.

I. Dionysos

As have seen in the previous chapter, Dionysos was one of the darlings of Seleukid imperial ideology.¹⁴²⁰ Imperial propaganda equated Seleukos with the legendary eastern conquests of both Alexander and Dionysos himself. This is most vividly seen in coins from the Susa mint in the years following the failed invasion of India (303) and the victory at Ipsos (301). The obverse portrait of these triumphant coins depicted the assimilated portrait of Seleukos, Alexander, and Dionysos in a panther-skin helmet and a panther cloak, emphasising Dionysos' fearsome martial aspect. The reverse displays the goddess Nike establishing a war trophy on the battlefield with "ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ" blazoned on the perimeter.¹⁴²¹ The *oikoumenē*-wide imperial claims of Dionysos, passed on to Alexander, were now to be

¹⁴¹⁷ Demarcation mortals/dead: Hom. *Od.* 11.13-20; *Il.* 18.7-8; Hes. *Op.* 165-70.

¹⁴¹⁸ Shipwrecked sailor: Diod. *Sic.* 2.39.

¹⁴¹⁹ See: Ch. 3.3.II.

¹⁴²⁰ See: Ch. 4.1.

¹⁴²¹ SC 1.173, 1.P25, 1.174-6 (Susa mint, 301 BCE - 295 BCE); cf. Hadley (1974).

inherited by Seleukos. At the time Megasthenes penned the *Indika*, the orthodox use of Dionysos in imperial ideology was clear.

Yet the Dionysos of Megasthenes' *Indika* is not a Seleukid conqueror, but rather a culture-hero for India. We encounter Dionysian foundation myths on the Ganges, as we sail past countless cities heading, with fluvial inevitability, towards the imperial capital of Palimbothra. In the distant past, we are told, there were no cities and no temples in India. The original autochthonous Indians lived off wild game and wore animal skins, as was 'done by the Greeks' in the same era.¹⁴²² Enter Dionysos. Dionysos 'founded cities, gave them laws, bestowed wine on the Indians as on the Greeks, and taught them to sow their land, giving them seed.'¹⁴²³ Dionysos assumes the role of the foundational culture hero, teaching agriculture, civilisation, and *dike*.¹⁴²⁴ The tacit comparison with Greece is significant. According to Euripides, Dionysos transformed the east well before he arrived in Greece.¹⁴²⁵ But in Megasthenes' work, it is the civilising aspect of this transformation which is emphasised.¹⁴²⁶ Megasthenes' India, then, has an intimidating tradition of civilisation which predates Greece, thanks to the foundational visitation by Dionysos.

Not only does the Dionysian presence in India predate Greece, but it remained much more meaningfully present in the Mauryan empire. This is evident in the military. Dionysos had 'equipped them... with the arms of warfare', and proofs of militant Dionysian equipment could be seen in Megasthenes' own day, expressed through the Indian military's 'dappled costume' which was 'like that worn by the Bacchanals of Dionysus'.¹⁴²⁷ Further proof could be seen in the women who accompanied the army, Megasthenes drawing on notions of the formidable 'Asian Bacchae' (Ἀσιάδες βάκχαι) of the Greek imagination.¹⁴²⁸ For Megasthenes, this continuing Dionysian emulation accounts for the remarkable morale of the Mauryan army that he apparently witnessed firsthand.¹⁴²⁹ The expectations of the Seleukid court audience have been effectively inverted. Far from being the disorderly excess of a foreign people in need of Seleukid colonising, the Indians' approach to war is, in fact, proof of their closer proximity to the godhead. The formidable god of the phalanx in the gigantomachy is now on the Mauryan, rather than Seleukid side.¹⁴³⁰ In martial, as in civic terms, Megasthenes' Dionysos provides his court audience with an unexpected and disconcerting sense of inferiority.

¹⁴²² *BNJ* 715 F12 (=Arr. *Ind.* 7.2-3); 'καθάπερ καὶ παρ' Ἑλλήσιν', F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.38.2).

¹⁴²³ 'Διόνυσον δὲ ἐλθόντα, ὡς καρτερός ἐγένετο Ἰνδῶν... πόληάς τε οἰκίσαι καὶ νόμους θέσθαι τῆσι πόλεσιν, οἴνου τε δοτῆρα Ἰνδοῖς γενέσθαι κατάπερ Ἑλλήσι', F12 (=Arr. *Ind.* 7.5).

¹⁴²⁴ Dionysos as Indian foundational hero: Kosmin (2014b) 40-1; Bosworth (1996) 121.

¹⁴²⁵ Eur. *Bacch.* 13-22; D. Raeburn (2017) 173-188.

¹⁴²⁶ Stoneman (2022) 98-99. For the significance of cultural-religious primacy, see: Hdt. 2.4; A.B. Lloyd (1994) 175.

¹⁴²⁷ 'καὶ ὀπλίῃσι ὀπλοῖσι τοῖσιν ἀρηίοισι', *BNJ* 715 F12 (=Arr. *Ind.* 7.7); 'καὶ ἐσθῆς αὐτοῖσι κατάστικτος ἐοῦσα, κατάπερ τοῦ Διονύσου τοῖσι βάκχοισιν', F12 (=Arr. *Ind.* 5.9-10); Stoneman (2019) 95-7.

¹⁴²⁸ Eur. *Bacch.* 1168, cf. 1155-63; Raeburn (2017) 174.

¹⁴²⁹ See: Ch. 5.5.II below.

¹⁴³⁰ Eur. *Cycl.* 5-9; Fraser (1972) 1.202-3.

II. Herakles

Megasthenes' Herakles is powerfully associated with Indian kingship, distancing us from Seleukid imperial notions of the hero. Seleukid propaganda explicitly associated Herakles with Seleukos from the beginning of the Seleukid Era (311). The Herakles-type coins minted in Babylon from this time show a beardless Herakles in lion headdress on the obverse, unchanged from the Alexander-Herakles type depiction in all but name.¹⁴³¹ On the reverse was a throned Zeus with eagle and sceptre. The coins boldly suggest that just like 'King Alexander' before him, 'King Seleukos' was to follow in the footsteps of Herakles as a divine conqueror and imposer of order. The imperial Herakles would prove to have remarkable continuity, exemplified in the larger-than-life Herakles Kallinikos of Behistun (148 BCE).¹⁴³² Situated above the royal road, the imposing figure reclines on his lionskin with a foot upon a vanquished king in a striking blend of martial and sympotic themes, uniting lower and upper satrapies with his gaze. In orthodox Seleukid imperial ideology, Herakles featured prominently as a god of conquest and geographical control.

The Seleukid audience of Megasthenes' *Indika* were no doubt surprised to learn that Herakles was, in fact, an indigenous Indian king far removed from divine Seleukid kingship. The accounts of his indigenous origin are, we are assured by Megasthenes, from 'trustworthy sources' (πιστὰ ἡγεῖται).¹⁴³³ Herakles' assumption to kingship began a new dynasty, fifteen generations after Dionysos. The transition to the new dynasty was apparently an orderly one, part of the Indian political process in which 'Indian kings were appointed for merit' when dynasties naturally weakened over time.¹⁴³⁴ The geographer highlights the problems of hereditary succession—hardly a topic fit for a Seleukid imperial geography—and his solution of merit-appointment (ἀριστινδην) results in a second culture-hero as king for India. Indeed, Herakles assumes all the duties of a divine culture-hero, first traversing the territory and cleansing it of monsters.¹⁴³⁵ This is then followed by city-founding, especially on the plains.¹⁴³⁶ The figure that emerges is no universal imperial figure like Dionysos, rather, Megasthenes' Herakles has imperial limits. Yet he is nonetheless a potent civilising force and remains sacred in India, continuing to be worshipped in Megasthenes' own time.¹⁴³⁷ Further evidence for Herakles' presence in India is found in continuing Indian depictions of the hero, dressed with club and animal-skin, a possible syncretist nod by Megasthenes to Śiva.¹⁴³⁸ The Herakles of Seleukid propaganda, the god who paved the way for Alexander's and then Seleukos' world-

¹⁴³¹ See: n.1104.

¹⁴³² Kosmin (2014b) 162-164.

¹⁴³³ *BNJ* 715 F11a (=Strabo 15.1.7); although 'μυθολογοῦσιν': *BNJ* 715 F4 (Diod. Sic. 2.39.1). For Megasthenes' trustworthy sources as Brahmins, see: Stoneman (2021) 8-9; Mauryan court, see: Roller (2015) 118-9. Eratosthenes' scepticism: Eratosth. F21 (=Strabo 15.1.7); see also: Ch. 3.3.II.A of dissert.

¹⁴³⁴ '...εἰ δὲ ἐκλείποι τὸ γένος, οὕτω δὴ ἀριστινδην καθίστασθαι Ἰνδοῖσι βασιλέας', *Arr. Ind.* 8.3-4.

¹⁴³⁵ 'καθήραντα ὃ τι περ κακόν', F13a (=Arr. *Ind.* 8.8); '...καὶ καθαρὰν ποιῆσαι τῶν θηρίων γῆν τε καὶ θάλατταν', *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.39.1); A. Dahlquist (1962) 82, 89; Stoneman (2019) 87-88.

¹⁴³⁶ *BNJ* 715 F33 (=Strabo 15.1.58); Schwanbeck (1846) 37-8.

¹⁴³⁷ *BNJ* 715 F11a (=Strabo 15.1.6-7); F3b (=Joseph. *AJ* 10.277).

¹⁴³⁸ F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.39.1); cf. Theban Herakles with club & skin: Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.10-11.

spanning empires, loses its simple and powerful message in Megasthenes' digression. The *Indika's* Herakles is a meritocratic, and distinctly Indian, hero.

III. Historical precedent

Megasthenes uses the Herodotean succession of empires as an exercise in *paideia*, merging myth and more recent history up to the present. The geographer elevates the divine imperialists, Dionysos and Alexander, who alone have right to India as part of *oikoumenē*-wide conquest. These are contrasted with effective mortal kings, who understand the limits of empire, and look elsewhere, pointedly away from India, for their expansion.¹⁴³⁹ Our Arrian source concludes with the clearest commentary for a Seleukid audience:

‘ἄλλον δὲ οὐδένα ἐμβαλεῖν ἐς γῆν τὴν Ἰνδῶν ἐπὶ πολέμῳ, οὐδὲ Κῦρον τὸν Καμβύσεω, καίτοι ἐπὶ Σκύθας ἐλάσαντα καὶ τᾶλλα πολυπραγμονέστατον δὴ τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν βασιλέων γενόμενον τὸν Κῦρον. ἀλλὰ Ἀλέξανδρον γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τε καὶ κρατῆσαι [πάντων] τοῖς ὅπλοις ὅσους γε δὴ ἐπῆλθε· καὶ ἂν καὶ πάντων κρατῆσαι, εἰ ἡ στρατιὴ ἤθελεν. οὐ μὲν δὴ οὐδὲ Ἰνδῶν τινὰ ἔξω τῆς οἰκείης σταλῆναι ἐπὶ πολέμῳ διὰ δικαιοσύνην.’

...but no one else ever invaded India, not even Kyros son of Kambyses, though he attacked the Skythians, and in other ways was the most energetic of the kings in Asia. Only Alexander came and conquered by force of arms all the countries he assailed, and would have conquered the whole world, had his army been willing. Nor did any Indians ever set out beyond their own country on a warlike expedition, because of their respect for justice.

BNJ 715 F14 (=Arr. *Ind.* 9.11-12) (tr. Brunt (1983) with adaption)

Alexander fittingly follows in the footsteps of Dionysos, as a divine world-conquering force, in clear juxtaposition to prior mortal kings.¹⁴⁴⁰ Mortals with a sense of *dike*, like the Indians, however, should stay within their realms, as the final line of this passage urges. What is missing in this list is, of course, any reference to the Seleukids, something which would be glaringly apparent to Megasthenes' court audience. The omission cannot easily be accommodated within a framework of Seleukid imperial geography.¹⁴⁴¹ Indeed, for Stoneman, the comparison is so potentially 'tactless' that he questions whether it was part of the original text.¹⁴⁴² Yet we need not go that far to account for the omission. Rather than a transmission issue, our *a priori* assumption that the work should align with orthodox imperial ideology may be the mistake here. The text certainly fails as *epainos*, but it performs perfectly well as *parrhēsia*: urging the regime to know its limits. Seleukos, defeated by the Mauryans in 303, is

¹⁴³⁹ BNJ 715 F11b (=Arr. *Ind.* 5.4.8); cf. Strabo is less clear: F11A (=Strabo 15.1.6-7). For Strabo's 'ambiguity': Visscher (2020) 50-51.

¹⁴⁴⁰ ‘ἀλλὰ Ἀλέξανδρον γὰρ στρατεῦσαι ἐπ’ Ἰνδοῦς μοῦνον’, BNJ 715 F11b (=Arr. *Ind.* 5.7). Followed by Pliny: *HN* 6.59. Roller (2008); cf. R. Rollinger (2016) 132-3.

¹⁴⁴¹ Propagandistic readings see it as unbroken continuity from Alexander: R. Rollinger (2016) 129-164; Visscher (2020) 50-51.

¹⁴⁴² Stoneman (2021) 3, n.11.

no divine Alexander with limitless reach. In Megasthenes' *Indika*, Alexander and Seleukos are an exercise in contrasts, the former being utilised to highlight the limitations of the latter. The contrast acts as a very public whisper into Seleukos' ear: *memento mori*.¹⁴⁴³

5.4 The epicentre

The focus of the Mauryan court as the epicentre of the kingdom sits in contrast to the more fluid peripatetic court maintained by the Seleukids.¹⁴⁴⁴ Megasthenes displays the effectiveness of the centripetal empire of the Mauryans, as opposed to the Seleukids' more peripatetic 'circulatory' empire, with resources gravitating in India to the royal centre.¹⁴⁴⁵ Mauryan roads and its administrative network work emphasise the Mauryan king's far-reaching vectors. These vectors speak to organisation and reach, suggesting that the king could easily mobilise and move to the edges of India and, worryingly for the Seleukid audience, beyond, if provoked.

I. The royal city

Megasthenes presents Palimbothra as the awe-inspiring epicentre of the map. Having returned from the historical digressions on our journey down the Ganges, we finally approach the imperial capital:

‘μεγίστην δὲ πόλιν <έν> Ἰνδοῖσιν εἶναι <τήν> Παλίμβοθρα καλεομένην ἐν τῇ Πρασιῶν γῆι, ἵνα αἱ συμβολαί εἰσι τοῦ τε Ἐραννοβόα ποταμοῦ καὶ τοῦ Γάγγεω... καὶ λέγει Μεγασθένης μῆκος μὲν ἐπέχειν τὴν πόλιν καθ' ἑκατέρην τὴν πλευρὴν, ἵνα περ μακροτάτη αὐτὴ ἐωυτῆς ὠικισται, ἐς ὀγδοήκοντα σταδίους, τὸ δὲ πλάτος ἐς πεντεκαίδεκα. τάφρον δὲ περιβεβλησθαι τῇ πόλει τὸ εὖρος ἑξάπλεθρον, τὸ δὲ βάθος τριήκοντα πήχεων· πύργους δὲ ἑβδομήκοντα καὶ πεντακοσίους ἔχειν τὸ τεῖχος καὶ πύλας τέσσαρας καὶ ἑξήκοντα.’

The largest Indian city is called Palimbothra, in the Prasian territory, where the Erannoboas river flows into the Ganges... Megasthenes says that the length of the city on each side, where it has been built to the greatest extent, is as much as 80 stadia, with the width 15. A ditch surrounds the city, six plethra in width and 30 pecheis deep. There are 570 towers in the wall and 64 gates.

BNJ 715 F18a (=Arr. *Ind.* 10.6) (tr. Brunt (1983))

The location of this massive city clearly impressed Megasthenes, the wooden fortress protruding into the most substantial of rivers. This account is supported by the archaeology:

¹⁴⁴³ Arr. *Epict. diss.* 3.24.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Kosmin (2014b) 178; Strootman (2007).

¹⁴⁴⁵ Kosmin (2014b) 142-180. Also see: Ch.4.4.II of this dissert.

Waddell's excavations in the 1890s identified the city's site in Patna, contrary to the 1878 survey.¹⁴⁴⁶ Like Megasthenes had described, Waddell encountered a moat and partially preserved wooden wall 'shaped like a parallelogram' (ἐν παραλληλογράμμωι σχήματι), reflecting Strabo's fragment, an imposing civic protrusion into the fluvial confluence.¹⁴⁴⁷ Waddell's findings were shorter than Megasthenes' measurements, at eight miles (12.9 kms) in length, perhaps suggesting that Megasthenes exaggerated the city's length, emphasising the city's significance in a 'hierarchy of spaces'.¹⁴⁴⁸

We disembark with Megasthenes at Palimbothra, encouraged to tour its perimeter, marvel at its substantial moats, and peer up at the wooden walls. Any doubts as to its strength are quashed by the sheer size of battlements and the 570 towers staring down at us. Strabo's account emphasises our position of vulnerability in the approach, the city being 'surrounded by a perforated wooden construction, so that one can shoot arrows through the holes'.¹⁴⁴⁹ Before we even reach these walls, we must traverse the water-filled moats which are an outstanding feature, particularly for their depth and width, making any landward side assault under the towers' panoptic gaze ill-advised.¹⁴⁵⁰ These same moats showcase the city's engineering, acting also 'as a reservoir for what flows out of the city', a channel of the Erannoboas river redirected to form a southerly perimeter of the city.¹⁴⁵¹ Such civic construction is the marker of good kingship for the educated Greek audience.¹⁴⁵²

Having arrived at the capital, the layout speaks to a Hellenistic sense of *eunomia*, the city proper divided from the palatial zone which, not unlike Alexandria, juts into the water.¹⁴⁵³ The palatial zone is grand (βασιλεία πολυτελῆ) and built, according to Megasthenes, by an Indian, possibly Herakles.¹⁴⁵⁴ If, like Stoneman, we accept Aelian's fragment of Megasthenes, it would appear the geographer compared Palimbothra's palatial parks with the Persian palaces of the Seleukid upper satrapies:¹⁴⁵⁵

‘...πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἄλλα ἐστὶ θαυμάσαι ἄξια, ὡς μὴ αὐτοῖς ἀντικρίνειν μήτε τὰ Μεμνόνεια Σοῦσα καὶ τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς πολυτέλειαν μήτε τὴν ἐν τοῖς Ἐκβατάνοις μεγαλοργίαν· ἔοικε γὰρ κόμπος εἶναι Περσικὸς ἐκεῖνα, εἰ πρὸς ταῦτα ἐξετάζοιτο.’

¹⁴⁴⁶ L.A. Waddell (1903) 11, 19-26.

¹⁴⁴⁷ *BNJ* 715 F18b (=Strabo 15.1.36); Cf. Hiuen Tsiang (7th C). describes 70 *li* (19kms) total circumference: Waddell (1903) 72; B. Jacobs (2016) 63.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Said (1995) 36.

¹⁴⁴⁹ 'ξύλινον περίβολον ἔχουσαν κατατετρημένον, ὥστε διὰ τῶν ὀπῶν τοξεύειν', *BNJ* 715 F18b (=Strabo 15.1.36).

¹⁴⁵⁰ 'τάφροις ἀξιολόγοις ποταμίους ὕδασι πληρουμέναις', Diod. Sic. 2.393-4; cf. F18a (=Arr. *Ind.* 10.6); tower foundations: Waddell (1903) 22.

¹⁴⁵¹ '...προκεῖσθαι δὲ καὶ τάφρον φυλακῆς τε χάριν καὶ ὑποδοχῆς τῶν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἀπορροιῶν'. F18b (=Strabo 15.1.36); Waddell (1903) 20.

¹⁴⁵² Drainage, sign of affluence/modernity: D.P. Crouch (1993) 27-31, 175-6; 'fits into Greek ideal views', Roller (2008) commentary for F18b. Cf. Ideal kingship: *Arthashastra: KA 2.1*: for reservoir (*sétu*) construction (R. Shamasastri (1967)).

¹⁴⁵³ Shipley (2000) 92-96.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Diod. Sic. 2.39.3.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Significantly informed by Megasthenes: Stoneman (2019) 171; (2021) 118.

...there are so many objects for admiration that neither Memnon's city of Susa with all its extravagance, nor the magnificence of Ecbatana is to be compared with them. (These places appear to be the pride of Persia, if there is to be any comparison between the two countries.)

Ael. NA 13.18 (tr. N.G. Wilson (1997))

Megasthenes uses digression to encourage us to stroll around the royal gardens. Aelian provides an abbreviated version, yet we nonetheless get a sense of the digression, explaining with a scientific eye how such wonders develop.¹⁴⁵⁶ There are tame peacocks, myriad birds, and a carefully cultivated garden replete with specialised gardeners. Tellingly, Megasthenes then describes the climate which sustains these gardens. There are evergreen plants with 'leaves [which] never grow old and fall: some of them are indigenous, others have been imported from abroad after careful consideration.'¹⁴⁵⁷ These are recurring Megasthenic themes: as in the mountains, climate once more conspires with human craftsmanship under a wise king. Megasthenes' comparison functions as *parrhēsia*; his Seleukid court audience encouraged to compare the Mauryan imperial centre favourably with the Seleukid court. We find ourselves wondering whether the Seleukid empire has the resources, infrastructure, or, most worryingly, the leadership needed to create palatial centres like this one.

II. The sympotic court of Maurya

At the centre of Megasthenes' India is the king's court, ruling with *Philoī* and a sophisticated bureaucracy over a well-ordered society. From the moment we arrive at Palimbothra, we are welcomed with expressions of *xenia*, city commissioners (ἀστυνόμοι) being assigned to 'entertain strangers' (ξενοδοχοῦσιν) and follow them closely, demonstrating equal parts surveillance and care.¹⁴⁵⁸ In Candragupta's court, the *mantrīpariṣad* serve as a council of ministers, understood by Megasthenes in sympotic terms. These are described as 'advisers and counsellors of the king' (οἱ σύμβουλοι καὶ σύνεδροι τοῦ βασιλέως).¹⁴⁵⁹ This small class, from which administrators, military commanders, tax-collectors, and treasurers were selected, seem to have provided something of a check on the king's power, according to the Rock Edicts of Aśoka.¹⁴⁶⁰ Evidently, this spoke to Megasthenes, who observes that although they are a small group, their wisdom and justice is great indeed, keeping the king on the right path.¹⁴⁶¹ Drawing on Aristotle's ambivalence towards uncontrolled kingship, Megasthenes' account depicts an effective sympotic court in which wise *Philoī* are trusted to not only provide sober advice, but also administer the kingdom.¹⁴⁶²

¹⁴⁵⁶ Ael. NA 13.18.

¹⁴⁵⁷ 'τὰ δένδρα αὐτὰ τῶν ἀειθαλῶν ἔστι, καὶ οὔποτε γηρᾶ καὶ ἀπορρεῖ τὰ φύλλα' καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐπιχώριά ἔστι, τὰ δὲ ἀλλαχόθεν σὺν πολλῇ κομισθέντα τῇ φροντίδι', Ael. NA 13.18.

¹⁴⁵⁸ BNJ 715 F31 (=Strabo 15.1.1).

¹⁴⁵⁹ F19b (=Strabo 15.1.41).

¹⁴⁶⁰ Potential tensions between king and council: MRE 3 & 6 (E. Hultzsich, (1925)); Thapar (2012) 123-4.

¹⁴⁶¹ BNJ 715 F19a (=Arr. Ind. 12.7); F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.41.4).

¹⁴⁶² Arist. Pol. 3.1287a-83b.

Megasthenes' depiction of the *Brahmin varṇa* is as a philosopher class, but one with a distinctly Peripatetic bent. The Indian *philosophoi* or *sophistai* had long been elevated by Greek scholars in utopian literature, remembered for expressing *parrhēsia* to Alexander.¹⁴⁶³ In Megasthenes' account, Cynicism is replaced by critical inquiry, the value of their knowledge for the kingdom is publicly verified.¹⁴⁶⁴ Their writing and observations are accepted if 'useful with reference to the prosperity of either fruits or living beings or concerning the government'.¹⁴⁶⁵ Those who fail are silenced, those who benefit the public are rewarded. Significantly, this usefulness is not for the pleasure of the king, nor any private person. Rather, it is for the service of the state (περὶ πολιτείας). In this open space, a *kolax* cannot get an opportunity to deceive. Poor advice can be resolved through a sceptical process of autopsy in full public view. In the Mauryan court, in contrast to the Hellenistic courts, the king is protected by scientific processes from the dangerous council of false friends.

Beyond the court, we are presented with a society defined by class, an appealing proposition for an elite audience. There is an orderly multitude of people dwelling in the capital (πληθος οἰκητόρων) which is fitting for a healthy imperial centre.¹⁴⁶⁶ Each group or area within the city is well supervised by city administrators with different roles.¹⁴⁶⁷ The city hums with an orderly industriousness. The four basic *varṇa* of the Brahminic caste system—the *brahman* (priesthood), *kṣatriya* (military), *vaiśya* (merchants & landowners) and *śūdra* (labourers)—have been reimaged as seven classes by Megasthenes. Thapar and Stoneman argue that Megasthenes is confused.¹⁴⁶⁸ But the seven classes intriguingly parallel the Egyptian social structure.¹⁴⁶⁹ The number encourages an implicit comparison: his Seleukid court audience now must look west as well as east, and will find itself flanked by two stable, functional, and effective class systems on each frontier. Far from ruling the world, the Seleukid empire is hemmed in, once more in between places in Megasthenes' geography.

5.5 Royal control

As we have seen, Megasthenes used descriptive geography to bring us, along with the resources of India, to the royal centre. Yet from this centre, the imperial gaze also extends its reach outwards across imperial space, and potentially beyond. Roads facilitate administrative organisation, through which the Mauryan king can control the resources of the empire with a degree of certainty which exceeds anything seen closer to home by the Seleukid court audience. We will see in this section that through these vectors, not only is taxation harvested, but *nomos* is maintained. Furthermore, a professional military complex is equipped and

¹⁴⁶³ *Gymnosophistai*, *parrhēsia* with Alexander: AR: 3.5-6; Plut. *Alex.* 65; Onesikritos (BNJ 134 F17a); Stoneman (1995) 99-114; *contra* Megasthenes' Brahmins: Stoneman (2019) 193.

¹⁴⁶⁴ BNJ 715 F19b (=Strabo 15.1.39); F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 11); F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.40.1).

¹⁴⁶⁵ 'οἱ φιλόσοφοι τῷ βασιλεῖ συνελθόντες ἐπὶ θύρας, ὅ τι ἂν αὐτῶν ἕκαστος συντάξει τῶν χρησίμων ἢ τηρήσει πρὸς εὐετηρίαν καρπῶν τε καὶ ζώων καὶ περὶ πολιτείας', F19b (=Strabo 15.1.39); F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 11).

¹⁴⁶⁶ F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.39.3).

¹⁴⁶⁷ F31 (=Strabo 15.51).

¹⁴⁶⁸ Thapar (2012) 72-3; Stoneman (2019) 214-216.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Hdt. 2.164.

funded. These elements are bound closely in Megasthenes discussions of human geography in the realm, and the audience emerges with an unambiguous understanding of the Indian king's control. This creates an unflattering juxtaposition with, and criticism of, the roaming Seleukid court and its civic and military administration.¹⁴⁷⁰

I. Hodological vectors

In Megasthenes' *Indika*, the Mauryan road-network speaks to control of the imperial space, discouraging further Seleukid adventurism in India. As we have seen in the previous chapter, hodological vectors were an integral part of Seleukid imperial geography, used in combination with fluvial vectors to provide a sense of internal structure and control.¹⁴⁷¹ Roadbuilding and measurement transform the landscape into domesticated space through what Gregory describes as a 'double discourse' of domination and normalisation.¹⁴⁷² Yet in Megasthenes' map, hodological vectors serve Mauryan, rather than Seleukid, imperial concerns. Megasthenes' royal roads are prominent, acting as vital conduits for Mauryan imperial decrees, taxation, diplomatic envoys, trade and, pointedly, military movements, with Palimbothra remaining the central nexus of the system.¹⁴⁷³ It is along these roads that the overseers (οἱ ἐπίσκοποι) head out with decrees and back with surveillance data.¹⁴⁷⁴ They 'supervise everything that goes on in the country and cities, and report it to the king'.¹⁴⁷⁵ Diplomatic and coercive vectors move outwards from an imperial centre.¹⁴⁷⁶ The road-network transforms a politically diverse subcontinent with various local systems into an ostensibly unified imperial system.¹⁴⁷⁷

The royal roads not only speak to control, but also emphasise reach, an attribute of particular significance when describing a military rival. The main road went from Palimbothra to the western edge of India.¹⁴⁷⁸ We are told that it was carefully measured: 'at every ten stadia... pillars [are placed] showing the by-roads and the distances'.¹⁴⁷⁹ Megasthenes gains credibility for his measurement through an appeal to Mauryan *bematistai*, reminiscent of Alexander's own pacers.¹⁴⁸⁰ Where, precisely, Megasthenes marked the western edge of this road is uncertain. Yet in our Strabo source, 16,000 stadia is given as a minimum length (ἡ βραχύτατον), providing no defined upper limit.¹⁴⁸¹ Eratosthenes, apparently drawing on an

¹⁴⁷⁰ For the 'circularity system' of the Seleukid court: Kosmin (2014b) 142-180.

¹⁴⁷¹ See: Ch. 4.4.I.

¹⁴⁷² Gregory (2001) 84-111; E. Distretti (2017) 43-44.

¹⁴⁷³ Thapar (2012) 121.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Overseers (οἱ ἐπίσκοποι): *BNJ* 715 F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 12.5).

¹⁴⁷⁵ 'οἷτοι ἐφορῶσι τὰ γινόμενα κατὰ τε τὴν χώραν καὶ κατὰ τὰς πόλεις, καὶ ταῦτα ἀναγγέλλουσι τῷ βασιλεῖ', F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 12.5). Cf. *MRE* 3; K. Roy (2012) 52.

¹⁴⁷⁶ N. Lahari (2015) 90-91, 266, 271.

¹⁴⁷⁷ *BNJ* 715 F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 11.9, 12.5-6); Thapar (2012) 153.

¹⁴⁷⁸ *BNJ* 715 F6c (=Strabo 15.1.11).

¹⁴⁷⁹ F31 (=Strabo 15.1.50).

¹⁴⁸⁰ F6c (=Strabo 15.1.11); Alexander's *bematistai*: Plin. *HN* 6.61; Brunt (1976), 487-8.

¹⁴⁸¹ 'ἡ βραχύτατον', *BNJ* 715 F6c (=Strabo 15.1.11).

independent *stathmoi* source, corroborates this measurement.¹⁴⁸² Intriguingly, Eratosthenes refers to three roads that went all the way from Ortospa (possibly Kabul) to Baktria and, tantalisingly, possibly onwards to India.¹⁴⁸³ Megasthenes' use of Mauryan hodological vectors is both an explanation and a warning to his audience. The geography provides a clear explanation of how Candragupta mustered such formidable forces of resistance when faced with Seleukos' attempted invasion. The Mauryan hodological map speaks of movement and reach in times of war.

II. Military preparedness

Megasthenes' *Indika* depicts a militarily powerful but paradoxically peaceful nation, in contrast to the perpetual 'war economy' of the early Hellenistic states familiar to his court audience.¹⁴⁸⁴ The Mauryan military is presented as fundamentally defensive. As we have seen, Megasthenes insists that the Indians did not themselves engage in military adventurism. We have also seen that invasion is untenable, and off the table for even the grandest of mortal imperialists, with only the divine Alexander and Dionysos being the exceptions that prove the rule. Megasthenes goes to significant lengths to show that it is the Mauryan military machine which makes India impenetrable, the product of an efficient and orderly state. Given the recent disaster of the Mauryan-Seleukid war, such celebration of Mauryan might not only explain the Seleukid strategic failures from the other side but may also act as a warning against contemplating further invasion attempts.

For Megasthenes, specialisation, redistribution, and military might are interdependent features of the Mauryan military machine. The food surplus vital for military campaigning is not merely a fortuitous result of nature's bounty, the wonderful double harvest.¹⁴⁸⁵ It is also the product of specialisation under royal surveillance. The numerous farmers, supported by sophisticated irrigation, need only to concern themselves with farming.¹⁴⁸⁶ According to Arrian, they 'have no weapons and no concern in warfare, but they till the land and pay the taxes', a notion echoed in Diodoros and Strabo.¹⁴⁸⁷ This is only possible due to Mauryan imperial control, Arrian explaining that 'it is not lawful (οὐ θέμις) for them [soldiers] to touch these land workers, nor even to devastate the land itself,' sentiments paralleled in our Diodoros source.¹⁴⁸⁸ Megasthenes emphasises surplus, explaining that 'the land, remaining as it does unravaged and being laden with fruits, provides the inhabitants with a great supply

¹⁴⁸² Strabo 16.1.11.

¹⁴⁸³ Strabo 11.8.9; F. Scialpi (1984) 57.

¹⁴⁸⁴ M.M. Austin (1986) 464.

¹⁴⁸⁵ *BNJ* 715 T8 (=Plin. *HN* 6.58).

¹⁴⁸⁶ Numerous farmers: F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 11.9); F19b (=Strabo 15.1.40); F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.40.4).

¹⁴⁸⁷ 'τούτοισιν οὔτε ὄπλα ἐστὶν ἀρήγια οὔτε μέλει τὰ πολεμῆια ἔργα, ἀλλὰ τὴν χώραν οὔτοι ἐργάζονται, καὶ τοὺς φόρους τοῖς τε βασιλεῦσι καὶ τῆσι πόλεσιν', F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 11.9); cf. F19b (=Strabo 15.1.40); F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.40.4).

¹⁴⁸⁸ 'τῶν ἐργαζομένων τὴν γῆν οὐ θέμις σφιν ἄπτεσθαι οὐδὲ αὐτὴν τὴν γῆν τέμνειν', F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 11.9); F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.40.4). Echoing Platonic concerns: Pl. *Resp.* 5.470d-e.

of provisions'.¹⁴⁸⁹ Significantly, the bounty of this peaceful harvest is exclusively the king's to control, something which may have piqued the interest of Megasthenes' court audience: 'the whole of the country is of royal ownership; and the farmers cultivate it for a rental in addition to paying a fourth part of the produce'.¹⁴⁹⁰ This is a land as notable for its absence of tax farmers as it is for its lack of marauders.¹⁴⁹¹ There are no middlemen or local lords here. We are encouraged to view this through a royal lens in unequivocally positive terms; this is a more efficient state than the Hellenistic alternatives. This descriptive digression is more than a scholar's detached observations; it acts as economic *paideia* for a royal audience.

The soldiers of the Mauryan empire make for a stark contrast with the mercenary-dominated military structures of the Hellenistic states.¹⁴⁹² The *polemistai* are, we are assured, plentiful in number.¹⁴⁹³ Much like the farming class, they are specialists, 'devoted solely to military activities', and are prohibited from pursuing other vocations.¹⁴⁹⁴ On campaign, the separation of duties is maintained, leaving the Mauryan *polemistai* well-rested for battle. While they use government-issued arms and armour, it falls upon 'others' (ἄλλοι) to groom horses, polish armour, and repair arms.¹⁴⁹⁵ These 'others' are also the drivers of chariots and elephants, all of which is funded by the royal treasury. The soldiers are handsomely paid, and in times of peace they receive significant leisure time funded by the royal treasury.¹⁴⁹⁶ These are not soldiers who need to supplement pay with pillage. It is an army that is rested, trained, and perennially ready for mobilisation.

The organisation and discipline of these professional soldiers may help explain why they are so formidable. While on campaign they live simply and soberly, not pursuing 'useless disturbances'.¹⁴⁹⁷ Megasthenes claims to be an eyewitness to this 'orderly manner', apparently staying 'in the camp of Sandracottus', autopsy lending credibility to his observations.¹⁴⁹⁸ Megasthenes describes the size of the camp he visited (some 40,000 soldiers), and yet, 'on no day [he] saw reports of stolen articles that were worth more than two hundred drachmae'.¹⁴⁹⁹ The point is somewhat laboured, the geographer keen to emphasise that the *eunomia* of the well-run society evidently pays important dividends on campaign. The implicit juxtaposition to Hellenistic mercenaries is palpable.

This standing army is in contrast to the mixed armies of mercenaries and levied troops more familiar to his Seleukid court audience, a practical necessity for commanders from the earliest

¹⁴⁸⁹ '...διόπερ ἀδιάφθορος ἡ χώρα διαμένουσα καὶ καρποῖς βρίθουσα πολλὴν ἀπόλαυσιν παρέχεται τῶν ἐπιτηδείων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις'. *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.40.4).

¹⁴⁹⁰ 'ἔστι δ' ἡ χώρα βασιλικὴ πᾶσα· μισθοῦ δ' αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τετάρταις ἐργάζονται τῶν καρπῶν'. F19b (=Strabo 15.1.40).

¹⁴⁹¹ Manning (2010) 53, 152-7.

¹⁴⁹² Seleukid mercenaries: G.T. Griffith (1935) 165-9; R.M. Errington (2008) Ch 2.

¹⁴⁹³ 'πλήθει μὲν δεύτερον μετὰ τοὺς γεωργοὺς', *BNJ* 715 F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 12.2).

¹⁴⁹⁴ 'οὔτοι ἀσκηταὶ μόνων τῶν πολεμικῶν ἔργων εἰσίν', F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 12.2); F19b (=Strabo, 15.1.39); F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.40.5).

¹⁴⁹⁵ F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 12.3).

¹⁴⁹⁶ F19a (=Arr. *Ind.* 12.4); F19b (=Strabo 15.1.47).

¹⁴⁹⁷ 'οὐδ' ὄχλω περιττῶ χαίρουσι', F52 (=Strabo 15.1.53).

¹⁴⁹⁸ Order: 'διόπερ εὐκόσμοῦσι'; autopsy: '...ἐν τῷ Σανδροκόττου στρατοπέδῳ', F52 (=Strabo 15.1.53).

¹⁴⁹⁹ 'μηδεμίαν ἡμέραν ἰδεῖν ἀνηνεγμένα κλέμματα πλειόνων ἢ διακοσίων δραχμῶν ἄξια', Strabo 15.53.

days of the Successors.¹⁵⁰⁰ Eumenes' rapid rise and fall was, as Diodoros and Plutarch present it, significantly informed by the concerns of mercenary's wages and booty.¹⁵⁰¹ In the theatre, the mercenary became a stock comedic character known not only for his boorishness, but for his lack of scruples. Menander's Bias is portrayed as being motivated by booty, having for 'double-pay... [betrayed some] city, governor or army'.¹⁵⁰² In his *Perikeiromene*, Doris declares that as well as being thugs, mercenaries are fundamentally disloyal and unreliable (οὐδὲν πιστόν).¹⁵⁰³ The recurring themes of violence and unpredictability sit in sharp contrast to the disciplined class of *polemistai* of Megasthenes' *Indika*. The rebuke of the Seleukid approach to recruiting military forces is uncomfortably apparent. We are led to feel that it is perhaps little wonder that Seleukos was so thoroughly outclassed by Candragupta's forces in the Mauryan-Seleukid war.

Megasthenes depicts a Mauryan empire with mastery and near limitless access to the Seleukid totem and terror-weapon, the war elephant. Megasthenes' elephants are the natural product of the Indian landscape where there are 'all kinds of animals remarkable for their great size and strength'.¹⁵⁰⁴ With elaborate moats, ramparts, and camouflaged towers the Mauryans capture wild elephants for the royal stables and tame them.¹⁵⁰⁵ But there is a warning in his zoological digression: Megasthenes is clear that these elephants are the product of location-specific conditions. He says, 'it is because of this food that the elephants of this land are much more powerful than those produced in Libya'.¹⁵⁰⁶ In India, they flourish, while elsewhere, keeping elephants alive and battle-ready proved a frustrating challenge for Hellenistic kings.¹⁵⁰⁷

Megasthenes emphasises the martial value of these elephants, explaining that 'large numbers of them are made captive by the Indians and trained for warfare, and it is found that they play a great part in turning the scale to victory.'¹⁵⁰⁸ To give us a fuller sense of the causes of Mauryan victory, Megasthenes drops us into a military column on campaign. Here the elephants are an intrinsic part of the moving army. We encounter them alongside undisturbed horses, highlighting the animals' mutual familiarity, a product of the ubiquitous presence of elephants in the army. Oxen are employed to pull the chariots', horses' and, presumably, the elephants', equipment. Megasthenes is keen to show that the 'horses and beasts' (ἵπποις καὶ θηρίοις) are kitted out only once the army prepares for a pitched battle. Again, horses and elephants are spoken of in the same breath, giving us a sense of the abundance of elephants in the assembled army: 'There are two combatants in each chariot in addition to the charioteer; but the elephant carries four persons, the driver and three bowmen, and these three shoot

¹⁵⁰⁰ Griffith (1935) 142-170.

¹⁵⁰¹ Diod. Sic. 19.43; Plut. *Eum.* 17.

¹⁵⁰² 'ὄδ' ὁ διμοιρίτης', Men. *Kolax* B29; B40. S.M. Goldberg (2013) 45.

¹⁵⁰³ Men. *Pk.* 186-7.

¹⁵⁰⁴ 'ζώων τε παντοδαπῶν γέμει διαφόρων τοῖς μεγέθεσι καὶ ταῖς ἀλκαῖς', *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic 2.35.3)

¹⁵⁰⁵ F20b (=Strabo 15.1.42); F20a (=Arr. *Ind.* 13).

¹⁵⁰⁶ '...χορηγοῦσα τὰς τροφὰς ἀφθόνους, δι' ἃς ταῖς ῥώμαις τὰ θηρία ταῦτα πολὺ προέχει τῶν κατὰ τὴν Λιβύην γεννωμένων', F4 (=Diod. Sic 2.35.4).

¹⁵⁰⁷ Tarn (1940); Burstein (2008).

¹⁵⁰⁸ 'διὸ καὶ πολλῶν θηρευομένων ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰνδῶν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμικοὺς ἀγῶνας κατασκευαζομένων μεγάλας συμβαίνει ῥοπὰς γίνεσθαι πρὸς τὴν νίκην'. *BNJ* 715 F4 (=Diod. Sic. 2.35.4).

arrows from the elephant's back.'¹⁵⁰⁹ We are presented with a formidable sense of these beasts, well-trained and bristling with specialised drivers and archers securely above us on the howdah. These are unmistakably mobile fortresses on the battlefield and, in contrast to the volatile beasts in the Hellenistic armies, these elephants are apparently kept under control. This descriptive digression is a clear challenge to Seleukid ideology. In the *Indika*, it is the Mauryans, not the Seleukids, who show themselves to be masters of elephants.¹⁵¹⁰ Any sense of the elephant as a Seleukid totem has been disconcertingly undermined for the court audience.

Conclusion

As an envoy for the Seleukid court in the Mauryan imperial centre of Palimbothra, Megasthenes was in a relatively unique position as *Philos* and geographer. In contrast to the paradoxographers of centuries past, he had access to new data and was eyewitness to alternative civic, administrative, social, and administrative systems. Like other Seleukid geographers of his generation, Patrokles and Demodamas, he carefully selected and omitted natural and human features to create an ideologically charged text. Spaces were extended, vectors drawn, and boundaries removed or reinforced as necessary. His descriptive geographic elements used digressions in which he assumed the role of *physikos*, emphasising autopsy and scientific causation, adding further authority to his oft-idealised accounts.

Yet we have seen that these geographical tools were not used to elevate Seleukid claims to universal kingship. Instead, in an act which would be recognisable to Situationists as a *détournement*, he appropriated these techniques to express geographical *parrhēsia*. In Megasthenes' *Indika*, it is Mauryan space which is far-reaching and unified. India's mountains and rivers function as a conveyor of natural resources, bringing the wealth of a vast land to the imperial centre. The space is self-contained and protected by sea, only navigable to local experts. Seleukid space, conversely, is omitted. Fluvial comparisons overlook the Mesopotamian basin entirely, in marked contrast to earlier and later geographical treatises, treating the Seleukid heartland as a geographical irrelevancy.

Megasthenes' descriptive geography adds substance and authority to his account of the realm but also emphasises India's venerability and continuing power. Dionysos and Herakles are refashioned as Indian figures, where their continuing presence is more keenly felt than in the Seleukid court. The society descendent from these mythic ancestors proves to surpass their western contemporaries. The superlative wealth of the kingdom does not result in decadence, but in carefully applied administration. *Philo*i oversee a land of unharried, and therefore productive, farmers and well-paid and lawful soldiers, clearly delineated in class and duties. Most significantly for the Seleukids, Megasthenes' descriptions account for Mauryan military

¹⁵⁰⁹ 'δύο δ' εἰσὶν ἐπὶ τῷ ἄρματι παραβάται πρὸς τῷ ἠνιόχῳ· ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἐλέφαντος ἠνίοχος τέταρτος, τρεῖς δ' οἱ ἄπ' αὐτοῦ τοξεύοντες', F31 (=Strabo 15.1.52).

¹⁵¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 5.2.III.

success, the empire capable of mobilising an efficient and massive army, well-equipped and with so many elephants that they seem almost commonplace.

As a treatise penned after the Seleukid-Mauryan War of 305-3, the *Indika* functions as potent *parrhēsia* for his royal patron and *philos*. In a geography that sits in opposition to the imperial propaganda of Patrokles and Demodamas, Megasthenes reminds the king of his limits at every turn: the elephants that Seleukos paraded in the west were but crumbs from the table of Sandrakottos, soon to lose their flavour; the empty territory Seleukos holds is qualitatively inferior to the lands of India that he failed to invade; and at least two of the gods on Seleukos' coins are essentially Indian figures, much more closely tied to the Mauryan empire than to the empire of the Seleukids. Of equal significance is the military and administrative *paideia*: the Seleukid defeat at the hands of the Mauryans was no accident. Rather, it was the product of engaging with a superior military from a more powerful and efficiently run state. More broadly, Seleukos is discouraged from continuing down the path of universal empire. All mortal empires, the *Indika* proposes, ultimately meet their match.

Conclusion

Research into the ideology underpinning Hellenistic imperial geography has developed substantially in recent decades. No longer are the geographies produced by commanders and scholars under royal patronage presumed to be somehow disconnected from the concerns of the court. Rather, they are increasingly seen as texts expressing powerful ideological concerns, usually those of their kings. Yet this approach may lack sufficient appreciation of the sympotic court environment in which such treatises were produced. Indeed, while court geographies should not be understood as ideologically detached works, nor should they be interpreted as uniform propaganda for the regimes in which they were produced. This dissertation has provided a way to accommodate propagandistic and more subversive geographies on their own terms. Critical and alternate geographic tools were applied to identify propaganda and subversive elements within these texts. Then, these elements were interpreted through the sympotic lens of early Hellenistic court culture. We found that these geographies functioned as gifts of *paideia* from *Philos* to king, oftentimes including aspects of *epainos* or *parrhēsia* appropriate as expressions of sympotic friendship.

Chapter One examined the sympotic environment in which court geographies were produced. We saw how performative *philia* found expression through, *inter alia*, *epainos* and *parrhēsia* in a highly competitive court environment. Scientific treatises, including geographies, functioned as sympotic gifts within such a context, designed to entertain, as well as instruct. Yet we also discovered that expressions of *epainos* and *parrhēsia* could be something of a gambit. *Epainos*, a performative act of *philia* if given and received in the right spirit, was nonetheless potentially hazardous: too effusive and a scholar was in danger of branding himself a disingenuous *kolax*. Conversely, *parrhēsia*, understood as an antidote to *kolakeia*, could potentially mark one out as a true *philos*. However, this too needed to be executed with care to avoid offense. When effectively executed, *epainos* and *parrhēsia* allowed elite scholars to showcase their intimacy with their royal *philos*. It is through an appreciation of this sympotic context that the apparently contrasting propagandistic and subversive geographies can be more coherently accommodated.

Chapter Two offered our first case study in the early Ptolemaic court. It sought to establish the geographic propaganda of the Ptolemaic court from the late third to early second centuries. Critical geographic tools were applied to Ptolemaic texts, identifying a range of ways in which the Ptolemies used geography to impose an ideology of divine universal kingship and *oikoumenē*-wide hegemony. We saw that the assimilating lens of Timosthenes of Rhodes' *periplous* geography asserted thalassocratic control over three continents. Imperial centrality was expressed through representation of Alexandria as the beginning and end of journeys, orchestrating control over the *oikoumenē*. Itinerant movement partitioned and organised lands and peoples through an imperial lens. I argued that the Ptolemies constructed powerful

maritime vectors on the imperial map, asserting their reach through a thalassocratic lens. In *stelai* and the court poetry of Theokritos and Poseidippos, the ‘long... arm’ of the Ptolemies was depicted as effortlessly reaching from centre to the *oikoumenē*’s edge—from the Kimmerian Bosphoros to the edge of the torrid zone. These vectors not only expressed reach and control, but reinforced imperial centrality, bringing the world back to the Alexandrian court.

Moreover, geography played an important role in amplifying religious ideology. The deified Homer found a new, and historically improbable, geographic centre in Alexandria. In Siwa, we saw how the oasis was tied to the Ptolemies imperial claims; the mythical terrain blessed by Amun-Zeus acted as tangible proof of continuing divine support for Ptolemaic succession to Alexander’s universal empire. At sea, we saw that the maritime cult of Arsinoë played a powerful territorialising role, transforming the Mediterranean and beyond into a Ptolemaic lake, safe for passage. The sea was united and surveyed by the queen-turned-goddess who acted as a sentinel on every shore.

Yet these sweeping claims of the Ptolemies to universal empire and divine kingship sat incongruously alongside geopolitical realities. I argued that the maritime vectors under Ptolemy III and especially Ptolemy IV were increasingly tenuous. To the north, the ostensibly powerful vectors proved incapable of asserting Ptolemaic suzerainty over the Aegean, let alone the Greek mainland and Euxine Sea beyond. Looking south, the ambitious Erythraean Sea vector was mired by practical limitations, requiring alternate, less glamorous hybrid routes to be sought through hostile and relatively slow desert roads. These were not the simple, powerful vectors to the edge of the *oikoumenē* that the regime’s sensational propaganda depicted. Rather, the universal empire of the Ptolemaic imaginings existed with true clarity only on the imperial map.

In Chapter Three, we investigated the possibility of geographical *parrhēsia* at the Ptolemaic court. We examined Eratosthenes of Kyrene, a polymath whose geography has been too often mischaracterised as the work of an ideologically disinterested scholar or, more recently, an uncritical propagandist for the king. I showed that such readings do not account for unorthodox aspects of the *Geographika* and proposed that the text can be more coherently understood as an expression of geographical *parrhēsia*. To establish a fuller sense of the author’s concerns, we first reviewed a selection of the polymath’s non-geographical works where we discovered concerns about kingship, religious propaganda, and excessive imperial claims. We found that his astronomical poetry not only posed subversive challenges to the regime’s martial Dionysos, as Jordi Pàmias has previously demonstrated. It also contained clear challenges to scientific propaganda, which Eratosthenes framed as nothing less than *kolakeia*. Further, I argued that his letter-treatise emphasised the importance of good counsel and *paideia* over divine lineage. These concerns, which effectively subvert Ptolemaic imperial ideology, can most clearly be interpreted as expressions of *parrhēsia*, artfully articulated by an

elite *Philos*. With the thematic concerns of Eratosthenes' *parrhēsia* established, we could confidently navigate Eratosthenes' *Geographika* in search of similar concerns.

In the descriptive geographical aspects of the *Geographika*, we discovered digressions which distanced the reader from any sense of Ptolemaic control. Cultural digressions in different lands led to implicit juxtapositions in which the audience was required to compare 'bad' Greeks with 'refined' barbarians.¹⁵¹¹ Other digressions emphasised the awe-inspiring forces of nature. The geographer encouraged a scientific lens which spanned aeons, his audience witnessing shifting seas and lands diminishing human agency. Recalcitrant rivers loomed large in these digressions and could not be contained, transcending geopolitical boundaries, and making a mockery of imperial pretensions to command the landscape. Furthermore, we saw that Eratosthenes used natural forces to explain and rationalise religious spaces, dissociating his audience from divine causation. We observed that not all oracular locations or divine legends received the same treatment. Such scepticism was reserved for the darlings of the Ptolemaic court—Dionysos, Herakles, Amun-Zeus, Homer, and Alexander. Natural forces, not Ptolemaic gods, controlled Eratosthenes' map. The geographer used descriptive digressions, both cultural and scientific, to place limits on the imperial claims of his royal *philos*' regime.

Eratosthenes subverted the tools of spatial geography to question the more hyperbolic aspects of Ptolemaic imperial geography. I proposed that, in a striking act of *détournement*, the elevated geographic lens was used to frustrate, rather than assert, the imperial gaze. Contrary to the approach of imperial geographers, Eratosthenes encouraged his readers to linger over habitable lands beyond the impenetrable torrid zone, explicitly beyond reach. Even the source of the Nile was denied to the Ptolemies, placed in a tantalisingly habitable yet explicitly inaccessible location. I argued that this focus on inaccessible space reframed the Ptolemaic regime in more realistic terms, as a regional, rather than universal, power. Further, we saw that Eratosthenes' radical revision of the *oikoumenē* omitted geopolitical demarcation entirely, replacing traditional boundaries with parallels, meridians and *sphragides*. The geographer's novel demarcation maintained the Mauryan empire as a cohesive unit, but we saw that Hellenistic kingdoms were not so fortunate. The Ptolemaic thalassocracy was perhaps the imperial space most adversely affected by Eratosthenes' demarcations, with the maritime vectors which had been so confidently asserted on the imperial map now cut to ribbons. Moreover, geographic displacement effectively demoted Alexandria to a secondary position, while other cities, especially Rhodes and Athens, remained on the prime parallel of his map. Adapting a range of geographic techniques, both descriptive and spatial, the *Geographika* of Eratosthenes effectively places sobering limits on the grand imperial pretensions of Ptolemy III and IV. This was frank speech which could only be presented by the most elite and intimate of *Philois*.

¹⁵¹¹ See: Ch. 3.3.I.

For our second case study, we moved to the court of the Ptolemies' greatest rivals, the Seleukids. In Chapter Four, the imperial claims of the Seleukid court as expressed through propagandistic imperial geography were identified. We first considered how the ideology of Seleukid universal kingship, established through foundation myths, was undermined by the disastrous Mauryan-Seleukid war. I demonstrated that pro-Seleukid court historians used a mixture of omission, symptotic language, and a colonial gaze to minimise the disaster. But the threat that the Treaty of the Indus posed to the ideology of universal empire was a salient one. I proposed that it was in this climate of ideological crisis that some of the most audacious imperial geography was constructed.

Seleukid *Philo*-geographers produced breathtaking gifts of prescriptive propaganda for their royal patrons, bending the world until it conformed to the regime's designs. Using a critical geographic approach, I demonstrated that Patrokles' utilised techniques of displacement, smoothing, territorialising nomenclature, emplotment, descriptive digressions, and a dromological lens to create a profoundly distorted yet credible map. Oceanic and fluvial vectors reduced the Mauryan kingdom to a regional roadblock, and India was made easily accessible through rapid alternative routes. These vectors brought the bounty of India to court via river and sea to the fictitiously open-mouthed Kaspian harbour. We saw how this was part of a broader Seleukid project to construct a Seleukid core as the centre of a world empire.

We then considered Demodamas' alternative approach, using transcendent religious geography to bind the *oikoumenē* together under Seleukid rule. Legends of Dionysos, Herakles, and especially Alexander's ritual cleansing of Sogdiana, paved the way for Demodamas' territorialisation of lands beyond the Iaxartes. We saw that through crossing the fluvial edge of the map and establishing altars to Apollo Didymos in eastern Skythia, Demodamas constructed a transcendent religious vector, binding the farthest reaches of the *oikoumenē* to the religious centre at Didyma. This not only claimed much of the *oikoumenē* for the regime but gave it a sense of ideological cohesion. In a profound act of geographical *epainos*, the world is depicted in Demodamas' geography as united by Seleukos' true father, Apollo Didymos. These two *Philo*-geographers provided invaluable propagandistic gifts to the king, using descriptive and spatial geographic tools to create a prescriptive map of a united *oikoumenē* under Seleukid control.

In Chapter Five we considered the geographical *parrhēsia* in the Seleukid court by examining Megasthenes' *Indika*. I argued that Megasthenes' geography could not function as propaganda, despite some recent attempts to treat it as such. Rather, the treatise appropriated techniques from orthodox imperial geography to elevate Mauryan, rather than Seleukid, space. We saw how Megasthenes' spatial geography used the authority of hodological data and autopsy to extend Mauryan territory. The geographer used omission and an elevated lens to sweep over the Seleukid empire, which was reduced to little more than flyover country between more significant places. Megasthenes' descriptive geography distanced his audience from the paradoxographical tradition, encouraging us to adopt a Peripatetic scientific lens as

we descended into the landscape. The *Indika* used this credible approach to persuasively depict a land of superlative fecundity, overflowing with mineral, animal, and human resources. Significantly, these were all under the control of an efficient administration and a wise and well-counselled king. I proposed that Megasthenes' geography emphasised the martial power of the Mauryan imperial war machine as a sobering expression of *parrhēsia* for his royal patron and *philos*, Seleukos. This was imperial propaganda turned on its head, bolstering Mauryan, rather than Seleukid claims. Megasthenes' *Indika* emerges from the analysis as a frank warning for his Seleukid patron to know his limits.

This thesis' findings show that the application of the tools borrowed from the modern geographical discipline can provide a clearer understanding of the ideological concerns of Hellenistic geographers at court. We have seen that geographical selection, omission, nomenclature, and a range of spatial distortions powerfully communicate ideological concerns within Hellenistic geographical treatises. Further, we have observed that descriptive geography can be used to emphasise the power or impotence of imperial agency. Importantly, we have seen that geographers' use of these tools were far from uniform. While spatial and descriptive geography could produce potent propaganda, I have argued that it could also function as a *détournement* to place limits on imperial power. However, identification of propagandistic and potentially subversive geography does not, in itself, account for the ways such texts functioned in a court context.

To gain a clearer understanding of these texts' function at court, they have been interpreted through the lens of sympotic court culture. We have seen that propaganda can be understood as *epainos*, bending the world to flatter a royal *philos*. While universal empire may have been out of reach in the real world, it was possible through the gift of imperial geography. Although this may initially appear a safe gift, we have seen that such works risked being depicted as *kolakeia*.¹⁵¹² Conversely, certain elite *Philo*i had the status to challenge the ideology of universal empire and divine kingship. Although a potentially hazardous route, if done with care, we have seen that the potentially subversive works produced by such scholars could be presented as gifts of *parrhēsia*. The cultivated monarch should be seen to welcome gifts of *epainos* and *parrhēsia* alike as gestures of *philia*. These were equally vital elements of healthy sympotic discourse in the sophisticated courts of the most powerful Hellenistic kings. Reading these texts as works informed by, and published for, a sympotic court audience, we can more feasibly account for propagandistic and subversive elements produced in these treatises.

This thesis has emphasised the need to understand these geographical expressions of *epainos* and *parrhēsia* within the specific political climates of the courts in which they were produced. We saw that Timosthenes, Theokritos, and Poseidippos helped construct Ptolemy II's maritime vectors in their geographical *epainos*. This spatial language of empire was replicated by Ptolemy III. A generation later, Eratosthenes' *parrhēsia* challenged the continuing

¹⁵¹² Ch 4.2.1.

pretensions of such vectors as thalassocratic claims became increasingly unfeasible under Ptolemy III and Ptolemy IV. In the Seleukid sphere, Patrokles and Demodamas produced their geographical *epainos* after, and in response to, the crisis of the Mauryan-Seleukid war. Megasthenes' *parrhēsia* was developed in the same milieu, urging his patron to acknowledge the Mauryan empire's success rather than be misled by his own propaganda. These geographies were responding to very immediate concerns of their respective courts.

The approach offered in this dissertation can potentially be applied to a range of Hellenistic geographies, astronomies, and other scientific treatises in various sympotic courts. The integration of critical, alternate, radical, and counter-cartographic approaches to current critical geographic readings can allow us to identify a broader range of authorial intentions, from propagandistic *epainos* to potentially subversive *parrhēsia*. Individual geographers and scientists who appear to bend space in ways which serve or interrupt the imperial ambitions of their patrons, or indulge in extended or idiosyncratic descriptive digressions, may be investigated for potential expressions of *epainos* or *parrhēsia*. Below are some possible candidates for further investigation, although it should be emphasised that this is just the tip of the iceberg. We can no longer treat scientific treatises as somehow removed from the cultural and political contexts of the sympotic courts in which they were produced.

Agatharchides of Knidos, a second century Peripatetic historian and geographer who produced *On the Erythraean Sea*, has yet to be investigated for ideological concerns in depth.¹⁵¹³ He wrote at a highly politicised time for Alexandria's scholars, just after Ptolemy VIII's purges of the Library-Mouseion.¹⁵¹⁴ He writes positively of the imperial achievements of Ptolemy II's elephant hunts in a former age, the king cutting a heroic figure in taming the untameable landscape of the far south.¹⁵¹⁵ He emphasises natural causes for geographic phenomena.¹⁵¹⁶ Significantly, his description of Aithiopia addresses court *kolakeia*.¹⁵¹⁷ This is a notion which was touched on by Gabba, but has not been followed in more recent scholarship, primarily due to Agatharchides' scientific tone.¹⁵¹⁸ Yet this dissertation has shown that scientific tools can certainly be used for expressions of *parrhēsia*, and Agatharchides' use of *parrhēsia* deserves closer investigation. This would potentially reveal important insights into the ideological concerns of scholars at this tumultuous time.

At around the same time, in the Bithynian court of Nikomedes, Pseudo-Sykmnos produced a *periegesis* presented as a gift to teach and entertain his royal patron.¹⁵¹⁹ The work begins by

¹⁵¹³ Ch 3.3 III. Works: *BNJ* 86 T2 (Phot. *Bibl.* 213); Erythraean Sea fragments: Burstein (1989).

¹⁵¹⁴ Life: S.M. Burstein (2012) 12-18.

¹⁵¹⁵ *BNJ* F19 (Diod. Sic. 1.37.5-7); Agatharchides 1.20 (Phot. *Bibl.* 250); Burstein (1989) 22-9; D. Marcotte (2015).

¹⁵¹⁶ *BNJ* F19 (Diod. Sic. 1.41.4-9).

¹⁵¹⁷ Agatharchides 1.11-19 (Phot. *Bibl.* 250); Rejecting myth: Marcotte (2015) 166.

¹⁵¹⁸ Agatharchides not political: Marcotte (2015) 168-70; cf. Gabba (1974) 638.

¹⁵¹⁹ J. Lightfoot (2020); although for later 2nd C. dating, see: Boshnakov (2004).

praising the royal recipient as a lover of learning and the author introduces the text with reference to the oracle of Apollo Didymos.¹⁵²⁰ The prologue promises the king knowledge of the entire *oikoumene*. Recent research has shown that the author used the text for functions that went well beyond its ostensible aims.¹⁵²¹ The application of critical geographic techniques may find that the *epainos* extends beyond the prologue to the geographical treatise itself.

A generation later, Poseidonios of Rhodes (ca. 135-51 BCE) produced works under the Roman Republic's growing hegemony.¹⁵²² As a *prytanis* and a renowned scholar, he appears to have had close relations with significant Roman figures such as Marius, Cicero, Rutilius, Scipio, and Pompey.¹⁵²³ He produced a number of significant works across a range of disciplines, including *On the Ocean* and his *Histories*.¹⁵²⁴ In his spatial geography, Poseidonios follows Eratosthenes in emphasising places out of reach, including a habitable equatorial zone.¹⁵²⁵ His astronomy may go further, problematising the very notion of the (celestial) arctic circle, which he dismantles with geographic relativism.¹⁵²⁶ His descriptive geography emphasises 'nature' as a force to shape the landscape, with the moon controlling winds and tides.¹⁵²⁷ His commentary on royal courts reveal concerns of court *tryphe* (luxury).¹⁵²⁸ This is often dismissed as his Stoic concerns, yet such explanations by no means preclude the possibility of geographical *parrhēsia*.¹⁵²⁹ While the limitation of the fragments, mostly in Athenaios, may create some hurdles for analysis, an application of critical and alternate geographic tools may nonetheless reveal ideological concerns in Poseidonios' geographical treatises which could shine new light on the views of a favoured Greek scholar in the Late Republic.¹⁵³⁰

We have touched on the power of astronomy as propaganda in the discoveries of Berenikē's Lock by Konon of Samos.¹⁵³¹ However, a more extensive critical reading to examine his spatialising gestures and place them in a sympotic court context may identify this work as full-throated *epainos*, which Eratosthenes condemned as *kolakeia*. Further afield, Eratosthenes' friend and rival, Archimedes, appears to have used the language of *epainos* to present his letter-treatise to his Syracusan patron. In his introduction to *The Sand Reckoner*, personal language is foregrounded.¹⁵³² Archimedes' royal patron is treated like a fellow mathematician

¹⁵²⁰ Ps.-Scymn. *Periodos* 1-16 (GGM 1.196-237 (ed. K. Müller (1845)); D. Marcotte (2000).

¹⁵²¹ Lightfoot (2020); Hanigan and Kynaston (2023); cf. Hunter (2006).

¹⁵²² *BNJ* 169 T1 (=Souda s.v. Ποσειδώνιος); T2 (=Strabo 14.2.13); Clarke (1999) 129-192. For dating problems: B. Bar-Kochva (2010) 339; Dowden dates his works to end of 2nd century: Dowden (2013).

¹⁵²³ Marius (*BNJ* 169 T6, 7); Pompey (T8a-d); Cicero (T8d); Scipio (T10a, b); Rutilius (T10c); Marcelli (F41).

¹⁵²⁴ T14 (=Strabo 8.1.1).

¹⁵²⁵ *BNJ* 87 F28; F78.

¹⁵²⁶ Arctic relative to viewer's location: F76 (=Strabo 2.5.43).

¹⁵²⁷ Nature: F49 (=Strabo 3.3.4); T18 (=Strabo 3.2.9); Tides: F81 (=Stobias 1.38.4); F85 (=Strabo 3.5.7); Dowden (2013) F49 Commentary; I.G. Kidd (1989) 38-50; although: Clarke (1999) 174-6.

¹⁵²⁸ Ptolemy VIII: *BNJ* 87 F4 (=Ath. 6.61.252E); F6 (=Ath. 12.73.549d-e); Ptolemy X: F26 (=Ath. 12.73.550a-b); *Tryphe* of Antiochos VIII: F11 (=Ath. 10.53.439d-e); F13 (=Ath. 11.15.466c).

¹⁵²⁹ Criticisms of empire in Poseidonios: Strassberger (1965) 40-53; G. P. Verbrugghe (1975) 196-7.

¹⁵³⁰ Use of Athenaios: C. B. R. Pelling (2000), 171-190; caution: Clarke (1999) 135-8.

¹⁵³¹ See: Ch. 3.2.I.

¹⁵³² R. Netz (2004).

in an expression of mutual flattery. The treatise that follows may be examined for potential ideological concerns which speak to imperial control. His other works and inventions may likewise be considered within this relationship of scholar and ruler performing as mutual *philoi*.¹⁵³³ Archimedes, whose patronage, and ultimate fate, was so indelibly linked to the rulers of Syracuse, may have used his texts, as well as his contraptions, to support the regime.

Yet not all astronomy was necessarily infused with praise. Radical and counter-cartographic tools which identified geographic *parrhēsia* may be similarly useful for astronomy. The third century Ptolemaic astronomer, Aristarchos of Samos, presented a radical and disorienting heliocentric model in which the Earth was displaced from its geocentric position ‘disturbing the hearth of the universe’.¹⁵³⁴ Furthermore, the Earth and the moon were both measured and shown to be dwarfed by the sun in his new model.¹⁵³⁵ Intriguingly, the position was so controversial that his critics believed it warranted a charge of impiety.¹⁵³⁶ Did such ‘impiety’ have ideological overtones? Examination of the astronomer’s concerns within a sympotic court context as astronomical *parrhēsia* may help us to understand these charges of impiety. As with geography, astronomy similarly may prove to be contested ground, a place to flatter and challenge far-reaching imperial claims.

The sympotic consideration of court science more broadly is still in its infancy. Medicine, engineering, and other wonders of court scholars are increasingly being understood as more than just inventions for their own sake, but the creations of *Philoi* to entertain and teach their primary court audience.¹⁵³⁷ However, thus far, very little work has been done to account for the unorthodox and the subversive. A fuller appreciation of the role of *parrhēsia* as a key aspect of a *Philos*’ duties to his king may allow us to account for these works on their own terms. The court scientist’s *parrhēsia* could serve as the ultimate performance of *philia*, frank speech being something only a true friend could give.

The distortive effect of imperial geography remains a salient concern. On 24th February 2022, the military columns of the ‘special military operation’ which rolled from Russia and Belarus towards Kyiv initially appeared to be powerful imperial vectors in action.¹⁵³⁸ Former US president Donald Trump, seemingly inspired by footage of these vectors, enthused ‘there were more army tanks than I’ve ever seen’.¹⁵³⁹ Russian president Vladimir Putin televised his own imperial geographic history lessons, presenting this invasion as a natural and effortless intervention.¹⁵⁴⁰ Yet these military vectors proved to be less certain than they appeared in the

¹⁵³³ Principle of Displacement: Vitruvius. *De arch.* 9. Prooem.9-12.

¹⁵³⁴ ‘κινούντα τοῦ κόσμου τὴν ἐστίαν’, Plut. *Mor.* 922a.

¹⁵³⁵ Aristarchus *On the sizes and distances of the sun and moon* Prop. 9, 10, 15 (Heath (1913)).

¹⁵³⁶ ‘Κλεάνθης τὸν Σάμιον ἀσεβείας προσκαλεῖσθαι τοὺς Ἕλληνας...’, Plut. *Mor.* 922a (*De fac.* 6.1).

¹⁵³⁷ Berrey (2017).

¹⁵³⁸ *FIDH* (2022).

¹⁵³⁹ C. Travis & B. Sexton (2022).

¹⁵⁴⁰ Y.N. Harari (2022).

televised propaganda, soon grinding to an unglamorous halt. As the spectacle unfolded on screens around the world, Putin's own judgement was increasingly questioned by his critics. Although Trump declared the fellow authoritarian a 'genius' for redefining the map, others saw Putin's judgement as precariously vulnerable due to his absence of frank counsel.¹⁵⁴¹ His *siloviki*, it seemed, could no longer challenge 'the smartest guy in the room'.¹⁵⁴² It is a cautionary tale that could come straight from the Hellenistic *Peri Basileus* literary tradition. The Greek courts were keenly aware of such dangers for their rulers, and the traditions of the *symposion* were understood as a means of regulating these existential hazards to the king and, indeed, the kingdom. This dissertation has made the case that Hellenistic geographies should be understood as an integral part of this sympotic court dialogue. The descriptive and spatial expressions which could serve so powerfully as propaganda could also, when needed, quell excessive and unrealistic imperial ambitions. The bending of space on the map was not simply to promote the king's imperial claims. In the hands of a court *Philos*, it could also speak truth to power.

¹⁵⁴¹Trump: 'This is genius... we could use that on our southern border', C. Travis & B. Sexton (2022).

¹⁵⁴² A. Soldatov (2022).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Homer at the Memphite Serapeion, Saqqara

The early Ptolemaic *exedra* of Greek philosophers and poets may initially appear to sit incongruously in the landscape of Saqqara. It is situated at the western end of the avenue of sphynxes and is passed on the right at the beginning of the *dromos* to the Serapeion. Today its location can almost seem barren, modern visitors seldom pausing at the rubbish-strewn site before continuing along the unadorned walkway and reaching the Serapeion's subterranean entrance.¹⁵⁴³ The visitor in antiquity would have been presented with a richer experience. The low-walled *dromos* leading from the *exedra* to the Serapeion was decorated with Dionysiac limestone statues including a panther, a lion ridden by Dionysos, two peacocks ridden by a youthful Dionysos, and a depiction of Kerberos.¹⁵⁴⁴ When the site was excavated by Auguste Mariette in 1850–1, it was described as a 'fusion of Greek and Egyptian art'.¹⁵⁴⁵ Thompson identifies concerns beyond the aesthetic, 'the wisdom of Greece (in the semicircle of statues) has met with that of Egypt' via Dionysos and Osiris.¹⁵⁴⁶ The presence of Homer and other philosophers and poets at the beginning of this journey associates the Poet and his companions with figures of chthonic divinity.



Figure 1: The pericycle of Greek philosophers and poets: Remaining figures from left to right (Plato, Aristotle (?), Thales, Homer, Hesiod, Demetrius of Phaleron (?), Pindar) (Photo with permission: Jona Lendering (Livius.org (2020))

The arrangement of sculptures depicts Homer at the very centre of what was once eleven limestone statues of Greek poets and philosophers. Dating is disputed, ranging from the early

¹⁵⁴³ *Lonely Planet's* summary is dismissive and brief: 'This quite sad-looking group of Greek statues... is arranged in a semicircle and sheltered by a spectacularly ugly concrete shelter.' J. Lee & A. Sattin (2018) 204.

¹⁵⁴⁴ D.J. Thompson (1988) 25–6; Lauer & Picard (1955) 38–172.

¹⁵⁴⁵ *Scientific American* (1855) 145.

¹⁵⁴⁶ D.J. Thompson (1988) 25–6; P.M. Fraser (1972). 1.206; Dionysos & Osiris: L.R. Farnell (1909) 5.127–32.

third to early second centuries.¹⁵⁴⁷ Homer sits on a central throne, speaking to his pre-eminent authority. He wears the long dress of the *kitharoidos* (fig. 2A and 2B), appropriate for his status as the superlative poet.¹⁵⁴⁸ By placing Homer prominently in the religious landscape of Saqqara, the Ptolemies go further than Dionysos–Osiris syncretism in claiming the site. Through the *exedra*, they set a Hellenistic colonial tone for the worshippers' approach to the tombs of the Apis bulls. The most venerable Greek literary traditions are associated with the power of the Memphite Serapeion.¹⁵⁴⁹



Figure 2A: Homer, seated (front)



Figure 2B Homer, seated (3/4 angle)

Figure 2A and 2B show Homer seated on a throne in *kitharoidos* dress at the centre of the *exedra* (Photos: J.D. McDermott, 2022).

¹⁵⁴⁷ D.J. Thompson (1988) 116.

¹⁵⁴⁸ L.J. Roccas (1986).

¹⁵⁴⁹ Showcasing the regime's 'arrogant confidence at this relatively early stage': D.J. Thompson (1988) 116–17, 191–8.

Appendix 2. Apotheosis of Homer: relief by Archelaos of Prienē

This vivid depiction of the apotheosis of Homer is a marble stele signed by one Archelaos, son of Apollonios of Prienē (*BM* 1819,0812.1).¹⁵⁵⁰ It was excavated in Bovillae, Italy, but with ‘indisputably Alexandrian’ subject matter.¹⁵⁵¹ Dating is uncertain; Politt, and the British Museum, follow Watzinger in dating this piece to the reign of Ptolemy IV in the late third century, whereas Shapiro argues for the late second century.¹⁵⁵²

The top register (fig. 3) depicts Zeus with sceptre and eagle on slopes of a mountain (Olympos or Parnassos?), with a standing figure of Mnemosyne (Memory) on the right, elevated above five of their children, the Muses.¹⁵⁵³ The middle register (fig. 4) features the other four Muses, one with Apollo in a cave. The god of poetry is identifiable by his *kithara* and his *kitharoidos* dress. The isolated figure on the far right with a scroll is uncertain, although he is clearly a figure of poetry or learning.¹⁵⁵⁴



Figure 3: Relief of the Apotheosis of Homer

¹⁵⁵⁰ Signature features between first and second registers on the indented ledge below the semi-reclining figure of Zeus. Shapiro (2020) 547.

¹⁵⁵¹ J.J. Pollitt (1986) 16.

¹⁵⁵² Pollitt, late 3rd C. on stylistic grounds for the Muses grouping: J.J. Pollitt (1986) 16, although: 270–1; C. Watzinger (1903); *contra*: 2nd C.: Shapiro (2020) 547; Hunter follows the traditional later dating: (2018), 2; (2004), 235.

¹⁵⁵³ Pollitt (1986) 16; Shapiro (2020) 548.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Shapiro (2020) 549.



Figure 4: Middle Register: Four Muses, Apollo Kitharoidos in cave



Figure 5: Lower register: Throned Homer crowned by *Oikoumenē* and Time

(Photos: J.D. McDermott (2022) at the *Ancient Greeks: Athletes, Warriors and Heroes* exhibition at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. On loan from British Museum)

The lower register (fig. 5) moves us from Apollo to a ‘Zeus-like’ Homer, replete with full beard, sceptre, and throne.¹⁵⁵⁵ From the left we can see from the columns and curtain that we are inside a sanctuary, with Homer being crowned by two figures. The two figures are

¹⁵⁵⁵ Politt (1986) 16; Shapiro (2020) 549.

inscribed below, a female 'Oikoumenē' in the foreground, and a male 'Time' in the background. Watzinger observed that these deities with individualised features may also represent Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III, and Politt goes further, suggesting that this scene depicts the Temple to Homer established during Ptolemy IV's reign.¹⁵⁵⁶ The imperial assertions are profound. The divine Homer is given authority by time and space themselves.

The other figures speak to his gift to the world. Two kneeling figures flank his throne (although only one is clearly visible from our vantage point), labelled as 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey'. Set before Homer is an altar with a bull in the background. To the left of the altar, looking back to Homer, is the boy 'Myth' carrying a jug, while the girl, 'History', is in the centre of the scene, sprinkling an offering on the altar itself. The three prominent figures to her right are led by 'Poetry', lighting the room with torches, followed by 'Tragedy' and 'Comedy'. In the far right we have a grouping of four virtues— 'Excellence', 'Mindfulness', 'Trustworthiness' and 'Wisdom'—looking on, affirming the significance of these gifts of the divine Homer. Lastly, there is little 'Physis' reaching up to them. As Politt observes, the 'lesson' of the narrative is unambiguous and sequential, the power of Zeus is passed down through Apollo and the Muses directly to Homer.

A figure worth consideration is the diminutive 'Physis'. The figure is clearly subordinate within the narrative, dependent on higher virtues. If 'Physis' represents Nature, as is usually assumed, then it makes a powerful statement about the power of Homer over the physical world. The role of court scientists who emphasise *physis* over divine causation seem to be similarly diminished through association. Eratosthenes' jibes against Homer cannot, then, be understood as occurring in an ideologically neutral space.¹⁵⁵⁷ Homer's position at court, and relationship to science, appears to have been a contentious one.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Politt (1986) 16; C. Watzinger (1903); Shapiro (2020) 549.

¹⁵⁵⁷ See: Ch. 3.3.II.D.

Appendix 3. Eratosthenes' *Letter to King Ptolemy*

Eratosthenes' *Letter to King Ptolemy* is a letter–treatise which not only solves the age-old problem of the doubling of the cube, but also serves as a sort of owner's manual for the polymath's gift to the king of a *mesolabos*, guiding a royal lay audience on the use of this mechanical device. Furthermore, the *Letter to King Ptolemy* provides a platform for Eratosthenes' self–promotion as a learned scholar and intimate *philos* of the king. It allows Eratosthenes to publicly perform *paideia*, propaganda for the regime, and potential *parrhēsia*.

The text survives in Eutokios of Askalon's sixth century commentary on Archimedes' second book of *The Sphere and the Cylinder*. Its authenticity was partially problematised by Wilamowitz–Moellendorff in the 1890s on stylistic grounds (he saw it as too clumsy), something taken further by Heath. But Knorr convincingly argued against such views in the 1980s, demonstrating the letter's distinct and unified language as evidence of authenticity as a complete and unadulterated text. Most recent treatments of the text have followed Knorr in treating the letter as essentially authentic and complete in Eutokios' work, a position maintained in this dissertation.¹⁵⁵⁸

The scientific letter treatise combines elements from a range of genres, following the intimate tone and formula of sympotic letter writing, with the problem and solution acting as the main body of the letter.¹⁵⁵⁹ Eratosthenes' letter, which explains a device apparently on display, not only spans genres internally (letter, myth–history, mathematics, poetry), it is also multi–modal, encouraging engagement with the *mesolabos*.¹⁵⁶⁰ The letter is ostensibly for one audience (the king), and Netz tends to treat it as such. However, Taub, Berry, and Leventhal emphasise the public nature of the letter, designed not only to entertain, flatter, or challenge the king, but to do so before an audience.¹⁵⁶¹ In this sense, Eratosthenes' letter is a performance, showcasing an intimacy and sophistication ideal for the sympotic court.

The letter can be understood in five parts. First, an introduction to a non–scientific audience. Second, we are presented with a technical section of the letter–treatise. The third section describes the device briefly and introduces its location and use. The fourth section provides the mechanical version of the formula which is apparently on public display with the device. These are integrated with instructions for use. The final section is a verse functioning as a poetic 'seal' (*sphragis*) to the letter–treatise.¹⁵⁶²

This appendix has reproduced the Greek text from the 1915 J.L. Heiberg and E. Stamatis edition of Eutokios. Line numbers from this edition are included in parentheses. This is

¹⁵⁵⁸ Inauthentic: Von Wilamowitz–Moellendorff (1894) 15–35; 'a forgery' *sauf* epigram: T. L. Heath (1921) 244–5. Essentially authentic and complete: W.R. Knorr (1986) 17–20; (1989) esp. 131–146, *sauf* 138; Pfeiffer compares it favourably to Archimedes' letter–treatises: Pfeiffer (1968) 155–6; Geus (2002); Netz (2004) 294 n.153; Taub (2008) 290 n.23; Leventhal (2017) 43–84.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Knorr (1989) 144–5; Taub (2008); Leventhal (2017).

¹⁵⁶⁰ See esp. Taub (2008); Knorr (1989).

¹⁵⁶¹ Netz (2004) 297 n.176; *contra*: as entertainment (2008); Berrey (2017); as propaganda: Leventhal (2017).

¹⁵⁶² Taub (2008) 296–7; Thesleff (1949) 120–21.

followed by Reviel Netz's 2004 English translation, with my adaptations to the spelling of names. Diagrams have been reproduced as they appeared in the respective editions.¹⁵⁶³

I. Eratosthenes' Letter to King Ptolemy (J.L. Heiberg and E. Stamatis (1915))

The text below follows J.L. Heiberg and E. Stamatis (1915), *Archimedis opera omnia cum commentariis Eutocii*, volume 3 (Leipzig) 88-96. For authenticity, see: Geus (2002), *Eratosthenes Von Kyrene: Studien zur hellenistischen Kultur und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Munich) 195-205.

Ὡς Ἐρατοσθένης

- Βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίῳ Ἐρατοσθένης χαίρειν. (4)
- Τῶν ἀρχαίων τινὰ τραγωδοποιῶν φασιν εἰσαγαγεῖν (5)
- τὸν Μίνω τῷ Γλαύκῳ κατασκευάζοντα τάφον, πυθόμενον
δέ, ὅτι πανταχοῦ ἑκατόμπεδος εἴη, εἰπεῖν·
- μικρὸν γ' ἔλεξας βασιλικοῦ σηκὸν τάφου·
 διπλάσιος ἔστω, τοῦ καλοῦ δὲ μὴ σφαιεῖς
 δίπλαζ' ἕκαστον κῶλον ἐν τάχει τάφου. (10)
- ἔδόκει δὲ διημαρτηκέναι· τῶν γὰρ πλευρῶν διπλασιασ-
θεισῶν τὸ μὲν ἐπίπεδον γίνεται τετραπλάσιον, τὸ δὲ
στερεὸν ὀκταπλάσιον. ἐζητεῖτο δὲ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς γεω-
μέτραις, τίνα ἂν τις τρόπον τὸ δοθὲν στερεὸν διαμένον
ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ σχήματι διπλασιάσειεν, καὶ ἔκαλεῖτο τὸ τοι- (15)
- οὔτον πρόβλημα κύβου διπλασιασμός· ὑποθέμενοι γὰρ
κύβον ἐζήτουν τοῦτον διπλασιάσαι. πάντων δὲ διαπορούν-
των ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον πρῶτος Ἴπποκράτης ὁ Χῖος ἐπε-
νόησεν, ὅτι, ἐὰν εὐρεθῇ δύο εὐθειῶν γραμμῶν, ὧν ἡ
μείζων τῆς ἐλάσσονός ἐστι διπλασία, δύο μέσας ἀνάλογον (20)
- λαβεῖν ἐν συνεχεῖ ἀναλογία, διπλασιασθήσεται ὁ κύβος,
ὥστε τὸ ἀπόρημα αὐτῶ εἰς ἕτερον οὐκ ἔλασσον ἀπόρημα
κατέστρεφεν. μετὰ χρόνον δὲ τινὰς φασιν Δηλίους ἐπι-
(90) βαλλομένους κατὰ χρησμὸν διπλασιάσαι τινὰ τῶν βωμῶν
ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπόρημα, διαπεμψαμένους δὲ τοὺς
παρὰ τῷ Πλάτωνι ἐν Ἀκαδημίᾳ γεωμέτραις ἀξιοῦν αὐτοῖς
εὐρεῖν τὸ ζητούμενον. τῶν δὲ φιλοπόνως ἐπιδιδόντων (5)
- ἑαυτοὺς καὶ ζητούντων δύο τῶν δοθεισῶν δύο μέσας
λαβεῖν Ἀρχύτας μὲν ὁ Ταραντῖνος λέγεται διὰ τῶν ἡμι-
κυλίνδρων εὐρηκέναι, Εὐδοξος δὲ διὰ τῶν καλουμένων
καμπύλων γραμμῶν· συμβέβηκε δὲ πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς ἀπο-
δεικτικῶς γεγραφεῖναι, χειροουργῆσαι δὲ καὶ εἰς χρεῖαν

¹⁵⁶³ J.L. Heiberg and E. Stamatis (1915) 88-96; R. Netz (2004) 294-298.

πεσεῖν μὴ δύνασθαι πλὴν ἐπὶ βραχὺ τι τὸν Μέναιχμον (10)
 καὶ ταῦτα δυσχερῶς. ἐπινενόηται δὲ τις ὑφ' ἡμῶν ὄρ-
 γανικὴ λήψις ῥαθία, δι' ἧς εὐρήσομεν δύο τῶν δοθεισῶν
 οὐ μόνον δύο μέσας, ἀλλ' ὅσας ἂν τις ἐπιτάξῃ. τούτου
 δὲ εὐρισκομένου δυνησόμεθα καθόλου τὸ δοθὲν στερεὸν
 παραλληλογράμμοις περιεχόμενον εἰς κύβον καθιστάναι (15)
 ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρου εἰς ἕτερον μετασχηματίζειν καὶ ὅμοιον ποιεῖν
 καὶ ἐπαύξειν διατηροῦντας τὴν ὁμοιότητα, ὥστε καὶ βω-
 μούς καὶ ναούς· δυνησόμεθα δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν ὑγρῶν μέτρα
 καὶ ξηρῶν, λέγω δὲ οἶον μετρητὴν ἢ μέδιμνον, εἰς κύ-
 βον καθίστασθαι καὶ διὰ τῆς τούτου πλευρᾶς ἀναμετρεῖν (20)
 τὰ τούτων δεκτικὰ ἀγγεῖα, πόσον χωρεῖ. χρήσιμον δὲ
 ἔσται τὸ ἐπινόημα καὶ τοῖς βουλομένοις ἐπαύξειν κατα-
 παλτικὰ καὶ λιθοβόλα ὄργανα· δεῖ γὰρ ἀνάλογον ἅπαντα
 αὐξηθῆναι καὶ τὰ πάχη καὶ τὰ μεγέθη καὶ τὰς κατατροπή-
 σεις καὶ τὰς χοινικίδας καὶ τὰ ἐμβαλλόμενα νεῦρα, εἰ (25)
 μέλλει καὶ ἡ βολὴ ἀνάλογον ἐπαυξηθῆναι, ταῦτα δὲ οὐ
 δυνατὰ γενέσθαι ἄνευ τῆς τῶν μέσων εὐρέσεως. τὴν δὲ
 ἀπόδειξιν καὶ τὴν κατασκευὴν τοῦ λεχθέντος ὀργάνου
 ὑπογέγραφα σοι.

δεδόσθωσαν δύο ἄνισοι εὐθειᾶι, ὧν δεῖ δύο μέσας (30)
 ἀνάλογον εὐρεῖν ἐν συνεχείᾳ ἀναλογίᾳ, αἱ ΑΕ, ΔΘ, καὶ
 (92) κείσθω ἐπὶ τινος εὐθείας τῆς ΕΘ πρὸς ὀρθὰς ἡ ΑΕ,
 καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ΕΘ τρία συνεστάτω παραλληλόγραμμα ἐφ-
 εξῆς τὰ ΑΖ, ΖΙ, ΙΘ, καὶ ἤχθωσαν διάμετροι ἐν αὐτοῖς
 αἱ ΑΖ, ΛΗ, ΙΘ· ἔσονται δὲ αὗται παράλληλοι. μέ- (5)
 νοντος δὲ τοῦ μέσου παραλληλογράμμου τοῦ ΖΙ συν-
 ωσθήτω τὸ μὲν ΑΖ ἐπάνω τοῦ μέσου, τὸ δὲ ΙΘ ὑπο-
 κάτω, καθάπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ δευτέρου σχήματος, ἕως οὗ γέ-
 νηται τὰ Α, Β, Γ, Δ κατ' εὐθείαν, καὶ διήχθω διὰ τῶν
 Α, Β, Γ, Δ σημείων εὐθεῖα καὶ συμπίπτέτω τῇ ΕΘ ἐκ-
 βληθείση κατὰ τὸ Κ· ἔσται δὴ, ὡς ἡ ΑΚ πρὸς ΚΒ, ἐν (10)
 μὲν ταῖς ΑΕ, ΖΒ παραλλήλοις ἢ ΕΚ πρὸς ΚΖ, ἐν δὲ
 ταῖς ΑΖ, ΒΗ παραλλήλοις ἢ ΖΚ πρὸς ΚΗ. ὡς ἄρα ἡ
 ΑΚ πρὸς ΚΒ, ἢ ΕΚ πρὸς ΚΖ καὶ ἡ ΚΖ πρὸς ΚΗ.
 πάλιν, ἐπεὶ ἔστιν, ὡς ἡ ΒΚ πρὸς ΚΓ, ἐν μὲν ταῖς ΒΖ,
 ΓΗ παραλλήλοις ἢ ΖΚ πρὸς ΚΗ, ἐν δὲ ταῖς ΒΗ, ΓΘ (15)
 παραλλήλοις ἢ ΗΚ πρὸς ΚΘ, ὡς ἄρα ἡ ΒΚ πρὸς ΚΓ,
 ἢ ΖΚ πρὸς ΚΗ καὶ ἡ ΗΚ πρὸς ΚΘ. ἀλλ' ὡς ἡ ΖΚ
 πρὸς ΚΗ, ἢ ΕΚ πρὸς ΚΖ· καὶ ὡς ἄρα ἡ ΕΚ πρὸς ΚΖ,
 ἢ ΖΚ πρὸς ΚΗ καὶ ἡ ΗΚ πρὸς ΚΘ. ἀλλ' ὡς ἡ ΕΚ
 πρὸς ΚΖ, ἢ ΑΕ πρὸς ΒΖ, ὡς δὲ ἡ ΖΚ πρὸς ΚΗ, ἢ (20)
 ΒΖ πρὸς ΓΗ, ὡς δὲ ἡ ΗΚ πρὸς ΚΘ, ἢ ΓΗ πρὸς ΔΘ·

καὶ ὡς ἄρα ἡ ΑΕ πρὸς ΒΖ, ἢ ΒΖ πρὸς ΓΗ καὶ ἡ
ΓΗ πρὸς ΔΘ. ἠϋρηνται ἄρα τῶν ΑΕ, ΔΘ δύο μέσαι
ἢ τε ΒΖ καὶ ἡ ΓΗ.

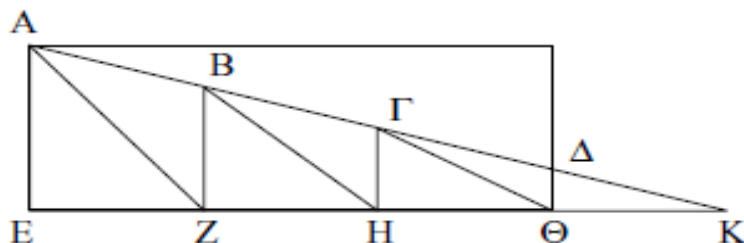
ταῦτα οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν γεωμετρούμενων ἐπιφανειῶν ἀπο- (25)

δέδεικται· ἵνα δὲ καὶ ὀργανικῶς δυνώμεθα τὰς δύο μέ-
σας λαμβάνειν, διαπήγνυται πλινθίων ξύλινον ἢ ἐλεφάν-
τινον ἢ χαλκοῦν ἔχον τρεῖς πινακίσκους ἴσους ὡς λεπτο-
(94) τάτους, ὧν ὁ μὲν μέσος ἐνήρμοσται, οἱ δὲ δύο ἐπωστοί
εἰσιν ἐν χολέδραις, τοῖς δὲ μεγέθεσιν καὶ ταῖς συμμε-
τρίαις ὡς ἕκαστοι ἑαυτοὺς πείθουσιν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ τῆς
ἀποδείξεως ὡσαύτως συντελεῖται· πρὸς δὲ τὸ ἀκριβέστε-
ρον λαμβάνεσθαι τὰς γραμμὰς φιλοτεχνητέον, ἵνα ἐν (5)

τῷ συνάγεσθαι τοὺς πινακίσκους παράλληλα διαμένη
πάντα καὶ ἄσχαστα καὶ ὁμαλῶς συναπτόμενα ἀλλήλοις.
_ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀναθήματι τὸ μὲν ὀργανικὸν χαλκοῦν ἐστίν
καὶ καθήρμοσται ὑπ' αὐτὴν τὴν στεφάνην τῆς στήλης
προσμεμολυβδοχοημένον, ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δὲ ἡ ἀπόδειξις συν- (10)
τομώτερον φραζομένη καὶ τὸ σχῆμα, μετ' αὐτὸ δὲ ἐπί-
γραμμα. ὑπογεγράφθω οὖν σοι καὶ ταῦτα, ἵνα ἔχῃς καὶ
ὡς ἐν τῷ ἀναθήματι. τῶν δὲ δύο σχημάτων τὸ δεύτερον
γέγραπται ἐν τῇ στήλῃ.

Δύο τῶν δοθεισῶν εὐθειῶν δύο μέσας ἀνάλογον εὐ- (15)
ρεῖν ἐν συνεχεῖ ἀναλογίᾳ. δεδόσθωσαν αἱ ΑΕ, ΔΘ.

συνάγω δὴ τοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀργάνῳ πίνακας, ἕως ἂν κατ' εὐ-
θειᾶν γένηται τὰ Α, Β, Γ, Δ σημεῖα. νοείσθω δὴ, ὡς ἔχει
ἐπὶ τοῦ δευτέρου σχήματος. ἐστίν ἄρα, ὡς ἡ ΑΚ πρὸς
ΚΒ, ἐν μὲν ταῖς ΑΕ, ΒΖ παραλλήλοις ἢ ΕΚ πρὸς ΚΖ, (20)
ἐν δὲ ταῖς ΑΖ, ΒΗ ἢ ΖΚ πρὸς ΚΗ· ὡς ἄρα ἡ ΕΚ
πρὸς ΚΖ, ἢ ΚΖ πρὸς ΚΗ. ὡς δὲ αὐταὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλας,
ἢ τε ΑΕ πρὸς ΒΖ καὶ ἡ ΒΖ πρὸς ΓΗ. ὡσαύτως δὲ
δείξομεν, ὅτι καὶ, ὡς ἡ ΖΒ πρὸς ΓΗ, ἢ ΓΗ πρὸς ΔΘ.



(96) ἀνάλογον ἄρα αἱ ΑΕ, ΒΖ, ΓΗ, ΔΘ. ἤρρηται ἄρα δύο τῶν δοθεισῶν δύο μέσαι.

ἐὰν δὲ αἱ δοθεῖσαι μὴ ἴσαι ὧσιν ταῖς ΑΕ, ΔΘ, ποιήσαντες αὐταῖς ἀνάλογον τὰς ΑΕ, ΔΘ τούτων ληψόμεθα τὰς μέσας καὶ ἐπανοίσομεν ἐπ' ἐκείνας, καὶ ἐσόμεθα πεποιηκότες τὸ ἐπιταχθέν. ἐὰν δὲ πλείους μέσας ἐπιταχθῆ εὐρεῖν, ἀεὶ ἐνὶ πλείους πινακίσκους καταστησόμεθα ἐν τῷ ὄργανῷ τῶν ληφθησομένων μέσων· ἢ δὲ ἀπόδειξις ἢ αὐτή.

Εἰ κύβον ἐξ ὀλίγου διπλήσιον, ὦγαθέ, τεύχειν
φράζῃαι ἢ στερεὴν πᾶσαν ἐς ἄλλο φύσιν
εὖ μεταμορφῶσαι, τόδε τοι πάρα, κἂν σύ γε μάνδρην
τῆδ' ἀναμετρήσαιο, μέσας ὅτε τέρμασιν ἄκροις
τῆδ' ἀναμετρήσαιο, μέσας ὅτε τέρμασιν ἄκροις
συνδρομάδας δισσῶν ἐντὸς ἕλης κανόνων.

μηδὲ σύ γ' Ἀρχύτεω δυσμήχανα ἔργα κυλίνδρων
μηδὲ Μεναιχμείους κωνοτομεῖν τριάδας
διζήση, μηδ' εἴ τι θεουδέος Εὐδόξοιο

καμπύλον ἐγ γραμμαῖς εἶδος ἀναγράφεται.
τοῖσδε γὰρ ἐν πινάκεσσι μεσόγραφα μυρία τεύχοις
ῥεῖᾶ κεν ἐκ παύρου πυθμένος ἀρχόμενος.

εὐαίων, Πτολεμαῖε, πατήρ ὅτι παιδὶ συνηβῶν
πάνθ', ὅσα καὶ Μούσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσι φίλα,
αὐτὸς ἐδωρήσω· τὸ δ' ἐς ὕστερον, οὐράνιε Ζεῦ,
καὶ σκήπτρων ἐκ σῆς ἀντιάσειε χερός.

καὶ τὰ μὲν ὡς τελέοιτο, λέγοι δέ τις ἄνθεμα λεύσσων
τοῦ Κυρηναίου τοῦτ' Ἐρατοσθένεος.

II. Eratosthenes' Letter to King Ptolemy (tr. Netz (2004))

Eratosthenes to king Ptolemy, greetings.

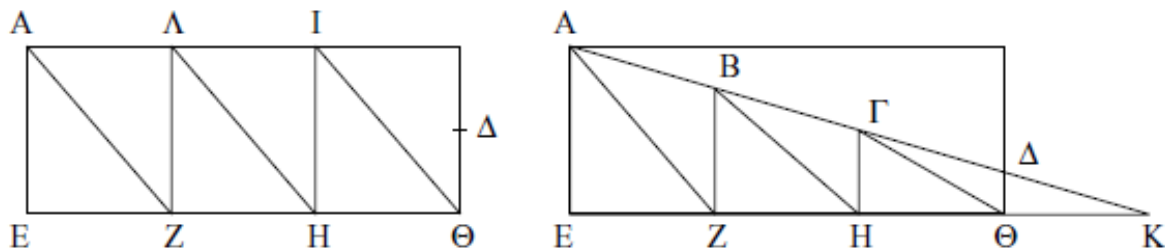
They say that one of the old tragic authors introduced Minos, building a tomb to Glaukos, and, hearing that it is to be a hundred cubits long in each direction, saying:

*You have mentioned a small precinct of the tomb royal;
Let it be double, and, not losing its beauty,
Quickly double each side of the tomb.*

He seems, however, to have been mistaken; for, the sides doubled, the plane becomes four times, while the solid becomes eight times. And this was investigated by the geometers, too: in which way one could double the given solid, the solid keeping the same shape; and they called this problem "duplication of a cube:" for, assuming a cube, they investigated how to double it. And, after they were all puzzled by this for a long time, Hippokrates of Chios was the first to realize that, if it is found how to take two mean proportionals, in continuous proportion, between two straight lines (of whom the greater is double the smaller), then the cube shall be doubled, so that he converted the puzzle into another, no smaller puzzle. After a while, they say, some Delians, undertaking to fulfil an oracle demanding that they double one of their altars, encountered the same difficulty, and they sent messengers to the geometers who were with Plato in the Academy, asking of them to find that which was asked. Of those who dedicated themselves to this diligently, and investigated how to take two mean proportionals between two given lines, it is said that Archytas of Taranta solved this with the aid of semicylinders, while Eudoxos did so with the so-called curved lines; as it happens, all of them wrote demonstratively, and it was impossible practically to do this by hand (except Menaechmos, by the shortness – and this with difficulty). But we have conceived of a certain easy mechanical way of taking proportionals through which, given two lines, means – not only two, but as many as one may set forth – shall be found. This thing found, we may, generally: reduce a given solid (contained by parallelograms) into a cube, or transform one solid into another, both making it similar and, while enlarging it, maintaining the similitude, and this with both altars and temples; and we can also reduce into a cube, both liquid and dry measures (I mean, e.g., a metertes or a medimnos), and we can then measure how much the vessels of these liquid or dry materials hold, using the side of the cube. And the conception will be useful also for those who wish to enlarge catapults and stone-throwing machines; for it is required to augment all – the thicknesses and the magnitudes and the apertures and the choinikids and the inserted strings – if the throwing-power is to be proportionally augmented, and this cannot be done without finding the means. I have written to you the proof and the construction of the said machine.

For let there be given two unequal lines, <namely> AE , $\Delta\Theta$, between which it is required to find two mean proportionals in continuous proportion, (a) and, on a certain line, <namely> $E\Theta$, let AE be set at right <angles>, (b) and let three parallelograms, <namely> AZ , ZI , $I\Theta$, be constructed on $E\Theta$, (c) and, in them, let diagonals be drawn: AZ , ΛH , $I\Theta$; (1) so they themselves will be parallel. (d) So, the middle parallelogram (ZI) remaining in place, let AZ be pushed above the middle <parallelogram>, <and let> $I\Theta$ <be pushed> beneath it, as in the second figure, until A , B , Γ , Δ come to be on a <single> line, (e) and let a line be drawn through the points A , B , Γ , Δ , (f) and let it meet the <line> $E\Theta$, produced, at K ; (2) so it will be: as AK to KB , EK to KZ (in the parallels AE , ZB), (3) and ZK to KH (in the parallels

AZ, BH).¹⁵⁶⁴ (4) Therefore as AK to KB, EK to KZ and KZ to KH. (5) Again, since it is: as BK to KΓ, ZK to KH (in the parallels BZ, ΓH), (6) and HK to KΘ (in the parallels BH, ΓΘ), (7) therefore as BK to KΓ, ZK to KH and HK to KΘ. (8) But as ZK to KH, EK to KZ; (9) therefore also: as EK to KZ, ZK to KH and HK to KΘ. (10) But as EK to KZ, AE to BZ, (11) and as ZK to KH, BZ to ΓH, (12) and as HK to KΘ, ΓH to ΔΘ; (13) therefore also: as AE to BZ, BZ to ΓH and ΓH to ΔΘ. (14) Therefore two means have been found between AE, ΔΘ, <namely> both BZ and ΓH.



So these are proved for geometrical surfaces. But so as we may also take the two means by a machine, a box is fixed (made of wood, or ivory, or bronze), holding three equal tablets, as thin as possible. Of these, the middle is fitted in its place, while the other two are moveable along grooves (the sizes and the proportions may be as anyone wishes them; for the arguments of the proof will yield the conclusion in the same way). And, for taking the lines in the most precise way, it must be done with great art, so that when the tablets are simultaneously moved they all remain parallel and firm and touching each other throughout.

In the dedication, the machine is made of bronze, and is fitted with lead below the crown of that pillar, and the proof below it (phrased more succinctly), and the figure, and with it the epigram. So let these be written below as well, for you, so that you have, also, just as in the dedication. (Of the two figures, the second is inscribed in the pillar.

Given two lines, to find two mean proportionals in continuous proportion. Let AE, ΔΘ be given. (a) So I move the tables in the machine together, until the points A, B, Γ, Δ come to be on a <single> line. ((b) So let it be imagined, as in the second figure.) (1) Therefore it is: as AK to KB, EK to KZ (in the parallels AE, BZ), (2) and ZK to KH (in the <parallels> AZ, BH); (3) therefore as EK to KZ, KZ to KH. (4) But as they themselves are to each other, so are both: AE to BZ and BZ to H.180 (5) And we shall prove in the same way that, also, as ZB to ΓH, ΓH to ΔΘ; (6) therefore AE, BZ, ΓH, ΔΘ are proportional. Therefore two means have been found between the two given <lines>.

And if the given<lines>will not be equal to AE, ΔΘ, then, after we make AE, ΔΘ proportional to them, we shall take the means between them <=AE, ΔΘ>, and return to those <given lines>, and we shall have the task done. And if it is demanded to find several means: we shall insert tablets in the machine, <so that their total is> always more by one than <the number of> the means to be taken; and the proof is the same.

¹⁵⁶⁴ ‘...by sliding the doors to the left or to the right, the painted diagonals remain parallel to each other, as do the edges of the doors. Essentially, before us is a parallelism-preserving machine.’ Netz (2004), 295–6, n167.

*If you plan, of a small cube, its double to fashion,
Or – dear friend – any solid to change to another
In nature: it's yours. You can measure, as well:
Be it byre, or corn-pit, or the space of a deep,
Hollow well. As they run to converge, in between
The two rulers – seize the means by their boundary-ends.
Do not seek the impractical works of Archytas'
Cylinders; nor the three conic-cutting Menaechmics;
And not even that shape which is curved in the lines
That Divine Eudoxos constructed.
By these tablets, indeed, you may easily fashion –
With a small base to start with – even thousands of means.
O Ptolemy, happy! Father, as youthful as son:
You have given him all that is dear to the muses
And to kings. In the future – O Zeus! – may you give him,
From your hand, this, as well: a sceptre.
May it all come to pass. And may him, who looks, say:
'Eratosthenes, of Cyrene, set up this dedication.'*

Appendix 4. Siwa

Siwa is striking for its geography, the oasis improbably lush and green, surrounded by hyper-arid desert. It is situated 260 kilometres inland from the Mediterranean Sea and some 30 kilometres from the Libyan border at its closest point. The oasis is where the Qattara Depression (N, NE) meets the Great Sand Sea (S, SW, W). The Qattara Depression formed over thousands of years of salt erosion and aeolian weathering. Salinity in the soil is acute and many of the major lakes (Birket Siwa, Birket al-Maraqi) are hypersaline and hostile to aquatic life.¹⁵⁶⁵ Yet Siwa Oasis also has freshwater springs which draw on the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System, providing water vital for human habitation and the abundant vegetation of the immediate area.

Since the Egyptian security force's mistaken killing of ten tourists and two Egyptian guides in 2015, non-Egyptians have been restricted in their approach to Siwa.¹⁵⁶⁶ To get to Siwa from Alexandria, one now must follow the same path as Alexander the Great, coming southwest from the coast at Paraitonion (Marsa Matruh, see fig.6A). There are several military checkpoints along the way, staffed with soldiers who make up for their lack of numbers with their diligence. The approach brings one into an increasingly arid desert. Yet arriving at Siwa, the sudden contrast of lush green continues to seem little short of miraculous (fig. 8).



Figure 6A: In the footsteps of Alexander: Alexander, and Eratosthenes, would travel the same route we do today: Alexandria—Paraitonion (Marsah Matrah)—Siwa (elevation: 700 kms)¹⁵⁶⁷

¹⁵⁶⁵ N.H. Moghazy & J.J. Kaluarachchi (2020) 149–163; A.M. Scheffers & D.H. Kelletat (2016) 181, 214.

¹⁵⁶⁶ H. Saleh (2015).

¹⁵⁶⁷ Google Earth Pro 7.3 (2023).

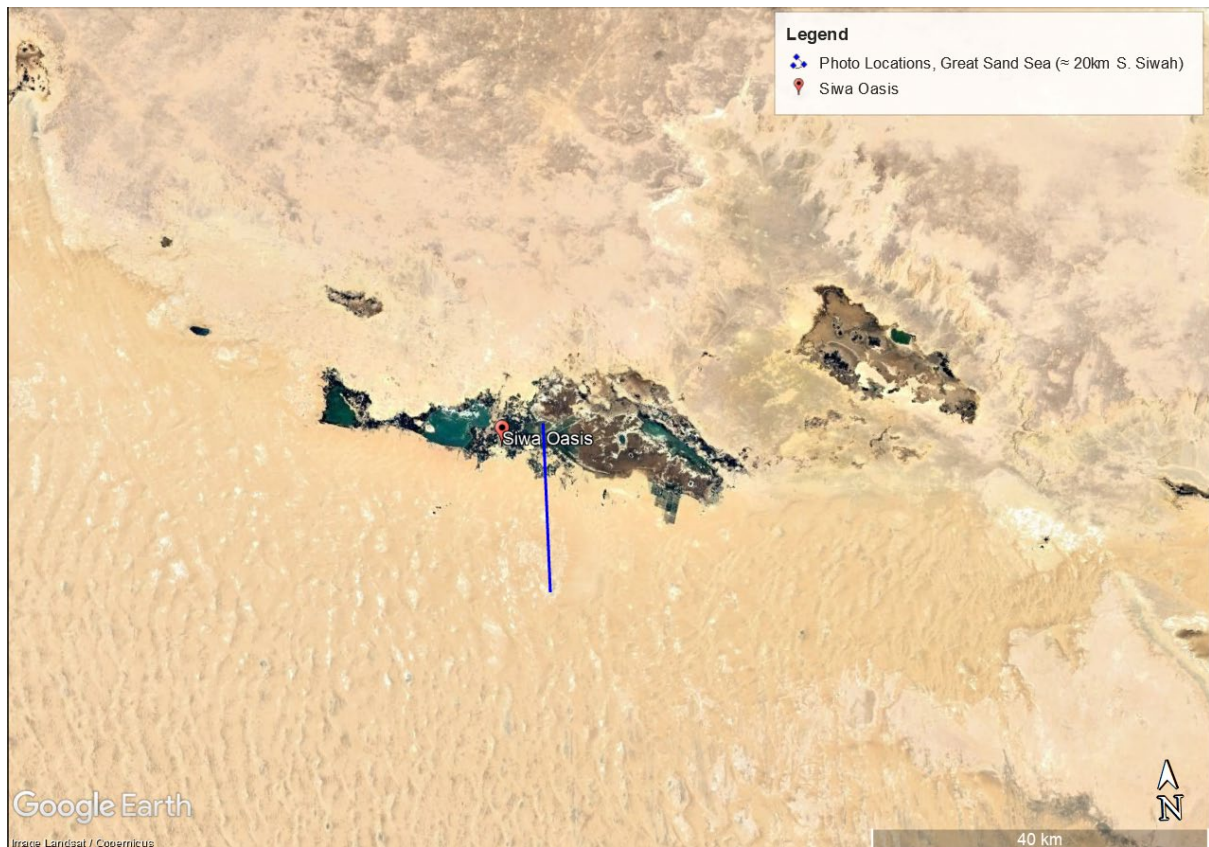


Figure 6B: Location of sea fossilised marine floor (elevation: 140 kms)¹⁵⁶⁸

The photos on the following page were taken in the Great Sand Sea no more than twenty kilometres south of Siwa (fig. 6B). As the name suggests, the landscape changes dramatically from flat sweeping vistas to tolling dunes navigated by 4X4s. Protruding from the dunes are shale rock studded with fossils. Special thanks to my guide, Abu al-Qasim Ibrahim Abu al-Qasim Alloush (ابوالقاسم إبراهيم ابوالقاسم علوش), who not only located valuable sites but identified the fossils featured (fig. 7A–D) below.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Google Earth Pro 7.3 (2023).



Figure 7A: Fossilised seafloor protruding from dunes



Figure 7B: Fossilised sedimentary seafloor



Figure 7C: Shells embedded in sedimentary rock



Figure 7D: A loose fossilised shell

(Photos: J.D. McDermott, 2022)

To support Strato's theory of shifting coastlines (Chapter Three), Eratosthenes would not have had to look very hard. What is striking about this area of the Great Sand Sea directly south of Siwa is the prolific nature of easily identifiable marine fossil matter. Eratosthenes' reference to the oyster shells (*πολλήν γὰρ εἶναι χύσιν ὀστρέων*) is almost certainly a reference to these fossils, which are certainly abundant.¹⁵⁶⁹ The abundant salt referred to in the same passage

¹⁵⁶⁹ Eratosth. F15 (=Strabo 1.3.4). See: Ch. 3.3.II.C.

lends further weight to his theory, yet it is the fossils that provide the vital evidence for Strato's natural causation, which effectively sidelines Ptolemaic claims of a divine landscape.

However, while shifting coastlines account for the salt, the fresh water of Siwa is not effectively accounted for by Strato's and Eratosthenes' theory. Siwa's fecundity, on full display at the Temple of Amun-Zeus (fig. 8), is the product of the freshwater aquifer system, not salt water of a former sea. Tantalisingly, the geological reality is not dissimilar to Eratosthenes' subterranean fluvial theories, which the geographer used to account for freshwater emerging in unexpected places, a restless force which could not be tamed by human hands.¹⁵⁷⁰ While this aspect is not explicitly referred to in the surviving fragment concerning Siwa, Eratosthenes' theories pertaining to water as an agent for natural causation account for all the phenomena of Siwa without the need for divine intervention. For Eratosthenes, it is 'mindless' Nature, not Amun-Zeus, that is the awesome force at play here.¹⁵⁷¹



Figure 8: View east from the Temple of the Oracle, Siwa. Temple in left foreground.

(Photo: J.D. McDermott, 2022)

¹⁵⁷⁰ Eratosth. F87 (=Strabo 16.1.21–22); F96 (=Strabo 16.1.12).

¹⁵⁷¹ See: Ch 3.3.II.C & 3.3.III. B.

Appendix 5. Eratosthenes' spatial geography

I. Eratosthenes' parallels and meridian in the Eastern Mediterranean

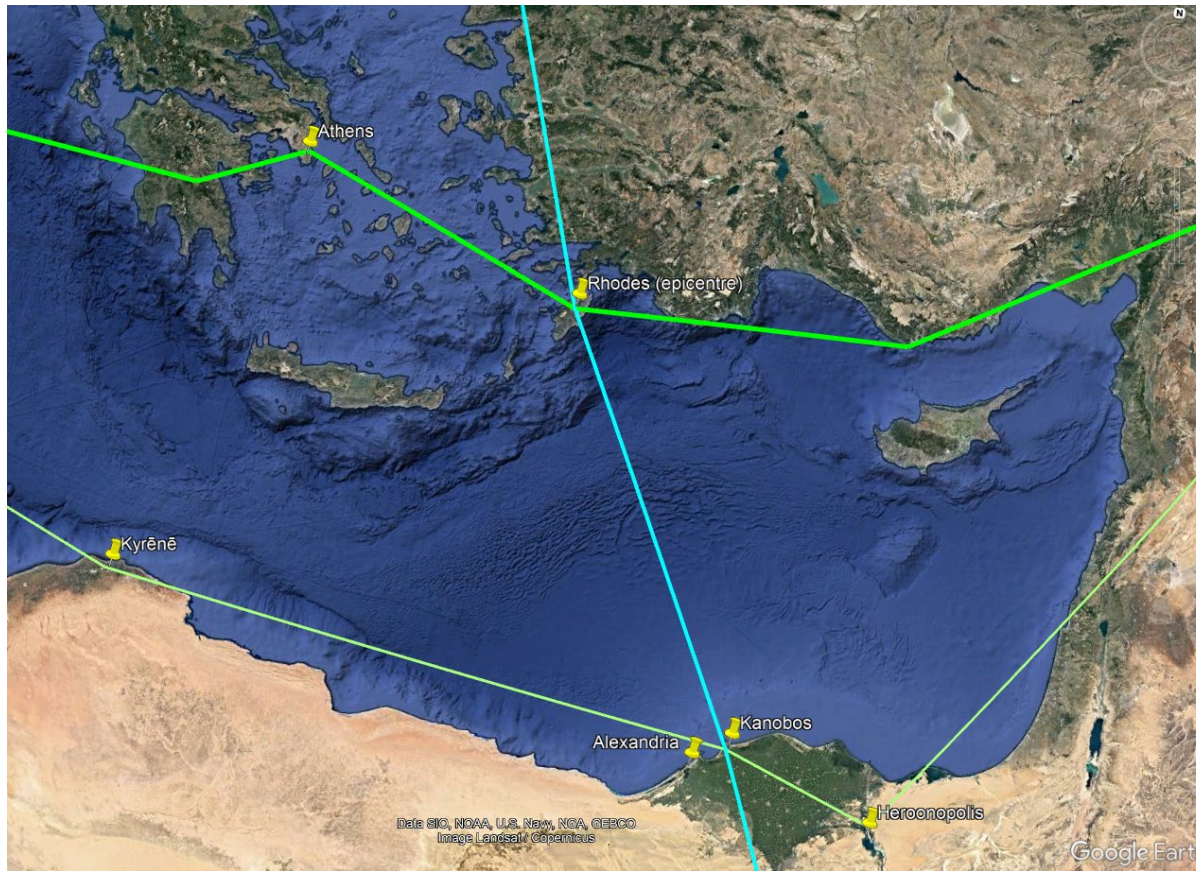


Figure 9A: Effects of Eratosthenes' prime parallel, prime meridian, and a secondary (Alexandrian) parallel' on the Ptolemaic thalassocracy (elevation: 1,200 kms)¹⁵⁷²

Figure 9A shows the intersection of the prime parallel and prime meridian meeting sharply at Rhodes.¹⁵⁷³ Note the presence of Athens also on the prime parallel, which is used to identify this main organising feature of the *oikoumenē* elsewhere.¹⁵⁷⁴ The prime meridian bisects the Kanobic mouth of the Nile and Rhodes, with Alexandria 50 kilometres southwest (see figure 9B). Note that Alexandria sits on a secondary parallel of lesser geographical significance for Eratosthenes' spatial geography.¹⁵⁷⁵ This secondary parallel, shared by Kyrene, Alexandria, Heroöpolis, and Thapsakos is a notably 'broken line' (κεκλασμένη ή γραμμή), something criticised by Strabo.¹⁵⁷⁶ Indeed, Strabo finds himself in rare, qualified agreement with this aspect of Hipparchos' *Against the Geography of Eratosthenes*. Strabo observes these lines are 'not

¹⁵⁷² Google Earth Pro 7.3 (2023).

¹⁵⁷³ Eratosth. F53 (=Strabo 2.5.14); 54 (= Strabo 2.1.35); F56 (=Strabo =2.1.33); F60 (=Strabo 2.5.39).

¹⁵⁷⁴ Eratosth. F47 (=Strabo 2.1.1). See: Ch. 3.4.I & II.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Eratosth. F49 (=Strabo 2.1.31); F48 (=Strabo 11.12.4-5).

¹⁵⁷⁶ Eratosth. F55 (=Strabo 2.1.37).

taken well' (οὐκ εὖ δὲ οὐδὲ αἱ διαβόρειοι λαμβάνονται μερίδες) by Eratosthenes.¹⁵⁷⁷ As we saw in Chapter Three, the effect on the vectoral map of the Ptolemies is significant, disrupting vectors to the Euxine Sea, Samos, and the Nesiotic league to the north.¹⁵⁷⁸ Closer to home, links to Kypros, Koelē -Syria, and the Anatolian coast are severely interrupted.

II. Eratosthenes' fourth *sphragis*

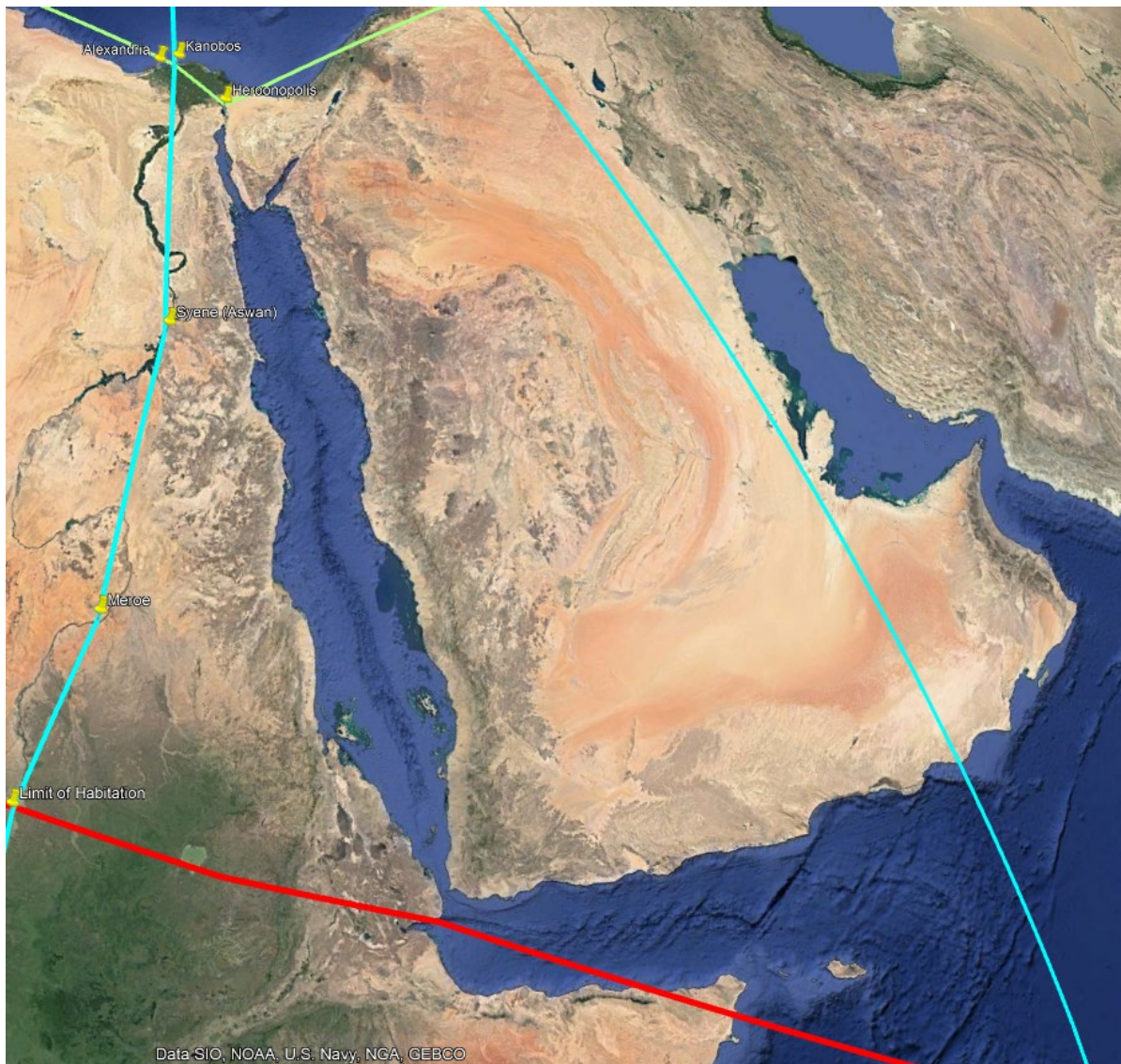


Figure 9B: The fourth *sphragis* of Eratosthenes' *Geographika* (Eratosth. F56 (=Strabo 2.1.33); F92 (=Strabo 2.1.32)) (elevation: 3,200 kms)¹⁵⁷⁹

¹⁵⁷⁷ Eratosth. F56 (=Strabo 2.1.33); cf. F62 (=Strabo 2.1.36).

¹⁵⁷⁸ See: Ch. 3.4.I & II.

¹⁵⁷⁹ *Google Earth Pro 7.3* (2023).

The fourth *sphragis* has sometimes been presented as an imperial expression, aggregating Ptolemaic Egypt with claims over areas to the south and east.¹⁵⁸⁰ In Visscher's map, the eastern boundary drifts far to the east, reaching midway to Kyrene. It is described as a territorialising claim reflecting the 'immediate historical reality' at the outset of the Third Syrian War (246 BCE) with 'Arabia, Syria, and the Levant' acquired by Alexandria.¹⁵⁸¹ Such a depiction seems to depend on fragment 92 alone. However, a closer reading of fragment 56 provides more detail. Here, the western boundary—the main meridian—is defined as near (περὶ) Alexandria and Kanobos, 'at that point' is identified as the Kanobic/Herakleotic mouth ('ἐνταῦθα γὰρ ἔστι τὸ ἔσχατον στόμα τὸ καλούμενον Κανωβικόν τε καὶ Ἡρακλεωτικόν').¹⁵⁸² This is some 52 kilometres northeast of Alexandria. As such, Alexandria sits outside the *sphragis*, creating significant difficulties for a propagandistic reading.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Visscher (2020) 68, Map 4; cf. Roller (2010) 168, 192-3, 250.

¹⁵⁸¹ Visscher (2020) 68.

¹⁵⁸² F56 (=Strabo 2.1.33).

Appendix 6. India, Asia: geographers' projections

I. Megasthenes' India

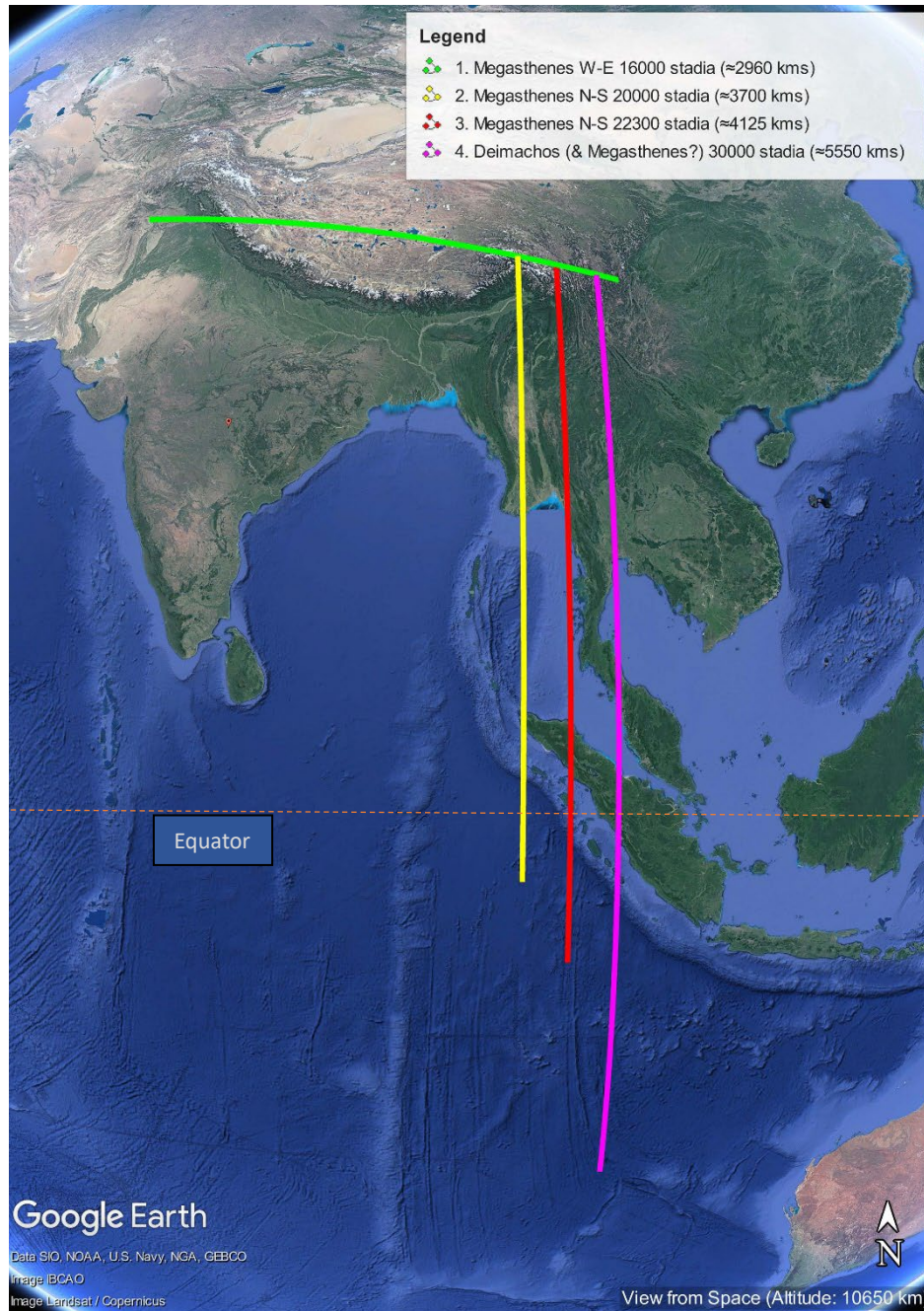


Figure 10: Megasthenes' length and width of India according to Arrian, Strabo, and Diodoros, using 'attic' stadia of 185m (D. Engels (1985)) superimposed over satellite image of S/SE Asia and Indian Ocean (elevation: 10,650kms)¹⁵⁸³

Megasthenes' west–east measurement of India's 'length' (μήκους) totals 16,000 stadia reported in Arrian and in book two and fifteen of Strabo (10,000 from the River Indus to

¹⁵⁸³ Google Earth Pro 7.3 (2023).

Palimbothra, plus 6,000 to the sea).¹⁵⁸⁴ However, we have several conflicting accounts of Megasthenes' north–south measurement, the 'width' (πλάτος), of India. Strabo provides several measurements. At 2.1.7, Strabo aggregates Megasthenes' measurements with Eratosthenes' (*contra* Patrokles') at 20,000.¹⁵⁸⁵ Also in book two, we have the assertion that Deimachos and Megasthenes record the length to the southern sea as 20,000 'in places', and in other places 30,000, something echoed in the Diodoros fragment.¹⁵⁸⁶ In Arrian, Megasthenes' north–south measurement is more precisely presented as 22,300 stadia (marked in red on Fig.9). He says that 'for [Megasthenes] the span from north to south is the length, extending 22,300 stadia where it is narrowest,' referring to the south–eastern cape.¹⁵⁸⁷ We get a sense here of the landmass extending to the equator in the southeast corner. This is reinforced by Megasthenes' astronomical observations, noting that 'in the southern parts of India, the Bears set and the shadows fall in the opposite directions'.¹⁵⁸⁸ Stoneman observes that this is technically true throughout the torrid zone, yet the antipodean observation is more notable and meaningful for Megasthenes' depiction of a land which nears, or crosses into, the southern hemisphere.¹⁵⁸⁹ Megasthenes has presented India as a true giant of the map.

This projection on a satellite image (fig. 10) has significant limitations. It should be noted that Megasthenes (followed by Eratosthenes) understood the River Indus to flow in a southerly, rather than south–westerly direction, profoundly distorting the western edge of India proper. This allows for the 'rhomboidal' shape of the *sphragis* described in Eratosthenes' *Geographika*.¹⁵⁹⁰ It is worth keeping in mind that the Mauryan kingdom in Megasthenes and Strabo extends westwards well beyond the Indus valley.¹⁵⁹¹ Finally, despite these limitations, the projection provides a sense of the spatial exaggerations of India on Megasthenes' map. This was a kingdom that spanned a landmass the size of a continent.

¹⁵⁸⁴ *BNJ* 715 F6b (=Arr. *Ind.* 3.6–8); F6d (=Strabo 2.1.7); also in Strabo 15.1.11–12. However, this second Strabo fragment is the result of a Casaubon amendment (1587), followed by most since. Although: Kramer (1852) 230.

¹⁵⁸⁵ '...τὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς πλάτος δισμμυρίων σταδίων' *BNJ* 712 F3a (=Strabo 2.1.7)

¹⁵⁸⁶ 'δυεῖν ἀντιμαρτυρούντων αὐτῶι Δημάχου τε καὶ Μεγασθέου, οἱ καθ' οὓς μὲν τόπους δισμμυρίων εἶναι σταδίων τὸ διάστημα φασὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς κατὰ μεσημβρίαν θαλάττης, καθ' οὓς δὲ καὶ τρισμμυρίων' *BNJ* 715 T5 (=Strabo 2.1.4, 68); cf. F4 (=Diod. *Sic.* 2.35.1–42); although he later associates the top of the range with Deimachos alone: 'Δημάχος δ' ὑπὲρ τοὺς τρισμμυρίους κατ' ἐνίους τόπους πρὸς οὓς ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις λόγοις εἴρηται' *BNJ* 715 F6c (=Strabo 15.1.11–2).

¹⁵⁸⁷ 'καὶ ἐπέχει <σταδίους> τριηκοσίους καὶ δισχιλίους καὶ δισμμυρίους ἵνα περ τὸ στενότατον αὐτοῦ.' *BNJ* 715 F6b (= Arr. *Ind.* 3.6–8).

¹⁵⁸⁸ 'Μεγασθέου τε ἀντιλέγειν φήσαντι ἐν τοῖς νοτίοις μέρεσι τῆς Ἰνδικῆς τὰς τε ἄρκτους ἀποκρύπτεσθαι καὶ τὰς σκιάς ἀντιπίπτειν' F7A (=Strabo 2.1.19–20); F4 Diod. *Sic.* 2.35.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Stoneman (2022) 91.

¹⁵⁹⁰ 'ὥστε καὶ τετράπλευρος ὀρθῶς λέγεται καὶ ῥομβοειδῆς' Eratosth. F49 (= Strabo 2.1.31). See: Ch. 3.4.II.

¹⁵⁹¹ See: Ch. 4.2.II–III.

II. Patrokles' India

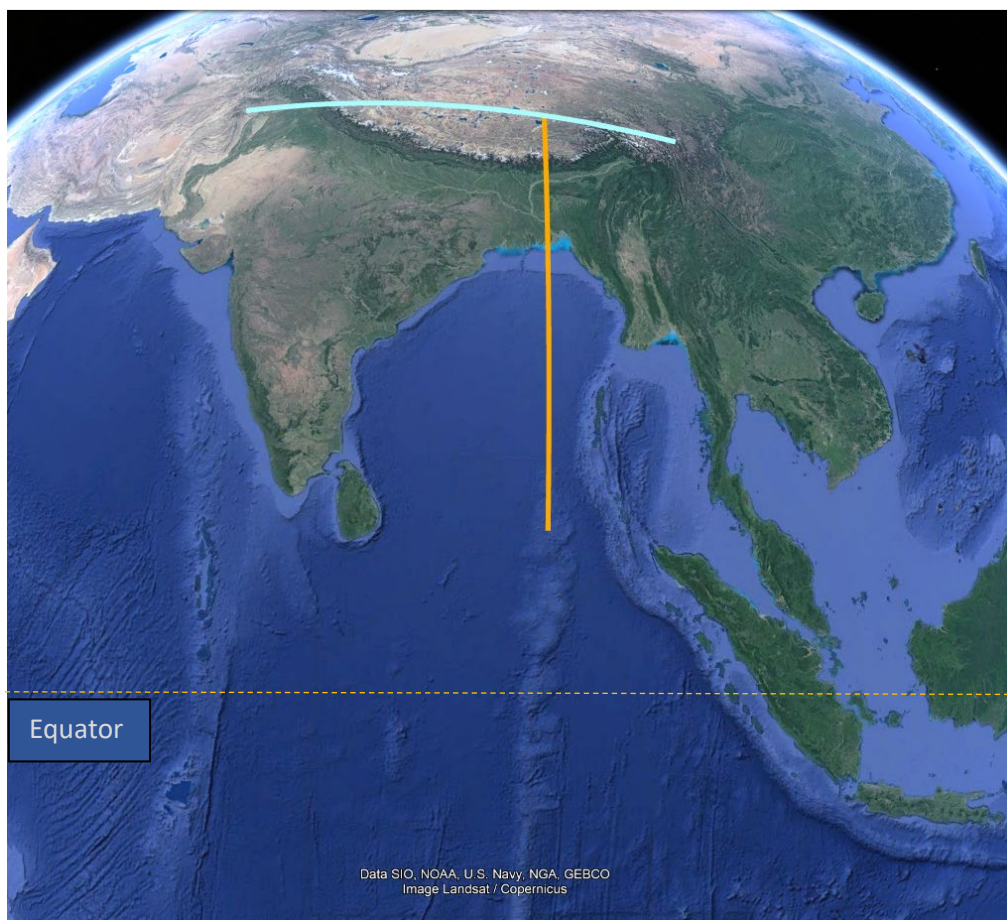


Figure 11: Patrokles' smaller measurements of India: a less threatening kingdom (elevation: 5,400 kms)¹⁵⁹²

Patrokles' India presents a very different picture. Rather than the antipodal India reaching deep into the Ocean, we are presented with a more manageable country, smaller than it is in reality. With an east–west length of 15,000 stadia (*BNJ* 712 F2 (=Strabo 2.1.2–6)) and a north–south 'width' of only 12,000 (F3a (=Strabo 2.1.7)), the territory can be feasibly reached through the north–east passage which Patrokles claimed to have navigated. What a satellite image cannot show is the imagined Ocean of Patrokles. We need to imagine an *oikoumenē* in which not only China and Eastern Russia, but much of central Asia, is replaced with open water. Further, the Kaspian Sea is not only an open harbour, but it is the most northerly point (ἀρκτικώτερον) of the *oikoumenē*, creating a smooth periplous to India which is notable as an explicitly practical route (περίπλουν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς δυνατόν), effortlessly

¹⁵⁹² *Google Earth Pro* 7.3 (2023).

navigated.¹⁵⁹³ These cartographical errors would have only positive effects for the propaganda of Seleukid imperial geography.

III. The Kaspian Sea, Aral Sea, River Oxus, River Iaxartes



Figure 12: The River Oxos and River Iaxartes debouche not into the Kaspian Sea, but the Aral Sea. There was no waterborne route between the two in antiquity or today (elevation: 2,300 kms)¹⁵⁹⁴

The River Jaxartes (Syr Darya) has its sources in the western edge of the Tian Shen range, forming in the Fergana Valley. The River Oxus (Amu Darya) begins in the Pamir range north of the Hindu Kush where the Panj and Vakhsh converge. Both rivers complete their journeys

¹⁵⁹³ *BNJ* 712 F4a (=Strabo 2.1.17).

¹⁵⁹⁴ *Google Earth Pro* 7.3 (2023).

not at the Kaspian Sea, as Patrokles claims, but at the Aral sea.¹⁵⁹⁵ The grim picture of the Aral Sea courtesy of satellite photography does not accurately reflect its condition in antiquity, having dramatically dried up over the past century from large-scale dams and irrigation.¹⁵⁹⁶ Yet at no stage in antiquity were there fluvial connections between the Aral and the Kaspian Seas. Patrokles' depiction of vibrant fluviant vectors from India to the Kaspian were a geographic fallacy.

IV. Patrokles' Oceanic vector

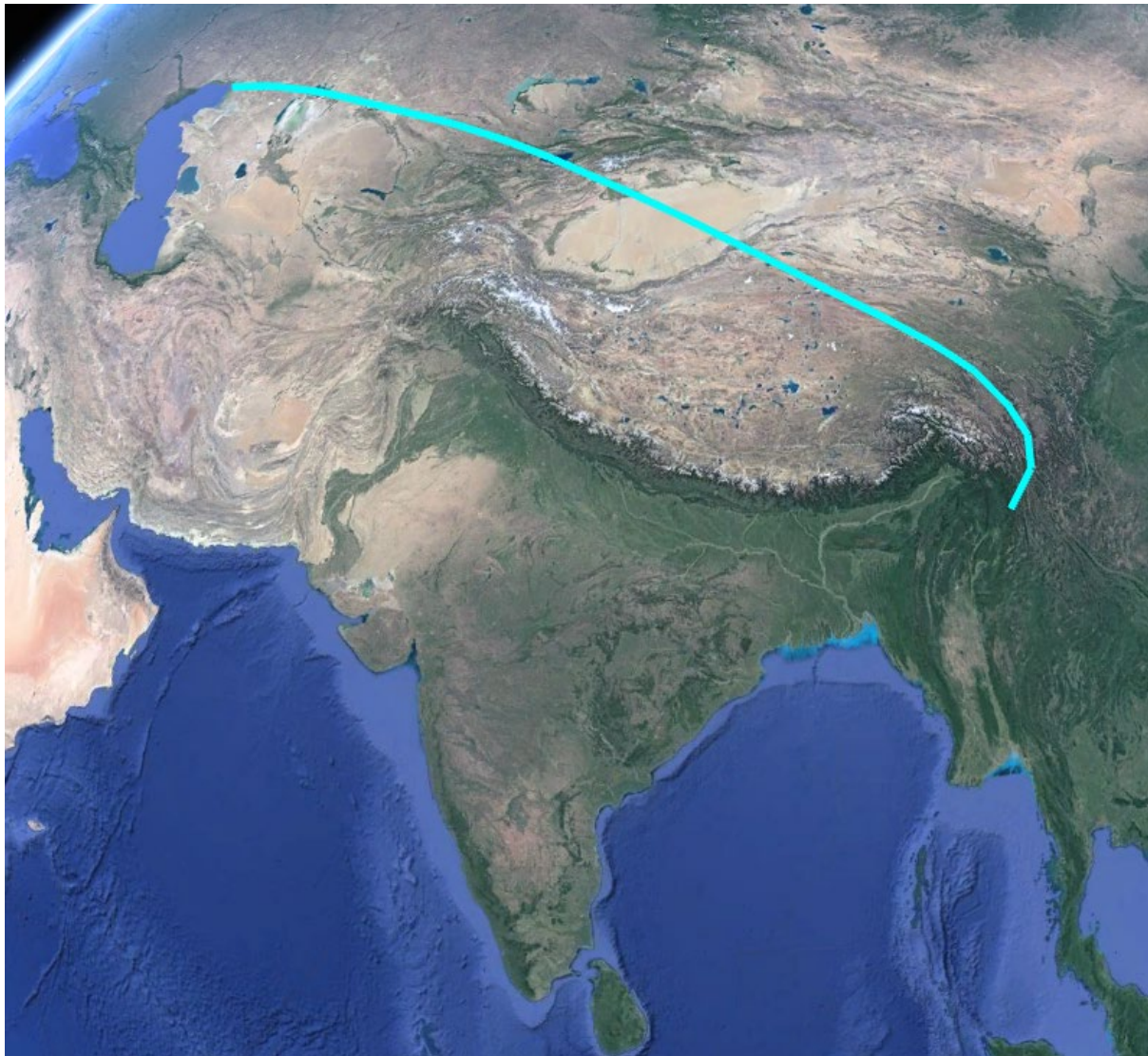


Figure 13: Patrokles' Oceanic Vector accesses eastern India via a fictitious maritime route to and from the Kaspian Sea (elevation: 5,300 kms)¹⁵⁹⁷

The best deceptions are surrounded with credible evidence and Patrokles' Oceanic vector, from the Kaspian Sea to eastern India via the Ocean, seems to have done exactly that. Having provided credible measurements for the Kaspian sea and the Indian land mass, Patrokles

¹⁵⁹⁵ See: Ch. 4.3.I.C.

¹⁵⁹⁶ R. Létolle, P. Micklin, A. Aladin, I. Plotnikov (2007).

¹⁵⁹⁷ *Google Earth Pro 7.3* (2023).

claims to have travelled between the two. The ‘tapering’ (μείουρον) route described by Strabo has us start from the most northerly point at the mouth of the Kaspian, before moving unimpeded to eastern India.¹⁵⁹⁸ Not only are the riches of the east accessible, but the Mauryan empire has been enveloped by Seleukid imperial vector.

The claimed territories of ‘Seleucida’ and ‘Antiochida’ described by Pliny would appear to be easily accommodated by a much reduced eastern Skythia.¹⁵⁹⁹ The steppe has been circumnavigated and the entire eastern oikoumene is unambiguously claimed as Seleukid space. Pliny’s territorialising ends with a return to the Seleukid centre at the Kaspian sea.

V. Patrokles’ navigation of the Kaspian Sea



Figure 14: Patrokles’ measurement of the Kaspian Sea (5,000 Stadia (925 kms)) (elevation: 5,200 kms)¹⁶⁰⁰

¹⁵⁹⁸ *BNJ* 712 F4a (=Strabo 2.1.17); Strabo 11.11.7.

¹⁵⁹⁹ *BNJ* 712 F4c (=Plin. *HN* 2.167).

¹⁶⁰⁰ *Google Earth Pro* 7.3 (2023).

As we can see in figure 13, Patrokles successfully measured the length of the Kaspian Sea, suggesting the geographer had cartographic skill. It also suggests autopsy, the navigator or a reliable underling successfully making the journey and back again. This makes his fabrications all the more persuasive. The errors concerning the northern Kaspian Sea, especially the Volga estuary, would appear to be deliberate fabrications rather than the errors of hearsay.

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