CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

SPHS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Alexander and empire: a commentary on a new testimony to Onesicritus (Sen. *Ben.* 7.2.5)

Julian Degen

University of Trier
Email: degen@uni-trier.de

Abstract

This article is a commentary on a recently discovered testimony to Onesicritus, in which the writer speaks about his role as participant in the expedition of Alexander. It will be argued that the ideological backdrop of the testimony was Alexander's claim to universalism, which was intended to be a response to the ancient Near Eastern discourse on empire. Alexander adopted ideological concepts of successful rulership used by the Achaemenids in order to stabilize control in Asia. For this purpose, he claimed to have carried his conquest to the Ocean, which implied universalism. That claim was the main theme in Onesicritus' account and established the literary atmosphere in which the writer determined his role during the navigation of the Indian Ocean.

Keywords: Alexander; Onesicritus; Indian Ocean; empire; Achaemenids

I. Introduction

Although research on Alexander III (the Great) has increasingly focused on the lost accounts of the so-called primary authors in recent years, comparatively little attention has been paid to Onesicritus (probably of Astypalaea; *BNJ* 134).[1] The major publication on this author is still the thoughtful commentary on the fragments published over ten years ago by Michael Whitby.[2] However, discussion is expected to intensify, since Reinhold Bichler recently drew attention to a hitherto unnoticed reference to Onesicritus in Seneca the Younger's *De beneficiis*. This reference needs to be considered as a biographical testimony to Onesicritus recounting his tasks as a participant in Alexander's expedition in the course of naval missions, rather than a fragment deriving from his still-lost account.[3] Whereas Onesicritus' life and much of his literary production are shrouded in mystery, the information provided by Seneca can contribute much to our understanding of his literary aims. There are two reasons which may justify an exhaustive treatment of this testimony.

[1] The literature on Alexander which also deals with Onesicritus is too rich to be reviewed here. Studies of the last 20 years focused on Onesicritus are Mariotta (2017) (extension of Onesicritus' explorations of the Indian Ocean); Winiarczyk (2011) 73–115 and (2007) (literary genre); Müller (2014) and (2011) (literary aims); Zambrini (2007) (general discussion of the first accounts). See the chapter on Alexander in India by Stoneman (2019) 36–79. In comparison, the other earliest writers about Alexander's expedition received more attention. A recent overview is provided by the bibliographical essays of Marín (2018).

[2] Whitby (2011).

[3] For a critical approach to definitions of 'fragments' and 'testimonia' as established by German scholars of the 19th century, see Dionisotti (1997); Schepens (1997).

First, simply the fact that this passage went unnoticed in Felix Jacoby's *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* and in its follow-up project *Brill's New Jacoby* is remarkable. This implies that it was not considered to be significant evidence in the discussion of either Alexander or Onesicritus. Then, although Bichler's article is a truly important contribution to the overall discussion on this little-known writer, he leaves it to future studies to gauge what can be inferred from it.[4]

The present study intends to fill this gap, as a commentary discussing the testimony against the backdrop of the accounts of the earliest writers about Alexander. It will be argued here that Alexander's claim to universalism was the prevailing theme in Onesicritus' account, which also established the literary atmosphere in which the author determined his role as a participant in Alexander's expedition. In addition, I attempt to show that Alexander promoted universalism by claiming successful conquest up to the Ocean. In this way, he responded to the Great Kings' imperial representation and thus met the expectations of his Asian subjects, who were accustomed to Achaemenid concepts of legitimation.

The brief mention of Onesicritus in Seneca's work can be divided into two related segments. Whilst the first is about his tasks, the focus of the second concerns Seneca's own interpretation based on his reading of Onesicritus.[5] Both segments are equally important for examining the original intention of Onesicritus' account. I shall begin with the first.

II. Onesicritus, scout and conqueror

As every reader of Seneca's works knows, he sometimes uses Alexander as a moral *exemplum* to illustrate Stoic ideals.[6] With the intention of exemplifying the values of the ideal Stoic man, Seneca refers to Alexander's insatiable appetite for conquest as an antithesis. In Seneca's opinion, only the state of freedom from urges can prevent what he calls 'mental confusion' (*distorquentibus mentem*, *Ben.* 7.2.4). The central message of Seneca's essay is that the ultimate objective of Stoic doctrine, that of attaining *sapientia*, can be achieved only if one relinquishes all ambitious struggles with other men (7.2).[7] By following these instructions, it is possible to become a wise man (*sapiens*), he who ultimately possesses everything (7.2.5, 6.2). All this means that in referring to Alexander the philosopher does not rebuke him on principle for being a conqueror; instead he points to the Macedonian ruler's never-ending lust for conquest as his most obvious negative trait, which definitely does not correspond with Stoic maxims. Hence, the wise man who is freed from such desires shall possess much more than Alexander could ever have conquered. For the purpose of exemplifying this maxim, Seneca refers to Alexander as an antithesis to the Stoic ideals, at which point he thinks of Onesicritus (7.2.5):

> Et ne illum existimes paruo esse contentum, omnia illius sunt, non sic, quemadmodum Alexandri fuerunt, cui, quamquam in litore rubri maris steterat, plus deerat, quam qua uenerat. Illius ne ea quidem erant, quae tenebat aut uicerat, cum in oceano Onesicritus praemissus explorator erraret et bella in ignoto mari quaereret.

---

[4] Bichler (2018) 69: 'We do not know what Seneca in his mention of Onesicritus specifically referred to. But the taken-for-grantedness with which the latter's name crossed his mind in this context could give us food for thought'. See also Griffin (2013) 323.

[5] Watt (1994) 230 has argued that the segments are joined together.

[6] For an overview see Celotta (2018) 327.

[7] See Setaioli (2013) 243.

And do not suppose that he [*sc.* the ideal Stoic] is content with a little—all things are his, and not in the sense in which they were Alexander's, who, although he stood upon the shore of the Indian Ocean, had need of more territory than he had passed through. Nor did he even own the kingdoms that he was holding or had conquered, while Onesicritus, who had been sent ahead, roamed as scout over the Ocean and stirred up war by sea in the unknown sea.[8]

What makes this passage so important is Seneca's designation of Onesicritus' roles as those of scout and conqueror. Based on the available evidence, the majority of scholars have regarded him as a Cynic philosopher in Alexander's entourage who had written an account in which philosophy, utopia and fiction were blended together.[9] However, in recent years, commentators have begun to doubt Onesicritus' role as a philosopher, instead viewing him as a flatterer of Alexander.[10] Therefore, Seneca's statement is an unexpected but welcome contribution to the discussion, which merits serious investigation.

The fact that Onesicritus occurred to Seneca is surprising, since his interest in his work is limited. No other fragment or report about Onesicritus can be found in the corpus of his works. Based on Seneca's references to the accounts of the earliest writers about Alexander's expedition, it can be said that he read Callisthenes (*BNJ* 124)[11] and possibly also Aristobulus (*BNJ* 139).[12] Bearing this in mind, Seneca's choice of Onesicritus' work is exceptional and deserves further explanation.

It is possible to make a good argument for Seneca having read Onesicritus' account on the basis of how the latter designates his own tasks. This served Onesicritus' intention to elevate his otherwise only poorly known and thus probably minor position in Alexander's empire. This is supported by the fact that a pattern emerges from the extant fragments which shows that Onesicritus exaggerated his value to the voyage on the Indian Ocean in 325 BC.[13] We do not know what rank he held in Alexander's fleet, but in his account he definitely referred to himself as the captain of the naval mission.[14] It is possible that being the first of all those who followed Alexander to Asia to publish his account gave him the chance to present himself in a favourable light. On the other hand, there is ample reason for regarding Nearchus as the captain of this mission.[15] The latter also wrote an account of the voyage, published after Onesicritus' work, in which he accused the latter of bending the facts.[16]

---

[8] Text and tr. Basore (1935), with slight modifications. Basore translated *cum in oceano Onesicritus praemissus explorator erraret et bella in ignoto mari quaereret* imprecisely as 'while Onesicritus, who had been ahead to discover new ones, was wandering about the ocean and stirring up war on unknown seas'. His translation is based on the presupposition that Alexander discovered unknown seas and hence he ignores the meaning of *praemissus explorator* as 'scout' and *mari* as the locative singular of *mare.* On 'scout' as a translation of *explorator* in a military context see *Oxford Latin Dictionary, s.v.* explorator. Briant (2013) has shown that it is possible to argue for viewing the modern interpretation of the voyages undertaken during the reign of Alexander as expeditions of discovery as a scholarly myth that goes back to scholars of the 17th century. Furthermore, Basore was unaware that the 'Red Sea' or Erythraean Sea, *mare rubrum*, i.e. ἐρυθρὰ θάλαττα, was part of the Ocean encircling the sea in ancient Greek thought. On this issue, see Berger (1907) 592. Accordingly, the 'Red Sea' mentioned by Seneca corresponds to the western Indian Ocean and modern Red Sea.

[9] For Strabo's assessment, see *BNJ* 134 T10. *Cf.* Pearson (1960) 85–90.

[10] Glorification of Alexander: Müller (2011) 47–56; Zambrini (2007) 212–14. No philosophical aims: Winiarczyk (2007).

[11] *BNJ* 124 F19, F20, F21. For his father's knowledge of Callisthenes' work, see T13.

[12] *BNJ* 139 F47 with parallels to Sen. *Ep.* 59.12 and Curt. 8.10.20.

[13] Whitby (2011) *ad BNJ* 134 T4, T5a, T5b, T6, F27. Bichler (2018) 67–68; Zambrini (2007) *contra* Badian (1975) 158–60. All evidence available is collected in Berve (1926) nos 272, 290; Heckel (2006) 184.

[14] *BNJ* 134 F27. On Onesicritus' role as royal helmsman, see Müller (2011) 53–55; Hauben (1987).

[15] *BNJ* 133 T1; *BNJ* 134 T5b; *BNJ* 713 F2.

[16] Degen (2022b) 522–25. See the controversy between Bosworth (1987) and Badian (1975) (Nearchus staged himself); Hauben (1987) (Onesicritus obtained a high rank in Alexander's fleet). *Cf.* Pédech (1984) 74.

In the light of Onesicritus' self-representation, it is easy to imagine that he situated himself as a scout whom Alexander sent ahead to roam over the Ocean with the aim of downplaying the importance of his rival Nearchus.[17] Seneca's definition of Onesicritus' task can be used as an argument to view conquest as the original purpose of the navigation, which scholars view as an expedition of discovery.[18] However, whether the exploration of the Indian Ocean was really Alexander's motive for sending out his fleet is open to question. That the aspect of conquest and not exploration of the unknown was dominant in Onesicritus' work may be inferred from Pliny the Elder, who used it as a source for his description of the fauna of the supposedly mythical island of Taprobane (Sri Lanka) in the *Naturalis historia*.[19] Whether Onesicritus simply hinted at the existence of this island or claimed credit for its discovery cannot be answered with complete certainty. However, that statement corresponds with another reference to Onesicritus, in Solinus' collection of miracles. There, Alexander is said to have sent Onesicritus on a naval mission to the mythical island.[20] The historicity of this mission should not be accepted without strong reservations. In this case, Onesicritus' mission seems to be out of its original context, since Solinus' interest is clearly focused on geographical investigation of the mythical island. However, this mission shares the same context as Alexander's alleged encounter with the Amazons, which was also part of Onesicritus' work.[21] Both episodes are set in mythical lands at the limits of the *oikoumenē* and thus seem originally to have been examples highlighting the enormous spatial dimensions of the Macedonian campaign.[22] This means that some of the earliest writers about Alexander's expedition created a literary atmosphere in which the conqueror pushed his campaign so far that he reached the limits of the known world, where the land of myth was expected to be located.[23] Apparently their interpretations were intended to highlight the uniqueness of the Macedonian campaign. However, this endeavour was clearly undertaken in the military context of conquest. Seneca's classification of Onesicritus' task as that of a scout clearly shows that the latter presented himself as Alexander's spearhead on the high seas, which highlights conquest as the prevailing aspect of the enterprise.

This assumption is supported by the fact that in our sources nothing suggests that Alexander sent his fleet out to explore part of the Indian Ocean that was no longer an unknown body of water in his time. From various types of evidence, we learn that the 'Red Sea' or 'Erythraean Sea' (that is, the modern western Indian Ocean and the Red Sea) was a frequently used seaway nearly 3,000 years before the Macedonians' arrival.[24] Against this backdrop, it seems that Nearchus was simply in charge of guiding the fleet safely from the mouth of the Indus to Mesopotamia while Alexander led his army through the Gedrosian Desert.[25] This means that exploration was not the major motivation for the navigation through the 'Red Sea'. What strengthens this view is that Alexander's contemporaries probably knew that Darius I claimed to have been the first to discover (ὑπὸ Δαρείου ἐξευρέθη) the eastern parts of Asia, as Herodotus states (4.44).[26] Furthermore, there is

---

[17] According to *BNJ* 133 F1 IX, Nearchus regarded his mission as the exploration of the coast of the Persian Gulf.
[18] For instance, see Gehrke (2016) 90; Bucciantini (2015). Marín (2017) 295 has argued that it was Eratosthenes' decision to make of Alexander a geographer.
[19] *BNJ* 134 F13.
[20] Solin. 53.1–2. This passage is not part of *BNJ*'s collection. On the possibility that Onesicritus did indeed reach Sri Lanka, see Mariotta (2017). Nevertheless, the fact that Solinus refers to Onesicritus as *praefectus classis Macedonicae* therein should raise doubts about the historicity of this naval mission.
[21] *BNJ* 134 F1. See on this Baynham (2001) 116, speculating on Onesicritus' invention of this tale.
[22] Hdt. 4.110 (Amazons); ps.-Arist. [*Mund.*] 393b 15 (Taprobane).
[23] Bichler (2018); Whitby (2011) *ad loc.*; Baynham (2001) 116; Pearson (1960) 93.
[24] Gupta (2018). See also Berger (1907).
[25] Bosworth (1996) 169–76; (1988a) 143–46; (1987).
[26] Perhaps the participants in Alexander's expedition were also aware of Skylax of Karyanda's account of his voyage on the 'Red Sea' (*FGrH* 1000; *BNJ*² 709).

ample evidence in Herodotus' *Histories* and indigenous sources to suggest that the coastal regions of the Persian Gulf were part of the Achaemenid administrative system.[27] Moreover, Strabo 15.2.3 mentions that Alexander sent out pioneers in advance to Gedrosia and its coast to establish stations for the army and the fleet before he set out to cross the desert. Obviously, Onesicritus' account of his function as scout was originally set within a military framework and loaded with a meaning other than merely opening up the sea. Therefore, the designation of the Ocean as unknown is not evidence for the geographical knowledge of Alexander's time, but combined a real military task with the self-representation of Onesicritus.

But why did Seneca the Younger refer to the 'Red Sea' as the unknown Ocean? Seneca the Elder's first *Suasoria* is a key to understanding Onesicritus as scout on the unknown sea. This work is about a controversy between scholars on the issue of whether Alexander would have been able to carry his conquest to lands lying in or even beyond the Ocean, which was thought to be the world's utmost limit (*Suas.* 1.1). The outcome of the debate was that it was impossible to conquer the Ocean because it was assumed to be a body of water too vast and hence must remain, literally, 'untroubled by the oar' (*inagitata remigio*). Thus, it is not surprising that the collocutors agree that Alexander's plan to conquer the Ocean and even the lands lying beyond it was never one of his actual military objectives and hence has to be explained by his insatiable lust for conquest. Against this backdrop, it becomes even more plausible that Seneca the Younger understood Onesicritus as someone who reached the edge of the world in the wake of Alexander's campaign.

Evidence for this assumption is provided by the context of Seneca's reference to Onesicritus in *Ben.* 7.2.5, whose subject is not exploration but conquest. This specific task finally qualifies this testimony as exceptional, since it is the only ancient statement in which we find an association between Onesicritus and conquest. It seems possible that this was a self-designation by Onesicritus, who as we have seen exaggerated his role in Alexander's naval missions. In other words, Onesicritus claimed to be playing Nearchus' part. This is suggested by a short note from Plutarch about the naval mission which Alexander ordered Nearchus to undertake in 324 BC. Its purpose for Plutarch was clearly the military conquest of the Ocean's shore (*Alex.* 68.3). The wider context of this mission was Alexander's plan for a circumnavigation of Arabia and Africa, which was to be achieved under Nearchus' command (Plut. *Alex.* 68.1). That endeavour was charged with ideological meaning, because the Achaemenids were known to have failed to circumnavigate these continents (Hdt. 4.42–43).[28] Sailing on the Ocean that encircles the entire world and having reached its remotest corners bestowed connotations of universalism, a key ideological concept of rulers of the ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic empires. These rulers, however, claimed theoretical and not actual supremacy over the entire world.[29] This required a particular mental geography whose limit was the boundless Ocean, thus creating the image of an *imperium sine fine*. According to this world-view, the Ocean itself, and any islands in it, is beyond the limit, so conquest up to the coast qualifies as universal.

Alexander's claim to universalism is not only a feature of Seneca's meditations, it is also well attested in our main sources from the Roman Imperial period. A revealing example is the elaborate argumentation of the Scythian delegation to Alexander, immediately before the Macedonians cross the Tanaïs (i.e. the Iaxartes) in Curtius Rufus' account (7.8.18–19).[30] Curtius does not fail to explain to his readers that Alexander's main trait was his desire to gain possession of every part of the world (7.8.20). The same is true for Arrian's *Anabasis*.

---

[27] Potts (2019).

[28] Bosworth (2007) 450.

[29] Bichler and Rollinger (2017) (overview); Meeus (2014) (Hellenistic rulers); Strootman (2014) (Diadochi).

[30] See Ballesteros-Pastor (2011) and Bosworth (1988a) 110–12 for arguments to identify the Tanaïs with the Iaxartes, the modern Syr-Darya.

When judging Alexander's drive for conquest against the backdrop of Stoic ideals, Arrian discusses his imperial ambitions.[31] Alexander's dialogue with the Indian sophists is only the most famous example among many Macedonian imperial projects used as targets for Arrian's moralization (*Anab.* 7.1.6).[32] Arrian finally breaks with his eulogistic portrait of Alexander in the last book of his *Anabasis*, in which his protagonist's plans to achieve universalism become the main focus of the narrative.[33] The same applies to Plutarch and even to Seneca the Elder, both of whom cite Alexander's will to reach the lands lying beyond the Ocean in order to exemplify his insatiable appetite for conquest (Plut. *Mor.* 207D; Sen. *Suas.* 1.1).[34] As we can see, the Imperial authors all present the same picture of Alexander, dominated by unceasing conquest, aiming to continue to campaign until there was nothing left to conquer.

Was universal conquest also a theme in Onesicritus' account? Surveying the remaining fragments of his work, one has the impression that later authors used it mainly for quoting fiction rather than for matters concerning Alexander's campaign.[35] The scanty evidence about his biographical and intellectual background does not assist us in reaching any conclusions on his literary activity. In this regard, Lucian's remarks on Onesicritus offer a fresh interpretation. An argument for viewing Onesicritus as a flatterer who wrote an account to match what Alexander wanted to hear can be crafted from Lucian's pejorative appraisal of the latter. According to Lucian, Onesicritus was one of the few participants who were known to have praised Alexander not only after his death but also during his lifetime.[36] Thus it seems at least conceivable to include him with those who flattered Alexander, or the circle of writers to whom Ptolemy, Aristobulus and Nearchus belonged, whose works all show the influence of court language.[37]

If the assessment above is correct, certain surviving fragments may shed light on contemporary views of Alexander's campaign, when considered in their specific contexts. The natural phenomena in some fragments are revealing examples of universalism as a prominent theme in Onesicritus' work. Later authors were most interested in his observations about significant changes in flora and fauna that the soldiers had allegedly observed when they reached the Indus Valley. Two fragments can be regarded as praise for Alexander's deeds in this context. In the first, Onesicritus claimed that Alexander had reached the springs of the Nile because his companions saw hippopotamuses in the Indus. As becomes clear from the other fragment, Onesicritus states that the Macedonians traversed the Tropic of Cancer, supporting this assertion with observations of significant changes in shadows and astronomical phenomena. Both statements are devoid of their precise and targeted meaning because the fragments are products of later writers' selective interest and thus their original context has been lost. However, when considered in the context of contemporary geographical conceptions, the two fragments reveal Onesicritus' original intention to glorify Alexander's achievements. Reading the fragments against the backdrop of Herodotean geography is helpful. The same natural phenomena

---

[31] Whether the doctrine of Arrian's former teacher Epictetus had an influence on his *Anabasis* is still a matter of debate. See Brunt (1977) 19–48 (considerable influence) *contra* Stadter (1980) 201 (no influence).

[32] Stoneman (1995); in general, Burliga (2013) 88.

[33] Baron (2018); Liotsakis (2019) 77; Burliga (2013) 109; Bosworth (2007) 453.

[34] See Asirvatham (2018) 368-73.

[35] Baynham (2001) 118–20.

[36] *BNJ* 134 T7. The fact that Onesicritus belonged to Alexander's inner circle, as suggested by Berve (1926) no. 583; Müller (2011); Heckel (2006) 184, could explain his praise for Alexander.

[37] See Degen (2022c); Whitby (2011) *ad BNJ* 134 T7 τῆς τῶν κολακευόντων μερίδος εἰκότως ἂν νομισθείη. On flatterers in Alexander's entourage, see Curt. 8.5.7; Cic. *Arch.* 24; Strabo 11.5.5. See the interpretation of Winiarczyk (2011) 73–115. Winiarczyk (2007) has presented arguments for viewing the aim of Onesicritus' work as glorifying Alexander. However, Baynham (2021) has sounded a note of caution when calling the first accounts of Alexander 'propaganda'.

and fauna which Onesicritus places in India can also be found in Herodotus' description of Ethiopia.[38] In the *Histories*, this land is the southernmost inhabited part of the *oikoumenē*, lying on the equator and at the end of the world (τὰ ἔσχατα γῆς, Hdt. 3.25.1). There is no doubt that the *Histories* must be counted among the most well-known pieces of classical and early Hellenistic period prose in the Greek-speaking world, and therefore can be expected to have had an impact on Alexander's contemporaries' geographical notions.[39] The context of statements about India's natural phenomena originating from Onesicritus which later authors used as fiction seems to support the view of Lucian, who regarded him as having written an account for a specific purpose. Thus, it seems at least conceivable that Onesicritus' account, in which he had the conqueror reach the bounds of the *oikoumenē*, was intended to meet the expectations of Alexander's claim to universalism. Seen against this backdrop, it is possible to argue that Onesicritus' flattering rhetoric derived from Alexander's self-representation, which aimed to demonstrate that he had achieved universalism. As can be seen, a pattern which suggests that universalism was a theme in Onesicritus' work is beginning to emerge from our analysis of the extant fragments of it. The second segment of the testimony enhances this impression.

III. Onesicritus on universalism

Universalism finds a nuanced expression in Seneca the Younger's interpretation of Alexander's character, which immediately follows the reference to Onesicritus (*Ben.* 7.2.6–3.1):

> Non satis apparebat inopem esse, qui extra naturae terminos arma proferret, qui se in profundum inexploratum et immensum auiditate caeca prosus immitteret? Quid interest, quot eripuerit regna, quot dederit, quantum terrarum tributo premat? Tantum illi deest, quantum cupit. Nec hoc Alexandri tantum uitium fuit, quem per Liberi Herculisque uestigia felix temeritas egit, sed omnium, quos fortuna irritauit implendo. Cyrum et Cambysen et totum regni Persici stemma percense. Quem inuenies, cui modum imperii satietas fecerit, qui non uitam in aliqua ulterius procedendi cogitatione finierit? Nec id mirum est; quidquid cupiditati contingit, penitus hauritur et conditur, nec interest, quantum eo, quod inexplebile est, congeras.

> Was it not quite clear that it was a man without resources who pushed his weapons beyond the bounds of Nature, who, driven on by blind greed, plunged headlong into an unexplored and boundless sea? What difference does it make how many kingdoms he has snatched, how many he has bestowed, how many lands he oppresses with tribute? He has need of as much as he still covets. Nor was this the vice of Alexander alone, whose successful audacity led him to follow in the footsteps of Liber and Hercules, but of all those whom Fortune has goaded on by rich gifts. Consider Cyrus and Cambyses and all the royal line of Persia. Will you find any among them for whom contentment imposed a limit upon their empire, who did not end his life in plan to advance farther? Nor need we wonder; anything that comes into contact with greed is drawn in deeply and stored away, and it does not make any difference how great a quantity you pile up in something that is unfillable.[40]

---

[38] *BNJ* 134 F7 (hippopotamuses in India); *BNJ* 134 F9, F10 (Tropic of Cancer). See also Whitby (2011) *ad BNJ* F9 and F10. For arguments that natural phenomena in Onesicritus served the purpose of highlighting Alexander's claim to universalism, see Bichler (2018) 63–64, 66; Müller (2011) 54, 64; Pearson (1960) 13, 15; *contra* Geus (2019) (no propagandistic intention).

[39] Matijašić (2019); Taietti (2016).

[40] Tr. Basore (1935), with slight modifications. I am deeply grateful to the reviewers for their thoughtful improvements to the translation.

Since Seneca referred to Onesicritus in the previous line, it can be suggested that what he read in his account had a considerable influence on his characterization of Alexander. The fact that Seneca puts focus on Onesicritus in this passage indicates his knowledge of his account and may be a hint to his reading. It is surprising that Seneca associates Alexander with the Persian Great Kings whose dissatisfaction with the limits of their empire was a trait he shared. This close association with the Persian rulers, to whom Seneca accords no special role in his works, is not without basis. The only examples of rulers whose lust for conquest was comparable to that of Alexander in *De beneficiis* can be found in the *Histories* of Herodotus, in which taking conquest to the limits of the world was a particular feature of the Teispids and Achaemenids. The most revealing instance of this comes from Xerxes I's speech given in the so-called 'Crown Council', which was considered part of the Ocean encircling the world in Achaemenid royal texts.[41] According to Herodotus 7.8γ1–2, the limits of heaven became Xerxes' military objective when campaigning against Hellas.[42] Nothing in our sources indicates that the Great Kings gave up their claim to universalism after the Persian Wars. This can be seen from Aeschines, who states that Alexander's military success ended the dissemination of the Achaemenids' letters in which they claimed universalism (*In Ctes.* 132). Although Seneca was thinking about the Herodotean Great Kings when penning these lines, the association of universalism with the conquest of the Ocean deserves further examination.

Herodotus may generally explain the Achaemenid claim to universalism by reference to the Great Kings' hubristic traits, but this theme is approached with subtlety in certain episodes of his work. This applies particularly to Darius I's attitude towards the sea. The Achaemenid king is said to have sailed the Ocean twice in the context of staging his military success. He did so when he reached the Indian Ocean having accomplished his conquest of the Indus Valley, and in sailing the Pontus Euxinus before campaigning against the Scythians (Hdt. 4.44, 85–87). Robert Rollinger and Johannes Haubold have shown convincingly that these episodes should be viewed in the context of Achaemenid royal ideology.[43] This means that the Great Kings were acting out an ancient script, aiming to stage imperial success by showing their ability to do what their predecessors had failed to achieve. The connotation of these symbolic acts in respect of the sea cannot be understood without considering their original contexts.

The shared kernel of both Herodotean episodes is deeply rooted in the discourse on empire in the first millennium BC, in which large bodies of water such as the sea and the Ocean became essential reference points for highlighting imperial success. Good examples can be found in the Neo-Assyrian period. Each king claimed to have surpassed the achievements of his predecessor, which were measured in terms of reaching the 'Upper and the Lower Sea' (*tâmti elīti adi tâmti šaplīti*), locations that were heavy with meaning in the mental geography of royal propaganda.[44] Although reaching these points was regarded as fundamental for claiming universalism, later rulers gradually outperformed their predecessors' claims by extending the imperial borders towards the sea. There is an abundance of ancient evidence for this.[45] A telling example comes from the texts of the Neo-Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who drew on this discourse by expanding his claim to include power over the islands in the Upper and Lower Seas and even those in the 'Midst of the Sea' (*qabal tâmti*).[46] This claim, which included even the remotest places, could not be surpassed. The much later Cyrus Cylinder likewise asserts that the Upper and Lower Seas

---

[41] Degen (2019a); Haubold (2012).
[42] See the discussion in Schwab (2017). On ancient Near Eastern elements in the *Histories*, see Rollinger (2018).
[43] Rollinger (2014a); Haubold (2012).
[44] Haubold (2013) 98–107; Stevens (2014); Parker (2011); Lang and Rollinger (2010).
[45] Chicago Assyrian Dictionary 18 *s.v.* tâmtu. See also Yamada (2005).
[46] Lang and Rollinger (2010).

are the limits of the Teispid Empire.[47] Nevertheless, Cyrus' son and successor, Cambyses II, seems to have extended this claim. According to a statement in Herodotus' *Histories* (3.34.4), the Persians praised Cambyses as their most successful ruler because he had added Egypt and the neighbouring sea to the realm he had inherited from his father.[48] It does not matter whether historical credence is given to this episode. It reveals that the Great Kings engaged in this discursive dialogue with their ancient Near Eastern predecessors.

The prevailing claim to universalism could only be extended if a new mental map were used as its framework. Darius I did this in the Babylonian version of his Apadāna-inscriptions in Persepolis (DPg), when he proudly proclaimed that he ruled over lands located beyond the Ocean:

> ᵈú-ru-ma-az-ˊdaˋra-bi šá ra-bu-ú ina muḫ-ḫi DINGIR.MEŠ gab-bi šá AN-e u KI-tì ib-nu-ú u A.MEŠ ib-nu-ú šá dum-qí gab-bi id-din-nu-ma ÙG.MEŠ ina lìb-bi bal-ṭu-ʾ šá a-n[a] ᵐda-a-ri-iạ-muš LUGAL ib-nu-ú u ˊa-naˋ ᵐda-a-ri-iạ-ˊmušˋ LUGAL LUGAL-ú-tu id-din-nu ina qaq-qar a-ga-a rap-šá-a-ˊtu₄ˋ šá KUR.KUR.MEŠ ma-de-e-tu₄ ina lìb-bi-šú KUR par-su KUR ma-da-a-a u KUR.KUR.MEŠ šá-né-ti-ma li-šá-nu šá-né-tu₄ šá KUR.KUR.MEŠ u ma-a-tu₄ šá a-ḫa-na-a-a a-ga-a šá ÍD.mar-ra-tu₄ u a-ḫu-ul-lu-a-a ul-li-i šá ÍD.mar-ra-tu₄ šá a-ḫa-na-a-a šá qaq-qar ṣu-ma-ma-i-tu₄ u a-ḫu-ul-lu-a-a ˊul-li-iˋ šá qaq-qar ṣu-ma-ma-i-tu₄.

> Ahuramazdā (is) great, who (is) great over all gods, who created the heaven and the earth and created water. Who gave all prosperity and people to live on, who made Darius the king, and to Darius the king (he) gave the kingship in this wide earth of many lands, among (them) Parsa, Media and other lands of other tongues, of mountains and plains, of this near side of the sea and that far side of the sea, of this near side of the waterless desert and that far side of the waterless desert.[49]

The reference points for Darius' imperial extension are the lands beyond the *marratu*, the 'Bitter Sea' which according to the Mesopotamian mental map, encircled the inhabited world.[50] However, this claim does not indicate either factual conquest or hegemony, but the ability to seize even the world's remotest places.[51] By claiming to rule over these remote lands, Darius not only surpassed all his predecessors' claims to power but also measured his achievements alongside the deeds of gods and heroes. According to Mesopotamian mythology, the crossing of the *marratu* is an achievement attributed only to the sun-god Shamash and the great hero Gilgamesh.[52] This exaggerated claim to universalism finally became merely a formula in the 'lists of lands' (OP *dahyāva*) of Darius' successors, in which no further advancement of this idea can be seen during the Achaemenid period.[53] Interestingly, the oldest testimony for this claim is paragraph 74 of the famous Bisitun rock inscription in its Old Persian version. This text was produced at a time when the usurper Darius sought to establish his rule on firm ground, which may explain the superlative claim.[54] However, the fact that DPg is only preserved in an Akkadian version becomes important for the examination of Darius' intentions. It can be said that this text is a good example of an intensive discourse between Darius and his ancient Near Eastern predecessors and their conception of universal rule.

Seen against this backdrop, one wonders whether Alexander was not also seeking his place in this discourse on empire. There is evidence suggesting that his contemporaries

---

[47] Cyrus Cylinder ll. 28'–30' according to Schaudig (2018) 23–24.
[48] Haubold (2012) 7.
[49] DPg (Akk.) ll. 1'–12'. Edition and tr. Delshad (2019) 3–4, with slight modifications.
[50] Haubold (2013) 102–07; Horowitz (1998) 20–25; Herrenschmidt (1976).
[51] Haubold (2012); Rollinger (2014b); Rollinger and Degen (2021a).
[52] George (2003) 682–83, Standard Babylonian epic, tablet x, ll. 72'–84'.
[53] Rollinger (2016); Schmitt (2014) *s.v. paradraya*.
[54] Rollinger and Degen (2021a) 203–13.

knew of the particular geographical conception which established the framework for Achaemenid royal ideology. Donald Murray has highlighted its impact on Herodotus' idea of the waters at the world's limits.[55] However, the best example of its reception comes from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (8.6.21), in which the encircling Ocean and the deserts form the limits of the Achaemenid Empire.[56] The same geographical conception is also the background to Alexander's argumentation in his speech delivered at the river Hyphasis, according to Arrian (*Anab.* 5.25.3–26.7).[57] Here, Alexander characterizes the Caspian Sea as a bay of the Ocean, with the aim of creating the illusion that the Macedonians had already seen its shore in the north. Seemingly, Arrian had recourse to a source that does not appear to be the most recent geographical model of the time. The earliest writers about Alexander intentionally presented the Caspian Sea was an open body of water, which helped to create the impression that Alexander really had reached the Ocean in the north.[58] However, although the authenticity of this statement in the *Anabasis* is open to debate, Alexander's drive to campaign beyond the Achaemenid Empire's boundaries is a theme common to other accounts.[59] According to certain fragments of Aristobulus, the participants in Alexander's expedition employed onomastic deceits to change Asia's geography with the purpose of elevating the conqueror's military achievements by creating the idea that he had pushed beyond the limits of Asia. Strabo views this as the flatterers' attempt to satisfy Alexander's lust for glory (φιλοτιμία).[60] Telling examples of this are the re-designations of the Parapamisus as the Caucasus and the river Iaxartes as the Tanaïs. The targeted meaning of these statements is that those natural barriers were considered to be the limits of the Great King's realm.[61] Changing the names of the geographical reference points which Alexander passed through on his campaign to those marking the limits of the Achaemenid Empire may have served a particular purpose. It seems that Alexander wished to hear that the Achaemenids' proud achievements were a thing of the past, since he had campaigned beyond the limits of their empire. This may have found an echo in Arrian's meditations on Alexander's achievements, which are dominated by the theme of adding new lands to what had previously belonged to the Persians and the Medes (*Anab.* 5.25.5, 7.10.5). Given Alexander's ambition, it is not surprising that the Macedonians found evidence of Dionysus' distant wanderings to the East in places which also mark the limits of the Persian realm.[62]

Whilst some of the earliest writers explained Alexander's transcendence of the borders of the Achaemenid Empire by reference to his quest for mythical figures, they also showed interest in disguising his failures in order to achieve this objective.[63] From the extant fragments we can grasp Ptolemy's explanation for the Macedonian campaign halting at the Hyphasis. He stated that inauspicious omens made it impossible to cross the river which was known to be the easternmost border of the Achaemenid Empire.[64] The common patterns among some of the first accounts create the image of Alexander as successful in pushing beyond the borders of the Persian Empire and hence outperforming the deeds of

---

[55] Murray (2016).

[56] See further Degen (2020); (2019b); Bosworth (1995) 348.

[57] See the association of reaching the Ocean with conquest in Curt. 9.9.4.

[58] Hdt. 1.202.4, 203, 3.115; *BNJ* 1 F18a, F302c; Arist. *Mete.* 1.13.350a, 2.1.354a; *BNJ* 128 F7. Concerning the first century, see *BNJ* 188 F3. *Cf.* Plut. *Alex.* 44. For interpretation, see Hamilton (1969) 116–24, contrasting with Pearson (1960) 71, who argues for a propaganda perspective.

[59] Bosworth (1995) 348; (1988b) 130–32; Wüst (1953) *contra* Hammond (1999); Nagle (1996).

[60] *BNJ* 139 F23. *Cf.* Arr. *Anab.* 5.3.1–4; *BNJ* 139 F19.

[61] See Degen (2022c) 32–44. Tanaïs: Strabo 11.11.4; Caucasus: Hdt. 3.97.4.

[62] Degen (2021); Bowden (2014) 84, 89–91.

[63] Rollinger (2015); Howe and Müller (2012). For a case study of Alexander adapting to diverse audiences when presenting himself before a multicultural crowd, see Spawforth (2012).

[64] Hdt. 4.44; Bowden (2014) 84; Nawotka (2010) 296; Howe and Müller (2012).

the Achaemenids. This might be because the authors of the first accounts of the expedition were recipients of Alexander's self-representations, which were put into circulation by his entourage. We know that Ptolemy, Aristobulus and Nearchus belonged to Alexander's inner circle, which may explain why they wrote about Macedonian imperial ambitions. Elements of Alexander's self-representation thus found their way into accounts that were published a considerable time after Onesicritus' work, and it appears that all the earliest writers regarded the theme of universalism to be an essential part of their portraits of Alexander.[65]

Considering this discourse as the context of Seneca's mention of Onesicritus, it is not surprising that the philosopher mentions Alexander alongside the Great Kings, all rulers who attempted to achieve world conquest. In this regard, the special connotation of the Ocean suggests that the Achaemenid idea of it as a point of reference for claiming imperial success was the background of Onesicritus' episode. Finally, the best example of Alexander's response to the discourse on empire regarding the Ocean is the context of the testimony of Onesicritus under discussion. After Alexander had led his troops from the Hyphasis to the mouth of the Indus, he performed an act of great symbolic significance in the Indian Ocean; he acted out the ancient script by sailing out onto the Ocean and performing sacrifices on the high seas much as Darius I had done at the end of his Indian campaign, or the Assyrian kings had done at the Upper and Lower Seas (Hdt. 4.44).[66] The aim of Alexander's ceremony was to claim conquest of the Ocean, and thus it can be seen as a response to the Near Eastern discourse on empire. Two statements from the so-called 'Vulgate' tradition also support this view. According to Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, Alexander marked the shore of the Indian Ocean as the furthest border of his empire (*positis imperii terminis*, 12.10.5).[67] Plutarch, who drew on the same tradition, emphasized another detail, stating that Alexander prayed to the gods that no one would ever cross the limits of his campaign (αὐτὸν ἀνθρώπων ὑπερβῆναι τοὺς ὅρους τῆς στρατείας ἀνέστρεφε, *Alex.* 66.1). Contextualizing this information against the backdrop of the discourse on empire allows one to draw the conclusion that in marking the Ocean as the most far-flung point of his empire, Alexander aspired to surpass the deeds of the Great Kings.

There is additional evidence to suggest that Alexander took his competition with the Achaemenids further, aspiring to rule even over the boundless Ocean. The idea of extending his conquest into the Ocean finds expression in a speech by Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 4.49). Here, the emphasis is on Alexander's dissatisfaction with what he has achieved after completing his conquest of the Achaemenid Empire:

οὐδὲ γὰρ ζῆν ἐβούλετο, εἰ μὴ βασιλεὺς εἴη τῆς Εὐρώπης καὶ τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τῆς Λιβύης καὶ εἴ πού τίς ἐστι νῆσος ἐν τῷ Ὠκεανῷ κειμένη.

For he did not care to live at all unless he might be king of Europe, Asia, Libya, and of any island which might lie in the Ocean.[68]

The phrase 'island which might lie in the Ocean' suggests the existence of accounts in which Alexander's plans for conquest were not limited by the Ocean's shore, influenced by the ancient Near Eastern semantics.[69] Thus it appears that the ideological background to

[65] Squillace (2018); Rosen (1979). For the proximity of these writers to Alexander, see, on Ptolemy, Howe (2018); Worthington (2016) 7–69; Heckel (1992) 230–39; on Aristobulus, Arr. *Anab.* 4.14.3; Berve (1926) no. 121; on Nearchus, Bosworth (1987); Badian (1975); Berve (1926) no. 544.
[66] On this issue, see Rollinger and Degen (2021b); Rollinger (2014a) 96–98.
[67] See Bichler and Rollinger (2017) 16–17.
[68] Tr. Cohoon (1932), with slight modifications.
[69] See, for instance, Diodorus referring to Alexander's plan for circumnavigation of the continents as παραπλεῦσαι δι᾽ Ὠκεανοῦ (17.104.3).

Dio Chrysostom's statement was Alexander's response to the discourse on empire. An extension of this idea can be found in Seneca the Elder and Plutarch, where the endless Ocean itself became the objective of Alexander's campaign (Plut. *Mor.* 207D; Sen. *Suas.* 1.1). Onesicritus' mission to roam over the boundless Ocean and conquer new lands in it described in *De beneficiis* can be seen to be in accordance with this. Seneca's idea of Alexander standing at the shore of the Indian Ocean and longing for even more lands to conquer than those he already possessed is based on Alexander's claim to universalism. In this way, Alexander responded to the ancient Near Eastern discourse on empire by aspiring to conquer lands whose existence was unknown, in the boundless Ocean.

Although there is much to indicate that Alexander deliberately responded to the ancient Near Eastern discourse on empire, nothing in our sources suggests that he ever saw himself as 'the last Achaemenid'.[70] Instead it seems that he and members of his entourage presented an image in which it was essential to surpass his ancient Near Eastern predecessors. This may have served the purpose of creating an atmosphere in which his Asian subjects, who were accustomed to Achaemenid rule, could regard the Macedonian conqueror as their new, legitimate ruler.[71] Alexander acted in the way expected of a legitimate ancient Near Eastern ruler, staging himself as superior to his predecessors. There is much to be said for the idea that Onesicritus played an important role in this cultural dialogue. One of the extant fragments reveals that he provided a translation of Darius' tomb inscription which reproduces part of the original text quite closely.[72] This suggests that an intensive encounter occurred between Alexander's entourage and Achaemenid ideology, in which Onesicritus was somehow involved. In the light of the evidence presented here, the Achaemenid imperial model was not foreign to the earliest writers about Alexander.

Finally, we may return to the question of Seneca's choice of Onesicritus as his source for Alexander's lust for conquest. Onesicritus' self-designation as scout and conqueror needs to be seen in the context of Alexander seeking his place in the prevailing discourse on empire in his time. He did so with his claim to universalism, which even included as yet unknown lands beyond the Ocean, for which the meditations of Imperial philosophers are a telling source. Obviously, this was less a theoretical claim than an actual aim of his campaign. Alexander's aspiration, perceived by later authors as an insatiable lust for conquest, seems to have been an important theme in Onesicritus' work. And that qualifies the testimony as a high-value source regarding Alexander's dialogue with the Achaemenid imperial model. Therefore, it seems that Onesicritus' self-designation as a scout and conqueror of the Ocean is linked to Alexander's ideological claim. The latter constituted the literary background of his work, and was also the context of the author's elevation of his role during the campaign. So there is no room for doubt that Onesicritus made the last campaign of Alexander a topic in his writing and used its ideological frame to bring his own function into line with the purposes of his ruler's claim to power. This means that he presented himself as a scout roaming the Ocean and thus acted out Alexander's claim to universalism. This proud statement may have been the reason why Seneca chose Onesicritus as his source in exemplifying the Macedonian conqueror's imperial ambitions. Ultimately, the contextualization of this overlooked testimony regarding Onesicritus suggests that the presentation of Alexander in his account was very close to what Seneca called 'something that is unfillable'.

---

[70] Briant (2002) 856; (2017) 26–29 *contra* Lane Fox (2007); Wiemer (2007).

[71] For a comprehensive discussion of Alexander's dialogue with Achaemenid ideology, see Degen (2022a) 302–408. See also Bosworth (1980); Degen (2022b); (2019a); Olbrycht (2015); Trampedach and Meeus (2020).

[72] *BNJ* 134 F35. See discussion between Degen (2019a) 76; Seibert (2004); Schmitt (1988) *contra* Herzfeld (1968) 13 (authentic). For parallels see the Old Persian text of Darius' Bisitun-inscription (DB (OP)) §70; Hdt. 1.136; *SEG* XXVIII 1245, ll. 14′–15′.

Bibliography

Asirvatham, S. (2018) 'Plutarch's Alexander', in K. Moore (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great* (Brill's Companions to Classical Reception 14) (Leiden and Boston) 355–76

Badian, E. (1975) 'Nearchus the Cretan', *YClS* 24, 147–70

Ballesteros-Pastor, L. (2011) 'Beyond the Tanais: Tacitus and Quintus Curtius', *Ancient West and East* 10, 43–47

Baron, C. (2018) 'The Great King and his limits: allusions to Herodotus in book 7 of Arrian's *Anabasis*', in O. Devillers and B.B. Sebastiani (eds), *Sources et modèles des historiens anciens* (Scripta Antiqua 109) (Ausonius) 259–68

Basore, J.W. (tr.) (1935) *Seneca: Moral Essays, Volume III:* De beneficiis (Loeb Classical Library 310) (Cambridge MA).

Baynham, E. (2001) 'Alexander and the Amazons', *CQ* 51, 115–26

— (2021) '"Selling Alexander": the concept and use of "propaganda" in the age of Alexander', in J. Walsh and E. Baynham (eds), *Alexander the Great and Propaganda* (Abingdon and New York) 1–13

Berger, H. (1907) Ἐρυθρὰ θάλαττα', *RE* 11, cols 592–601

Berve, H. (1926) *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage: Zweiter Band Prosoprographie* (Munich)

Bichler, R. (2018) 'On the traces of Onesicritus: some historiographical aspects of Alexander's Indian campaign', in K. Nawotka, R. Rollinger, J. Wiesehöfer and A. Wojciechowska (eds), *The Historiography of Alexander the Great* (Classica et Orientalia 20) (Wiesbaden) 51–69

Bichler, R. and Rollinger, R. (2017) 'Universale Weltherrschaft und die Monumente an ihren Grenzen', in R. Rollinger (ed.), *Die Sicht auf die Welt zwischen Ost und West (750 v. Chr.–550 n. Chr.) – Looking at the World, from the East and the West (750 BCE–550 CE), Part A* (Classica et Orientalia 12) (Wiesbaden) 1–30

Bosworth, A.B. (1980) 'Alexander and the Iranians', *JHS* 100, 1–21

— (1987) 'Nearchus in Susiana', in W. Will (ed.), *Zu Alexander dem Großen: FS Gerhard Wirth* (Amsterdam) 541–67

— (1988a) *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge)

— (1988b) *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford)

— (1995) *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander, Vol. II: Books IV–V* (Oxford)

— (1996) *Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph* (Oxford)

— (2007) 'Arrian, Alexander, and the pursuit of glory', in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World) (Malden and Oxford) 447–53

Bowden, H. (2014) *Alexander the Great: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford)

Briant, P. (2002) *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake IN)

— (2013) 'La figure de Néarque dans l'historiographie européenne', in D. Marcotte (ed.), *D'Arrien à William Vincent. Le périple de Néarque et sa postérité* (Geographia Antiqua 22) (Florence) 15–20

— (2017) 'Foreword', in P. Briant (ed.), *Kings, Countries, Peoples: Selected Studies on the Achaemenid Empire* (tr. Amélie Kuhrt) (Oriens et Occidens 26) (Stuttgart) 1–29

Brunt, P.A. (1977) 'From Epictetus to Arrian', *Athenaeum* 55, 19–48

Bucciantini, V. (2015) 'Geographical description and historical narrative in the tradition on Alexander's expedition', in S. Bianchetti, M. Cataudella and H.-J. Gehrke (eds), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Geography: The Inhabited World in Greek and Roman Tradition* (Brill's Companions to Classical Studies) (Leiden) 98–109

Burliga, B. (2013) *Arrian's Anabasis: An Intellectual and Cultural Story* (Gdańsk)

Celotta, G. (2018) 'Alexander the Great in Seneca's works and Lucan's *Bellum civile*', in K. Moore (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great* (Brill's Companions to Classical Reception 14) (Leiden and Boston) 325–54

Cohoon, J.W. (ed. and tr.) (1932) *Dio Chrysostom:* Discourses *1–11* (Loeb Classical Library 257) (Cambridge MA)

Degen, J. (2019a) 'Alexander III., Dareios I. und das speererworbene Land', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 6.1, 53–95

— (2019b) 'Xenophon and the light from heaven', *AHB* 33, 81–107

— (2020) 'Ancient near eastern traditions in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: conceptions of royal qualities and empire', in B. Jacobs (ed.), *Ancient Information on Persia Re-assessed: Xenophon's* Cyropaedia (Classica et Orientalia 22) (Wiesbaden) 197–240

— (2021) 'Alexander III, the Achaemenids and the quest for Dionysos: framing and claiming universal rulership in the Macedonian world empire', in T. Daryaee and R. Rollinger (eds), *Iran and Its Histories: From the Beginnings through the Achaemenid Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 29) (Wiesbaden) 239–87

— (2022a) *Alexander III. zwischen Ost und West. Indigene Traditionen und Herrschaftsinszenierung im makedonischen Weltimperium* (Oriens et Occidens 39) (Stuttgart)

— (2022b) 'Alexander und die κήτεα des Okeanos', *Klio* 104, 517–49

— (2022c) 'Source and criticism: traces of Alexander's "official language" in the *Anabasis*', in R. Rollinger and J. Degen (eds), *The World of Alexander in Perspective Contextualizing Arrian* (Classica et Orientalia 30) (Wiesbaden 2022) 25–72

Delshad, S. (2019) 'DPg: Ahuramazdā and the creation of water, with a new text edition', *Iranian Studies* 52, 575–88

Dionisotti, A.C. (1997) 'On fragments in classical scholarship', in G.W. Most (ed.), *Collecting Fragments – Fragmente sammeln* (Aporemata 1) (Göttingen) 1–33

Gehrke, H.-J. (2016) 'The "revolution" of Alexander the Great: old and new in the world's view', in S. Bianchetti, M.R. Cataudella and H.-J. Gehrke (eds), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Geography* (Brill's Companions to Classical Studies) (Leiden) 78–97

George, A.R. (2003) *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford)

Geus, K. (2019) 'Krokodile, Elefanten, Wale und Bohnen: über Kontingenz und Valenz von zoologischen und botanischen Argumenten in den geographischen Konzeptionen der Antike', in R. Lafer, H. Dolenz and M. Luik (eds), *Antiquitates variae: Festschrift für Karl Strobel zum 65. Geburtstag* (Internationale Archäologie – Studia honoraria 39) (Rahden) 81–96

Griffin, M.T. (2013) *Seneca on Society: A Guide to* De beneficiis (Oxford)

Gupta, S. (2018) 'The archaeological record of Indian Ocean engagements: Bay of Bengal (5000 BC–500 AD)', in *Oxford Handbooks Online* doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935413.013.46

Hamilton, J.R. (1969) *Plutarch:* Alexander, *A Commentary* (London)

Hammond, N.G.L. (1999) 'The speeches in Arrian's *Indica* and *Anabasis*', *CQ* 49, 238–53

Hauben, H. (1987) 'Onesicritus and the Hellenistic "Archikybernesis"', in W. Will (ed.), *Zu Alexander dem Großen: FS Gerhard Wirth* (Amsterdam) 569–93

Haubold, J. (2012) 'The Achaemenid Empire and the sea', *MHR* 27, 4–23

— (2013) *Greece and Mesopotamia: Dialogues in Literature* (Cambridge)

Heckel, W. (1992) *The Marshals of Alexander's Empire: A Study of the Macedonian Aristocracy and the Politics of Military Leadership* (London and New York)

— (2006) *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great: Prosopography of Alexander's Empire* (Malden and Oxford)

Herrenschmidt, C. (1976) 'Désignation de l'empire et concepts politiques de Darius Ier d'après ses inscriptions en vieux perse', *Studia Iranica* 6, 17–58

Herzfeld, E. (1968) *The Persian Empire: Studies in Geography and Ethnography of the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden)

Horowitz, W. (1998) *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8) (Winona Lake IN)

Howe, T. (2018) 'Ptolemy (138)', in I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill's New Jacoby Online* http://doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363_bnj_a138

Howe, T. and Müller, S. (2012) 'Mission accomplished: Alexander at the Hyphasis', *AHB* 26, 24–42

Lane Fox, R. (2007) 'Alexander the Great: "Last of the Achaemenids"?', in C. Tuplin (ed.), *Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire* (Swansea) 267–311

Lang, M. and Rollinger, R. (2010) 'Im Herzen der Meere und in der Mitte des Meeres. Das Buch Ezechiel und die in assyrischer Zeit fassbaren Vorstellungen von den Grenzen der Welt', in R. Rollinger, B. Gufler, M. Lang and I. Madreiter (eds), *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt: Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* (Philippika 34) (Wiesbaden) 207–64

Liotsakis, V. (2019) *Alexander the Great in Arrian's 'Anabasis': A Literary Portrait* (Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes 78) (Berlin and Boston)

Marín, A.I.M. (2017) 'Under the shadow of Eratosthenes: Strabo and the Alexander historians', in D. Dueck (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Strabo* (London) 294–305

— (2018) *Alejandro Magno (1916–2015): un siglo de estudios sobre Macedonia Antigua* (Zaragosa)

Mariotta, G. (2017) 'Una spedizione di Onesicrito nello Sri Lanka?', *Sileno* 43, 113–20

Matijašić, I. (2019) 'Herodotus in the theatre at Alexandria? On Athenaeus 14.620D', *JHS* 139, 83–93

Meeus, A. (2014) 'The territorial ambitions of Ptolemy I', in H. Hauben and A. Meeus (eds), *The Age of the Successors and the Creation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms (323–276 B.C.)* (Studia Hellenistica 53) (Leuven, Paris and Bristol) 263–306

Müller, S. (2011) 'Onesikritos und das Achaimenidenreich', *Anabasis* 2, 45–66

— (2014) *Alexander, Makedonien und Persien* (Frankfurter Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge 18) (Berlin)

Murray, D. (2016) 'The waters at the end of the world: Herodotus and Mesopotamian cosmic geography', in E. Barker, S. Bouzarovski, C. Pelling and L. Isaksen (eds), *New Worlds from Old Texts: Revisiting Space and Place* (Oxford) 47–60

Nagle, D.B. (1996) 'The cultural context of Alexander's speech at Opis', *TAPhA* 126, 151–72

Nawotka, K. (2010) *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge)

Olbrycht, J.M. (2015) 'An admirer of Persian ways: Alexander the Great's reforms in Parthia-Hyrcania and the Iranian heritage', in T. Darayee, A. Mousavi and K. Rhezakhani (eds), *Excavating an Empire: Achaemenid Persia in Longue Durée* (Costa Mesa) 37–62

Parker, B.J. (2011) 'The construction and performance of kingship in the Neo-Assyrian empire', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67, 357–86

Pearson, L. (1960) *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (Chicago)

Pédech, P. (1984) *Historiens compagnons d'Alexandre* (Paris)

Potts, D.T. (2019) 'The islands of the XIVth satrapy', in R. Oetjen (ed.), *New Perspectives in Seleucid History, Archaeology and Numismatics: Studies in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 355) (Berlin) 375–96

Rollinger, R. (2014a) 'Dareios und Xerxes an den Rändern der Welt und die Inszenierung von Weltherrschaft. Altorientalisches bei Herodot', in B. Dunsch and K. Ruffing (eds), *Herodots Quellen: Die Quellen Herodots – Herodotus and His Sources* (Classica et Orientalia 6), (Wiesbaden) 95–116

— (2014b) 'Thinking and writing about history in Teispid and Achaemenid Persia', in K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Thinking, Recording, and Writing History in the Ancient World* (Malden, Oxford and Chichester) 187–212

— (2015) 'Aornos and the mountains of the East: the Assyrian kings and Alexander the Great', in S. Gaspa, A. Greco, D.M. Bonacossi, S. Ponchia and R. Rollinger (eds), *From Source to History: Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond. Dedicated to Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday on June 23, 2014* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament Band 412) (Münster) 597–635

— (2016) 'Royal strategies of representation and the language(s) of power: some considerations on the audience and the dissemination of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions', in S. Procházka, L. Reinfandt and S. Tost (eds), *Official Epistolography and the Language(s) of Power* (Papyrologica Vindobonensia 8) (Vienna) 117–30

— (2018) 'Herodotus and the transformation of ancient Near Eastern motifs: Darius I, Oebares, and the neighing horse', in T. Harrison and E. Irwin (eds), *Interpreting Herodotus* (Oxford) 125–48

Rollinger, R. and Degen, J. (2021a) 'Conceptualizing universal rulership: considerations on the Persian Achaemenid worldview and the Saka at the "end of the world"', in H. Klinkott, L. Luther and J. Wiesehöfer (eds), *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur des alten Iran und benachbarter Gebiete: Festschrift für Rüdiger Schmitt* (Oriens et Occidens 36) (Stuttgart) 187–224

— (2021b) 'Alexander the Great and the borders of the world', in D. Agut-Labordère, R. Boucharlat, F. Joannès, A. Kuhrt and M.W. Stolper (eds), *Achemenet. Vingt ans après. Études offertes à Pierre Briant à l'occasion des vingt ans du Programme Achemenet* (Persika 21) (Leuven) 321–42

Rosen, K. (1979) 'Politische Ziele in der Frühen Hellenistischen Geschichtsschreibung', *Hermes* 107, 460–77

Schaudig, H.-P. (2018) 'The text of the Cyrus Cylinder', in M.R. Shayegan (ed.), *Cyrus the Great: Life and Lore* (Ilex Series 21) (Cambridge MA and London) 16–25

Schepens, G. (1997) 'Jacoby's *FGrHist*: problems, methods, prospects', in G.W. Most (ed.), *Collecting Fragments – Fragmente sammeln* (Aporemata 1) (Göttingen) 144–72

Schmitt, R. (1988) 'Achaimenideninschriften in griechischer literarischer Überlieferung', in W. Sundermann, J. Duchesne-Guillemin and F. Vahman (eds), *A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen* (Acta Iranica 28) (Leiden) 17–38

— (2014) *Wörterbuch der altpersischen Königsinschriften* (Wiesbaden)

Schwab, A. (2017) 'Achaimenidische Königsideologie in Herodots Erzählung über Xerxes, Hdt. 7,8–11', in H. Klinkott and N. Kramer (eds), *Zwischen Assur und Athen: Altorientalisches in den Historien Herodots* (SpielRäume der Antike 4) (Stuttgart) 163–95

Seibert, J. (2004) 'Alexander der Großen an den Gräbern der Perserkönige', in H. Seibert and G. Thoma (eds), *Von Sachsen bis Jerusalem: Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel der Zeit: Festschrift für Wolfgang Giese zum 65. Geburtstag* (Munich) 13–30

Setaioli, A. (2013) 'Ethics I: philosophy as therapy, self-transformation, and "Lebensform"', in G. Damschen and A. Heil (eds), *Brill's Companion to Seneca: Philosopher and Dramatist* (Brill's Companions to Classical Studies) (Leiden) 239–56

Spawforth, A. (2012) 'The pamphleteer Ephippus, king Alexander and the Persian royal hunt', *Histos* 6, 169–213

Squillace, G. (2018) 'Alexander after Alexander: Macedonian propaganda and historical memory in Ptolemy and Aristobulus' writings', in K. Moore (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Brill's Companions to Classical Reception 14) (Leiden and Boston) 119–39

Stadter, P.A. (1980) *Arrian of Nicomedia* (Chapel Hill and London)

Stevens, K. (2014) 'The Antiochus cylinder, Babylonian scholarship and Seleucid imperial ideology', *JHS* 134, 66–88

Stoneman, R. (1995) 'Naked philosophers: the Brahmans in the Alexander historians and the Alexander romance', *JHS* 115, 99–114

— (2019) *The Greek Experience of India: From Alexander to the Indo-Greeks* (Princeton)

Strootman, R. (2014) '"Men to whose rapacity neither sea nor mountain sets a limit": the aims of the Diadochs', in H. Hauben and A. Meuss (eds), *The Age of the Successors and the Creation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms (323–276 B.C.)* (Studia Hellenistica 53) (Leuven) 305–22

Taietti, G.D.M. (2016) 'Alexander the Great as a Herodotean Persian king', in K. Nawotka and A. Wojciechowska (eds), *Alexander the Great and the East: History, Art, Tradition* (Philippika 103) (Wiesbaden) 159–77

Trampedach, K. and Meeus, A. (2020) 'Introduction: understanding Alexander's relations with his subjects', in K. Trampedach and A. Meeus (eds), *The Legitimation of Conquest: Monarchical Representation and the Art of Government in the Empire of Alexander the Great* (Studies in Ancient Monarchies 7) (Stuttgart) 9–18

Watt, W.S. (1994) 'Notes on Seneca, *De beneficiis*, *De clementia*, and *Dialogi*', *HSPh* 96, 225–39

Whitby, M. (2011) 'Onesikritos (134)', in I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill's New Jacoby* http://doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363_bnj_a134

Wiemer, H.-U. (2007) 'Alexander – der letzte Achaimenide? Eroberungspolitik, lokale Eliten und altorientalische Traditionen im Jahr 323', *HZ* 284, 283–309

Winiarczyk, M. (2007) 'Das Werk Die Erziehung Alexanders des Onesikritos von Astypalaia (*FGrHist* 134 F 1–39). Forschungsstand (1832–2005) und Interpretationsversuch', *Eos* 94, 197–250

— (2011) *Die hellenistischen Utopien* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 293) (Berlin and New York)

Worthington, I. (2016) *Ptolemy I: King and Pharaoh of Egypt* (New York and Oxford)

Wüst, F.R. (1953) 'Die Rede Alexanders des Grossen in Opis, Arrian VII 9–10', *Historia* 2, 177–88

Yamada, K. (2005) '"From the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea": the development of the names of seas in the Assyrian royal inscriptions', *Orient* 40, 31–55

Zambrini, A. (2007) 'The historians of Alexander the Great', in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World) (Malden and Oxford) 210–20