

Alexander and Roman emperors (again)



Alexander and Rome: Pompey

We have previously touched on the use made of Alexander by Roman emperors (cf. Erskine, *Greece and Rome* 2002; Erickson 2018) e.g. Pompey

BUT “Pompey’s successes in the east were far from complete from the perspective of a second Alexander. The Parthians who had claimed from the Seleucids the majority of the eastern half of Alexander’s empire and could be looked to as the successors to the Persians remained unconquered.” (Erickson 2018: 258)



Alexander and Julius Caesar



“As Pompey’s rivals emerged from his shadow, they too sought their own comparisons with Alexander. For Caesar, Suetonius’ *Life of Julius Caesar* gives us the story of his encounter with the statue of Alexander in Spain and his own insubstantial career at the same age and also there are his reported plans for an invasion of Parthia” (Erickson 2018: 258)

At statue of Alexander in the temple of Hercules at Gades> Caesar bemoans that he has achieved nothing.

Rumour he’d move capital to Troy or Alexandria (Suet. *Life of Julius Caesar* 79.3; Nicolaus of Damasacus *Caes.* 20; nb Octavian made a similar charge about Antony: note luxury associations)



Alexander and Octavian (Augustus)

(Octavian visited tomb of Alexander) “About this time he had the sarcophagus and body of Alexander the Great brought forth from its shrine, and after gazing on it, showed his respect by placing upon it a golden crown and strewing it with flowers; and being then asked whether he wished to see the tomb of the Ptolemies as well, he replied, "My wish was to see a king, not corpses." (Suetonius *Aug.* 18.1)

used a seal with a portrait of Alexander; promised the Alexandrians that he would spare their city out of respect to their founder (see Tracy 2009)

“Augustus also apparently at this time commissioned paintings by Apelles depicting Alexander’s conquests over the Persians. Given Gaius’ upcoming campaign, these paintings must have been meant to highlight the similarities between Persia’s greatest conqueror and the future undertaking of the emperor’s grandson.” (Poirot 2014, diss. ‘The Romano-Parthian Cold War: Julio-Claudian Foreign Policy in the First Century CE and Tacitus’ *Annales*’)

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- Gaius Caesar (Augustus' grandson, d. 4 CE)/ Alexander
cf. Poirot, J. J. 'The Romano-Parthian Cold War: Julio-Claudian Foreign Policy in the First Century CE and Tacitus' *Annales*' (LSU diss., 2014): "Gaius was probably depicted as a veritable Alexander the Great, and his eastern mission was almost certainly billed as the final, long-awaited Roman retribution for Crassus and Carrhae." [Punic wars]
- e.g. Nero (e.g. ordered Lysippus statue of Alexander to be gilded; see e.g. Champlin, *Nero* 2003)
- variability in Lucan for application of Alexander figures e.g. Caesar (Leigh 2009: 242 argues Lucan figures Caesar as an Achilles figure across the intermediary figure of Alexander the Great), Pompey the Great, Cato (water; cf. Leigh 2000)

Cicero epistle to (historian) Lucceius (*Fam.* 5.12), 55 BC



Story that Alexander visited tomb of Achilles at Sigeum:

“For the famous Alexander himself did not wish to be painted by Apelles, and to have his statue made by Lysippus above all others, merely from personal favour to them, but because he thought that their art would be a glory at once to them and to himself..... And, moreover, it will more redound to my present exultation and the honour of my memory to have found my way into your history, than if I had done so into that of others, in this, that I shall profit not only by the genius of the writer—as Timoleon did by that of Timæus, Themistocles by that of Herodotus—but also by the authority of a man of a most illustrious and well-established character, and one well known and of the first repute for his conduct in the most important and weighty matters of state; so that I shall seem to have gained not only **the fame which Alexander on his visit to Sigeum said had been bestowed on Achilles by Homer**, but also the weighty testimony of a great and illustrious man.”



Importance of communicating glory at Rome



“The poet could be a kind of public relations officer. When Fulvius Nobilior took Ennius with him on his campaign in Aetolia in 189 B.c. no doubt he intended that the poet would celebrate his exploits in verse, as indeed he did. So too the poem of Hostius on the Istrian war of 129 B.C. was written for the glory of the Roman commander Sempronius Tuditanus. Greek writers as well as Roman were in demand for the same purpose; as Cicero says in *Pro Archia* Greek was more widely read than Latin. **Archias** specialized in writing laudatory poems on the exploits of leading Romans. He accompanied Lucullus on his campaigns against Mithridates and duly wrote about them, and he celebrated Marius' wars against the Cimbri. Cicero tried to get him to write on that glorious theme, Cicero's consulship. Archias made a start but did not get far; he was already engaged on singing the praises” (Clarke ‘Poets and patrons at Rome’ *Greece & Rome* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Apr., 1978), pp. 46-54, p48)



Cicero *Pro Archia* (62 BC): defence of poet Archias



- “shall we eject from our franchise one for whom many states have striven, and whom Heraclea has gained, and constituted her citizen by due process of law?

For if anyone thinks that the glory won by the writing of Greek verse is naturally less than that accorded to the poet who writes in Latin, he is entirely in the wrong. Greek literature is read in nearly every nation under heaven, while the vogue of Latin is confined to its own boundaries, and they are, we must grant, narrow. Seeing, therefore, that the activities of our race know no barrier save the limits of the round earth, we ought to be ambitious that whithersoever our arms have penetrated there also our fame and glory should extend; for the reason that literature exalts the nation whose high deeds it sings, and at the same time there can be no doubt that those who stake their lives to fight in honour's cause find therein a lofty incentive to [24] peril and endeavour.



Pro Archia



We read that Alexander the Great carried in his train numbers of epic poets and historians. And yet, standing before the tomb of Achilles at Sigeum, he exclaimed,—“Fortunate youth, to have found in Homer an herald of thy valour!” Well might he so exclaim, for had the *Iliad* never existed, the same mound which covered Achilles’ bones would also have overwhelmed his memory. Again, did not he to whom our own age has accorded the title of Great [Pompey], whose successes have been commensurate with his high qualities, present with the citizenship before a mass meeting of his troops Theophanes of Mytilene, the historian of his campaigns?



Cicero *Pro Archia*



Were not our brave fellows, soldiers and peasants though they were, so smitten with the glamour of renown that they loudly applauded the act, feeling that they too had a share in the glory that had been shed upon their [25] leader? Accordingly, if Archias were not legally a Roman citizen already, it would have been beyond his power, presumably, to win the gift of citizenship from some military commander.” (Cic. *Pro Archia* 23-5)

Agenda for bringing in anecdote?

