

## BIAS IN PTOLEMY'S HISTORY OF ALEXANDER<sup>1</sup>

ARRIAN's enthusiasm for Ptolemy's account of Alexander has often been echoed in modern times.<sup>2</sup> With much justification it is generally agreed that Arrian's account of Alexander, through its reliance on the works of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, is our best and, on the whole, most reliable account of Alexander. Recent work, however, has illuminated Ptolemy's weaknesses, and we can no longer regard Ptolemy as utterly reliable in every important respect.<sup>3</sup> His version of the Alexander story is centred on Alexander, therefore Alexander is depicted out of the close context of the Macedonian court.<sup>4</sup> It is only through the information preserved in other writers—traditionally, but indiscriminately, considered unreliable—that, for instance, the picture of Alexander's struggle with his Macedonian nobles has begun to emerge. And in matters of this kind Ptolemy's version is so much the court 'official' version that it cannot be regarded as trustworthy.

From these studies a new dimension has been revealed in Ptolemy's history. Far from being a simple military narrative, a general's story, 'to set the record straight',<sup>5</sup> it is as much a political history as any, even if much of the distortion is caused by omitting crucial events. Strasburger in 1934 noted Ptolemy's penchant for throwing Alexander's activities into relief by omitting details about his nobles', except in purely military contexts where mention was unavoidable.<sup>6</sup> Strasburger attributed Ptolemy's unwillingness to allow too much success to Alexander's nobles, and his complementary emphasis on Alexander's own activities, to Ptolemy's loyalist point of view, and he did not regard it as being of any great importance. But Badian's more recent work has shown that, far from being unimportant, it is one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of Ptolemy's historical work.

Welles has tried to plot another aspect of Ptolemy's bias:<sup>7</sup> arguing from fundamentals, that Ptolemy was himself active under Alexander, therefore cannot have been unbiased in his treatment of his own career, he goes on to illustrate, in terms of military commands, how Ptolemy on occasions exaggerated his own achievements, and on occasions disagreed with what other authors had to say about his own activities. Moreover, we can add that this exaggeration was not limited solely to military affairs. The silence about the other Macedonian nobles, which Strasburger noticed, is more insidious than

<sup>1</sup> An early version of this paper was read to the meeting of Hibernian Hellenists at Ballymascannon in March 1968. I am grateful for comments made then, and to Professor E. Badian for reading a subsequent draft.

<sup>2</sup> A(rrian) 1. 1 (all references are to the *Anabasis* unless otherwise stated). Cf. W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, 1949), *passim*; L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (New York, 1960), esp. 188 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the articles of E. Badian

in *TAPhA*, 1960, *Historia*, 1958, *C.Q.*, 1958. Also his comments on Pearson's book in *Gnomon*, 1961 (reprinted in *Studies in Greek and Roman History* [Oxford, 1964], 250 ff.); C. B. Welles, *Miscellanea Rostagni* (Turin, 1963), 101 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Clearly shown by H. Strasburger, *Ptolemaios und Alexander* (Leipzig, 1934), 50 ff.

<sup>5</sup> So Pearson, *Lost Histories*, 193 ff. (with bibliography).

<sup>6</sup> *Ptolemaios und Alexander*, 50 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Miscellanea Rostagni*, 101 ff.

at first appears: for it is used to exaggerate Ptolemy's own importance. In the 'conspiracy of the pages', which led to Callisthenes' arrest, Curtius' version<sup>1</sup>—which we have no reason to doubt in outline—has it that the conspiracy was revealed in the first instance to Ptolemy and Leonnatus, who duly brought matters to a head by informing Alexander (and who, by implication, took the credit of saving the king's life). Arrian's version is broadly similar, but the credit for bringing the conspiracy to Alexander's notice there belongs to Ptolemy alone: Leonnatus does not feature in his account, and there is no reason why Arrian should have omitted him, had Ptolemy mentioned his part.<sup>2</sup>

Since Ptolemy exaggerated his own activities in this way, he also, inevitably, depreciated the activities of his colleagues. In the case we have just noticed, Leonnatus' reputation would have suffered were Arrian's (Ptolemy's) version the only one to have survived. Exaggeration of Ptolemy's own activities is perhaps to be expected, and we can take precautions against it. But his insidious distortion by the simple omission of important facts about his colleagues is clearly not intended only to throw Alexander's own activities into relief, and to make them alone seem relatively more important. Ptolemy clearly used the method more widely than has hitherto been thought, and while he uses it to exaggerate discreetly his own career (often without actually lying—a characteristic which appealed to Arrian!), we must explore whether it was also used, equally discreetly, to denigrate his later opponents. Few of his later opponents were, in fact, sufficiently important under Alexander to feature largely in Ptolemy's narrative. But there are cases which seem to offer *prima-facie* evidence, Antigonus, Aristonous, and Perdikkas.<sup>3</sup> Since the case of Antigonus is inconclusive, I shall deal with it first.

In his examination of some information which Curtius provides, and which he thinks Arrian ought to have, Tarn deals with the case of Antigonus.<sup>4</sup> Antigonus was appointed to the satrapy of Phrygia Major in 334, which he retained until Alexander's death. After Issus, in 333, Antigonus had a major success in dealing with the remains of the Persian army which tried to escape through Asia Minor. This we know only from Curtius.<sup>5</sup> It is not in Arrian, and the reasonable conclusion is that it was not in Ptolemy. Tarn attributed this to Ptolemy's hostility towards Antigonus: 'Ptolemy was not going to relate the *acta* of one who had been his most bitter enemy.'<sup>6</sup> And since it is clear that distortion by omission was peculiarly Ptolemy's among the Alexander historians, Tarn's interpretation has a *prima-facie* plausibility. Yet in this instance Ptolemy can be defended: for Antigonus' activities in Phrygia after 333 were no part of the Alexander-centred story favoured both by Ptolemy and by Arrian: they were essentially off-stage activities, however important in themselves. Even if Ptolemy had recorded Antigonus' success, there is no reason for Arrian to have followed him in this. Moreover, the manner of Tarn's argument begs a large question about the date at which Ptolemy wrote: he accepts the

<sup>1</sup> C(urtius) 8. 6. 22.

<sup>2</sup> A. 4. 13. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Otto (*ap.* H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* (2 vols., Munich, 1926), ii. 351 n. 6), suggests that Seleucus' military career under Alexander has also been suppressed—though he does not say who might have suppressed it. This is an unnecessary assumption and cannot be demonstrated (as

Berve, *loc. cit.*, points out), since no source supplies much information about Seleucus under Alexander. Berve's own suggestion is quite satisfactory, that Seleucus simply was not important at the time.

<sup>4</sup> *Alexander*, ii. 110–11.

<sup>5</sup> C. 4. 1. 35.

<sup>6</sup> *Alexander*, ii. 110; cf. Pearson, *Lost Histories*, 192 (briefly).

common assumption that Ptolemy wrote late in life, therefore after he had been hostile to Antigonos (after 314).<sup>1</sup> This may be reasonable; but if Ptolemy wrote before 314, there can clearly be no question of his having been openly hostile to Antigonos at the time of his writing, and therefore no question of his having concealed Antigonos' activities through jealousy. We shall return to this point later. It is sufficient for the present to notice that there is no conclusive reason for seeing hostile bias in Antigonos' omission.

The second of our examples is more interesting. Again, Tarn has drawn attention to it.<sup>2</sup> The man in question is Aristonous, about whom essential information is preserved in Curtius alone, and though Arrian mentions him twice, neither instance comes from Ptolemy. The strange thing is that Aristonous was an important man at the court: he was a *somatophylax* at least as early as 326, since Arrian cites him in a list of *somatophylakes*, which he took from Aristobulus, when Peucestas was made *somatophylax* in 325; and Aristonous is also named later as 'Alexander's *somatophylax*'.<sup>3</sup> The only other mention in Arrian comes from Nearchus: Aristonous is named as one of the trierarchs on the Indus.<sup>4</sup> It is Curtius who gives us details of Aristonous' sole known claim to fame under Alexander. At the capture of the city of the Malli, Aristonous is one of those who, together with Peucestas, Timaeus, and Leonnatus, fought to protect Alexander's body, and was wounded for his pains.<sup>5</sup> Arrian, as is well known, uses the discrepancies among the accounts of this battle for a discussion of his source material, but his narrative, probably taken from Ptolemy,<sup>6</sup> features Peucestas, Leonnatus, and an otherwise unknown Abreas, a *dimoirites*. Aristonous is not mentioned. Arrian admits that accounts vary: all are agreed on Peucestas, but they do not agree on Leonnatus and Abreas.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that Ptolemy must have provided the account which Arrian follows, yet, as Arrian himself admits, Ptolemy was not himself present at the battle;<sup>8</sup> and Curtius, for one, found information about Aristonous elsewhere—but although he knew Ptolemy's book, he chose to ignore Ptolemy's trivia about the insignificant Abreas. The conclusion which immediately presents itself is that Ptolemy has deliberately concealed Aristonous' bravery, and chosen instead to feature the unimportant Abreas; were it not for Aristobulus' list of *somatophylakes*, Nearchus' list of trierarchs, and Curtius' wide reading and good sense, we should know precisely nothing about Aristonous under Alexander.

This would be particularly odd in view of the fact that Aristonous was an important man after Alexander's death. Arrian's *Successors*, taking information from Hieronymus of Cardia, lists him among the nobles who supported Perdiccas against Meleager in the first struggle at Babylon in June 323; Curtius also makes him prominent at Babylon, and Curtius was also probably using the reliable Hieronymus.<sup>9</sup> In this prominence at Babylon may lie the explanation of Ptolemy's silence about Aristonous under Alexander. For Aristonous was a firm supporter of Perdiccas at Babylon and after; and the speech which Curtius attributes to Aristonous at Babylon is not only the statement of one fully committed to supporting Perdiccas, but is also the first speech after

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander*, ii. 110; cf. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

<sup>3</sup> A. 6. 28. 4; cf. Strasburger, *Ptolemaios und Alexander*, 46; A. *succ.* (= F. Jacoby, *FGH* no. 156), frg. 10. 6.

<sup>4</sup> A. *Ind.* 18. 5.

<sup>5</sup> C. 9. 5. 15 ff.

<sup>6</sup> A. 6. 9. 10; cf. Strasburger, *Ptolemaios und Alexander*, 45.

<sup>7</sup> A. 6. 11. 7.

<sup>8</sup> A. 6. 11. 8.

<sup>9</sup> A. *succ.* 2; C. 10. 6. 16 f. I shall show in *JHS* 1970 C.'s probable use of Hieronymus for his account of events at Babylon.

Ptolemy's own intervention in the struggle, and is largely responsible for Ptolemy's proposal's being ignored. Moreover, this was not Aristonous' sole action directly against Ptolemy's interests: the Vatican papyrus fragment of Arrian's *Successors* shows him in action on Perdiccas' behalf in Cyprus, at the time when the leading Cypriot kings had allied with Ptolemy against Perdiccas, and when Perdiccas was in the process of invading Egypt in 320.<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy clearly had reason for thinking Aristonous hostile, and for deliberately suppressing his activities under Alexander.<sup>2</sup>

Concealment—surely deliberate—by Ptolemy of his enemy's earlier activities, which alone explain why Aristonous was at all prominent among the nobles at Babylon, leads us directly to an examination of Ptolemy's attitude to Perdiccas himself under Alexander, for Perdiccas proved to be Ptolemy's chief enemy—though only comparatively briefly—after Alexander's death: he was the only man to turn the whole might of the central government's power and propaganda against Ptolemy's possession of Egypt. There was every reason for Ptolemy to be hostile towards Perdiccas as towards his lieutenant Aristonous; and we shall see that his method of distortion by suppression was also employed in Perdiccas' case—naturally, much more widely, inasmuch as Perdiccas was a more important man, than with Aristonous. We shall therefore proceed by comparing the picture of Perdiccas' career as it emerges from Ptolemy, on the one hand, and from the non-Ptolemaic sources on the other.

First, it is clear that a great deal of formal information, about battle alignments and commands, is common to all sources; and since this seems to be fuller and more accurate before the death of Callisthenes than after, it may have come in the first instance from Callisthenes' history, and have reached our extant authors either directly, or through Ptolemy and Aristobulus (Arrian), Clitarchus (Diodorus and ? Curtius), or others. It is therefore quite meaningless for our purpose that (for instance), both Curtius and Arrian mention the presence of Perdiccas' *taxis* in the dispositions before the battle of Issus, and that they are joined by Diodorus in giving the same information for Gaumela.<sup>3</sup> If battles have to be described in detail, it is clearly important that the dispositions should be described. These purely formal mentions of Pergadicas' presence account for no fewer than eight out of eighteen references to him in Arrian, where he relies on Ptolemy, only four out of twenty in non-Ptolemy. Some of the remainder are insignificant for our purpose: for instance, the fact that Perdiccas was one of Philip's bodyguards is recorded only by Diodorus;<sup>4</sup> but there is no essential reason why Ptolemy (or Arrian) should have mentioned this detail. There is no point in discussing such inconclusive details: we shall therefore stick to such instances as shed some light on our investigation.

The first of these is very important, for it is a direct conflict between an attested fragment of Ptolemy and Diodorus, over Perdiccas' part in Alexander's

<sup>1</sup> A. *succ.* frg. 10, 6. On the date cf. E. Manni, *RAL* ser. 8, iv (1949), 53 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The remaining information about Aristonous after Perdiccas' death shows him only indirectly opposed to Ptolemy: he joined Olympias—whether or not he was attached to Polyperchon first—and fought for her against Cassander in 316 (Diod. 19. 35. 4), and was her governor of Amphipolis until her

surrender to Cassander, when he was murdered by Cassander (Diod. 19. 51. 1 ff.). Although Ptolemy was nominally friendly towards Cassander, it is difficult to see anything in this later career of Aristonous which would exacerbate Ptolemy's hostility towards him.

<sup>3</sup> References in Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, ii. 213–14.

<sup>4</sup> Diod. 16. 94. 4.

destruction of Thebes in 335.<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy's tendency throughout his book is to apologize for Alexander, wherever he can prevent his distortion from being too obvious, and to depict him as being correct and right and his actions justified. Ptolemy's version of the destruction of Thebes—a difficult enough problem for his *Tendenz* so early in his book—is that the crucial attack which ultimately captured the city was started by Perdiccas without Alexander's orders, and that Alexander had to go to his rescue, and by so doing captured the city. The version has the clear merit for Ptolemy of partially absolving Alexander of the blame for Thebes' destruction; and this purpose becomes even clearer as his account progresses, when the Phocians, Plataeans, and other Boeotians are said to have been more prominent than the Macedonians in sacking the city.<sup>2</sup> Here, Ptolemy chooses the ill discipline of Perdiccas as his chief means of absolving Alexander from the distasteful responsibility for destroying Thebes. His dual purpose is clear enough, and has often been recognized, particularly when it is confronted with Diodorus' version which (much more soberly and reasonably) has Perdiccas acting on Alexander's orders, and the other Greeks joining in the destruction only when it is already under way.<sup>3</sup> Tarn preferred Ptolemy; but, long before, Berve had rightly thought Diodorus' version more trustworthy.<sup>4</sup>

This is one of the few preserved traceable examples where Ptolemy distorted other than by omission.<sup>5</sup> But omission can hurt Perdiccas just as well. At the siege of Tyre we have to look to Curtius to find the fact that Alexander at one stage left Perdiccas and Craterus in joint command of the siege operations while he went against some Arabs.<sup>6</sup> This could conceivably be an omission of Arrian's, so undue weight should not be placed upon it. But when we come to Gaugamela Ptolemy is clearly culpable: a list of nobles wounded in the battle is uniformly given by Diodorus and Curtius as Hephaestion, Perdiccas, Coenus, and Menidas; Arrian has merely Hephaestion, Coenus, and Menidas, omitting Perdiccas.<sup>7</sup> Arrian himself had no reason to deprive Perdiccas of his glory: his omission must be Ptolemy's responsibility. Furthermore, we owe to a random mention in Curtius our knowledge that Perdiccas had already reached the high rank of *somatophylax* by 330, for he participated in the Philotas affair in this capacity. Ptolemy himself, we know, did not become *somatophylax* until after the affair, as a direct result of a vacancy created by the purge which followed.<sup>8</sup>

From this time onwards Ptolemy himself had the same high status as Perdiccas, and they were often associated. But it can scarcely be an accident that Ptolemy's own activities are given much more prominence in Arrian than Perdiccas'—or indeed, than any of the other nobles': we have already seen how Leonnatus' part in discovering the conspiracy of the pages was suppressed by Ptolemy—in their personal association with Alexander. In Sogdiana in 329 Curtius alone<sup>9</sup> mentions that Perdiccas and Meleager were left in charge of a siege; and in the next spring, when Alexander split up the army into five sections, commanded respectively by himself, Hephaestion, Perdiccas,

<sup>1</sup> A. 1. 8. 1 ff. = *FGH* no. 138, frg. 3; involving Perdiccas) cf. Badian, *Studies*, 258; Diod. 17. 12. 3 ff. Welles, *Miscellanea Rostagni*, 101 ff.

<sup>2</sup> A. 1. 8. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Diod. 17. 12. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Tarn, *Alexander*, i. 7–8; Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, ii. 313.

<sup>5</sup> For some other important examples (not

<sup>6</sup> C. 4. 3. 1; cf. A. 2. 20. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Diod. 17. 61. 3; C. 4. 16. 32; cf. A. iii. 15. 2.

<sup>8</sup> C. 4. 8. 17 (Perdiccas); A. 3. 27. 5 (Ptolemy).

<sup>9</sup> C. 7. 6. 19–21.

Ptolemy, and Coenus and Artabazus jointly, Ptolemy is the only man explicitly called *somatophylax*, yet Hephaestion and Perdiccas were also members of the corps.<sup>1</sup> This might be quite accidental. But it is odd that Arrian here uses this distinguishing phrase in addition to his usual defining phrase, 'Ptolemy, son of Lagus'. There is no obvious need to mention that Ptolemy was *somatophylax*. It seems to carry the false implication, which may well be deliberate, that all the others were not.

Another conflict of evidence occurs in connection with the death of Clitus in Maracanda, in winter 328/7. Alexander held a party in connection with a sacrifice to the Dioscuri, in the course of which Alexander's achievements were openly praised in terms which offended some of the older Macedonians, since they implied depreciation of the achievements of Philip. Clitus objected, and Alexander tried to kill him, but was at first restrained. There are different versions of the incident from here on, but all sources agree that the upshot was that very soon after the first provocation the party provided another opportunity for Alexander, and this time Clitus was duly murdered.

Arrian's main version of the first part of the incident, in which Alexander was at first restrained, is vague. He says simply that Alexander was restrained by 'some of his drinking companions'.<sup>2</sup> He also cites explicitly Aristobulus, whose version was that Ptolemy rushed Clitus away before any damage could be done, but that Clitus rushed back and presented Alexander with his opportunity.<sup>3</sup> Aristobulus' version is clearly an attempt to exonerate Alexander, and to depict his action as duly provoked—which is consonant with his reputation in later antiquity as a flatterer of Alexander.<sup>4</sup> If Arrian is here following his usual custom, his main version will be Ptolemy's, while he cites Aristobulus' version as a variation. In this case Ptolemy chose to conceal his own part in the affair under the blanket term which Arrian gives as *τῶν ξυμπινόντων*. In outline, Curtius' account agrees with Arrian's first version, but gives more detail: *τῶν ξυμπινόντων* becomes Ptolemy and Perdiccas, aided by Lysimachus and Leonnatus.<sup>5</sup> Where Curtius' source found these names is not clear: Plutarch's account of the events, which perhaps comes from Chares, does not mention them.<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to believe that they are invented—though it is not impossible. However, if they are (more or less) correct, Ptolemy's vague phrase can be seen to have concealed his own participation; but it has also concealed the participation of others. It is easy enough to see that Ptolemy himself was not proud of his involvement in the highly discreditable episode, and if he omitted his own part, he could scarcely allow others to be prominent.

However, the consensus of modern opinion is that Arrian's main version is not here drawn from Ptolemy.<sup>7</sup> If this is correct—and there are good grounds for it—it must imply that Ptolemy simply omitted the whole unsavoury episode, a practice entirely in accordance with his normal technique of suppressing the inconvenient or unpalatable. In so doing, of course, he has also omitted—as we have already seen from discussing the implications of *τῶν ξυμπινόντων*—both his own part and that of his colleagues. However we regard

<sup>1</sup> A. 4. 16. 2; cf. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, i. 25 ff.

<sup>2</sup> A. 4. 8. 7.

<sup>3</sup> A. 4. 8. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pearson, *Lost Histories*, 150 ff., with Badian's comments, *Studies*, 255–6.

<sup>5</sup> C. 8. 1. 43 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 50–1; cf. Pearson, *Lost Histories*, 60.

<sup>7</sup> So Strasburger, *Ptolemaios und Alexander*, following Schwartz, *R.E.* s.v. 'Arrianos', 1240, and Jacoby, *FGH* II D, 517.

the question of Arrian's source, we clearly have here a further example of the discreet silence which has already been seen to be the chief characteristic of Ptolemy's propaganda technique. Unfortunately for Ptolemy, his was not the only version of the incident to survive: Aristobulus chose him as the *deus ex machina* for his own justification of Alexander's conduct. Someone much more straightforward provided information which perhaps Clitarchus wrote up for Curtius' use. For despite some (trivial) dramatic additions for which Curtius himself might easily be responsible, Curtius' version shows fewer signs of tendentious distortion than either of Arrian's, and is therefore likely (in outline) to be closer to the truth. Also the fact that it is not altogether incompatible with Plutarch's version—which, if from Chares, will represent an eyewitness account—suggests the same conclusion.

From the death of Clitus to the end of the Indian campaign relatively little evidence for our purpose is available: both Curtius and Arrian confirm that Perdikkas was sent ahead of the main expedition with Hephaestion to arrange the bridging of the Indus; and though Arrian gives much more prominence to Ptolemy's activities than does Curtius, this is explicable from Arrian's use of Ptolemy, who, it is clear, also liked where possible to give his own activities a discreet prominence.<sup>1</sup> Nor can much be made of the remaining instances of Perdikkas' activities as mentioned by Arrian; they are mostly either simple military commands with little or no detail given, or references to groups of men among whom Ptolemy also is mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Only one more direct reference may reflect Ptolemy's bias in action: the occasion is the attack on the city of the Malli, where Alexander was almost fatally wounded.<sup>3</sup> The incident as presented by Arrian, who is no doubt influenced by Ptolemy's presentation, does nothing to enhance Perdikkas' military reputation; for it was directly because of the slowness in action of his section of the army that Alexander was cut off and wounded. If this does reflect Ptolemy, it is consistent with his general attitude to Perdikkas.

Crucial omissions now remain to be considered, for they constitute the body of facts which alone explain how Perdikkas was, at the time of Alexander's death, quite pre-eminent among the Macedonians; if we only had Arrian, with his emphasis, taken from Ptolemy, on Alexander's own achievements, it would come as a totally unexplained phenomenon to find (even in Arrian's own book on the successors) Perdikkas' immediate dominance at Babylon after Alexander's death. Ptolemy's subtle distortion by suppression must clearly be at work again, with its purpose of emphasizing Alexander's supremacy over all. The vital facts which Ptolemy has suppressed are that Perdikkas, on Hephaestion's death in 324, virtually succeeded to Hephaestion's position as chief companion of the king and second-in-command of the empire. Diodorus, following Clitarchus—who is likely to have been well informed on these events, since he may have been an eyewitness; but in any case he had no axe to grind and no reason to falsify details which would be widely known—says that Perdikkas was given the highly personal and honorific task of conveying Hephaestion's body to Babylon;<sup>4</sup> and Diodorus is supported by Plutarch—

<sup>1</sup> C. 8. 10. 2 ff.; A. 4. 22. 7 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Military: A. 6. 6. 4 ff.; 6. 15. 1; cf. C. 9. 1. 19. Groups: A. 5. 13. 1; 7. 4. 5; cf. C. 8. 14. 15.

<sup>3</sup> A. 6. 9. 1 ff., cf. Schwartz, *R.E.* s.v.

'Arrianos', 1241; Strasburger, *Ptolemaios und Alexander*, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Diod. 17. 110. 8. On the date of Clitarchus see (most recently) Badian, *PACA* viii (1965), 5 ff.

here both using Hieronymus of Cardia, whose close association with Eumenes made him well informed on court matters—in saying that Perdikkas succeeded to Hephaestion's position as chiliarch of the companion cavalry—a military command which by now implied that its holder would be Grand Vizier.<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy found this an opportunity for discreet concealment. Arrian records Ptolemy's information that Alexander never appointed another commander for Hephaestion's chiliarchy, but that it remained known as 'Hephaestion's chiliarchy', and kept the same standard. This seems to contradict Diodorus and Plutarch, yet it is not incompatible. That we cannot simply choose to believe Ptolemy's version against that of the others is clear from the additional fact that in the same passage Plutarch preserves a promotion consequent on that of Perdikkas, Eumenes' appointment to command Perdikkas' *taxis*. Perdikkas must have been given the temporary command of Hephaestion's chiliarchy—for reasons we need not investigate here—which accordingly retained its name and standard. Presumably Perdikkas' *taxis*, now commanded by Eumenes, similarly retained its former name and standard. Arrian omits these crucial promotions; indeed, he implies that they did not take place. The dissimulation is clear; it must be Ptolemy's, and Perdikkas' reputation is again the chief sufferer.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly Curtius, probably taking his information from Clitarchus—who had no reason to invent it—must be reliable when he makes Perdikkas Alexander's confidant on his death-bed;<sup>3</sup> and Curtius, Diodorus, and Justin, all probably using Hieronymus, who, through Eumenes, would know the fact from its importance in the subsequent struggle at Babylon, record Alexander's giving Perdikkas his signet ring. Tarn denied that this was fact because Ptolemy did not say it.<sup>4</sup> But his argument from silence is not at all cogent. Ptolemy, as we have seen, had every reason for suppressing Perdikkas' prominence and there is no justification any longer for regarding him as the sole straightforward purveyor of all truth.

Ptolemy's suppression of important details about Aristonous and Perdikkas seems proved, in so far as anything of this kind can ever be proved. The reason for the suppression must originate in their co-operation against Ptolemy's separatist inclinations in Egypt after Alexander's death. We can perhaps go further and see Ptolemy's discreetly apologetic portrait of Alexander himself, and his generally uninformative treatment of his officers, as also originating in these years. For by depicting Alexander as supreme, by implication Ptolemy depicted Alexander's officers as all being on the same level of prominence. To depict the officers as equals under Alexander, to suppress the outstanding prominence of Perdikkas in the last years, was tantamount to depicting his

<sup>1</sup> Diod. 18. 3. 4; Plut. *Eumenes*, 1. Tarn, *JHS*, 1921, 4 ff., argues unconvincingly that these are based on Duris—yet even Duris cannot *always* have been wrong! On Hieronymus see T. S. Brown, *AHR* lii (1946–7), 684 ff.

<sup>2</sup> A. 7. 14. 10. This explanation of the contradiction in the sources seems more satisfactory than that of Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, ii. 315–16, and Tarn (tentatively, in *Alexander*, i. 117) that Perdikkas did the duties of the office without the name; it is far from clear that the Macedonian monarchy employed such over-subtle distinctions.

Possible hostility to Eumenes, also apparent in this omission, will be from Eumenes' later close association with Perdikkas. Unfortunately we cannot trace this in any detail in Ptolemy's book.

<sup>3</sup> C. 10. 5. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Diod. 17. 117. 3; 18. 2. 4; C. 10. 5. 4; Justin, 12. 15. 12. Tarn, *JHS* 1921, 4 ff.; cf. also M. J. Fontana, 'Le lotte per la successione di Alessandro Magno', 259 ff. (in *Atti della accademia di scienze, lettere e arti di Palermo*, xviii, II, 1957–8). Good discussion in Badian, *HSPH* lxxii (1967), 185 n. 12.

own position after 323 as being based on an equivalent prestige to Perdiccas'. This was likely to be a much more effective means of propaganda than if Ptolemy had obviously exaggerated his own status under Alexander, for that would be expected; and the fact that we have to search for this type of personal exaggeration is evidence that Ptolemy avoided making himself invidiously prominent in his book.

This bias which we have illustrated against Perdiccas and Aristonous—leaving aside the doubtful case of Antigonos—might have some bearing on the date at which Ptolemy wrote his history. Badian has already suggested that the traditional period for the composition—Ptolemy's extreme old age in the 280s B.C.—should be reconsidered: his re-examination of the meagre evidence for the relative dates of Ptolemy and Aristobulus shows it to be entirely inconclusive;<sup>1</sup> and the traditional purpose for Ptolemy's book, to set the record straight, is equally unconvincing. In addition to the important instances which Badian cites of Ptolemy's suppression of crucial details of court history, which in themselves constitute a severe indictment against Ptolemy's good faith, the more personal animosity which we have demonstrated offers further evidence of a distinct purpose behind Ptolemy's *Tendenz*. Badian suggests that his book might have been written during the early part of his career in Egypt, at the time when, having snatched Alexander's body from Perdiccas' control and buried it in Egypt, he seems to have been making some claim to be regarded as Alexander's successor.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly, the traditional late date offers no convincing reason for Ptolemy's purpose: there could be no urgency giving edge to his hostility towards Perdiccas and Aristonous, no urgency to his suppression of unsavory details about Alexander, if he wrote when his own acknowledged kingship had existed for nearly twenty years,<sup>3</sup> his actual control of Egypt for nearly forty. What point was there, at this late stage of his life, in justifying himself in this over-subtle way? If we take an earlier date, however (let us say sometime after 320, when Perdiccas was assassinated in Egypt while attacking Ptolemy, and Ptolemy had access to such documentary material as was collected at the royal headquarters), Ptolemy had more reason for producing the kind of book he did. The previous year he had gained the prestige of possessing Alexander's corpse; he was investing massive resources in developing the city of Alexander, Alexandria, as his capital; in every way his satrapy was to be dominated by the prestige (and the physical remains) of Alexander. It is surely in this general context that his Alexander-centred history assumes its greatest relevance. From this time onwards the course of events might actually be affected by what people—particularly the Macedonians and Greeks whom he wished to encourage to support him in Egypt—thought about Alexander. After Perdiccas' death it really mattered to Ptolemy what these people thought about Perdiccas and what kind of information they had about him. And—perhaps most importantly—what Alexander had thought about Perdiccas, for this was an immediate issue. After Perdiccas' death and in the context of an Alexander-conscious Egypt which was on the defensive, the general levelling of the officers' prestige under Alexander and the concealment of Perdiccas' closeness to Alexander in the last months of the king's life were not only important: they

<sup>1</sup> Badian, *Studies*, 256 ff. For the traditional view, cf. Pearson, *Lost Histories*, 193 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies*, 258.

<sup>3</sup> From 305/4: cf. A. E. Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology* (Munich, 1962), 4 ff.

might even have been the crucial factors in retaining the long-term loyalty of Ptolemy's Macedonian supporters. On Alexander Ptolemy built his kingdom. His publicized view of Alexander and of the careers of his colleagues (and of himself) under Alexander is vitally conditioned by this fact.

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