

ARRIAN AT THE CASPIAN GATES: A STUDY IN METHODOLOGY

In a recent article Professor Brunt has made an eloquent plea for greater rigour in handling the remains of non-extant authors.¹ When the original is lost and we depend upon quotation, paraphrase or mere citation by later authorities, we must first establish the reliability of the source which supplies the fragment. There is obviously a world of difference between the long verbal quotations in Athenaeus and the disjointed epitomes provided by the *periochae* of Livy. As a general rule, the fuller and more explicit the reproduction in the secondary source, the more confident we can be that it approximates to the original. Our doubts should increase as the references become less precise and resort to paraphrase rather than direct quotation. The wider context is also important. One always needs to know why the secondary author is making his citation and what interest he has in a strictly literal reproduction. These principles are unexceptionable, but they are difficult to maintain in practice. One rarely has the opportunity to make a sustained experiment, checking an author's techniques of quotation and digest against sources which are now extant. As a result the historian all too often feels constrained to squeeze the last drop of meaning out of testimonia which are by their very nature imprecise. The standard work, Jacoby's *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, is a pitfall for the unwary. It presents all citations, whether full quotations or the vaguest of references, on the same status as 'fragments'; and the context is necessarily reduced to the barest minimum, so that the reader's attention is focussed directly upon the lost original and diverted from the machinery of transmission. In the following pages I wish to examine a test case, in which (it seems to me) far too much has been read into fragments provided by secondary authors of unproven reliability, and a complicated picture has been constructed by pressing the individual pieces of evidence much further than is warranted by their immediate context. I hope that the results will be cautionary and at the same time supply a model for investigation of a fragmentary tradition.

It has become fashionable to argue that the historian L. Flavius Arrianus served in Trajan's Parthian war and subsequently based the historical narrative of his *Parthica* on eye-witness experience, devoting no less than ten of its seventeen books to four campaigning years, A.D. 114–117.² There is explicit, if late, evidence from the sixth-century Byzantine author John the Lydian:³ 'such is the account of the Caspian

¹ P. A. Brunt, 'On historical fragments and epitomes', *CQ* 30 (1980), 477–94.

² Gerhard Wirth, 'Arrian und Traian -Versuch einer Gegenwartsdeutung', *Studii Clasice* 16 (1974) 169–209, esp. 189 f.; Everett L. Wheeler, *Flavius Arrianus: a political and military biography* (Diss. Duke University, 1977), pp. 27–31; Philip A. Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (Chapel Hill, 1980), pp. 9, 135–43. (These three works will henceforth be referred to by the author's name alone.) The hypothesis had been mooted briefly in the past, most categorically by Alfred von Domaszewski (*SB. Heidelberg* 16 (1925/6), Heft 1, 5), who argued that Arrian served as an equestrian officer. This evoked brief expressions of dissent; cf. E. Schwartz, *RE* ii. 1236; F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* iiD. 567, 575; F. A. Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War* (Oxford, 1948), p. 2. None of these authors, however, questions the postulate that ten books of the *Parthica* were devoted to Trajan's campaigns.

³ Joh. Lyd. *de magistratibus populi romani* 3. 48, p. 142. 6. The page references here and subsequently are to the standard Teubner text by R. Wuensch (Leipzig, 1903), and, unless it is otherwise stated, all references to John are to the *de magistratibus*. This work was begun in A.D. 554. See in general J. R. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* ii (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 612–15.

Gates given by the Roman authors, which Arrian expounds with superior accuracy in his *Alanike historia* and especially in the eighth book of his *Parthica*, having himself approached the vicinity when he commanded that country under Trajan the good.⁴ The statement is clear: Arrian held a command in Trajan's reign, operated in the area of the Caspian Gates and gave a topographical description in two separate works. Nothing further is known of his *Alanike historia*, except that it was published as a separate monograph,⁵ but the eighth book of the *Parthica* is elsewhere attested. It is cited by Stephanus of Byzantium as a source of information about the Armenian settlement of Elegeia.⁶ Now Elegeia is famous as the location where king Parthamasiris offered his submission to Trajan, and over a century ago Alfred von Gutschmid argued that Arrian referred to Elegeia in the context of the surrender.⁷ The consequences of the assumption were far reaching. The *Parthica* is known to have comprised seventeen books; and, if Arrian was recording the events of A.D. 114 as early as book VIII, the narrative of Trajan's campaigns must have been colossally detailed, rivalling the *history of the Successors*, which took ten books to cover the three years from the death of Alexander to the end of the campaigning season of 321 B.C.⁸ But the *Parthica* also shows alarming lack of proportion, compressing all Parthian history before Trajan into seven books and dilating at enormous length on the contemporary war of conquest. It is the bias one might expect from a contemporary of the events obsessed by his own experiences.

If Arrian was a participant in the campaigns, he was in his late twenties at least – too old for a laticlavian tribune and too young to serve as a legionary legate, as Sir Ronald Syme has observed.⁹ It is perhaps possible that his military service, like that of the younger Trajan, was unusually protracted; but the likelihood is that he served (if he did serve) as an equestrian officer and was only later adlected to the senate by the favour of Hadrian. There is another difficulty in that John explicitly places his activity under Trajan in the vicinity of the Caspian Gates, the modern Darial pass in central

⁴ τοιοῦτος μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶν Κασπίων πυλῶν τοῖς Ῥωμαίων συγγραφεῦσιν ὁ λόγος <ὄν> Ἀρριανὸς ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀλανικῆς ἱστορίας καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα ἐπὶ τῆς ὀγδόης τῶν Παρθικῶν ἀκριβέστερον διεξέρχεται, αὐτὸς τοῖς τόποις ἐπιστάς, οἷα τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἡγησάμενος ὑπὸ Τραϊανῷ τῷ χρηστῷ. This is the limit of the fragment in Roos' edition (*Parth.* F 6, *Flavii Arriani quae exstant omnia* II (revised G. Wirth: Leipzig, 1967), p. 229); Jacoby *FGRHist* 156 F 37 continues it for a sentence (on which see below, p. 270). Wirth, p. 189 n. 79, interprets the final clause as an explanation of Arrian's later Cappadocian command: 'he himself commanded the area, seeing that he had been in charge of that territory <before> under Trajan' (this is accepted by Wheeler, p. 30, and less explicitly by Stadter, p. 143). I find this interpretation very forced. In the context ἐπιστάς should be understood simply in the sense of proximity, as in the exact parallel from Polybius: ποιησάμενος δὲ τὴν πορείαν διὰ τῆς Δανυίας... ἐπέστη τοῖς κατὰ τὸ Ῥήγιον τόποις ἀνυπόπτως (Polyb. 9. 7. 10; see further *LSJ*² s.v. ἐπίστημι B. iii). John's statement now becomes perfectly simple; Arrian's description was more accurate because he had actually visited the scene in his capacity as commander of the area.

⁵ Photius, *Bibl.* cod. 58 = *Parth.* F 1 Roos: συγγράφεται δὲ καὶ τὰ κατὰ Ἀλανούς, ἣν ἐπέγραψεν Ἀλανικῆν. The only other possible allusion to the work is a passing reference in Procopius (*de bell. Goth.* 4. 14. 47 f.; cf. Roos, *Mnemosyne* 54 (1926), 116).

⁶ Steph. Byz. s.v. Ἐλέγεια = *Parth.* F 5 Roos.

⁷ A. von Gutschmid, *Philologus* 8 (1853), 435–39. His results served as Roos' framework for his reconstruction of the *Parthica* (A. G. Roos, *Studia Arrianea* (Leipzig, 1912), p. 36), which was in turn endorsed by Jacoby (*FGRHist* II D. 566 f.). Since that time the identification has been taken as an 'absolutely fixed point' (R. P. Longden, *JRS* 21 (1931), 12 n. 3).

⁸ For the dimensions of the *History of the Successors* see the digest of Photius (cod. 92 = *Succ.* F 1 Roos) and the brief characterisation by Stadter, pp. 144–52.

⁹ *Historia* 14 (1965) 354 = *Danubian Papers* (Bucharest, 1971), p. 237.

Georgia. Trajan was never himself in the district, though he did regulate the affairs of the Caucasian kingdoms of Iberia and Albania while he was in Elegeia.¹⁰ He moved rapidly south to the headwaters of the Tigris, and by the winter of 114/5 his legates are attested operating in the far south of Armenia, Lusius Quietus campaigning against the Mardi near Lake Van and Bruttius Praesens with the *VI Ferrata* near the border of Atropatene.¹¹ If Arrian was sent on a mission to the Caspian Gates, he remained with the garrison of Armenia; units of three legions are attested in Artaxata and Arrian could have been attached to any one of them.¹² If so, his autopsy was limited and did not extend to the great campaigns in Mesopotamia. But there is no *a priori* reason for contesting the theory that Arrian served as angusticlavian tribune in the vicinity of the Caspian Gates. It is a possibility, but the possibility is grounded on the assumption that the report of John the Lydian is strictly accurate, and the assumption should be tested before using his evidence.

John's report on Arrian comes at the end of a long passage dealing with the wrangle between the Byzantine and Persian empires over the expenses of Biraparach, the fortress guarding the Caspian Gates. The context is the fifth century A.D., the period from Jovian to Anastasius, and has nothing to do with Trajan or Arrian. The passage begins with a brief and very general description of the Gates (3. 52, p. 140. 20), which can hardly be Arrian's 'more accurate' account. John has clearly taken his historical narrative from contemporary Byzantine authors, and the note on Arrian is an appendix, stating that his work contained more detailed information on the Caspian Gates based on first-hand experience. It is important to determine how much of what John says is an extract from Arrian. Did the historian merely describe the Caspian Gates or did he also mention his own participation in the campaign? Much depends on the general reliability of John, and this fortunately can be checked.

The *de magistratibus* is generously larded with citations, intended to display John's erudition to best advantage, and many refer to extant authors. They vary in character, ranging from explicit verbatim translation of juristic texts to the most casual of passing references. Usually, but not invariably, the longer and more explicit fragments are the more correct. When John translates, he generally gives a fair approximation of the original, though it is evident that he is using extracts from the *Digest*, not the original unabridged texts. That emerges clearly from 1. 26, p. 29. 5 ff., where John gives a literal translation of a passage of Pomponius (*Dig.* 1. 2. 22–23) but ascribes it to Gaius' treatise on the Twelve Tables, an extract from which immediately precedes the passage of Pomponius in the *Digest*. John merely referred to the head of the chapter in the mistaken assumption that the passage he translated was the first of the section.¹³ Here the translation, if wrongly ascribed, is at least accurate, but that is not invariably the case. At 1. 24, p. 27. 9 ff. he gives what purports to be a literal translation of Iunius Gracchanus. It is in fact a garbled version of an extract from Ulpian's *de officio*

¹⁰ Eutrop. 8. 2. 2; Festus, *Brev.* 20. 2; Jerome, *Chron.* p. 194 Helm. For digest and discussion see Lepper (above, n. 2), pp. 13–15.

¹¹ For the operations of Lusius Quietus see Themistius, *Orat.* 16, p. 294. 21 Downey; Arrian *Parth.* F 87 Roos, and for those of Bruttius Praesens see Arrian *Parth.* F 85 Roos (located by Syme, *Historia* 18 [1969] 352 = *Roman Papers* (Oxford, 1979), p. 774).

¹² *AE* 1968, no. 510–11: *IV Scythica* was present in force in late 116, and there were *vexillationes* from *I Italica* and *VI Ferrata*. See further Marie-Louise Chaumont, *ANRW* II. ix. 1 (Berlin, 1976), 137.

¹³ The error recurs at 1. 34, p. 34. 16 ff., which is a free adaptation of Pomponius (*Dig.* 1. 2. 24) masquerading as a translation. The passage is again ascribed to Gaius.

quaestoris, which refers to passing to Gracchanus as a source. There is a lacuna in John's translation and he adds material not to be found in the original.¹⁴

If self-proclaimed translations are unreliable, the prospects are not encouraging for less explicit references. John can be accurate, as when he refers to Diodorus (1. 13. 3) for the tradition that Hephaestus was the first king of Egypt (3. 30, p. 118. 2), but, even when the reference is correct in essence, John can add material not in the original. At 1. 13, p. 18. 4 ff., he refers correctly to Suetonius' anecdote (*Aug.* 40. 5) of Augustus criticising the casual dress of the Roman *plebs*, but he locates the incident imaginatively in the hippodrome and glosses *pullati* as ἐπὶ τὸ βαρβαρικώτερον ἑσταλμένοι. All too often the entire reference is fallacious. John refers to the satirist Persius for the story of a Serranus being summoned to the dictatorship while woodcutting and taking with him improvised *fascēs*, whereas Persius' original merely tells the famous legend of Cincinnatus called from the plough; there is no reference to the *fascēs* or to woodcutting.¹⁵ One can only guess at the number of stages of transmission required to produce such atrocious garbling. Certainly John does not know at first hand many of the authors he cites. His discussion of the sturgeon is a case in point (3. 63, p. 154. 5 ff.). He begins with a reference to Athenaeus (7. 294 F) which is only slightly garbled¹⁶ and refers correctly to Aristotle (*HA* 2. 13, 505a 15) for the Greek name ἔλοψ. After an unverifiable reference to Aristophanes of Byzantium he gives a circumstantial story, ascribed to Cornelius Nepos and the poet Laberius, describing how Optatus, a freedman of Claudius and commander of the Carpathian fleet, transplanted sturgeon to the Italian coast between Ostia and Campania. Despite his protestations John is not using Nepos and Laberius directly. His account is ultimately derived from the elder Pliny, who did adduce the authority of Nepos and Laberius, but solely for the fact that in their period the chief fish delicacies were the *lupus* and *asellus*. These, Pliny says, had displaced the sturgeon.¹⁷ The Optatus incident comes a few sentences later, in another context dealing with yet another fish, the *scarus*. Optatus is given his proper role as a prefect of the Misenum fleet (Carpathus is only mentioned as the breeding ground of the *scarus*),¹⁸ and the only correspondence with John is the farming of the fish between Ostia and Campania. This is a blatant instance where John cannot have used his cited authorities directly; and the reproduction of even the secondary source is so garbled that he must be quoting either indirectly or from a very faulty memory. His version contrasts vividly with the relatively accurate digest which Macrobius makes of the same passage.¹⁹

¹⁴ John claims that Tullus Hostilius made the office of quaestor compulsory, whereas Ulpian (*Dig.* 1. 12. 1) merely states that it was established fact that Tullus had quaestors. John omits the previous sentence (which evinces doubt whether quaestors existed under Romulus and Numa), so that the text as it stands is unintelligible.

¹⁵ 1. 32, p. 33. 13 ff.; cf. Persius 1. 73–75. Compare the reference to Lucan at 3. 46, p. 135. 14, where John claims that Dyrrhachium got its name from an eponymous Cretan king and cites the second book of the *Pharsalia* in support. Lucan says nothing about a Cretan king or the foundation of Dyrrhachium. He merely notes that *Brundisium* was once occupied by Cretan exiles (*Phars.* 2. 610); Epidamnus (not named Dyrrhachium) appears fleetingly at line 625.

¹⁶ Athenaeus claims that the fish was served at Rome to the accompaniment of pipes and garlands; in John's version the accompaniment is pipes and cymbals.

¹⁷ Pliny *HN* 9. 61: 'postea praecipuam auctoritatem fuisse lupo et asellis Nepos Cornelius et Laberius poeta mimorum tradidere.'

¹⁸ Pliny *HN* 9. 62: 'inde [sc. from the Carpathian sea] advectos Tiberio Claudio principe Optatus e libertis eius praefectus classis inter Ostiensem et Campaniae oram sparsos disseminavit.'

¹⁹ Macrobius *Sat.* 3. 16. 10. The original is embroidered but the substance (and some of the terminology) is accurately transmitted.

The most precise-seeming labels can be deceptive. At 1. 47, p. 50. 10 ff., John refers explicitly to the second book of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* for the information that Solon derived his three-tier structure of Attic society from his experiences in Egypt. There is no such passage in the second book of Diodorus. John has in fact fused together two quite unrelated passages of book 1, the first a statement that Lycurgus, Plato and Solon transferred many Egyptian customs to their homelands and the second a description of the three classes of Egyptian society. In the latter passage Diodorus does compare Athenian and Egyptian society in much the terms that John ascribes to him, but there is no connection with Solon.²⁰ Two discrete passages relating to Athenian borrowings from Egypt have been conflated and attributed to the wrong book.

So far the evidence has been discouraging. John is occasionally accurate in his references, but it seems a matter of chance. He is capable of the most outrageous distortions and totally false reporting, and some of his purported sources he demonstrably had not seen. But it may be that he was more scrupulous in his use of Arrian. We must look for other references to his work, and, once again, it is his extant work that is important. John provides three other extracts from Arrian, one of which is a reference to the lost *Parthica* and unverifiable.²¹ Of the two remaining references one is a bare mention of Arrian's *Tactica*. It comes in a long catalogue of tactical writers cited to illustrate the meaning of the Roman term *veteranus*.²² Arrian in fact never refers to veterans in the extant *Tactica*, nor did his immediate source, Aelian, who also figures in John's list. It is apparent that John has compiled a catalogue of tactical authorities and adduced them in support of his definition of *veteranus* without checking whether all (or any?) did in fact support him. There is no guarantee that he had even sighted Arrian's *Tactica*. But John continues with a reference to Arrian's Alexander history; Arrian, he claims, there gave the Bessi the name Triballi.²³ Now Arrian does of course refer to Alexander's Triballian campaign of 335 B.C., but he nowhere suggests that the Triballi were identical to the Bessi nor does he even mention the Bessi. The tribes of the central Haemus range, the homeland of the Bessi,²⁴ are termed the autonomous Thracians, who are completely distinct from the Triballi;²⁵ and the Triballi took no part in the defence of the Haemus against Alexander. The mistake could arise from an extremely cursory reading of the first chapter of Arrian, where it is stated that Alexander's objective in 335 was to subjugate the Triballi (and Illyrians) and the first recorded episode was the forcing of the Haemus passes.²⁶ John may have inferred falsely that the defenders of the Haemus were the Triballi. Alternatively he may have referred to Arrian at second hand, misinterpreting some commentator who observed that the people later known as Bessi were mentioned in

²⁰ Diod. 1. 98. 1 (cf. 77. 5, 79. 4 for other Solonian borrowings). The triple division of Egyptian society comes at 1. 28. 4–5 and is adduced as evidence that Athens was colonised from Sais in Egypt.

²¹ *De mensibus* 3. 1, p. 37. 14 = Arrian *Parth.* F 1 Roos.

²² 1. 47, p. 49. 13–20. The list ends with a reference to book 1 of Claudian's extant encomium on Stilicho. Once more there is no reference to veterans in the text, but Claudian (1. 384) does refer in passing to '*veterum*... lauros', the triumphs of men of old.

²³ 1. 47, p. 50. 2: τοὺς λεγομένους Τριβαλλοὺς· οὕτως δὲ τοὺς Βέσσους Ἀρριανὸς ἐν τοῖς περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου προσηγόρευσε.

²⁴ In the Roman period the Bessi were the predominant tribe of the Haemus (cf. Strabo 7. 5. 12, 318). They were the descendants of Arrian's autonomous Thracians.

²⁵ Arr. 1. 1. 5–6 (on this passage see my *Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander* 1 (1980), pp. 53 f.). Alexander only encountered the Triballi after he crossed the Haemus and pressed towards the Danube (Arr. 1. 2. 1).

²⁶ Arr. 1. 1. 4–5: ἐλαύνων ἐπὶ Θράκης, ἐς Τριβαλλοὺς καὶ Ἰλλυριοὺς... δεκαταῖος ἀφίκετο ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τὸν Αἴμον.

Arrian's account of the Triballian war. But the sad fact remains that the only correct item in John's report is that Arrian mentioned the Triballi in his Alexander history. Otherwise he is fundamentally misleading.

Given John's performance elsewhere, it would be absurd to place any reliance upon his report of Arrian's *Parthica* or to assume that it contains any genuinely autobiographical elements. Indeed, if his wording is taken strictly, it does not imply that Arrian held any subordinate post. The terminology (τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἡγησάμενος) coheres much better with his amply attested governorship of Cappadocia than with a military tribunate. John confirms the impression in his subsequent observations (not included as part of the fragment by Roos): 'for such were the commanders (ἄρχοντας) employed by that emperor, men who by their words and deeds raised the commonwealth to so great a glory'.²⁷ The passage resembles the encomium written nearly two centuries before by Themistius. This praises Arrian and the emperors of the day who employed him as a philosopher in action, so that he 'crossed the Caspian Gates, drove the Alani from Armenia and regulated boundaries for the Iberians and Albanians'.²⁸ Themistius considers the high point of Arrian's career to have been his action against the Alani in A.D. 135 and his subsequent operations around the Caspian Gates. This is patently a reference to Arrian's career as governor of Cappadocia between 131 and 137. John's material derives from the same tradition. Arrian, he claims, could give an accurate description of the Caspian Gates because he had been in the vicinity while governor of Cappadocia. The only problem in this interpretation is that John assigns the operations to the reign of Trajan and not Hadrian, but the error is relatively venial compared with the gross distortions he commits elsewhere. It can moreover be explained and paralleled. The only complete document from Arrian's governorship is the *Periplus*, which begins with a dedication to the emperor: *Αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Τραϊανῶ Ἀδριανῶ Σεβαστῶ*. Hadrian is given both his adoptive and actual *cognomina*, and the same may have been the case in the lost introduction of Arrian's *Tactica*. It would have been relatively easy for a writer of the Byzantine period to infer that Arrian's addressee was Traianus rather than Traianus Hadrianus. The mistake has in fact occurred in the archetype of the *Periplus*, the early tenth century codex Palatinus gr. 398. Although the dedication explicitly names Traianus Hadrianus the copyist can still entitle the work *Ἀρριανοῦ ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τραϊανόν*. I see no reason why John should not similarly have mistaken a reference to Arrian's service under Traianus Hadrianus. The mistake could well have occurred already in the tradition.

All that remains from John's report is that Arrian gave a detailed description of the Caspian Gates in the *Alanike historia* and the *Parthica*, and, considering his record elsewhere, we cannot assume without corroboration that the description came in book VIII of the *Parthica*. There is no possibility of determining the historical context, for the Caspian Gates were such a feature of Caucasian geography that they could have received a full description at almost any stage in the narrative. One thinks of the Caucasian campaigns of Pompey and Canidius Crassus,²⁹ the Iberian invasion of

²⁷ τοιοῦτους γὰρ ἄρχοντας ἐκείνος ἔσχεν, οἱ τοῖς τε λόγοις τοῖς τε ἔργοις εἰς τοσαύτην εὐκλειαν τὴν πολιτείαν ἀνέστησαν (p. 142. 21–23).

²⁸ Themistius *Orat.* 34. 8 (T 13 Roos). The passage describes both Arrian and Q. Iunius Rusticus, the mentor of Marcus Aurelius, and conflates their achievements. The two careers, however, can easily be disentangled. For discussion of the context and its historical implications see *HSCP* 81 (1977), 229–32.

²⁹ Pompey passed through the centre of Iberia in his campaign of 65 B.C., forcing the pass at Mshkheta, immediately south of the Caspian Gates (cf. Dio 37. 1. 4–5). For Crassus' invasion of 36 B.C. see Plut. *Ant.* 34. 10; Dio 49. 24. 1. Strabo 11. 3. 5, 501, states that he used the same passes as Pompey.

Armenia in A.D. 35,³⁰ Nero's abortive expedition to the Caspian Gates,³¹ or the peaceful Flavian involvement in the Caucasus.³² These are merely the incidents known to us which would have justified a description of the Gates. Arrian would doubtless have had many more occasions in the seventeen books of the *Parthica*. What one can argue, with some reticence, is that Trajan's campaigns are an unlikely context for that description. There is no record of military activity there in A.D. 114 but ample record throughout the previous century and a half. One would naturally expect a description of the Gates at an earlier period, when it was more germane to the narrative. If the description did in fact come from book VIII of the *Parthica*, then there is a *prima facie* case for not attributing the narrative to Trajan's Parthian war.

We may now turn to Stephanus of Byzantium. The extant epitome of his *Ethnica* refers fourteen times to specific books of the *Parthica*, naming Arrian as a source for various toponyms, and it twice gives brief verbatim quotations. The crucial entry is one of the most laconic: 'Ελέγεια, χωρίον πέραν Εὐφράτου, Ἀρριανὸς ἐν Παρθικῶν ἢ τὸ ἐθνικὸν Ἐλεγεὺς ὡς Σελευκεὺς. Stephanus merely states that Elegeia was a locality beyond the Euphrates and was mentioned by Arrian in book VIII of his *Parthica*. The context of Arrian's reference is not given, but, as we have seen, modern scholars have opted for Trajan's visit in A.D. 114. How secure is this attribution? It can certainly be admitted that Trajan's reception of Parthamasiris was a suitable occasion for Elegeia to have been mentioned by name, and indeed Arrian must have mentioned the site of the encounter.³³ But we cannot assume that Stephanus referred to that particular context unless it can be shown that there was no other context in which Elegeia could have been mentioned. That is clearly not the case. Elegeia is not frequently attested in our extant sources, but it was a place of some substance. In A.D. 161 it was a major theatre of operations, the site of the débacle of Sedatius Severianus.³⁴ The geographers place it by the Euphrates in the general latitude of Artaxata,³⁵ and although the site cannot be identified,³⁶ it was clearly on the main highway from Satala, the capital of Lesser Armenia, into Armenia and towards the northern capital.³⁷ It presumably controlled the passage of the Euphrates. Such a location may have been mentioned in any number of contexts. An obvious occasion was Corbulo's invasion of Armenia in A.D. 58, which was launched from Cappadocia (Satala has been suggested as his base)³⁸ and drove towards Artaxata. Tacitus' account is vivid and

³⁰ Tacitus (*Ann.* 6. 33. 3) mentions both the Darial pass and the coastal pass of Derbent (cf. Jos *AJ* 18. 97).

³¹ Pliny *HN* 6. 40; Tac. *Hist.* 1. 6. 4; Dio 63. 8. 1; Suet. *Nero* 19. 2. There is controversy about Nero's intentions (for reviews of the problem see Wheeler, pp. 117–23; G. E. F. Chilver, *Historical Commentary on Tacitus' Histories I and II* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 55 f.); but all sources agree that the Caspian Gates were his geographical objective.

³² For the evidence see Bosworth, *Antichthon* 10 (1976), 73–76; Wheeler, pp. 131 ff. It is significant that Statius (*Silv.* 4. 4. 63 f.) regards the Caspian Gates as a natural arena for the operations of the Cappadocian army.

³³ He gave a detailed account of the interview, apparently including speeches by both Trajan and Parthamasiris (*Parth.* F 37–40 Roos; cf. Roos, *Studia Arrianea*, p. 36; Stadter, p. 139).

³⁴ Dio 71. 2. 1; cf. Lucian *Alexander* 27; *de hist. conscr.* 21, 25 f.; Groag, *RE* iiA. 1009–10 ('auf einem in der Geschichte Armeniens oft genannten Schlachtfelde').

³⁵ Pliny *HN* 5. 84 (the context is difficult to interpret, but Elegeia is clearly placed on the Euphrates); Ptolemy *Geogr.* 5. 13. 12 Nobbe.

³⁶ The favourite choice is Ilica, between modern Erzurum and Askale (cf. Baumgartner, *RE* v. 2258; T. B. Mitford, *ANRW* 11. vii. 2 (Berlin, 1980), 1198 f.). D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* ii. 1465, was rightly sceptical.

³⁷ Note Trajan's line of march in A.D. 114 (Dio 68. 19. 5; cf. Lepper [above, n. 2], pp. 7, 207; Chaumont [above, n. 12], p. 134).

³⁸ Mitford (above, n. 36), p. 1176, 'perhaps near Erzurum, but more plausibly at Satala'. Chaumont, pp. 100–1, argues that Corbulo spent the winter of A.D. 57/8 in the plateau of Erzurum after moving from Cappadocia. In that case he will have passed by or near Elegeia.

rhetorical but short on incidents and place names, concentrating on the capture of Volandum³⁹ and clearly omitting a great deal of material available to Arrian. It is hard to believe that Corbulo did not pass through or near Elegeia, and there is a high probability that he mentioned the site in his memoirs.⁴⁰ This is only one possible context; there are many others. Now, if Arrian mentioned Elegeia on several occasions, there was no reason for Stephanus to have chosen the most famous (if the reception of Parthamasiris was the most famous). He may simply have picked out the first reference to Elegeia. One may compare some of his notes on Thucydides. For material on Molycreum he refers to book II, where the city features evanescently as an Athenian port of call (2. 84. 4), and omits the far more explicit material in book III, where Thucydides describes its capture by the Aetolians and notes its status as a Corinthian colony and Athenian subject (3. 102. 2). Similarly, with respect to Oropus, he again singles out Thucydides' first reference, recording incidental damage inflicted on the city's territory by the retreating Peloponnesian invasion force of 431 (2. 23. 3), and ignores all later passages, including the reports in book VIII of Oropus' important role in the fighting of the Ionian war.⁴¹ If we apply the analogy to Arrian, it seems most likely that Stephanus' note on Elegeia refers to the first appearance of the site in the *Parthica*. The context may have been relatively trivial, not recorded in our extant sources, and in all probability it dealt with an episode earlier than Trajan's Parthian war.

Yet another caveat is in order. Stephanus gives the book number in abbreviated form, and there is at least a possibility of corruption. If we contrast his reports of book numbers in another seventeen-volume work, Strabo's *Geographica*, it rapidly becomes clear that his performance is most erratic. Of eleven references to Strabo XVII only three have the correct book figure.⁴² Approximately half the references to book XVI are wrong, as are two out of four references to book V.⁴³ Other books are better excerpted. Twelve out of thirteen references to book XIV are correct, as are five out of six references to book VIII; but in both cases the figures which are corrupt have been abbreviated.⁴⁴ In sum, though Stephanus' figures may be generally reliable, that reliability decreases markedly when the book number has been abbreviated in the manuscript tradition. One cannot therefore be totally sure that the reference to Elegeia did come in book VIII of the *Parthica*.

There is, then, no compelling reason to refer Arrian's mention of Elegeia to the

³⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 13. 39. 1–5. Volandum is often identified with the fortress of Olane (cf. Chaumont, p. 103 n. 171), which Strabo (11. 14. 6, 529) locates in the vicinity of Artaxata. If so, Tacitus has not given a single place name between the Cappadocian border and the Armenian capital.

⁴⁰ Pliny's reference to Elegeia occurs in a context in which he cites Corbulo and C. Licinius Mucianus as sources for the geography of the Euphrates (*HN* 5. 83 = Corbulo F 3 Peter).

⁴¹ Thuc. 8. 60. 1–2, 95. 1, 3–4. There are other passing references to Oropus at 3. 91. 3, 4. 96. 7 and 7. 28. 1. The reference to Sollium is also to its first appearance in Thucydides (2. 30. 1; cf. 3. 95. 1, 5. 30. 2). Unfortunately Stephanus is not consistent. There is no apparent reason why the reference to Anactorium is to Thucydides' account of its capture by the Athenians in 424 (Thuc. 4. 49) and not to the similar note in book I recording its capture and resettlement by the Corinthians (1. 55. 1; cf. also 2. 80. 3, 3. 114. 3, 5. 30. 2, 7. 31. 2).

⁴² 444. 18, 470. 13, 564. 1 (these and subsequent references are to pages and lines of Meineke's edition (Berlin, 1849; repr. Graz, 1958)). The most frequent corruption is *ις* or *ἐκκαίδεκάτω* (9. 8, 239. 16, 278. 19, 296. 11, 308. 1, 355. 6). At 445. 3 the reading is *ιδ* and at 477. 13 there is a variant *ς*.

⁴³ Book XVI: right – 111. 6, 368. 9, 477. 3, 594. 8; wrong – 20. 19, 224. 1, 250. 14, 378. 11, 433. 2, 476. 12, 574. 6 (variants in two manuscripts). Book V: right – 115. 17, 671. 19; wrong – 564. 16, 712. 19.

⁴⁴ 83. 8 (*ιδ* for *ιδ*); 448. 3 (*ς* for *η*).

campaign of A.D. 114. The other fragments give no indication that Trajan's campaign was covered in the books immediately following. Book X contained references to toponyms in Mesopotamia: Phalga, a village upstream from Dura-Europus, and Choche, an outer suburb of Seleuceia.⁴⁵ Neither site figures in the scanty extant record of Trajan's campaigns. In his note on Choche Stephanus quotes a sentence from Arrian describing a king's progress from Seleuceia to Choche,⁴⁶ but patently any Parthian king could be the subject; there is no reason to refer it to Chosroes (Trajan's Parthian adversary), still less to Trajan himself. It is only in book XIII that there is a remotely plausible concentration of references; three notes on places in Adiabene and eastern Mesopotamia may possibly refer to the revolt of Mebarsapes of Adiabene in 115 and Trajan's punitive expedition in spring of the following year.⁴⁷ But, once again, Adiabene was an important area in the Parthian sphere of interest and could have figured prominently in the narrative on other occasions.⁴⁸ The last two books alone can be confidently ascribed to Trajan's war. The reference in book XVI to Oratha in Mesene belongs to the narrative of the voyage down the Tigris and Trajan's visit to Spasinou Charax in the late summer of 116,⁴⁹ and the reference to Hatra in book XVII (*Parth.* F. 17 Roos) came in the context of the final inglorious siege of 117. I do not doubt that Arrian reported Trajan's campaigns in great detail, but it is totally impossible to reach precise conclusions about the economy of the work. As we have seen, Stephanus' citations are not sufficiently explicit for the purpose. What is more, he provides us with no references to books XIV and XV, which may well have contained the earlier events of Trajan's campaigns. We must remain in ignorance, but at least there is now no reason to assume that Arrian's coverage of the Trajanic period was totally disproportionate. Once the reference to Elegeia is removed from the context of A.D. 114, there is no indication which book began the narrative of the war.

Nothing in the extant fragments of the *Parthica* suggests that Arrian had personal experience of Trajan's war. Schwartz and Jacoby went too far in their dogmatic assertion that his work was totally derived from accounts already published.⁵⁰ Arrian does show some knowledge of written accounts of the campaigns. A fragment, probably from the *Parthica*, refers to writers who recorded not only Trajan's actions but also his deliberations.⁵¹ But Arrian was competent to combine written testimony with material based on his own and others' experiences. On the other hand there is no unambiguous statement that Arrian personally witnessed the events he described. Certain incidents have been thought to display autopsy, scenes such as Trajan's reception of Arbandes (replete with dialogue and personal detail), the vivid portrayal

⁴⁵ *Parth.* F 8–9 Roos. For Phalga see Isidore of Charax, *FGrHist* 781 F 2. (i) (Φάλγῃα), and for Choche Amm. Marc. 24. 5. 3, 6. 2. Similarly Naarda, mentioned in Book XI (F 10 Roos), was a rich and flourishing city of south Babylonia, the scene of a Jewish uprising under Artabanus III (Jos. *AJ* 18. 311 ff., 369). It could have been mentioned in almost any context, as could the obscure fortress of Thebetha (F 11 Roos: cf. Lepper [above, n. 2], pp. 124 f.).

⁴⁶ καὶ βασιλεὺς δ' ἐξελαύνει ἐκ Σελευκείας οὐ πρόσω τοῦ Τίγριδος ἐς κώμην ἣ τι νιν Χωχῇ ὄνομα (F 10).

⁴⁷ F 10–14 Roos. For Trajan's operations in Adiabene see Lepper, pp. 9–10, 129–36.

⁴⁸ Note for instance Josephus' interest in the principality during the reigns of Izates and Monobazus (*AJ* 20. 17 ff.). Tigranes ravaged the territory extensively in A.D. 62 (Tac. *Ann.* 15. 1. 2), and the consequence was a Parthian threat to the Euphrates frontier (*Ann.* 15. 5. 2–4, 9. 1–2), which is a possible context for the reference to Olbia and the satrapy of Chazene (F 14 Roos). I am not arguing that book XIII did cover the events of 62, merely that Trajan's campaign is not the only possible home for the fragments.

⁴⁹ F 16 Roos; cf. Dio 68. 28. 4.

⁵⁰ Schwartz, *RE* ii. 1236; Jacoby, *FGrHist* nD. 567. See the strictures of Stadter, p. 142.

⁵¹ οἱ γράψαντες οὐ μόνον τὰ ἔργα Τραϊανοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ βουλευόμενα (F 73 Roos).

of the Tigris voyage, or Bruttius Praesens' use of snow shoes in southern Armenia.⁵² Unfortunately vividness of detail and convincing report of dialogue is a measure of a writer's skill, not of his personal experience. Otherwise we should be forced to assume that Thucydides was a participant in the battle of the Great Harbour, that Herodotus was present at Plataea, and that Arrian personally witnessed Alexander's voyage down the Indus. We need not doubt that Arrian questioned participants in Trajan's war and gained first-hand information, which he wrote up in the most effective and striking way. The wealth of detail does not and cannot prove that he had personal experience of the events. Only a first-person report would provide that guarantee. There is, then, no adequate evidence that Arrian served in the war, and in the whole corpus of his extant work there is no reference that so much as hints at personal experience of it. The argument from silence has no probative force, but, given the absence of other evidence, it tilts the balance against the theory.

The conclusions that follow will no doubt be thought disappointingly negative by some. First, one cannot assume that Arrian served in Trajan's Parthian war, and his career and literary works may not be reconstructed on that assumption. Secondly we can deduce nothing about the internal economy of the *Parthica*, and Stephanus' references to place names in books VIII–XIII cannot be exploited for topographical details about Trajan's campaigns. There is, however, a third conclusion which is much more important. Randomly preserved fragments should not form the basis of historical constructions unless their context can be definitely assigned and the source transmitting them is authenticated as a reliable witness. Otherwise one is building a house of cards. What is at best a possibility gains the status of an axiom and the whole edifice constructed upon it is vulnerable.

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APPENDIX

The following notes provide conjectural contexts for the fragments of the *Parthica* to which Stephanus assigns book numbers. It would be futile to pretend that they are any more than possibilities, since there are no unambiguously fixed points of reference and much is inevitably based on guess work. All I can claim for my proposed schema is that it allows for a more balanced coverage by Arrian and a more detailed narrative of early Parthian history. It also demonstrates that the fragments may be arranged sequentially in more than one way and still remain compatible with our present historical knowledge.

F 2 Roos. The reference to Zenodotium in Book II has been regularly assigned to the city's sack at the hands of Crassus (Plut. *Crass.* 17. 5; Dio 40. 13. 1–2). This is at best a *terminus post quem non*. As a Greco-Macedonian colony Zenodotium must have figured in the previous conflicts between the Parthian and Seleucid empires. One thinks of the wars between Mithradates I and Demetrius II (141–139 B.C.), which began by diplomatic appeals to Demetrius by the Greeks and Macedonians of Mesopotamia (Jos. *AJ* 13. 185).

⁵² F 46 (not explicitly attributed to Arrian), 60–62, 85. These fragments were among a number amassed by Wirth (*Historia* 13 (1964), 228; *Philologus* 107 (1963), 288–300), and they are accepted by Wheeler (pp. 30 f.) as proof of autopsy. Stadter, pp. 143 f., is more cautious: 'certain fragments . . . suggest autopsy without guaranteeing it.'

F 3 Roos. Arrian mentioned the Median summer palace of Gazaca in Book IV. Von Gutschmid assigned the reference to Antony's campaigns of 36 B.C. This is plainly a guess and not substantiated by Strabo 11. 13. 3 (523), which states that Antony besieged the *winter* palace of Vera. A place as prominent as Gazaca might occur in any context, and I would suggest the war of Antiochus VII Sidetes (130/29 B.C.), which seems to have taken place predominantly in Media (Poseidonius, *FGrHist* 87 F 9, 11–12). It does not seem at all unlikely that Arrian devoted at least two books to the Partho-Seleucid wars of the mid-second century B.C. They were crucially important and had been covered at length by Poseidonius, who dealt with the two years of Antiochus' war over Books XIV–XVI of his *Histories* (F 9, 11–13; cf. Nicolaus of Damascus *FGrHist* 90 F 92). Arrian would have had a wealth of material to reshape.

F 4 Roos. In Book VI Arrian referred to a Tigranes, satrap of Cholobetene. Neither the man nor the satrapy can be identified. Roos and Jacoby suggested the context of Corbulo's march from Artaxata to Tigranocerta (Tac. *Ann.* 14. 23–24), which is again the merest of guesses. Somewhat earlier Baumgartner (*RE* iii. 2369) referred the fragment to the early career of Tigranes I of Armenia (cf. Strabo 11. 14. 15 [532]). But the name Tigranes is omnipresent in Armenian history and without further evidence no historical context can even be suggested.

F 5. Roos. For the reference to Elegeia in Book VIII see above, pp. 271f. In addition to the contexts there discussed Antony's invasion of Armenia in 34 B.C. should be considered and perhaps preferred. This was launched from Nicopolis in Lesser Armenia and drove towards Artaxata (Dio 49. 39. 3). It was a carbon copy of Corbulo's invasion route and must have passed by Elegeia. Antony's campaigns also provide an appropriate context for the description of the Caspian Gates (F 6 Roos), which would have figured in the expedition of Canidius Crassus.

F7 Roos. The city of Libana east of Hatra, which Arrian mentioned in Book IX, cannot be assigned to any specific context. If Antony's campaigns were covered in Book VIII, it may have figured in Arrian's narrative of the Parthian civil wars around 30 B.C., some of the action of which took place in Mesopotamia (Isidore of Charax, *FGrHist* 781 F 2 [i]).

F 8–9 Roos. The references in Book X to Phalga and Choche (see above, p. 273) may relate to the actions of the Roman-backed pretender Tiridates in A.D. 36. He may have crossed the Euphrates near Phalga (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 6. 36. 2–3). From the crossing he certainly went to a triumphal reception in Seleuceia and a formal investiture at Ctesiphon (*Ann.* 6. 42. 3–4), and he seems to have remained in the vicinity of Seleuceia until he fled in the face of Artabanus' army (*Ann.* 6. 44. 2). The reference to Choche may have related to the first stage of his withdrawal.

F 10 Roos. If Book X dealt with events in the reign of Artabanus III, the reference to Naarda in Book XI most naturally relates to the period when it formed the centre of Jewish insurgency in Babylonia at the end of Artabanus' reign (Jos. *AJ* 18. 311–12, 379). This arrangement of the narrative allows for an extended treatment of the wars between Vardanes and Gotarzes, the ill-fated mission of Meherdates and the outbreak of war with Rome in Nero's reign. The account of Corbulo's campaigns will have continued until Book XIII, which contained references to Adiabene (F 12–13 Roos), probably relating to Tigranes' abortive invasion of A.D. 62 (see above, n. 48). In that

case the narrative of Trajan's campaigns did not begin until Book XIV, possibly not until Book XV. Even so, there was ample scope for an extended and eulogistic narrative. Trajan's triumphs would be expounded in much greater detail than anything preceding and would form a fitting climax to the story of Rome's relations with Parthia.