

ANTH. PAL. 9. 235: JUBA II, CLEOPATRA SELENE AND THE COURSE OF THE NILE

ἄγχουροι μεγάλοι κόσμον χθόνες, ἅς διὰ Νεῖλος
 πιμπλάμενος μελάνων τέμνει ἀπ' Αἰθιοπῶν,
 ἀμφότεροι βασιλῆας ἐκοινώσασθε γάμοισιν,
 ἐν γένος Αἰγύπτου καὶ Λιβύης θέμεναι.
 ἐκ πατέρων εἴη παισὶν πάλι τοῖσιν ἀνάκτων
 ἔμπεδον ἡπείροις κτήπτρον ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρας.

Great neighbour-regions of the world, which the Nile, swollen from dusky Ethiopia, severs, you have made common kings for both by marriage, making a single race of Egyptians and Libyans. May the kings' children hold from their fathers in their turn firm dominion over both mainlands.

(tr. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Garland of Philip* (1968), i. 213)

Who is the author of this poem and what is its historical context?

Gow and Page are convinced that the author is Crinagoras. Manuscript authority, in the person of the so-called 'corrector', supports the attribution. Yet, at first sight at least, the attribution of this poem to Crinagoras raises something of a problem. It does so because the poem evidently relates to what seems to be a contemporary marriage linking the royal families of Egypt and Libya respectively: if the author is indeed Crinagoras, what marriage can this be? Only one such marriage is available: as Gow and Page accurately observe, 'It is generally agreed that this epigram refers to the marriage of Cleopatra Selene and Juba II'.¹

Juba II was the son of Juba I of Numidia, who played a leading role in the Pompeian cause against Caesar. After his father's defeat and death the young Juba was brought to Rome and walked in Caesar's triumph in 46 B.C. Thereafter, he remained with Caesar and thence Octavian until, in 25 B.C., Augustus appointed him to the throne of Mauretania, vacant since 33 B.C. The early experience of Selene is curiously similar to that of her husband. Selene was the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra; after their defeat she walked in Octavian's Egyptian triumph of 29 B.C. Thereafter, she was brought up by Octavia until her marriage to Juba. The date of the marriage is not certain, but it had taken place by 20/19 B.C.; this would suggest a probable date for the poem.²

But how can the marriage of Cleopatra Selene and Juba II be conceived as the union of Egypt and Libya, a union stressed in the poem? This difficulty has seemed so great to some scholars that they have preferred to reject Crinagoras' authorship on that account alone.³ Such a rejection must be a last resort, given manuscript authority for

¹ *Garland* ii. 233.

² On the history of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene see in general S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du nord* (1928), vii and vii. On their marriage in particular, *Plut. Ant.* 87; *Dio* 51. 15. 6. As to the date of the marriage, a coin bearing the heads of Juba and Cleopatra Selene is dated to 20/19 B.C., indicating a *terminus ante quem* for their wedding: see J. Mazard, *Corpus nummorum Numidiae Mauretaniaeque* (1955), no. 357; cf. also no. 297 with Mazard ad loc. It is worth noting that Augustus is said to have favoured such marriages (*Suet. Aug.* 48); this one must have had his blessing, as *Dio* 51. 15. 6 states. According to *Plut. Ant.* 87 Octavia also played a part in the union.

³ So, notably, Gsell (1928), viii. 221, followed by G. H. Macurdy, *Vassal Queens* (1937), p. 54.

Crinagoras' authorship. Nor does it solve much: no earlier alternative marriage is available to provide a context for this poem. Therefore, we must consider the difficulty closely before rejecting Crinagoras' authorship and the consequent context of the poem.

It is true that Selene never actually ruled Egypt, but she did have a hereditary claim so to do, for she was the daughter of its last reigning queen, Cleopatra VII. At the same time she had a particular claim to Cyrenaica, which had been awarded to her by Antony and Cleopatra.⁴ Similarly as the descendant of Massinissa, Juba had a good hereditary claim to Numidia; Dio is quite explicit on this point.⁵ Therefore Juba might claim Mauretania, his actual kingdom, and Numidia, his ancestral kingdom, while Selene might claim Cyrenaica and Egypt. Between them Juba and Selene might thus claim all North Africa. Juba's portion might easily be termed Libya, for, as Gow and Page note, the name 'Libya' is variously applied to all or part of North Africa; thus Josephus describes Juba as a Libyan, ruling Libyans and, most significant for us, Libya⁶ – so might Crinagoras. If Crinagoras did indeed present the marriage of Juba and Selene as the union of Libya and Egypt he was obviously guilty of grandiloquence. But that is hardly problematic; it provides insufficient grounds for rejecting his authorship and, with it, the poem's suggested context.

A subsidiary problem remains. On the orthodox attribution supported here (indeed, one imagines, on *any* attribution), 'We must judge that the poet's geographical ideas are excessively imprecise. What divides Juba's realm (sc. Libya) from Egypt is not the Nile...'⁷ Must we?

As well as a king, Juba II was a scholar of wide interests: he concerned himself particularly with philology, history and, most important for the present discussion, geography. Pliny the Elder, himself no slouch, was one of his admirers, describing the king as 'studiorum claritate memorabilior etiam quam regno'. The king was even something of a poet.⁸ Of particular relevance for us is Juba's claim to have discovered the source of the Nile in the Atlas Mountains of Mauretania, his kingdom. Pliny the Elder tells us all we know of this claim:

The sources from which the Nile rises have not been ascertained, proceeding as it does through scorching deserts for an enormously long distance and only having been explored by unarmed investigators, without the wars that have discovered all other countries; but so far as King Juba was able to ascertain, it has its origin in a mountain of lower Mauretania not far from the Ocean, and immediately forms a stagnant lake called Nilides. Fish found in this lake are the alabeta, coracimus and silurus; also a crocodile was brought from it by Juba to prove his theory, and placed as a votive offering in the temple of Isis at Caesarea, where it is on view today. Moreover it has been observed that the Nile rises in proportion to excessive falls of snow or rain in Mauretania. Issuing from this lake the river disdains to flow through arid deserts of sand, and for a distance of several days' journey it hides underground, but afterwards it bursts out in another larger lake in the territory of the Masaesytes clan of Mauretania Caesariensis, and so to speak makes a survey of the communities of mankind, proving its identity by having the same fauna. Sinking again into the sand of the desert it hides for another space of 20 days' journey till it reaches the nearest Ethiopians, and when it has once more become aware of man's proximity it leaps out in a fountain, probably the one called the Black Spring. From this point it forms the boundary line between Africa and Ethiopia, and though the river-side is not immediately inhabited, it teems with wild beasts and animal life and produces forests.

(Plin. *NH* 5. 51–3, tr. H. Rackham, Loeb edn)

⁴ Dio 49. 41. 3.

⁵ Dio 51. 15. 6; for Juba's antecedents see, most conveniently, *ILS* 840.

⁶ *AJ* 17. 349; *BJ* 2. 115; cf. *Garland* ii. 234.

⁷ *Garland* ii. 233.

⁸ Plin. *NH* 5. 16. The evidence is conveniently collected and discussed in S. Gsell, 'Juba II, savant et écrivain', *JdS* 68 (1927), 169–97 = Gsell (1928) viii. 251–76. Cf. the poetry of Polemo II of Pontus (or possibly Polemo I): *Garland* i. 371. On the scholarly interests of Hellenistic royalty see C. Préaux, *Le monde hellénistique* (1978), i. 212–20.

Juba was not the first to place the – or, at least, a – source of the Nile in Mauretania, improbable as the notion may seem: Aristotle records the view.⁹ It should be noted that Pliny treats Juba's claim with all respect and seriousness and does not deny its validity. But what has this to do with Crinagoras?

Gow and Page, as their translation clearly shows, hold that Crinagoras envisages the Nile as separating Egypt from Libya. They proceed to the entirely reasonable objection that the Nile in fact does no such thing, for a large part of Egypt lies, like Libya, to the west of the Nile. There is, however, an alternative translation, which obviates this problem: Paton translates, 'Great bordering regions of the world which the full stream of Nile separates from the black Aethiopians...'¹⁰ Gow and Page dismiss Paton on the grounds that 'Crinagoras must have known better than to say that the Nile divided "Egypt and Libya" from "the Ethiopians"'.¹¹ But this objection is not as conclusive as it may seem. Pliny the Elder describes the Nile as separating North Africa from Ethiopia (*Africam ab Aethiopia dispescens*: NH 5. 53); if Pliny could say as much, so could Crinagoras. Further, the Nile above the third cataract, together with its tributary, the Atbara, can indeed be envisaged as dividing Ethiopia from Egypt: from that point on, travelling up-river, the Nile first swings east towards the Red Sea and then forks to east and west at Khartoum, effectively cutting off (with the help of the Atbara) most of Ethiopia from Egypt.¹² It is therefore entirely possible, I suggest, that Crinagoras is describing the Nile as severing Egypt and Libya from the Ethiopians; at least, this seems no less likely than the view of Gow and Page that he is describing the river as severing Egypt from Libya, which it evidently does not.

Quite apart from geographical considerations, there are linguistic grounds for preferring Paton's translation. Gow and Page very reasonably allow that, on their translation, 'it must be admitted that the word-order is almost intolerable'. Probably more seriously, there is also a problem of syntax, which Gow and Page do not recognize. They take μέλανων... ἀπ' Αἰθιοπῶν with πῖμπλάμενος, to mean 'taking its floodwaters from'. But *LSJ* gives no example of ἀπό after πῖμπλάμενος or any related form of that verb, nor do Gow and Page cite one. Paton's translation is to be preferred: the use of ἀπό after διατέμνειν is firmly attested elsewhere.¹³

If the preceding arguments are accepted, the poem – especially the final couplet – becomes most interesting for the historian of the Principate.

The notion of a union of Selene's Egypt and Juba's Libya made explicit by Crinagoras, on the present argument, can also be discerned outside his poem in the actions of the royal pair. We have observed Juba's concern to establish a claim to the source of the Nile: the despatch of explorers to that end and the king's proud display of a Mauretanian crocodile at Caesarea in the temple of Isis he had built there are notable indications of his desire to proclaim his Egyptian connection.¹⁴ It was also convenient for him to support the view recorded by Pliny, that the Nile showed itself in Numidia, his ancestral kingdom. In addition to all this, we should observe that much of the royal coinage bears so-called 'Egyptian types': Isis, the sistra, the uraeus, the

⁹ On the history of the view see Gsell (1927), p. 172 = (1928), viii. 254. Note also that Hdt. 2. 33–4 envisages the Nile as running horizontally across North Africa from west to east, which would accord with the view that the source of the Nile was in Mauretania: see A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II: Commentary*, 1–98 (1976), pp. 135–46, esp. p. 136.

¹⁰ W. R. Paton, *The Greek Anthology* (Loeb, 1915), iii. 123.

¹¹ *Garland* ii. 234.

¹² W. Y. Adams, *Nubia, Corridor to Africa* (1977), considers the geography and history of the whole area: see especially his maps on pp. 14 and 57.

¹³ See Plato, *Politicus* 280B.

¹⁴ cf. Arr. *Anab.* 6. 1. 2, who states that when Alexander saw crocodiles in India, he thought at first that he had found the source of the Nile there.

crocodile, the hippopotamus. Further, at Athens, Juba's statue was erected in the gymnasium of Ptolemy; he may very well have conferred some benefaction upon that creation of Selene's ancestor.¹⁵ We do not know whether Juba's 'Egyptianizing' tendencies were the product of his marriage to Selene or whether this marriage is itself symptomatic of his Egyptian interests; certainly, such interests were in vogue in his day.¹⁶

The son of Juba and Selene was named, significantly enough, Ptolemy. An inscription at Athens describes Ptolemy as 'son of King Juba and descendant of King Ptolemy'.¹⁷ Gaius had him executed; we do not know why. However, it has recently been suggested that Ptolemy was killed for taking part in the conspiracy of Gaetulicus.¹⁸ The suggestion is inevitably hypothetical, but if it is right we must proceed to consider what Ptolemy hoped to gain from so dangerous an enterprise. To speculate: is it just possible that he hoped for an enlarged kingdom in North Africa, even including mighty Egypt itself? Mithridates' negotiations with Sertorius constitute something of a precedent;¹⁹ so, indeed, do the imperial arrangements of Antony and Cleopatra, the so-called Donations of Alexandria, though these are essentially different in scale at least.²⁰ The last two lines of Crinagoras' poem show that such a hope might be voiced under Augustus, for all its apparent improbability. Of course, even if Ptolemy did nurse such ambitions, it need not be supposed that a successful Gaetulicus would have fulfilled them.²¹

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¹⁵ Paus. 1. 17. 2 with P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Auguste* (1927), p. 82.

¹⁶ cf. A. Roulet, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome* (1972), and M. De Vos, *L'egittomania in pittura e mosaici romano-campani della prima età imperiale* (1980).

¹⁷ *OGIS* 197 = *EJ* 164.

¹⁸ D. Fishwick, 'The annexation of Mauretania', *Historia* 20 (1971), 467–87 with idem and B. D. Shaw, 'Ptolemy of Mauretania and the conspiracy of Gaetulicus', *Historia* 25 (1976), 491–4. Cf. J.-C. Faur, 'Caligula et la Maurétanie: la fin de Ptolémée', *Klio* 55 (1973), 249–71.

¹⁹ The precise scope of these negotiations remains unclear: see D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (1950), p. 1203 n. 1; cf. D. Glew, 'Between the wars: Mithridates Eupator and Rome, 85–73 B.C.', *Chiron* 11 (1981), 109–30.

²⁰ See, most recently, E. G. Huzar, *Mark Antony* (1978), pp. 196–200.

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