

ALEXANDER, ZEUS AMMON, AND THE CONQUEST OF ASIA

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Early in the year 331 BC, on the occasion of his occupation of Egypt, Alexander journeyed to the oasis of Siwah in the Libyan desert to consult the oracle of Zeus Ammon. In this paper I propose to examine the consultation with particular attention to Alexander's plans for the future. Because of the hazards of the desert march, the exotic nature of the undertaking, and perhaps because little became known about it to the outside world, the affair caught the imagination of Alexander's contemporaries and of posterity, and in modern scholarship it has become the most intensely discussed episode of Alexander's career. While Darius was readying his forces for the final showdown, Alexander took six weeks out of his schedule to visit Siwah. We must think that his motives were compelling.¹

We know that at Siwah Alexander was acknowledged as the god's son. Perhaps this acknowledgment did not come as a surprise. The idea of the god's paternity may have occurred to him already before, and one of his motives for the trip may have been the hope to obtain confirmation and clarification.² As the new Pharaoh, Alexander was, of course, *ex officio* son of god in Egypt (Ra and Osiris) and god (Horus), but this status had nothing to do with Ammon at

¹ The testimonia for the episode are Callisthenes, *FGrHist* 124 F14a=Strabo 17.1.43; F36=Plut. *Alex.* 27.4; Timaeus, *FGrHist* 566 F155=Polyb. 12.12b; Ephippus, *FGrHist* 126 F5=Athen. 12.538B; Satyrus, *FHG* III.164 F18=Athen. 6.250F; Arr. 3.3–4; 4.9.9; 7.8.3; 7.29.3; Plut. *Alex.* 26.11–27.11; *Mor.* 339E; Diod. 17.49–51; Curt. 4.7.5–30; 6.9.18; 6.10.26–29; 6.11.5; 6.11.23; 8.1.24; 8.5.5; 8.7.13; 8.8.14; 8.10.1; 8.10.29; 10.5.4; Just. 11.11.2–12; Lucian. *DMort.* 390. For a review of the modern scholarship from J. G. Droysen (ca. 1870) to 1970, see J. Seibert, *Alexander der Grosse*, *Erträge der Forschung* 10 (Darmstadt 1972) 116–25. For subsequent studies, see the references in note 2, below.

² Arr. 3.3.1–2, from Ptolemy or Aristobulus; Curt. 4.7.8, probably independent of Arrian's source; Callisthenes, *FGrHist* 124 F14a=Strabo 17.1.43. See J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch. Alexander. A Commentary* (Oxford 1969) 69f.; P. A. Brunt, *Arrian. History of Alexander and Indica*, I (LCL 1976) App. V.2 (pp. 472f.); F. Schachermeyr, *Alexander der Grosse. Das Problem seiner Persönlichkeit und seines Wirkens* (Vienna 1973) 242ff.; and esp. A. B. Bosworth, "Alexander and Ammon," in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory*, ed. K. H. Kinzl (Berlin and New York 1977) (hereafter: "Alexander and Ammon") 67–75; id., *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander* I (Oxford 1980) (hereafter: *Comm.*) 270–72. But see also E. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," in *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson*, edd. E. N. Borza and H. J. Dell, *Institute for Balkan Studies* 158 (Thessaloniki 1981) 44–47, for the view (in agreement with U. Wilcken) that the sonship came to Alexander as a surprise.

Siwah, and Alexander did not need to journey to Siwah to obtain it.³ No Egyptian Pharaoh, as far as we know, had ever visited Siwah.⁴ Unlike Amun-Ra in Egypt, however, Ammon at Siwah was for the Greeks a Greek god, the local manifestation of Zeus. The identification dated back at least to the time of Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.16; fr. 36 Snell), and it is clear that for Alexander, too, Ammon was Zeus.⁵ The idea that Zeus was his father may have seemed plausible to Alexander by reference to his heroic ancestors Heracles and Perseus, who also had been sons of Zeus (and also had consulted the oracle),⁶ and it is just possible that it went back all the way to the influence of Olympias, who hated Philip, was intensely religious, and seems to have had more than human pretensions.⁷ Be this as it may, after his visit to the oracle, Alexander propagated his divine sonship avidly, and indeed seems to have believed in it.⁸

In addition to information about the divine sonship, the ancient writers who constitute the "vulgate" tradition derived from the not very reliable Clitarchus, say that Alexander asked the god whether all his father's murderers had been duly punished (which the priest promptly corrected to "Philip's murderers") and (but not necessarily in this order) whether he granted him the rule of the world, and that the god answered both questions in the affirmative (Diod. 17.51; Curt. 4.7.26–27; Just. 11.11.9–10; Plut. *Alex.* 27.5–7). However, we should infer from Arrian (3.4.5), drawing on either Ptolemy or Aristobulus, and Strabo (17.1.43), quoting Callisthenes, that Alexander probably consulted the oracle (that is, put his questions and received his answers) alone in the inner sanctum, and that hence no one (except the priest) was privy to the consultation.⁹ But this does not mean that therefore the Clitarchan account must be rejected out of hand as spurious. U. Wilcken, to be sure, thought that Clitarchus entirely fabricated it, on the grounds that according to Plutarch (*Alex.* 27.8), not long after Siwah Alexander wrote to his mother that he had received "certain secret oracular

³ Cf. Bosworth, "Alexander and Ammon" (above, note 2) 75. Alexander's adoption of the pharaonic titles is attested by hieroglyphic inscriptions. See U. Wilcken, "Alexanders Zug in die Oase Siwah," *Berliner Akademieschriften zur alten Geschichte und Papyruskunde* (1883–1942) I.1 (Leipzig 1970) 261f. An actual enthronement ceremony, at Memphis, is attested only by Ps. Callisthenes 1.34.4 (Kroll), but Wilcken, 261n. 5, rightly notes: "Irgendein offizieller Akt muss stattgefunden haben, durch den dieses Anbieten und Annehmen [of the royal titles] geregelt worden ist."

⁴ Wilcken (above, note 3) 278.

⁵ Bosworth, "Alexander and Ammon" (above, note 2) 52, 57ff.; id., *Conquest and Empire. The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1988) (hereafter: *Conquest*) 282f.; Badian (above, note 2) 45f.; Brunt (above, note 2) App. V.6–7 (pp. 474f.).

⁶ Callisthenes, *FGrHist* 124 F14a=Strabo 17.1.43; Arr. 3.3.1–2; Bosworth, "Alexander and Ammon" (above, note 2) 69–75.

⁷ According to Eratosthenes, *FGrHist* 241 F28=Plut. *Alex.* 3.3, at Alexander's departure for Asia, Olympias "told him, and him alone, the secret of his birth, and charged him to entertain thoughts worthy of his begetting." We may perhaps infer from Plut. *Alex.* 3.1 that the reference is meant to be to Ammon. Cf. Arr. 4.10.2, and Plut. *Alex.* 27.8. On Olympias' religiosity, see Plut. *Alex.* 2.

⁸ Cf. Badian (above, note 2) 47; Bosworth, "Alexander and Ammon" (above, note 2) 75.

⁹ Wilcken (above, note 3) 270–71, and 316–25.

responses (τινάς αὐτῷ μαντείας ἀπορρήτους) which he would tell her, and her alone, on his return." Wilcken assumed that by ἀπορρήτους Alexander meant all the responses he received, that he never divulged them, and that therefore no one ever knew what they were.¹⁰ But Alexander's reference in the letter probably is not to all the responses he received, but rather to those (τινάς) concerned with the secret (ἀπορρήτους) of his begetting.¹¹ Except perhaps, then, for this intimate topic of his divine birth, Alexander could have felt free to divulge at any time whatever he wished about the consultation (and the priest at Siwah also might have talked), and such information therefore could have found its way, even if distorted, into the account of Clitarchus.¹² It therefore warrants critical scrutiny.

It is intrinsically plausible that Alexander may have asked about Philip's murderers. Both Alexander and Olympias had been from the beginning, and still were, under suspicion of complicity in the murder (Plut. *Alex.* 10.5–6; Just. 9.7.1, 8), and the god's response absolved them of it. Furthermore, if not Philip but rather Zeus Ammon was Alexander's father, Alexander could not, in any case, be guilty of patricide. On the other hand, the very plausibility of the story may be considered reason to think that Clitarchus made it up. We should admit, then, *ignoramus*.

As for the second question, did Alexander, as Clitarchus has it, ask the god for the rule of the "whole world"?¹³ The question is not whether Alexander at some time before his death showed an ambition for world rule,¹⁴ but whether he had conceived it already by this time, and whether we can therefore believe Clitarchus that he asked the god for it. Now it is possible that Alexander assumed the Egyptian kingship in Memphis by undergoing the traditional enthronement ceremony (see note 3), and this ceremony may have included in some form the claim, or bestowal, by the Egyptian gods, of Pharaonic world rule, but this was, as Alexander no doubt understood, phraseology intoned at the enthronement of every Pharaoh since time immemorial.¹⁵ Obviously there was a crucial difference between traditional formulaic claims by the Pharaohs of world rule, and an ambition actually to conquer the world by force of arms, and even if we think of the "world" in this context as essentially the *oikoumenê* consisting of the Persian empire in the East and the Mediterranean basin in the West, there is no evidence whatever to support Clitarchus' claim to the effect

¹⁰ Wilcken (above, note 3) 270.

¹¹ Cf. Schachermeyr (above, note 2) 251nn. 284, 253, 674.

¹² So already H. Berve, *Gnomon* 5 (1929) 375: "Die Möglichkeit, dass etwas in die Öffentlichkeit gedrungen ist, kann nicht geleugnet werden."

¹³ Diod. 17.51.2: τὴν ἀπάσης γῆς ἀρχήν; cf. 17.93.4: τὴν ἀπάσης τῆς γῆς ἐξουσίαν; Curt. 4.7.26: *totius orbis imperium*; cf. 4.7.26: *terrarum omnium rectorem*; Just. 11.11.10: *possessionem terrarum*; Plut. *Alex.* 27.6: πάντων ἀνθρώπων κυρίῳ.

¹⁴ On Alexander's plans at the time of his death, see above all E. Badian, "A King's Notebooks," *HSCP* 72 (1968) 183–204; A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander. Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford 1988) 185–211.

¹⁵ Wilcken (above, note 3) 278.

that Alexander already by now had conceived an appetite for it all.¹⁶ At this time, rather, his attention was directed toward Darius, and the East.

If, then, as seems likely, Alexander did not ask the god for the rule of the world, what ambitions for the future did he put to him? We should note that he apparently did not consult Delphi before the start of the campaign.¹⁷ This presents a puzzle in the case of a man whose religious punctiliousness is well known and who throughout his life placed great stock in oracles, prophecies and omens of all kinds.¹⁸ The only satisfactory explanation, in my opinion, was put forth long ago by H. U. Instinsky,¹⁹ that just as Alexander inherited from Philip the project of the war and its official slogan (Diod. 16.89.2; Arr. 2.14.4; 3.18.12; Polyb. 3.6.13; 5.10.8; Just. 11.5.6), so he also applied to himself the oracle which Philip had obtained for this war. According to Diodorus (16.91.2–3), in the spring of 336 BC, Philip had asked “whether he would conquer the King of the Persians,” and the Pythia “gave the following response: ‘Wreathed is the bull. All is done. There is also the one who will smite him.’” Now Philip found this response ambiguous, but accepted it in a sense favorable to himself, namely...that the Persian would be slaughtered like a sacrificial victim...and Asia would be made captive under the hands of the Macedonians” (tr. C. B. Welles, *LCL*).²⁰ By applying the oracle to himself, Alexander was able to interpret it to the effect that not Philip but the Persian king, after all, was to be the victim, and that Alexander was to be the sacrificer. If this is correct, Alexander started the campaign with an oracle foretelling, albeit vaguely, the overthrow of the Persian king and (by suggestion) the conquest of Asia.²¹

¹⁶ See esp. R. Andreotti, “Die Weltmonarchie Alexanders des Grossen in Überlieferung und geschichtlicher Wirklichkeit,” *Saeculum* 8 (1957) 120–61. And already Berve (above, note 12): “Alles was wir von der Entwicklung des Königs...wissen, schliesst das Vorhandensein solcher Ideen zur Zeit des Ammonzuges ganz eindeutig aus.” Clitarchus’ claim no doubt is due to his urge to sensationalize. Similarly, the god’s prediction of Alexander’s invincibility (Diod. 17.51.3; Curt. 4.7.27; Just. 11.11.10) looks like an *oraculum ex eventu*.

¹⁷ Plutarch’s story, *Alex.* 14.6–7 (cf. Diod. 17.93.4), of Alexander’s visit to Delphi is apocryphal. See H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1956) I, 240; II, 109 (no. 270). Even if it is historical, it is clear that Alexander did not obtain an oracle. Cf. Hamilton (above, note 2) 34.

¹⁸ See above all L. Edmunds, “The Religiosity of Alexander,” *GRBS* 12 (1971) 368–81.

¹⁹ H. U. Instinsky, *Alexander der Grosse am Hellespont* (Bad Godesberg 1949) 36–40.

²⁰ The oracle is quoted in identical form by Paus. 8.7.6, and considered authentic by Parke and Wormell (above, note 17) I, 238; II, 108 (no. 266). Cf. G. Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon* (London 1978) 178.

²¹ I cannot agree, therefore, with F. W. Walbank in his review of Instinsky, *JHS* 70 (1950) 80, that Alexander would not have appropriated for himself an oracle whose “effective ambiguity must have been apparent immediately Philip was struck down.” On the contrary, I think the appropriation was to Alexander’s advantage. It is just possible, as well, that Alexander refrained from seeking his own oracle from Delphi because he (unlike Philip) considered the oracle’s reputation for medizing, or at any rate defeatism, in the Persian Invasion a handicap for a project whose express purpose was to punish the Persians for the outrages committed by them in that same invasion. The oracle of Zeus Ammon, on the other hand, was considered “infallible” (Arr. 3.3.1). See further C. J.

In the spring of 334 BC, as he crossed the Hellespont and was approaching the Asian shore, encouraged, we should think, by Philip's oracle, Alexander

πρῶτος τῶν Μακεδόνων ἀπὸ τῆς νεῶς ἠκόντισε μὲν τὸ δόρυ, πῆξας δ' εἰς τὴν γῆν καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τῆς νεῶς ἀφαλλόμενος παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἀπεφαίνετο τὴν Ἀσίαν δέχεσθαι δορίκτητον.

flung his spear from the ship, fixing it on the ground, and then leapt ashore himself the first of the Macedonians, signifying that he received Asia from the gods as spear-won.

(Diod. 17.17.2; tr. C. B. Welles, *LCL*. Cf. Just. 11.5.5–11)

We should note, in particular, three things. One, W. Schmitthenner has argued on good grounds that Alexander himself used the term *dorikêtos*, that he used it in its old judicial sense meaning that the land, persons, and objects designated as “taken by the spear” were claimed as the legitimate property of the victor solely by the fact of conquest, and that therefore Alexander's proclamation, reinforced by the symbolism of the spear-cast onto Asian soil, signified a formal claim to the possession of “Asia” as his property by right of conquest and, as he said, the will of the gods (cf. Diod. 16.91.4).²² Schmitthenner may well be right. Second, the traditional assumption that in Alexander's time “Asia” denoted the Persian Empire is not quite correct. S. I. Oost has shown that, depending on the context in which the term was used, it might denote, in a political sense, the Persian Empire, but also, and more frequently, in a geographical sense, the Eastern *oikoumenê*, the Asian continent (occasionally including Libya, resp. Africa), the world roughly to the East of the Greeks, and even just Asia Minor. Quite often the context did not allow a strict determination.²³ Thus the very vagueness of the term probably appealed to Alexander, as it might mean the Persian Empire, but it also might designate less, or potentially more, than the extent of its present territory. It was useful precisely because its final definition, without major risk of embarrassment, could be determined by the outcome of the war at whatever point Alexander chose. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that at the Hellespont Alexander used the word in this indeterminate sense, and that his audience understood it in this sense.

Third, who were “the gods” whose authority Alexander invoked in his claim to Asia? The war was officially billed as a war of revenge against the Persians for the outrages committed by them against the Greeks and Macedonians, and especially their gods and temples, in their invasion of 480–79 BC (Diod. 16.89.2; Arr. 2.14.4; 3.18.12; Polyb. 3.6.13; 5.10.8; Just. 11.5.6). The gods to whom Alexander now appealed for this war were, therefore, no doubt the

Classen, “The Libyan God Ammon in Greece before 331 B.C.,” *Historia* 8 (1959) 349–55.

²² W. Schmitthenner, “Über eine Formveränderung der Monarchie seit Alexander d. Gr.,” *Saeculum* 19 (1968) 31–46. Cf. A. Mehl, ΔΟΡΙΚΗΤΟΣ ΧΩΡΑ: Kritische Bemerkungen zum ‘Speererwerb’ in Politik und Völkerrecht der hellenistischen Epoche,” *AncSoc* 11/12 (1980/81) 173–213, esp. 183–86; P. A. Brunt, “The Aims of Alexander,” *G&R* 12 (1965) 208; P. Goukowsky, *Diodorus XVII*, Budé ed. (Paris 1976) 178.

²³ S. I. Oost, “The Alexander Historians and Asia,” in *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (above, note 2) 265–82, esp. 267–70.

same gods, that is, the great panhellenic gods of both Greeks and Macedonians.²⁴ We can be a bit more specific. It was probably at some time before his departure for Asia that Alexander introduced his new imperial coinage, placing Athena in Corinthian crested helmet on the obverse (with Nike on the reverse) of his gold staters, and the head of Heracles on the obverse of his silver tetradrachms, with the seated Zeus, holding eagle and scepter, on the reverse.²⁵ Athena may have been chosen, at least in part, because she was the eponymous goddess of Athens, which had been the main victim of the Persians (and whose cooperation Alexander needed), and because she was (very possibly) the patron-goddess of Alexander's Hellenic (Corinthian) League.²⁶ Heracles was of course the panhellenic hero-god and progenitor of the Macedonian royal family. And Zeus, whose cult also was ancient in Macedonia, was especially appropriate as patron god for Alexander both in his status as king and in his ambitions for empire.²⁷ As he now was about to start the invasion, at the Hellespont, Alexander dedicated altars on both sides of the strait to the same gods: Zeus (*Apobaterios*), Athena, and Heracles (Arr. 1.11.7). As *Apobaterios*, Zeus was particularly concerned with safe landings. But for the safe crossing itself, Alexander made another, separate sacrifice from board ship, in the midst of the Hellespont, to Posidon and the Nereids (Arr. 1.11.6). Thus *Apobatêrios* may be a *Sonderform* of Soter, and the altars marked Alexander's crossing in a wider, symbolic sense, placing the invasion of "Asia" under the special aegis of Zeus, Athena, and Heracles.²⁸ In sum, at the Hellespont Alexander laid claim to

²⁴ On the Hellenic character of the Macedonian and Argead religion, see W. Baege, *De Macedonum Sacris* (Halle 1913) 1ff.; O. Hoffmann, *Die Makedonen, ihre Sprache und ihr Volkstum* (Göttingen 1906) esp. 92–115, 260f.; H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* I (Munich 1926) 85–100, s.v. "Kultus und Religion."

²⁵ M. J. Price, *Coins of the Macedonians* (British Museum Publication 1974) Pl. XI, 60 and 61. The date of the introduction has been disputed. The strongest case for a late date (spring 331 BC) was made by G. Kleiner, *Alexanders Reichsmünzen* (Berlin 1949) esp. 10f., 29–32. Subsequent studies have favored (I believe correctly) an early date some time between Alexander's accession (336 BC) and his departure for Asia (334 BC). See esp. A. R. Bellinger, *Essays on the Coinage of Alexander the Great*, Numismatic Studies 11. The American Numismatic Society (New York 1963) 3–23; M. J. Price, "Alexander's Reform of the Macedonian Royal Coinage," *NC* 142 (1982) 180–90 and *Coins of the Macedonians* (above, this note) 23–25. Note also the judicious remarks of T. R. Martin, *Sovereignty and Coinage in Classical Greece* (Princeton 1985) 283.

²⁶ Cf. Price, *Coins of the Macedonians* (above, note 25) 24.

²⁷ Cf. Price (above, note 25) 24: Zeus was "of all [the gods] the most suitable for Alexander's position."

²⁸ Arrian's information (altars to Zeus, Athena and Heracles on both sides of the Hellespont) is based on the "majority" of his sources (ὁ πλείων λόγος), and although there is no way of identifying them, there is no reason to reject the report. Cf. Bosworth, *Comm.* (above, note 2) 100f. According to Justin 11.5.4, before crossing the Hellespont Alexander dedicated "twelve altars to the gods as votive offering for the war." The information of Justin of course is less trustworthy than that of Arrian, but it is possible that Alexander dedicated altars to the Twelve Gods on the European side of the Hellespont (Justin), and altars to Zeus, Athena and Heracles on the Asian side (Arrian). Alexander does seem to have worshipped a traditional cult of the Twelve. Berve (above, note 24) 87; Baege

“Asia,” that is, whatever territory he would conquer in Asia, as his personal property by right of conquest and the sanction of the Greco-Macedonian gods, in particular of Athena, Heracles, and, most important, Zeus.

The confidence which Alexander displayed at the Hellespont was bolstered by his prompt victory over Darius’ generals at the Granicus and his subsequent seizure of much of Asia Minor. In the spring of 333 BC, at Gordium, the ancient capital of Phrygia, it received a further, and perhaps decisive, boost. On the acropolis, in the temple of Zeus Basileus, there stood an ancient wagon dedicated to this god, to which was attached an old prophecy that he who would undo the knot which latched the yoke to the pole of the wagon would become lord of “Asia.” Alexander undid this knot, taking a thunderstorm that night as verification, and on the next day performed a sacrifice in thanksgiving.²⁹ There is good reason to think that Alexander regarded the god who here held out to him the rule of “Asia” and confirmed it by the storm, not as some obscure local deity identified with Zeus, but as the great panhellenic Zeus whom, as I have suggested, Alexander had designated as the chief patron god of the war, and of his future domain.³⁰ The Phrygian word rendered in Greek as “Asia” probably designated, roughly, the equivalent of the continent and the territory of the Persian empire, and the prophecy thus had for the Phrygians an anti-Persian edge. For Alexander, it no doubt meant that he was to be lord of Asia by conquest of the Persian Empire, and we may be sure that he intended to make it come true.

Alexander’s victory over Darius and his army in November of that year at Issus, in northwestern Syria, gave him further encouragement. Shortly afterward, in a letter to Darius quoted by Arrian, Alexander rejected his offer to cede to him part of his empire, and stated:

ἐπεὶ δὲ μάχῃ νενίκηκα...καὶ τὴν χώραν ἔχω, τῶν θεῶν μοι δόντων,...ὡς οὖν ἐμοῦ τῆς Ἀσίας ἀπάσης κυρίου ὄντος ἦκε πρὸς ἐμέ...καὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ ὅταν πέμπῃς παρ’ ἐμέ, ὡς πρὸς βασιλέα τῆς Ἀσίας πέμπε....

Since I have conquered you in battle...and hold the country by gift of the gods,...you must then regard me as lord of all Asia and come to me...and in future when you send to me, make your addresses to the king of Asia.

(Arr. 2.14.7–9; tr. P. A. Brunt, *LCL*. Cf. Just. 11.12)

(above, note 24) 149. On the Macedonian, and Alexander’s, cult of Zeus, Athena, and Heracles, see Berve 86; Baege 1ff. According to Justin 11.5.6–11, Alexander (before crossing the Hellespont) prayed for “victoriam bello, quo totiens a Persis petita Graeciae ultor electus sit, quibus longa iam satis et matura imperia contigisse quorumque tempus esse vices excipere melius acturos” and (after landing on Asian soil) “ne se regem illae terrae invitae accipiant.”

²⁹ Marsyas of Philippi, *FGrHist* 135–36 F4=Schol. Eur. *Hipp.* 671; Arr. 2.3; Curt. 3.1.11–17; Just. 11.7.3–16. Cf. Plut. *Alex.* 18.1–4.

³⁰ E. A. Fredricksmeyer, “Alexander, Midas, and the Oracle at Gordium,” *CP* 56 (1961) 160–68. See further L. Roller, “Midas and the Gordian Knot,” *CA* 3 (1984) 269f., and L. Edmunds (above, note 18) 378. Cf. N. G. L. Hammond, *Alexander the Great. King, Commander and Statesman* (Park Ridge, NJ 1980) 88; Brunt (above, note 2) 130n. 3.

Arrian probably took the letter from Ptolemy. While it is impossible to determine to what extent the version he gives is the result of rephrasing (or summarizing) by himself or his source(s), we may be sure that it is in essence authentic, and in particular there would be no good grounds to question the authenticity of Alexander's claim to the kingship of Asia.³¹ Thus the letter provides clear evidence of Alexander's aims at this time: he now claimed nothing less than "the whole of Asia," that is, the Persian empire and perhaps more, and when he appealed to the gods as giving the country to him, he must have had in mind, in particular, the recent promise of Zeus Basileus at Gordium.

Alexander proceeded to conquer Syria and Palestine, and toward the end of 332 BC took possession of Egypt. A magnificent achievement. Even so, he had lost seven months in the siege of Tyre, King Agis with Persian support was preparing to stir up insurrection against him in Greece, and Darius was marshalling the resources of his empire against him at Babylon. While there is no suggestion in the sources that subsequently to his claim in his letter to Darius to the possession of "all Asia" Alexander curtailed his ambition (to which, after all, he had now openly committed himself), we may nevertheless believe that by the time he reached Egypt, about a year later, and almost two years after Gordium, he felt the need, at any rate the desire, to seek out Zeus Ammon at his famous oracle to obtain confirmation of the Gordian prophecy, and perhaps additional revelations and instructions, for his destiny to be ruler of Asia. We can accept, then, the information of Clitarchus that, as we should have to assume in any case, at Siwah Alexander consulted Zeus Ammon about the future, but he identified as his goal not, as Clitarchus has it, the rule of the world but, as we infer from the above evidence (Delphi, Hellespont, Gordium, letter to Darius), the rule of Asia.

After the consultation Alexander stated (Arr. 3.4.5) that "he had received the answers his heart desired (ἀκούσας ὅσα αὐτῷ πρὸς θυμοῦ ἦν, ὡς ἔλεγεν)," and accordingly he performed a splendid sacrifice to the god in thanksgiving (Diod. 17.51.4; Curt. 4.7.28; Plut. Alex. 27.7). Back in Memphis, and before setting out for the East and the battle that he hoped would secure for him the rule over "Asia" (Arr. 3.9.6), Alexander performed another great sacrifice, to Zeus Basileus, with a parade of his troops under arms and athletic and musical contests (Arr. 3.5.2). It appears that after receiving from Zeus Ammon at Siwah the assurances and instructions for his future, as he had hoped, Alexander wished to honor with a special tribute the god who had prophesied for him at Gordium the rule over Asia, Zeus the King.³²

³¹ See W. B. Kaiser, *Der Brief Alexanders des Grossen nach der Schlacht bei Issus* (Diss. dact. Mainz 1956) 55f. and passim; Schachermeyr (above, note 2) 223 and n. 246; G. T. Griffith, "The Letter of Darius at Arrian 2.14," *PCPS* 14 (1968) 33-48; Brunt (above, note 2) pp. XXVII and 173n. 1 and. II (1983) 533; Bosworth, *Comm.* (above, note 2) 232f. While these scholars disagree on the extent to which Arrian's version reproduces the original letter, none of them questions the detail of Alexander's claim to the sovereignty of Asia. Cf. Arr. 2.7.6.

³² There is no need, therefore, to speculate with V. Ehrenberg, *Polis und Imperium* (Zurich 1965) 431, followed by Bosworth, *Comm.* (above, note 2) 275, that the Zeus Basileus here worshipped was the Egyptian Amun-Ra. The Greek

In the late spring of 331 BC, Alexander set out from Memphis for his march against Darius. The show-down came on October 1, near Gaugamela, in northern Iraq. According to Arrian (3.9.6) Alexander told his officers before the battle that they would now fight for the sovereignty of the whole of Asia (ὕπὲρ τῆς ξυμπάσης Ἀσίας, οὓστινας χρὴ ἄρχειν). The outcome was a great victory for Alexander. Darius himself, however, once again made his escape, hoping to marshal the remaining resources of his empire for yet another decision. Alexander and his army paused at the village of Arbela.

The battle having had this outcome, the empire of the Persians was thought to be completely dissolved. Alexander was proclaimed King of Asia (βασιλεὺς δὲ τῆς Ἀσίας ἀνηγορευμένος) and made a magnificent sacrifice to the gods, and bestowed upon his friends wealth, estates, and positions of leadership. (Plut. *Alex.* 34.1)

This information is rightly regarded by most historians as historical.³³ The context of the passage, and in particular the great sacrifice, suggest that the proclamation was not an impromptu demonstration by Alexander's troops flush with victory, but part of a formal ceremony climaxed by the sacrifice.³⁴ Since

form of the worship (sacrifice with procession and musical contests) suggests a Hellenic god. All through his career, Alexander routinely worshipped the (traditional) Hellenic-Macedonian deities. Cf. Baege (above, note 24) 1–19; Berve (above, note 24) 85–100, esp. 86. Apart from deities of the locale, esp. river gods, to whom Alexander sacrificed *patrio more* (Curt. 3.8.22), there are credibly attested only two sacrifices to unequivocally foreign gods, one to Apis (not really a god but the sacred bull of Ptah) in Memphis (Arr. 3.1.4), and the other to Bel-Marduk in Babylon (Arr. 3.16.5), both probably for political reasons, in connection with the assumption of the local kingships. On Apis, see Wilcken (above, note 3) 263n. 2 and *Alexander the Great*, tr. G. C. Richards, ed. E. N. Borza (New York 1967) 115; Schachermeyr (above, note 2) 236; on Marduk, see Wilcken, *Alexander the Great* (above, this note) 140; Schachermeyr (above, note 2) 282. As for the Tyrian Melcart, Alexander regarded him as his ancestor Heracles. The sacrifice to Zeus Basileus in Memphis, we may believe, was made with a view to the impending campaign against Darius for the kingship of Asia. An Hellenic, rather than Egyptian, god was appropriate.

³³ E.g. Hamilton (above, note 2) 90; Bosworth, *Conquest* (above, note 5) 85; Hammond (above, note 30) 148; Schachermeyr (above, note 2) 277; Wilcken (above, note 32) 137f.; P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon* (Pelican Biography 1974) 297; G. Wirth, *Alexander der Grosse* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg 1973) 29; H. Berve, "Die Verschmelzungspolitik Alexanders des Grossen," *Klio* 31 (1938) 145. The only exception, to my knowledge, is F. Altheim, *Weltgeschichte Asiens im griechischen Zeitalter* I (Halle 1947) 177–84, 202; id., *Alexander und Asien. Geschichte eines geistigen Erbes* (Tübingen 1953) 66f. and 104f.; id. (with R. Stiel), *Geschichte Mittelasiens im Altertum* (Berlin 1970) 195ff. Altheim rejects the information on the grounds that the proclamation would have made Alexander Great King as successor of Darius, but that his actions until 329 BC, most conspicuously the destruction of Persepolis, were incompatible with this kingship. Altheim failed to see that Alexander's "kingship of Asia" was not identical with the Achaemenid kingship but meant to supersede it. Cf. N. G. L. Hammond, "The Kingdom of Asia and the Persian Throne," *Antichthon* 20 (1986) 73–85.

³⁴ Cf. Alexander's dedication, probably at this time, to Athena Lindia: Βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος μάχαι κρατήσας Δαρείων καὶ κύριος γενόμενος τῆς Ἀσίας ἔθυσσε τῇ Ἀθάναι... *FGrHist* 532 F1.38=C. Blinkenberg, *Die Lindische Tempelchronik* (Bonn 1915) 32. Also Alexander's letter μετὰ τὴν κατάλυσιν

Alexander never by any formal act assumed the Achaemenid kingship as successor of Darius, and we should expect that he assumed the kingship of Asia by some kind of constituent act, we may suppose that he did so on this occasion, as reported by Plutarch. Alexander thus formalized his claim to the kingship of Asia which he had raised in his letter to Darius after Issus, and by suggestion (at the least) already at the Hellespont, and which, most importantly, Zeus Basileus had held out to him at Gordium, and Zeus Ammon confirmed at Siwah. No doubt therefore Zeus, both as Ammon and as Basileus, figured prominently among the gods to whom Alexander now sacrificed in thanksgiving for the victory and the kingship. But while Alexander was now officially King of Asia, with Darius still at large, the greater part of his kingdom, and what remained of Darius' empire, remained yet to be conquered.

Let us move ahead to July 325 BC. Alexander had reached the Indian Ocean at the estuary of the Indus river, and thus completed the conquest of the Indus valley. The return to the West was now to begin. Alexander's admiral Nearchus reports that Alexander at his arrival sighted two islands, one in the mouth of the river and another one further out in the sea. Having ventured some distance from the river island toward the second one,

τότε μὲν δὴ ἐπανήλθον ἐς τὴν ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ νῆσον, καὶ πρὸς τοῖς ἄγκροις αὐτῆς καθορμισθεὶς θύει τοῖς θεοῖς Ἀλέξανδρος ὅσοις ἔφασκεν ὅτι παρὰ τοῦ Ἀμμωνος ἐπηγγελμένον ἦν θῦσαι αὐτῷ. ἐς δὲ τὴν ὑστεραίαν κατέπλει ὡς ἐπὶ τὴν ἄλλην τὴν ἐν τῷ πόντῳ νῆσον, καὶ προσχὼν καὶ ταύτῃ ἔθυε καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἄλλας αὐθυσίας ἄλλοις τε θεοῖς καὶ ἄλλῳ τρόπῳ. καὶ ταύτας δὲ κατ' ἐπιθεσπισμὸν θύειν (ἔφασκε) τοῦ Ἀμμωνος.

they then returned to the river island, and anchoring by its head-land Alexander sacrificed to the gods to whom, he used to say [or: he said?] Ammon had enjoined him to sacrifice. Next day he sailed down to the other island in the sea, put in there, and sacrificed there too, performing different sacrifices to different gods with different ceremonial; these sacrifices also, he said, he offered in accordance with the oracle given by Ammon.

(FGrHist 133 F33 = Arr. 6.19.4; tr. P. A. Brunt, LCL)

These elaborate sacrifices on Ammon's instructions, some six and a half years after his consultation at Siwah, are evidently important, and we must look at them carefully. They are the only sacrifices on record as having been expressly attributed by Alexander to Ammon, and indeed they are the only ones on record as having been performed by Alexander on Ammon's instructions. Is this an accident of our tradition, or was the occasion unique?³⁵

τῶν Περσῶν to the Iliaans promising signal honors for Athena Ilia. Strabo 13.1.26.

³⁵ Is the force of the imperfect tense of ἔφασκεν iterative or limited to this particular occasion? If it is iterative, does it mean that Alexander used or liked to say this (i.e., that he acted on Ammon's instructions) about the sacrifices he performed on this occasion, or is the idea perhaps that the sort of sacrifices which he performed on this occasion he habitually performed and attributed to Ammon? *Non liquet*.

There are indications that Alexander performed sacrifices regularly on Ammon's instructions. When he embarked on the Hydaspes for the campaign that was to take him to the Ocean, "he sacrificed to the gods who were *πάτριοι* or *μάντευτοί* for him, and to Posidon and Amphitrite and the Nereids and Ocean himself, and the river Hydaspes, whence he started, and the Acesines, into which the Hydaspes runs, and the Indus, into which they both run" (Nearchus, *FGrHist* 133 F1=Arr. *Ind.* 18.11). Elsewhere, with reference to the same occasion, Arrian (6.3.1), drawing either on Nearchus or on Ptolemy, writes that "he sacrificed to the gods according to (his) custom (*ὡς νόμος*), and to the river Hydaspes *as the seers instructed* (*ὅπως οἱ μάντιες ἐξηγοῦντο*); and...he poured a libation into the river, calling upon the Acesines along with the Hydaspes...and also upon the Indus into which the Acesines runs with the Hydaspes." The sacrifice to the Hydaspes was enjoined "by the seers," and so was therefore the invocation of the Acesines and of the Indus. At *Ind.* 18.11 (above) the Hydaspes and the other water divinities, to whom Alexander sacrificed on instructions of the seers, are distinguished (*καί*) from the gods who were *patrioi* or *manteutoi* for Alexander. These two categories are identified in this passage (6.3.1, above) as the gods to whom Alexander sacrificed according to (his) custom (*ὡς νόμος*). Therefore, the *manteutoi* (*theoi*) at *Ind.* 18.11 must mean "prescribed by oracle," as P. A. Brunt has it, and not "prescribed by the seers," as W. Capelle has it,³⁶ and this would mean, almost certainly, the oracle of Zeus Ammon.

Oracular instructions for sacrifices on campaigns would be in accord with Greek tradition. Xenophon (*An.* 3.1.6) tells us that he went to Delphi to ask "Apollo to which one of the gods he should sacrifice and pray in order best and most successfully to perform the journey [against the Great King] which he had in mind and, having met with success, to return home safely; and Apollo in response told to what gods he needed to sacrifice" (tr. C. L. Brownson, *LCL*). We know that one of these gods was Zeus (*An.* 6.1.22). We may assume, by the same token, that the gods to whom Zeus Ammon told Alexander to sacrifice were largely identical with the gods to whom he in any case routinely sacrificed, and this would explain why they are referred to at Arr. 6.3.1 as "customary" (*ὡς νόμος*) for Alexander, and why in our sources they are not further identified. They were, simply, routine.

The sacrifice at the Indian Ocean, however, was anything but routine. As we have noted, this is the only occasion of which it is recorded that Alexander sacrificed on instructions of Ammon, and he now performed not just one, but two sacrifices on Ammon's instructions. He performed them one after the other on two different islands, each to different gods, each with different ritual. The importance which he attached to them must have been considerable. What was it?

We should note, first, that on this same occasion Alexander performed yet another major sacrifice. Arrian (6.19.5; cf. *Ind.* 20.10) says that after the

³⁶ W. Capelle, *Arrian. Alexanders des Grossen Siegeszug durch Asien*, Bibliothek der Alten Welt (Zürich 1950) 428; Brunt (above, note 2) II (1983) 361. Cf. *LSJ*, s.v. *μάντευτός*.

sacrifices on the two islands on instructions of Ammon, Alexander sailed out to the sea “to observe, as he said, if any country stood out nearby in the ocean,...[and there] *sacrificed bulls to Posidon and cast them into the sea, and after the sacrifice poured a libation and cast into the sea the cup made of gold and golden bowls as thank-offerings* (χαριστήρια) praying that Posidon would safely convoy the naval force he intended to despatch with Nearchus toward the Persian Gulf and the mouths of the Euphrates and Tigris” (tr. P. A. Brunt, *LCL*).³⁷ For what did Alexander give thanks? No doubt for the safe voyage from the Hydaspes up to this point. But this may not be all. The offering is reminiscent of a sacrifice Alexander performed in the spring of 334 BC while crossing the Hellespont to Asia. Arrian (1.11.6) writes that according to the prevalent story (ὁ πλείων λόγος κατέχει) Alexander “steered the admiral’s ship himself when he crossed, sacrificing a bull to Posidon and the Nereids in the midst of the Hellespont strait, and pouring into the sea a drink offering from a golden cup” (tr. P.A. Brunt, *LCL*). As we recall, there is good reason to believe that at the Hellespont, the threshold as it were of Asia, Alexander announced his claim to “Asia” as willed by the gods. The similarity of the sacrifice in the Indian Ocean with that in the Hellespont suggests that Alexander performed it with reference to the former one, and if this is correct, it must mean that Alexander now considered himself as having finished the project on which he embarked at the Hellespont, the conquest of Asia, and that he thanked the gods accordingly.³⁸ And indeed Diodorus (17.104.1) writes that at the Indian Ocean Alexander “judged that he had now completed the campaign which he had undertaken (ὑπέλαβεν τετελευτηκέναι τὴν προκεχειρισμένην στρατείαν).”

I believe the sacrifices on the two islands on instructions of Ammon marked the same occasion. As we have seen, it is very likely that at Siwah Alexander asked Ammon for sanction of his plan to conquer Asia, that Ammon gave this sanction, and that he gave instructions for sacrifices to be performed on the way. At the Indian Ocean, if anywhere, Alexander was in the position to claim the success of his mission. According to Arrian (4.15.6), drawing on either Ptolemy or Aristobulus,³⁹ in the winter of 329–28 BC Alexander had stated to the king of the Choriasmians that his concern now was with the

³⁷ Curtius 9.9.27, referring clearly to the same sacrifice, says that “after sacrificing to the gods presiding over the sea and the region (*praesidibus et maris et locorum dis*) he returned to the fleet.” Diodorus 17.104.1 conflates this sacrifice with those on the two islands: “He sailed out into the Ocean with his Friends. There he discovered two islands and on them performed rich sacrifices. He threw many large cups of gold into the sea following the libations which he poured from them. He erected altars to Tethys and Oceanus and judged that his projected campaign was at an end” (tr. C. B. Welles, *LCL*).

³⁸ Note that on the Hellespont Alexander poured an offering from “a golden cup (ἐκ χρυσῆς φιάλης).” It is not said that he cast the cup into the sea. In the Indian Ocean, he cast into the sea “the golden cup (τὴν φιάλην χρυσὴν οὔσαν) and golden bowls as thank offerings.” Could “the golden cup” be the very cup from which he had poured the libation in the Hellespont? The casting of it into the sea appears then like an act of finality, suggesting the conclusion of the campaign.

³⁹ Bosworth (above, note 14) 192.

Indians, “for by subduing them he would then possess Asia as a whole (πᾶσαν ἂν ἥδη ἔχειν τὴν Ἀσίαν).” To be sure, at the Hyphasis (Beas), in September 326 BC, Alexander’s ambitions were frustrated when his troops, overcome by weariness and exhaustion, refused to continue the march eastward to reach the Ocean, and thus the border of Asia, which Alexander believed within reach. But he was not to be denied. Doubling back to the Hydaspes, he then moved South and subdued, in some of the fiercest fighting of his career, the Indians all the way from the northern Punjab to the Indian Ocean. In this way, though he had not reached the limit of Asia in the East, he now reached it somewhat further to the South. He did not in any real sense “possess Asia as a whole,” but on reaching the Indian Ocean he had given his title “King of Asia” considerable substance.⁴⁰ Never having admitted defeat except by the gods,⁴¹ he now seems to have dispatched messengers to various points West to announce the completion of his conquest of Asia and imminent return. Otherwise we could not account for the fact that early in 323 BC envoys met Alexander near Babylon from the Libyans (!) to congratulate him “on his kingship of Asia (ἐπὶ τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῆς Ἀσίας), and from Italy (!) Bruttians, Lucanians, and Etruscans sent envoys *for the same purpose* (ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς)” (Arr. 7.15.4; cf. 7.15.5–6). Similarly at his arrival in Babylon, and then again shortly thereafter, embassies from Greece and other places in the West, as far afield as Spain, presented themselves to honor Alexander (Arr. 7.19.1; 7.23.2; Diod. 17.113; Just. 12.13.1–2; Plin. *NH* 3.57). We should infer that their purpose was at least in part the same as that of the other embassies, to congratulate Alexander on his conquest and kingship of Asia. Alexander began his return march West in late August 325 BC. When in January 324 BC he linked up with Nearchus in Carmania, he swore, according to Nearchus, that he rejoiced at Nearchus’ safe voyage with his fleet up to this point more than at his own “possession of all Asia (ὅτι τὴν Ἀσίην πᾶσαν ἐκτημένος ἔρχεται)” (Arr. *Ind.* 35.8). If, then, at the mouth of the Indus Alexander claimed (with whatever justification) the completion of his conquest of Asia, which Ammon had vouchsafed him, and if on this very occasion he performed two elaborate sacrifices expressly on

⁴⁰ Cf. Arr. 5.26.2, 6, 8; 7.30.1; Diod. 17.104.1; Curt. 9.1.3–4; 9.6.20–21. At 7.1.1–3, however, Arrian notes that some writers alleged that after his return from the East, Alexander intended “to sail round most of Arabia, Ethiopia, Libya, and the Nomads beyond Mount Atlas, Gadeira and into our sea and, after subduing Libya and Carthage, finally justly to be called king of all Asia; for in his opinion the kings of the Persians and Medes had ruled only a fraction of Asia and so did not justly call themselves Great Kings.” On the other hand, in a speech to his troops at the Hyphasis in Sept. 326 BC, as reported by Arrian 5.26.2, Alexander in discussing his future plans expressly distinguished Asia and Libya: “From the Pillars [of Heracles] all the interior of Libya then becomes ours, just as all of Asia is now becoming ours.” If Arrian’s story at 7.1.1–3 (above) can be trusted, toward the end of his life, after his return to the West, Alexander came to think of Asia as including Africa. But our evidence (above) is fairly conclusive that in July 325 BC, on reaching the Indian Ocean, Alexander considered the conquest of Asia as essentially completed.

⁴¹ Even at the Hyphasis, Alexander attributed his decision to turn around not to the mutiny but to his own decision and the will of the gods. Arr. 5.28.4. Cf. 5.29.1–2.

Ammon's instructions, the conclusion is warranted that the god who had given him instructions for sacrifices along the way on his campaign, gave him these particular instructions for the specific occasion when he would have reached his promised goal.⁴²

Now the terms which Alexander-Nearchus used of Ammon's instructions are ἐπιθεσπισμός and ἐπηγγελμένον (see above). V. Ehrenberg⁴³ has drawn attention to the prefix in ἐπιθεσπισμός, a *hapax legomenon*,⁴⁴ and suggested that Alexander used the term to mean not "an oracle" but the "sanction of an oracle," as Liddell and Scott translate it (s.v.), with reference to the use of the verb ἐπιθεσπίζειν by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Dionysius says that in Rome the election to every office, especially the kingship, needed to be confirmed by divine ratification: ...μήτε βασιλείας μήτε ἀρχὰς λαμβάνειν, ἔαν μὴ καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον αὐτοῖς ἐπιθεσπίσῃ (2.6.1). And: μετὰ τὴν ὑπὸ τῶν φυλῶν γενησομένην ψηφοφορίαν τοὺς θεοὺς ἔδει τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῷ δι' οἰωνῶν αἰσίων ἐπιθεσπίσαι (3.35.6). Ehrenberg thought that in this case too "es sich dabei um etwas sekundär Hinzutretendes, um Bestätigung von etwas schon Verhandeltem, von anderer Seite Ausgesprochenem oder Getanem handelte. Dem Orakelspruch Ammons war schon etwas vorausgegangen."⁴⁵ If this is correct, what was the thing "spoken" or "done" that preceded and then was sanctioned by the oracle of Ammon? Ehrenberg suggested that at the Indus delta an Indian seer, perhaps Calanus, gave Alexander instructions for the sacrifices, and that Ammon then sanctioned these instructions through an oracle (ἐπι-θεσπισμός). Ehrenberg: "Dagegen wird man wohl vergeblich zu ergründen suchen, auf welchem Wege sich Ammon bei dieser Gelegenheit seinem Sohne offenbart hat. An θεωροί die eigens nach Siwah gegangen wären..., wird man hier nicht denken dürfen, schon weil Alexander die Situation nicht voraussehen konnte. So mag man immerhin Träume oder Zeichen als wahrscheinlichstes Mittel der Verkündigung betrachten."⁴⁶ This speculation is far-fetched and unnecessary. There is no indication in our sources that Indian seers were involved, or that Alexander ever received direct, on the spot communications of any kind from Ammon.⁴⁷ The apposite use of ἐπιθεσπίζειν by Dionysius, and the congruence of the prefix in ἐπι-θεσπισμός and ἐπ-ηγγελμένον, rather suggest that it (the prefix) points simply to the project, the conquest, or lordship, of Asia (cf. Dionysius' βασιλεία) which Alexander put to the god at Siwah, and this is the more plausible since Zeus Basileus had already assigned it to Alexander at Gordium. It is possible that Alexander himself used, or even coined, the word ἐπιθεσπισμός, *pietatis causa*, as a reminder that Ammon's oracle, and with it the sacrifice

⁴² We might note that the present occasion also, of course, signified Alexander's arrival at the border of the eastern *oikoumenē*, but, as we have noted, this simply meant "Asia."

⁴³ Ehrenberg (above, note 32) 452–55.

⁴⁴ Verified by the Ibycus.

⁴⁵ Ehrenberg (above, note 32) 452f.

⁴⁶ Ehrenberg (above, note 32) 455.

⁴⁷ Cf. Wilcken (above, note 3) 287.

instructions, was given in confirmation ("sanction") of the earlier promise by Zeus Basileus at Gordium.

To conclude. While one of Alexander's motives for seeking out the oracle of Zeus Ammon at Siwah very possibly was to obtain confirmation of his status as the god's son, he also sought to obtain confirmation of the promise of Zeus Basileus at Gordium for his conquest of Asia. The god provided this confirmation, in addition, perhaps, to other revelations. And he gave him instructions for appropriate sacrifices to the gods both along the way and, most important, for the particular occasion when he would reach his destined goal. At his arrival at the Indian Ocean in July 325 BC, Alexander decided that this occasion had arrived, and he marked it, in compliance with the god's instructions, by two great sacrifices in thanksgiving to the gods. This conclusion, if correct, opens up a further, important possibility. It is reasonably certain that in 324 BC, after his return to the West, that is, upon his conquest of "Asia," Alexander communicated to the cities of Greece, either by direct request or in some more diplomatic but nevertheless unmistakable way, a desire for divine honors,⁴⁸ and there is reason to think that he hoped that this recognition would include a formal acknowledgement of his status as son of Zeus Ammon.⁴⁹ E. Badian has drawn attention to Alexander's deference to his divine father when at the death of his friend Hephaestion he sought his permission to institute either divine or heroic honors for him, and at his bidding contented himself with heroic honors (Arr. 7.14.7; 7.23.6; Plut. *Alex.* 72.3). Badian considers it unlikely that Alexander would have failed to seek the god's permission in the much more important matter of his own honors, but our sources are silent. Badian: "I can see only one answer. The permission was unnecessary. Among the mysteries communicated to Alexander by his divine 'father' at Siwah there must have been an explicit promise that (at whatever time and in whatever form) he would become a god in his lifetime."⁵⁰ If Zeus Ammon promised his son deification in his lifetime *as well as* the conquest of Asia, it is reasonable to infer that he promised deification *as an award* for the

⁴⁸ Din. *Dem.* 94; Hyp. *Dem.* 31–32; Timaeus, *FGrHist* 566 F155=Polyb. 12.12b.3; Plut. *Mor.* 219E–F; 804B; 842D; Ael. *HV* 2.19; 5.12; Athen. 6.251B; Val. Max. 7.2 ext. 13; D. L. 6.63. The question is not whether Alexander desired deification (he did), but how he communicated his desire. Only two (late) sources, apparently drawing on a common source, state an outright request. Ael. *HV* 2.19: ἐπέστειλε τοῖς Ἑλλήσι θεὸν αὐτὸν ψηφίσασθαι, and Plut. *Mor.* 219E: Δᾶμις πρὸς τὰ ἐπισταλέντα παρὰ τοῦ Ἀλεχάνδρου θεὸν εἶναι ψηφίσασθαι... Nevertheless, many modern scholars, largely from inference (e.g., there is a lacuna at this point in Arrian), believe there was a direct order. E.g. Schachermeyr (above, note 2) 525–31; Wilcken (above, note 32) 210–14; Green (above, note 33) 451f.; J. R. Hamilton, *Alexander the Great* (Pittsburgh 1974) 183–84; K. M. T. Atkinson, "Demosthenes, Alexander, and Asebeia," *Athenaeum* n.s. 51 (1973) 331–35. On the other hand, even Badian, who is more skeptical, acknowledges (above, note 2) 64: "Alexander intensely wanted to be deified." Similarly Bosworth, *Conquest* (above, note 5) 288: "At the very least...the enactment of divine honors was well known to be something the king greatly desired."

⁴⁹ E. A. Fredrickmeyer, "Three Notes on Alexander's Deification," *AJAH* 4 (1979) 3–7.

⁵⁰ Badian (above, note 2) 66.

conquest of Asia. The conquest was, after all, a supreme achievement, *aretê* par excellence.⁵¹

⁵¹ I wish to thank the two anonymous referees and the Editor for criticisms and suggestions by which this paper has been greatly improved. Any remaining faults are of course my own.