Hamilcar Rhodanus, a Carthaginian Spy in Alexander's Army? A Historiographical Perspective

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyse the figure of Hamilcar Rhodanus, a Carthaginian spy in the army of Alexander the Great. In order to achieve this, the sources that report on this alleged episode of history must be reviewed: Frontinus, Justin and Orosius. The historiographical analysis put forth in this article allows to consider that, if there was a Carthaginian spy in Alexander's ranks, any credibility of the event has been lost in the course of history.

Introduction

Alexander the Great may have been the first figure to cross the thin line that divides history from legend.[1] His life and deeds have greatly influenced world history. But it is the Macedonian's great exploits that are most widely known in the collective memory.[2] It is well known, however, that scholarship today is quite concerned with finding new and multidisciplinary approaches to re-examine the classical sources. A prominent example would be the studies on the Achaemenid influence on Alexander III.[3] And although this eastern line of argumentation has resulted in great academic enhancement, only minor attention has been paid to other areas, such as the relationship between Alexander and Carthage. Two main lines of argumentation within research into the topic are worth mentioning here.

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[1] This article was written during a short research stay at the Catholic University of Milan. Many thanks to Prof. Giuseppe Zecchini for his comments and kindness.

[2] Briant 2012; Gómez Espelosín 2015.

[3] Bosworth 1980a, 1–21; Brosius 2003, 169–193; Shahbazi 2003, 5–38, Gómez Espelosín 2007, 307–322; Olbrycht 2008, 231–252; Howe 2016, 151–182; Mullen 2018, 233–253; Olbrycht 2018, 80–92; Heckel 2020, 201–220; Degen 2021, 239–287; Rollinger / Degen 2021a, 321–342; Stiles 2022, 64–76 and 97–116; Peltonen 2022, 99–118; Degen 2022, 332–408; Strootman 2022, 189–207; Gómez Espelosín 2023, 251–257 and 269–287.

Firstly, what could be called "the classical studies on Alexander". In the endless bibliography on Alexander, the treatment of the Carthaginians has been nearly non-existent. The Carthaginians are usually briefly mentioned when discussing the siege of Tyre or the embassies at Babylon. However, the questionable *Hypomnemata* are the only connection between Alexander and Carthage modern historians have conducted studies into. With these studies usually follow two lines of argumentation. On the one hand, some authors are of the opinion that the alleged campaign across the Mediterranean was a fixed plan in Alexander's mind. This point of view is mainly represented by the article of F. Schachermeyr, "Die Letzten Pläne Alexander des Grossen", 1954, and the book by L. Braccesi, *Alessandro al bivio. I Macedoni tra Europa, Asia e Cartagine*, 2020.[4] On the other hand, there are those authors who are of the opinion that the western plans of the *Hypomnemata* should be linked "not to the history of Alexander, but to the history of the Successors."[5] The latest trend in research into this area argues that the western conquest in Alexander's Last Plans is a Ptolemaic invention that can be found in the *Anabasis* of Arrian.[6]

Secondly, the Carthaginian academic tradition has focused its efforts on the reconstruction of its historical heritage. W. Huss was one of the first scholars to mention the relationship between Alexander and Carthage. Although his research focused on the relations between Carthage and Egypt in the Hellenistic period, he was of the opinion that Alexander's plans against Carthage were genuine.[7] This has been called into question by A. Ferjaoui, who advocates for the impossibility of knowing Alexander's Last Plans. He was also one of the first to mention Hamilcar Rhodanus and his alleged spying on Alexander, but simply noted the event uncommented.[8] Likewise, R. Miles argues that Alexander's anti-Carthaginian emotions, described by the sources and noted by several authors, are more closely related to Greco-Roman historiography and its aims than to historical accuracy. The scholar also mentions Hamilcar

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[4] Schachermeyr 1954, 118–140. The German scholar argued that the Last Plans were the most important question in Alexander studies: Schachermeyr 1954, 119. He also considered them to be authentic: Schachermeyr 1954, 140. L. Bracessi, for his part, considers that Alexander the Great and Alexander Molossus had a specific plan for the Mediterranean. Molossus, after gaining control of Magna Graecia, would have supported Alexander III in the conquest of Africa: Braccesi 2020, 94–118. See also: Seibert 1972, 231–233; Hammond 2004, 244–245; Lane Fox 2007, 765–766.

[5] Badian 2012 (1968), 189. In this vein: Tarn 1948, 378–393; Hampl 1953, 816–829; Andreotti 1956, 257–302; Badian 2012 (1968), 174–192; Kraft 1971, 119–127; Hamilton 1973, 154–158.

[6] San José 2024, 83–106. Thus, Ptolemy, not Alexander, should be credited with the universal rulership attested in the western clause of the *hypomnemata*. On Alexander's adoption of universal rulership from the Achaemenids: Alonso–Núñez 2003, 175–182; Degen 2021, 239–287; Rollinger / Degen 2021a, 321–342; Degen 2022, 332–408; Gómez Espelosín 2023: 251–257.

[7] Huss 1979, 121: "doch hält die überwiegende Zahl der Fachleute diese sog. Westpläne—jedenfalls in ihrem Kern—zu Recht für historisch". Huss 1993, 114–117.

[8] Ferjaoui 1993, 56–69. Particularly 67–68 for Last Plans and 69 for Hamilcar Rhodanus.

Rhodanus' espionage, but does not develop the topic.[9] In this vein, D. Hoyos and E. Macdonald have mentioned Hamilcar Rhodanus, but end up simply summarising what the sources convey.[10] The latest study on the subject, which has re-examined the sources on Tyre and the deployment of embassies to Babylon, shows that the relationship between Alexander and Carthage responds to their contextual framework, and that no anti-Carthaginian tendencies should be attributed to Alexander.[11]

Thus, academic tradition in both fields has permanently ignored the relationship between Carthage and Alexander. To fill the current scholarly vacuum, this study will examine the account of Hamilcar Rhodanus, a Carthaginian spy within Alexander's ranks. Particularly, the aim is to analyse the event in order to answer the following questions: What kind of narrative do the sources want to convey? How much credibility can be attributed to the accounts?

Hamilcar Rhodanus—A Carthaginian Spy in Alexander's Army?

Reports on Hamilcar Rhodanus have been passed on from Justin, Orosius and Frontinus.[12] Frontinus, being the first source chronologically, gives a brief account of how the Carthaginians sent a virtuous man (Hamilcar) to spy on Alexander, who was threatening Africa at the time. Justin, in turn, gives the most detailed report, while Orosius merely presents a summary of Justin's version. Justin recounts the event as follows:

> *Inter haec Karthaginienses tanto successu rerum Alexandri Magni exterriti, uerentes ne Persico regno et Africum uellet adiungere, mittunt ad speculandos eius animos Hamilcarem cognomento Rodanum, uirum sollertia facundiaque praeter ceteros insignem. Augebant enim metum et Tyros, urbs auctorum originis suae, capta et Alexandria aemula Karthaginis in terminis Africae et Aegypti condita et felicitas regis, apud quem nec cupiditas nec fortuna ullo modo terminabantur. Igitur Hamilcar per Parmeniona aditu regis obtento profugisse se ad regem expulsum patria fingit militemque se expeditionis offert. Atque ita consiliis eius exploratis in tabellis ligneis uacua desuper cera inducta ciuibus suis omnia perscribebat. Sed Karthaginienses post mortem regis*

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[9] Miles 2010, 140–142.

[10] Hoyos 2010, 139; Macdonald 2014, 25.

[11] San José 2021, 193–232. The context meets the needs of Alexander and his next campaign in Arabia, not the Mediterranean: Arr. *An.* 7.19.6; 7.20.1. It also suits the several Carthaginian objectives: the duty to show submission to Alexander's hegemonic position in Asia and Europe, the neighbourhood status after the treaty with Cyrenaica, and to prevent Alexander from using the civilian ransom of Tyre as *casus belli* in the future, an issue not related to the Last Plans but to the uncertainty of his next projects.

[12] Front. *Str.* 2.3; Just. *Epit.* 21.6; Oros. 4.6.21–22.

reuersum in patriam, quasi urbem regi uenditasset, non ingrato tantum, uerum etiam crudeli animo necauerunt.

Meanwhile, the Carthaginians, alarmed at the rapid successes of Alexander the Great, and fearing that he might plan to annex Africa to the Persian Empire, sent Hamilcar, surnamed Rhodanus, a man noted more than others for his wit and eloquence, to report on his intentions. Indeed, the capture of Tyre, their own mother city, and the foundation of Alexandria, Carthage's rival, on the borders of Africa and Egypt, as well as the good fortune of the monarch, whose ambition and success seemed to know no limits, raised their (the Carthaginians) fears to an extreme level. Hamilcar, obtaining access to the king through the favour of Parmenion, represented himself as an exile from his homeland, making Alexander believe that he has escaped, and offers himself as a soldier in the expedition. Having ascertained his intentions, he then sent a full account of them to his countrymen, inscribed on wooden tablets with blank wax spread over the writing. But when he returned home after Alexander's death, the Carthaginians not only ungratefully but cruelly murdered him. They claimed he had tried to sell the city to the king.[13]

The date on which the Carthaginian was sent on his mission of espionage is the first element to be examined. On the one hand, Justin states that the Carthaginians were terrified (*exterriti*) by Alexander's victories when they decided to dispatch Hamilcar. A fear that was heightened after the Tyre conquest (*Augebant enim metum et Tyros*). Therefore, the Carthaginian plot and the subsequent journey of Hamilcar took place before 332 BC. On the other hand, Orosius states that the Carthaginians sent Hamilcar when they heard of the destruction of Tyre, fearing Alexander's subsequent plans. Finally, no date can be deduced from Frontinus' account.[14] The sources therefore exhibit contradictions in their dating of the event.

Since Justin proclaims that it was terror which motivated the Carthaginian decision, his proposal is problematic. It is doubtful that, before 332BC, Carthage feared a Macedonian king on the other side of the Eastern Mediterranean who had only one notable victory over the reigning Persian monarch Darius III to show for. Orosius also mentions the Carthaginian terror, but his account enables other observations. For instance, Orosius reports: *Post haec Carthaginienses cum Tyrum urbem, auctorem originis suae, ab Alexandro Magno captam euersamque didicissent.*[15] The semantic construction, especially *didicissent*, a pluperfect subjunctive, suggests that the Carthaginians were warned *a posteriori* of the capture of Tyre. However, Orosius'

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[13] Just. *Epit*. 21.6.

[14] Just. *Epit*. 21.6.1–2; Oros. 4.6.21.

[15] Oros. 4.6.21: Afterwards, the Carthaginians learned that Tyre, their mother city, had been captured and destroyed by Alexander.

narrative involves denying that Carthage was aware of the siege/conquest. This presents a contradiction as it would imply the denial of the civil, not military, assistance from Carthage to Tyre and the pardon granted by Alexander to the refugees in the Temple of Heracles/Melqart, amongst whom was a Carthaginian embassy who had lived through the entire siege and had come to Tyre for religious reasons (*theorio*).[16] Although both accounts are questionable, it should be noted that Orosius' version (after 332 BC) is more reliable. Especially as the information would have come from Carthaginian envoys who had personally encountered Alexander. Furthermore, despite the account of Orosius being a summary of Justin's, the dating discrepancy may indicate an error in expression, in comprehension-transmission, or merely the existence of another lost source.

The second point worth investigating is the mention of Alexandria as an additional cause for terror in Carthage (*Augebant enim metum [...] et Alexandria aemula Karthaginis*). Alexandria was founded in 331 BC by Alexander following precise geographical and symbolic patterns.[17] Following the account of Justin, it is unlikely that Alexandria, a city founded a year after the alleged departure of the Carthaginian spy, increased the terror in Carthage. Rather, by proposing a mercantile competition that will take place in the second and first centuries BC, Justin falls into propagandistic anachronism. Moreover, Justin himself mentions that Hamilcar Rhodanus was sent before the destruction of Tyre and the founding of Alexandria. In other words, Egypt was not yet occupied. Neither did Alexander's pact with Cyrene, making Carthage a neighbour of his empire, exist yet.[18] Thus, Justin falls prey to inconsistencies and anachronisms.

The fourth part of the story in need of analysis is the speed with which Hamilcar Rhodanus was able to gain access to Alexander through Parmenion.[19] According to Arrian, Parmenion was the second highest ranked commander after Alexander at the beginning of the campaign.[20] His disgrace was the result of an alleged conspiracy by his son Philotas in 330 BC. According to Justin and Orosius, if Hamilcar Rhodanus won Parmenion's trust, it would have happened in the short period of two years, between 332–330 BC. This seems extremely improbable for several reasons: his exiled status (not the one of an ambassador), his Carthaginian citizenship (being alien

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[16] Arr. *Anab*. 2.24–25; Diod. Sic. 17.41.8; Curt. 4.2.10–11; 4.4.10–18. San José 2021, 202–209.

[17] Arr. *Anab*. 3.1.1–5; 3.2.2; Just. *Epit*. 11.11.13; Strabo 17.1.6–7; Curt. 4.8.6. Erskine 2002, 163–197; Howe 2014, 72–91; Kottaridi 2018, 39–50.

[18] Curt. 4.7.9; Arr. *Anab*. 1.5.4; 7.9.8. The pact was made at Paraetonium, near Lake Mareotis, when Alexander was marching towards Siwa: San José Campos 2021, 221–224; Gómez Espelosín 2023, 125–128.

[19] Just. *Epit*. 21.6.5; Oros. 4.22.

[20] Arr. *Anab*. 1.11.3.

to the Macedonian and Greek ethos), and Parmenion's high place within the Macedonian hierarchy. If one were to take the account's information at face value, there would still be inconsistencies. Justin reports that Hamilcar was not only granted an audience with Alexander, but also found out his future plans (*Atque ita consiliis eius exploratis*). A point that is consistent with Frontinus' account.[21] To assume that the Carthaginian had access to this information is to assume that Hamilcar Rhone was the most trusted figure in Alexander's life. Not to mention that such audiences would take place without bodyguards or Macedonian high officials who might overhear future plans.[22] As much for their exceptionality to historical reality as for their narrative convenience, the blind assumptions made in both accounts are striking.

In summary, the problem within the narrative of Hamilcar Rhodanus' mission as given by the sources are as follows: a) there are inconsistencies in the timing of Carthage's decision to send the spy; b) anachronistic propagandistic ideas like the report on the city of Alexandria are implemented; c) the narrative convenience of having access to Parmenion or to the Macedonian high ranks; d) the constant reference to an alleged Carthaginian terror, which cannot be supported by the historical context and which would in any case be premature; e) and the improbable importance that is given to an exiled Carthaginian in the army of Alexander. These observations allow to understand that the episode of Hamilcar Rhodanus in the Macedonian army is a false narrative construct.[23] At this point, it should be noted that the falsity of the sources does not mean that the event is entirely fictional. It is not unreasonable to speculate on the existence of a Carthaginian spy within Alexander's ranks. All the more so after the capture of Tyre and the subsequent neighbouring status of Alexander and Carthage. The Carthaginian embassy of 323 BC may have supported this proposal.[24] In fact, Justin and Orosius provide some possible insights. It is Justin who offers the original background of the story that was later perverted by anachronisms and implausible assumptions: *in tabellis ligneis uacua desuper cera inducta ciuibus suis omnia perscribebat.*[25] Orosius was able to extend this part of the account. If the unlikely access to Parmenion is disregarded, Hamilcar was accepted into the Macedonian ranks

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[21] Front. *Str*. 2.3.

[22] Alexander's bodyguards: Arr. *Anab*. 4.9.1–13.5; Plut. *Vit. Alex*. 63; *Mor*. 327b, 343d–345b; Diod. Sic. 17.98.1–99.4; Curt. 9.4.26–6.1. See: King 2023, 128–149. On Alexander's psyche (ψυχή): Due 1993, 53–60; Briant 2010, 24–28.

[23] In line with Ferjaoui 1993, 69: "La crédibilité de ce témoignage est très faible, son caractère légendaire semble, quant à lui, évident"; San José 2021, 213: "[...] incitan a considerar la aportación como falsa". On the contrary: Melliti 2016, 187.

[24] Diod. Sic. 17.113.1–4. Nenci 1958, 260–281; Sordi 1965, 445–452; Bosworth 1988, 152–153; Braccesi 2006, 57–67; San José 2021, 213–225.

[25] Just. *Epit*. 21.6.6: (Hamilcar) then sent a full account of them to his countrymen, inscribed on wooden tablets with blank wax spread over the writing.

and reported on the army's activities (*dehinc in militiam regis admissus omnia ciuibus*).[26] These are not unthinkable assumptions, but they cannot be verified. Nonetheless, it is one thing to determine the truth or falsity of an account and another to identify the author's agenda.

Justin was a Roman historian who wrote his work in the third century AD. His writing is the *Epitome* of the *Philippic Histories* by P. Trogus, a Romanised Gaul active during the time of Augustus.[27] Trogus' work dealt with the rise and fall of the Macedonian monarchy, devoting Books 11 and 12 to Alexander, and was the only universal history written in Latin by a non-Christian author in the Roman world. The problem with Justin's *Epitome* is that he formed his own assumptions based on Trogus' writing. By omitting information, making abbreviations, adding rhetorical-political comments and deciding on aesthetic aspects, the result is a completely different account.[28] Some scholars even argue that the *Philippic Histories* aims at darkening the figure of Alexander.[29] In fact, one of the consequences of this approach noticeable in Justin's work is the misunderstanding with the etymology of certain proper nouns.[30] The case of Hamilcar Rhodanus (*Rodanum*) seems to be a product of this confusion, as he assigns a Gallic romanised surname, Rhodanus, to a Carthaginian. Although this is the most plausible theory, there is also an alternative which is worthy of consideration. E. Macdonald raised the idea: "is this Hamilcar related to Hannibal the Rhodian from the First Punic War?" An unknown but conceivable idea based on Polybius and "the possibility that Carthaginian surnames were passed on from generation to generation."[31]

In any case, it is worth noting that the study of Alexander is extremely complex. Access to Alexander is provided through authors, not historians in the strict sense of today's term, who wrote their accounts between two and five centuries after the monarch's death. The study of the subject must therefore be a detective work, taking into account the author's contextual influence, the omissions due to ignorance, the spatio-temporal distance of the narrative, the ideological, political and propagandistic interests, the moralising objectives, the loss of documentation, the chronological disorder and the fabrication inherent in any process of literary transmission[32]. Thus,

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[26] Oros. 4.6.22: was later accepted into the royal army; he then informed his fellow countrymen.

[27] The title of Trogus' work might be perceived as the end of Greek freedom and the decline of the Macedonian monarchy after the rule of Philip II and Alexander: Alonso-Núñez 1995, 351.

[28] Goodyear 1982, 1–24; Yardley / Heckel 1997, 1–41; Bartlett 2014, 246–283.

[29] Horn 2021, 195–211.

[30] Bartlett 2014, 265; Gómez Espelosín 2015, 99.

[31] Polyb. 1.44–47. Macdonald 2015, 248 n. 5.

[32] Gabba 1981, 50–62; Alföldy 1984, 39–61; Gómez Espelosín 1989, 97–116; Stewart 1993, 9–21; Briant 2010, XIV–XIX; Heckel 2010, 29–37; Gómez Espelosín 2015, 75–134; Antela-Bernárdez 2019.

the two main themes that dominate the narrative on Hamilcar Rhodanus can be understood by linking these topics: Carthage and the ambition of Alexander.

On the one hand, Carthage. Justin wrote in the third century AD. The defeat of Carthage led to the destruction of the Carthaginian records, leaving only the Greco-Roman sources, most of which were written under Roman rule. Since its historiographical birth, Carthage has been situated in the Roman imaginary as a negative historical entity. Carthage was born to oppose and confront Rome. A construction epitomised in the inferior *fides punica*.[33] Justin is thus the heir to an anti-Carthaginian tradition, dating back more than four centuries. The Roman author is part of a cultural heritage that makes it possible to ascribe to the Carthaginians everything that the stereotype enables. Thus, one of the two main themes of the narrative on Hamilcar is the concept of the Carthaginians in the Roman world, with fear, wit and cruelty as their driving force. In fact, the Carthaginian socio-cultural construction reappears to close the narrative of Hamilcar Rhodanus:

> *Sed Karthaginienses post mortem regis reuersum in patriam, quasi urbem regi uenditasset, non ingrato tantum, uerum etiam crudeli animo necauerunt.*

> But when he returned home after Alexander's death, the Carthaginians not only ungratefully but cruelly murdered him. They claimed he had tried to sell the city to the king.[34]

Justin reports a fact that he believes to be true and that his readers will find coherent and interesting. The same pattern can be detected in Orosisus. Orosius was a Spanish priest who wrote his *Historiae adversus Paganos* between 416 and 418.[35] The Christian perspective of the work together with the Greco-Roman sources create a unique document. In the case of the Carthaginians, however, the representation can be tricky. It is true that Orosius is the first source to consider the Carthaginian Empire as one of the four universal empires of world history (Babylonian, Macedonian, Carthaginian and Roman). Nonetheless, Orosius used Greco-Roman sources for Christian purposes without questioning the Carthaginian depiction. Consequently, and using Justin as one of his main influences, he makes Carthage appear as a historical entity serving Rome.

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[33] Thiel 1954, 259–280; Dubuisson 1983, 159–167; Piccaluga 1983, 409–424; Devallet 1996, 17–28; Chassignet 1998, 55–72; Gruen 2011, 115–140; Bonnet 2011, 19–29; Ciocarlie 2011, 77–113; Kubler 2018, 95–114. It is, in short, an ethnic, linguistic, and geographical construction that is used in a group and conscious manner during certain periods of difficulty as a discursive construction of difference.

[34] Just. *Epit*. 21.6.7. Justin embraces the Carthaginian stereotype: Just. *Epit*. 22.7.9: *crudelitatem civium*: "cruelty of the countrymen (of Bomilcar, so of the Carthaginians)."

[35] For 416–417: Balmacena 2016, 160. For 418: Zecchini 2003, 320.

For instance, a mirror which assists the *metus hostilis* of the Romans.[36] Orosisus therefore portrayed the *fides punica*, a fact in the Roman world:

> *hunc mortuo Alexandro Carthaginem reuersum, quasi urbem regi uenditasset, non ingrato tantum animo uerum etiam crudeli inuidia necauerunt.*

> After Alexander's death, Hamilcar returned to Carthage, where he was killed as if he had actually betrayed his city to the king, not out of ingratitude but cruel envy.[37]

Finally, it seems likely that Frontinus's omission of Carthaginian ingratitude and cruelty is related more to how the *Strategemata* were written than to a later literary addition that Justin followed.

On the other hand, there is the ambition of Alexander. In order to deal with the subject, a few comments need to be made about Arrian and the universal kingship that was inserted into the *photos* of Alexander. Bithynian by birth and Greek by language, disciple of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus and Roman senator, Arrian represented the second-century governmental establishment and the eastern classes rising under the Antonines[38]. One of the most celebrated topics in the tradition of Alexander, and naturally in Arrian, is that of Alexander insatiable greed:

> [...] ἐκεῖνο δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἄν μοι δοκῶ ἰσχυρίσασθαι, οὔτε μικρόν τι καὶ φαῦλον ἐπινοεῖν Ἀλέξανδρον οὔτε μεῖναι ἂν ἀτρεμοῦντα ἐπ' οὐδενὶ τῶν ἤδη κεκτημένων, οὐδὲ εἰ τὴν Εὐρώπην τῇ Ἀσίᾳ προσέθηκεν, οὐδ' εἰ τὰς Βρεττανῶν νήσους τῇ Εὐρώπῃ.

> [...] although there is one thing I can affirm, that Alexander's plans had no lack of ambition or meaning, and that he would never have been satisfied with any conquest he might have made, not even if he had added Europe to Asia and the Britannic Islands to Europe.[39]

The urge to conquer peoples and borders are some of the notions associated with Alexander's *photos* and repeated by several authors in the Roman world, such as the aforementioned Justin and Orosius. Plans always refer to Ἀλεξάνδρου τὰ ἐνθυμήματα (beliefs, wishes) and therefore to creating a conscious fantasy scenario. In this vein, R. Strootman has recently pointed out how Arrian set up this idea and others "as a character trait unique to Alexander, using the word *pothos*."[40] An account designed to

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[36] Oros. 4.23.9; 10.1–4. Widely: Zecchini 2003, 317–345; Balmaceda 2016, 156–173.

[37] Oros. 4.22. Orosius' research: Oros. *Praef*.14.

[38] Zecchini 1983, 7–8; Gómez Espelosín 2015, 111–113; Leon 2021, 2–3, particularly fn. 9–10.

[39] Arr. *Anab*. 7.1.4. Also: Arr. *Anab*. 4.7.5, 5.26.2.

[40] Strootman 2022a, 191.

produce a "new Alexander" on several dimensions for his contemporary audience and for his own narrative purposes.[41] At this point, it is worthwhile to make a few remarks.

First, Alexander's image in Arrian is largely apologetic, but not monolithic. As a Bithynian who takes part in the world built by Rome, he saw Alexander as the founder of the civilisation he inhabits. The Macedonian king who overthrew the Persian Empire, defeated barbarism and allowed Rome to continue the order and cultural balance he now enjoys. The realisation of this feat produced in Arrian a sense of pride, as well as a positive disposition towards Alexander's *pothos*.[42] Nevertheless, from a certain point onwards, Arrian depicts a gradual corruption in Alexander, which is particularly noticeable in the last books (conquest of India). A process that has been seen as a mirror of the gradual corruption of the Roman emperors, belittling Arrian's sincere thought on the matter or his representation on some historiographical interests of the time: the inevitable fall of any empire and the relationship between humans and power.[43] Second, if it is true that *photos* was not a pure literary invention, it is also true that Arrian did not created the concept. Within the *photos*, the universal rulership that allows Alexander to conquer the borders of the world and its inhabitants stems from an ideology of power deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern discourse of power.[44] Likewise, since Alexander, the power ideology of *kosmokrátōr* (κοσμοκράτωρ-world conqueror) would have been transmitted to the Hellenistic world through the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires, having also impacted Rome.[45] Universal rulership thus becomes a historiographical and political *topos* devoid of any nuance. The distinction between universal sovereignty and the exercise of an expansive policy, or between the historiographic tradition of the world monarchies and the actual reality of the powers that assumed this status, was not taken into consideration.[46] In the case of Hamilcar Rhodanus, the influence of these cultural narratives can be seen.

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[41] Ceausescu 1974: 153–168; Welch / Mitchell 2013: 80–100; Burliga 2013, 39–79; Peltonen 2019, 115–122; Liotsakis 2019, 136–139.

[42] Bosworth 1980b, 15; Zecchini 1984, 201. Extensively: Burliga 2013, 104–128.

[43] Liotsakis 2018, 14–80; Leon 2021, 62–84.

[44] Alonso–Núñez, 2003, 175–182; Degen 2021, 239–287; Rollinger / Degen 2021a, 321–342; Rollinger / Degen 2021b, 187–224; Strootman 2022b, 189–207; Gómez Espelosín 2023, 251–257. Alonso–Núñez 2003, 175: "The *Chronicles* and *Omina* showed that as early as the second half of the third millennium, Sargon of Akkad considered himself a world monarch".

[45] Strootman 2014, 38–61; Strootman 2022, 381–400. Furthermore, following Degen 2021, 253: "the Achaemenid idea of universal rulership is the context for understanding the geographical fictions of Alexander", a topic widely studied by Gómez Espelosín 2023, 399–426. Likewise, Demetrius of Phaleron was the first author to include Macedonia in the line of succession to the world empire, shortly after Alexander's death: *FGrHist* 228 fr. 39.

[46] Alonso–Núñez 2003, 175–182; Baron 2018, 259–268.

To Justin, Alexander was sincere in his desire to conquer the whole world. Orosius accounts also favours this narrative.[47] Consequently, the ambition of Alexander is constantly referred to in the story of Hamilcar Rhodanus as a justification for the fear of the Carthaginians. As shown above, the terror Alexander invokes in the Carthaginians at the time of 332 BC is questionable. And this terror is to be questioned even after 331-330 BC.[48] Moreover, the Achaemenid discourse of power affected Alexander years after the dispatch of Hamilcar Rhodanus. In this regard, it could be accepted that the Carthaginians sent Hamilcar as a political measure to be informed of Alexander's actions.[49] After all, Carthage was a neighbour of Alexander's empire. However, the available accounts combine anachronism and convenience about two well-established realities in the Roman world: Alexander *photos* and the Roman cultural image of the Carthaginians. Thus, it should be said that the straightforward account provided by the sources on Hamilcar Rhodanus has more to do with the lack of knowledge (or deliberate misrepresentation) of Carthaginian politics and traditions in ancient Greek and Roman sources than with historical accuracy.[50]

Conclusion

The analysis of this paper allows to draw a number of conclusions. The account given by Frontinus, Justin and Orosius is apocryphal. A story built around two *topoi* widely spread in the Roman world: the universal kingship within Alexander's *photos* and the cultural representation of the Carthaginians. The most detailed narrative, and therefore the place where these topics can be best observed, is in the work of Justin. But these topics played the same role in the writings of Frontinus and Orosius. Likewise, current ideas about Justin might be defended by the lack of subtlety in the construction of Hamilcar Rhodanus narrative[51]. To conclude, the assumption that there was a Carthaginian spy in Alexander's ranks is both risky and possible. The idea, however, is likely due to the fact that the Carthaginian and Alexander territories were neighbouring after 332 BC. A point that may have been reflected in the Carthaginian

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[47] Just. *Epit*. 11.11.10: *uictoriam omnium bellorum possessionemque terrarum dari respondetur* / he was being promised victory in all his wars and possessions of the whole world. Also: Just. *Epit*. 21.6. Oros. 4.6.21: *timentes transitum eius in Africam futurum* / fearing that he (Alexander) would later try to reach Africa.

[48] See notes 3–5.

[49] San José 2021, 213–225.

[50] I paraphrase here Howe / Müller 2012, 38. Also: Miles 2010, 141; Rosselló Calafell 2022, 188.

[51] Stewart 1993, 17: "Trogus/Justin's Alexander is as subtle as a stickman"; Bartlett 2014, 280: "He did not share Trogus' concerns and philosophy, he did not bother himself with the succession of empires or the practice of ethnography, nor did he care about historical accuracy and chronological precision"; Gómez Espelosín 2015, 99: "a pesar de las pretensons que (Justino) pone de manifiesto, no contaba con un talento especialmente destacado".

embassy of 323 BC. However, if this event ever did occur, then all information has been lost in the course of history.

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