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Alexandria: the new Center¹

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ABSTRACT: The poets Posidippus of Pella and Callimachus of Cyrene, writing under Ptolemy II, actively construct a new Mediterranean geography in which people and luxury goods, even divinities, move from the Northern and Eastern Mediterranean to the new city of Alexandria. The building of the Alexandrian library provides a more concrete demonstration of that same trend, as the Ptolemies under the influence of both Greek thinkers like Demetrius of Phaleron and of Egyptian cultural practices like the great temple libraries strive to move the center of Greek learning from Athens to Alexandria. This paper explores the ways in which Posidippus and Callimachus shift Greek culture south.

KEY-WORDS: Alexandria, center, Posidippus, Callimachus, chariot-racing

In 332 BCE, Alexander the Great began his onslaught against the Persian empire by taking control of Egypt. During his several months in Egypt, he worshipped the sacred bull in Memphis, was proclaimed the son of Amun by the priests of Amun at the Siwah oasis, and founded the city named after him—Alexandria. When he died in

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Magda el-Nowieemy and to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina for their generous invitation to deliver this lecture in November 2016.

323 BCE his Successors engaged in a power struggle that resulted in the division of the vast territory that he had conquered. It was the Macedonian, Ptolemy, son of Lagus, and later called Soter, who ultimately gained control of Egypt. Ptolemy began his rule in Memphis, Egypt's oldest and most sacred city, and only when he had consolidated power with the Egyptian elites did he move his base of operations to the Mediterranean coast: to Alexandria. This event took place between fifteen and twenty years after Alexander officially founded the city. However, unlike an Athens or a Seleucid Babylon, Alexandria was a new city—literally a new city—undergoing rapid growth and new construction. Before Alexander's arrival, its location on the northern Egyptian coastline comprised what was probably an Egyptian military outpost—a space that had few if any cultural connections to ancient Greek cities, although it must have had a significant Egyptian population.² Alexander recognized that population by dedicating a temple to the Egyptian goddess, Isis, soon after he founded the city.³ And his deference to Egyptian cults like the Apis bull established a pattern for imperial actions that the Ptolemies themselves adhered to—ruling as both as Greek kings and as Egyptian pharaohs. While this hybrid style accommodated the Egyptian population, it also meant that the new Graeco-Macedonian rulers needed strategies to link this new and different kind of city with the old Greek culture of their immigrating subjects. These would have been a minority and from many regions of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean.

Accordingly, the Ptolemies invested enormous resources in cultural remapping, namely, the positioning the new city not at the edge of the Greek world but as its new (and inevitable) center. And all three of the city's earliest poets—Theocritus of Syracuse, Posidippus of Pella, and Callimachus of Cyrene—engage in this imperial re-centering project. Yet in writing about the world in which they found themselves, Alexandria's distinct lack of a Greek past posed unique challenges for them: the familiar means by which poets had praised Greek cities was to invoke colonizing ancestors, or tell stirring tales of formative events from the city's past. (For example, the Athenians always talked of defeating the Persians at Marathon and later at Salamis.) But such stories were not options for Alexandria; the local Egyptian

² For the establishment and growth of Alexandria see W. Scheidel, "Creating a Metropolis: A Comparative Demographic Perspective" in W. Harris and G. Ruffini, eds., *Ancient Alexandria between Egypt and Greece* (Leiden, 2004) 1-31.

³ Arrian 3.1.5.

landscape has no Greek heroes associated with it. Alexandria had no mother city from which to boast of transplanted citizens or from which religious cults could be imported. Moreover, previous Greek writing about this north African shoreline was restricted to mythological figures like Proteus, the old man in the sea, who according to Homer's *Odyssey* lived with his herd of seals on the island of the Pharos.⁴ Not a very promising model for new kings. In this evolving environment the poets who wrote about the city needed to insert their subjects into the past and into the greater Greek world in a way that embraced and resonated with the city's diverse Greek-speaking populations, but also aligned Greece with Egypt. Thus the poets necessarily experimented with various articulations of power—some familiar, some new—as they attempted to fashion images of and for this new place. The fundamental poetic gesture that I want to emphasize in this paper—found in all of the earliest poets, as well as with the crown itself—was to portray peoples and cultural objects familiar from old Greece or from Alexander's conquests *moving* into Alexandria, displacing them from their old Greek world and re-placing them in what was now imagined as a new Mediterranean center—Alexandria.

The most significant and far reaching event that epitomized this new way of thinking about place, of course, was the establishment of the Alexandrian library. Built on the model of Egyptian temple libraries⁵ under the first Ptolemies, its initial object was to gather copies of previous Greek literature into one place and thus serve as a focus of Greek pride and identity for the new immigrants. But it was also an act of cultural imperialism. There are stories of merchant ships that entered the Alexandrian harbor being searched for rolls of literature. These were quickly appropriated for the library. But the most famous story is recorded by Galen.⁶ It claims that Ptolemy pledged fifteen talents of gold to Athens to borrow Athens' official state copies of its tragic productions (the plays of, among others, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides), but, when these originals had been sent to Alexandria, Ptolemy kept them for his new library and forfeited the money. Whether or not this story is true, its symbolic value cannot be underestimated: it would have been much

⁴ Homer, *Odyssey* 4. 430ff.

⁵ F. Haikal, "Private Collections and Temple Libraries in Ancient Egypt", in M. el-Abbadi and O. Fathallah, eds., *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?* (Leiden, 2008) 39-55.

⁶ See Galen's commentary on Hippocrates' Epidemics in Karl Gottlob Kühn, ed., *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, 20 vols. (1821–33; reprinted Hildesheim, 1964–5), 17A. 606-7.

cheaper to have had the plays copied in Athens and the copies simply brought to Alexandria. But keeping the originals marked the physical passing of the most distinguished literary production of the Athenian state—its tragedies—to Egypt. This symbolic act coincided with the waning of Greece’s power and the rising influence of Alexandria.

The earliest references to Alexandria in the poets take up this theme of movement, by stressing the city’s wealth and its many opportunities for those who choose to immigrate: at the beginning of Herodas’ first mime, an old lady explains to a young woman why her lover will not return to her from Egypt:

All that exists and is produced in the world exists in Egypt: wealth, wrestling grounds, power, peace, renown, shows, philosophers, money, young men, the domain of the Sibling Gods—the king is a good man—the Museum, wine, all good things one might want... (Herodas, Mime 1.26-31).

Herodas was writing around the 270s-60s before the common era, and probably not in Alexandria but on one of the Greek islands like Cos. His list testifies to the rapid creation of a distinctive city infrastructure, and its enormous resources. We learn of the Museum with its attendant philosophers, gymnasia that served as a marker of ethnic identity for Greek men, and already the unique feature of Ptolemaic ruler cult—that of the Sibling Gods established in 270 BCE.

Characters in Theocritus’ 14th idyll (lines 58-60), written probably about the same time, talk in similar terms—Egypt is a land of opportunity and the Ptolemy is a generous paymaster: “As a king he is the very best: kind, cultured, gallant, pleasant to a fault...generous to many...” It is not surprising that the first Alexandrian poets emphasized prosperity as the mark of a good king. It was an idea that was as old as the Greek poets Homer and Hesiod, and given Egypt’s abundant natural resources and agricultural productivity, in combination with the local Ptolemaic practice of bestowing veterans with plots of land, it was recognizably accurate as well. In fact, all of our earliest poetic statements about the Ptolemies dwell on this dimension of their kingship as an incentive for Greek speaking peoples to immigrate to the new place.

Posidippus of Pella

Wealth is also a feature of the recently discovered papyrus roll by Posidippus of Pella. The papyrus, which was first published in 2001, surprised scholars by the extent to which images of Ptolemaic kingship were interwoven with artistic experiment and cultural movement. From the very beginning of the roll Posidippus stages the movement of valuable objects, of people, and of political power towards Alexandria. This schematic of the sections of the text convey a sense of the dynamic interplay of Greece and Alexandria .

Lithika (stones): movement from the Indian river Hydaspes to Alexandria.

Oionoskopika (omens) : movement from Pella in Macedon to Alexandria. The section ends with a favorable omen for Alexander.

Anathematika (dedications): movement of the diadem and Arion's lyre to Alexandria.

Andriantopoiika (statuary): great sculptors of Greek past are contrasted with new realistic style of a statue of Philius of Cos (the tutor of Ptolemy II) erected in Alexandria.

Hippika (horse and chariot-racing victories): Berenice I bests Cyniska of Sparta.

Iamatika (healing cures): Medeios, a well known Alexandrian doctor, found a cure for the bite of the Libyan asp.

But, at an even more basic level, the roll itself embodies the movement from Macedon to incorporation within not just a new place, but a place that blended Greek and Egyptian ways of life. In his autobiographical epigram Posidippus emphasizes his Macedonian heritage:

May you send forth and sound out from your hold shrine
 Such an immortal voice, O Lord, for me,
 So that the Macedonians may honor me, both those [on the Nile]
 And those on the Asiatic shores.
 I am Pellaean by race. (118. 13-17 A-B)⁷

⁷ All poems are cited from C. Austin and G. Bastianini, eds., *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia* (Milan, 2002). Recent work on the texts, translations, and bibliography may be found at the Center for Hellenic Studies website devoted to Posidippus.

However, the papyrus text we have was professionally copied somewhere in Egypt toward the end of the third century before the common era, and within a generation of Posidippus' lifetime. It was in use for at least fifty years before it was sent to a recycler and became part of a mummy's wrapping.

To understand the physical condition of the roll some background is necessary. There seems to have been a large scale increase in papyrus documentation required by the new administration, so many Egyptian mummifiers turned from their previous practice of using linen to using discarded papyrus to make sturdy coverings for the dead. They essentially cut up these recycled papyrus rolls, covered them with plaster, then molded them to create a kind of papier maché that we now refer to as cartonnage. The Posidippus papyrus was among many used to make a mask and chest covering for the dead that could be painted and ornamented. Unfortunately for this purpose the roll was not kept intact for this process but cut to shape, since the mask itself consisted of multiple layers glued with the plaster. When the covering was ready incisions were made to insert lapis lazuli and other ornamental stones, ironically many of the same types of stones that the poet mentions in his epigrams. Several documentary papyri were also part of the mask. From the documents it is clear that the mummy cartonnage itself was from the Fayum (where a number of other such discoveries have been made). Posidippus then owes his preservation and survival to an Egyptian practice and to a now anonymous Egyptian. This is both fitting because the movement to Egypt was not simply a re-creation of Greek culture in a new location but the creation of a city that itself blended Greek and Egyptian characteristics and behaviors—as obviously Alexander had done at the time of the city's founding.

The surviving roll now contained 16 columns of text and 606 lines. There are 112 individual short poems (epigrams) ranging in size from 2 lines to 14, and grouped under headings that announced the topic of the individual sections. The sections respectively commemorate: stones; omens; dedications; funerary epigrams; statuary; victories in horse and chariot racing; shipwrecks; healing; and character types. Each section is carefully organized and balanced between epigrams on men and on women; on kings and on commoners; the valuable and the mundane; the living and the dead. In its sweep it gives us a continuing sense of the movement toward the new city, the

range of peoples who would live there, and the lives they might have lived. In what follows I focus mainly on movement toward the new city.

The roll opened with an epigram set at the furthest reaches of Alexander's expedition in the East, the Indian river, Hydaspes, where Alexander's battle against Porus took place; subsequent epigrams in the opening section trace a movement through Persia, Arabia, Syria, and Palestine as the objects they celebrate draw the reader ever closer until we arrive at the Alexandrian coastline. Over the course of twenty epigrams, we also move from the past (of Alexander's conquests) into the present of the Ptolemies. And the size of the objects increases: the first epigram celebrates small, engraved jewel and the last in the section features a large boulder. The effect of this growth in size is a gathering of momentum as if arrival in Egypt was preordained and inevitable. This movement culminates with a prayer for the wellbeing of the lands of the Ptolemies. Along with this momentum many of the objects within these epigrams are of great value: precious stones convey the luxury of empire (a ruby, lapis lazuli, carnelian, pearl nacre, rock crystal); curiosities like magnets reflect the interests of scientists; and carved objects used in administration (like the seal ring of Polycrates, or a Nabatean cylinder seal) indicate the flow of wealth and power into the land of the Ptolemies.

The next section on omens begins with a different movement to Egypt, not from the edges of Alexander's empire, but from Macedon. This epigram recalls the flight of Thracian cranes from Macedon to Egypt. The cranes migrate from August to October from northern Europe to winter in North Africa. They return from March to May. Sailors depended on the flight path of the cranes to navigate their own voyages. The cranes, flying high above ships in a wedge formation, would vary their course if they sensed an approaching storm. This allowed the sailors below them to adjust the ship's course accordingly. Now Posidippus himself was a Macedonian, and what he describes is what he will have experienced on his sea voyage from Pella to Alexandria:

For us who are about to set course on the sea for Egypt, may the Thracian crane lead, flying above the forestays. A propitious sign for the pilot, the crane that saves us from great waves, glides serenely through the airy plain (22.3-6 A-B).

In the third section, ‘Dedications’, the poet is bolder; two of these epigrams state more obviously the shift both in artistic patronage and political power to the new rulers of Egypt that we found in the first section. To take the second first: although it is fragmentary, the meaning is clear:

Arsinoe, this lyre, which was made to sing by the poet’s hand,
a dolphin like Arion’s brought to you from the wave...
crossing the high sea...with the voice of a nightingale.
Accept this dedication, Brother-loving one (= Arsinoe II)...
as an offering of the temple-guardian. (37 A-B)

The ‘dolphin like Arion’s’ evokes the tale of the famous late seventh century BCE singer and lyre-player, Arion, a native of Lesbos, who, when captured by pirates and thrown into the sea, was saved by a dolphin. He came ashore in the land of Periander of Corinth, where he graced the ruler’s court with his lyre-playing (Hdt. 1.23-4). The migrating lyre acts as a symbol of a past world of Greek lyric that is now being renewed in Alexandria. The lyre, like Arion of old, is saved by a dolphin as it drifts through the eastern Mediterranean until it reaches Arsinoe II’s temple (either at Cape Zephyrium or her mortuary temple near the Emporion). There it is dedicated by the temple guardian. The importance of this epigram should not be underestimated. It confirms that support for the arts was from the earliest days part of the imperial agenda and the migrating lyre may also stand in for the migrating poets who came to the Ptolemaic court.

This next epigram is even more remarkable:

To you, Arsinoe, to provide a cool breeze through its folds,
is dedicated this linen strip of Naucratic linen.
With which, dear lady, in a dream you wished to wipe away the sweet sweat,

when you ceased from your toils.

You appeared in this way, Brother-loving one, with a spear point in your hand,
Lady, and a hollow shield on your arm.

When you requested this white band,
the Macedonian girl, Hegeso, dedicated it to you. (36 A-B)

This poem plays a riddling game. The white strip of cloth that is tied around the forehead is, in fact, what the royal diadem of Alexander looked like. And after Alexander's death this thin band or ribbon was worn by many of the Successors as a symbol of legitimacy or their right to rule. In this epigram it is telling that a Macedonian girl named Hegeso, which can be loosely translated as "you led," dreamed that Arsinoe wanted it. This certainly suggests, as does the opening section, that power as well as valuable objects (or the riches of conquest) and patronage of the arts are now moving to Egypt. Moreover the strip of cloth is made of Egyptian linen—unlike the objects that move from the periphery of Alexander's empire toward Egypt, this epigram seems to offer a symbol of power—a diadem—that is made from a local product—linen. And a product that represents an important economic industry. Finally, Arsinoe is imagined with a spear point and shield. These are the weapons carried by Neith, the Egyptian goddess of war, whom the Greeks had identified with Greek Athena. Neith's great temple was in nearby Saïs, and was supported with rich endowments from the Ptolemies, so it would have been familiar to Alexandrian readers of the epigrams. Here then we have a complex image of a Macedonian imagining a Ptolemaic queen with the accoutrements of an Egyptian goddess, and asking for Alexander's symbol of dynastic power.

Callimachus of Cyrene

This same marking of movement towards Egypt is discernible in another early Alexandrian poet, Callimachus of Cyrene. In his hymns he shows us, not material goods, but gods and monarchs moving from other parts of the Greek Mediterranean to Alexandria, where wealth abounds. In his earliest hymn, probably written about 284 BCE, he narrates how Zeus was born in Arcadia in Greece, then as an infant the god carried to Crete, where he was raised, and finally after the god had come to adulthood,

Callimachus links Zeus with the new city. His narrative carries his audience south—from Arcadia, to Crete, then to Alexandria—where Zeus presides over the best part of power, or kings. Callimachus states this in Greek terms by a direct quotation from Hesiod’s *Theogony*: “kings are from Zeus” (*Th.* 96). But he qualifies this to say that Ptolemy is the best of all kings and more powerful than the rest, accomplishing at evening what he thought of in the morning:

You have bestowed flowing wealth upon them and prosperity in abundance,
To all but not all equally. This may be inferred from my king [Ptolemy].
He far surpasses the others. At evening he accomplishes what he conceived
of in the morning.

At evening the greatest matters, the lesser as soon as he conceives them.

(*Hymn to Zeus*, 84-88)

As a further gesture to the new place and to mark a new kind of kingship, in his wording: “at evening he accomplishes what he conceived of in the morning”, Callimachus actually uses a formula found in royal inscriptions used for pharaohs: “if you dream something in the night, by daybreak it is accomplished.”⁸

A parallel southern migration occurs in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos*. In this hymn Apollo’s mother, Leto, is pregnant and fleeing the wrath of Hera. As she flees throughout the Mediterranean, she wishes to give birth to Apollo on the island of Cos, but the as yet unborn divinity explains to his mother why she cannot give birth to him there:

You should not give birth to me here, Mother,
I do not blame nor begrudge the island,
seeing as it rich and thriving in flocks.
But another god is destined to it from the Fates,
the lofty blood of the Saviors. Under whose diadem will come,
not unwilling to be ruled by a Macedonian,
both lands (= The Two Lands) and the lands that dwell in the sea,
as far the ends of the earth and where swift horses carry the Sun. (162-70)

⁸ S. Stephens, *Seeing Double: Intertextual Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkeley, 2003) 112.

The new god that Apollo refers to is Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who was born on Cos in 308. Cos, like Crete, is a space halfway between the northern homeland of both Alexander and the first Ptolemy, and Egyptian Alexandria. Just as Zeus moves from his mainland birthplace to an island rearing to become the patron of kings like Ptolemy, so we are shown the Ptolemies themselves moving away from old Macedon, to Cos, where Ptolemy II was reared, to the world that Ptolemy now rules. His realm is called *amphoterê mesogaia*—or “both lands.” This refers to the two continents of Europe and Libya. But as a number of scholars have pointed out, *amphoterê mesogaia* does double duty. It also translates the important and familiar designation of Egypt as the “Two Lands”, referring, of course, to Upper and Lower Egypt. Thus we see that Posidippus and Callimachus construct poetic scenarios of movement into Alexandria, but Callimachus not only moves kings and gods south, in addition he “Egyptianizes” them by employing overt references to native terms and royal ideology employed by the pharaohs.

Praising Athletic Victories

There is another way in which Posidippus and Callimachus emphasize the new center. They turn to the traditional venues in which Greek kings enhanced their status among fellow Greeks—through horse and chariot racing at the Panhellenic crown games. Four locations—most famously Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and Isthmia—housed bi- or quadrennial athletic competitions that were open to all Greeks, hence they were called ‘pan-Hellenic.’ They were also referred to as ‘crown’ games because the only prize awarded was a crown made from olive, laurel, or celery leaves. The Greek Archaic poet Pindar had much earlier celebrated victories of the powerful kings of Sicily and Cyrene, and in their turn the poets of early Alexandria celebrated the Ptolemies for their victories at these same games. And by means of these poems the poets provided an opportunity to elevate the Ptolemies above their peers and to construct useful genealogies that not only linked the king and his family to a Macedonian and Greek heritage but to their new location in Egypt. Also, Chariot racing had the further

advantage of linking the Ptolemies with previous Egyptian pharaohs, many of whom, like Ramesses III, both raced chariots and had extensive stables for breeding horses.⁹

Let me begin by returning to Posidippus' new epigrams: among them is an entire section of eighteen poems dedicated to victories in horse- and chariot- racing. At least five of these celebrate victories not just of the male Ptolemies but also victories of their queens and daughters. The extent of Ptolemaic engagement in these exhibitions of wealth and power can be seen in epigram 78 A-B, spoken by Ptolemy III's sister, Berenice Syra, on the occasion of her victory at Olympia. It begins by reciting a long line of Ptolemies who won pan-Hellenic competitions: they include her grandfather (Ptolemy I) and grandmother (Berenice I), her father (Ptolemy II), and Arsinoe II. About Arsinoe we learn that she won in a single year all three victories for harnessed races—the four-horse chariot (*tethrippon teleion*), the two-horse chariot (*sunoris*), and the four-horse chariot race for foals (*tethrippon polikon*). This deceptively simple epigram inserts the whole family into an exclusive club of horse-racing monarchs from the Greek past, such as the Spartan kings of the early fourth century or Philip II of Macedon, who had monuments erected to commemorate their victories at Olympia. Philip even had a small temple built that housed statues of himself with his parents, his wife Olympias, and his son Alexander. Posidippus' epigrams construct parallel literary monuments for the victorious Ptolemies, but they may also reflect historical reality. According to Pausanias' description of Olympia (6.15.20) Ptolemy I also had a statue group of himself with his sons erected there.

In another epigram Posidippus singles out Berenice I's chariot victory with foals, claiming that she now triumphs over the fourth century Spartan Cynisca. This very pointedly puts the Ptolemies on top. Cynisca was the daughter of the fourth century Spartan king Archidamus II. He and his family had won numerous chariot victories at pan-Hellenic games, especially at Olympia. In fact they dominated the horse-racing world in their day. Even in this family Cynisca apparently stood out as a breeder of horses; she entered her own teams to win chariot victories at Olympia in 396 and in 392 BCE (Pausanias 3.8.1, 3.15.1). She had Olympic monuments erected to celebrate

⁹ W. Decker, *Pharao und Sport* (Mainz am Rhein, 2006) 29-41.

her victory, claiming that she was the first woman throughout Greece to win such a great distinction. One monument bore this inscription on its base:

Kings of Sparta were my fathers and brothers; when I, Cynisca, had won with my chariot of swift-footed horses I put up this monument. I say that I alone out of all of the women of Hellas have won this crown.

Posidippus' epigram directly responds to Cynisca's monument: it is spoken by Berenice's victorious team of young horses, who exclaim:

When we were still foals we won Berenice's Olympic crown,
which has a much praised reputation;
with it we eclipsed the ancient *glory* of Cynisca in Sparta (87.2-4 A-B).

The speaking horses imply that Berenice, like Cynisca, had a victory monument that would have included a chariot team. While this is certainly possible, because the Ptolemy's had more than one monument erected at Olympia, more likely the epigram itself is intended as the monument, and as readers we are to understand that Cynisca's monument could only be read by those who went to Olympia; while readers of Posidippus' poem would everywhere be impressed by Berenice's victory. But what kind of victory? Other women after Cynisca had won chariot races—Berenice's distinction seems to be that she was the first woman to do it with foals; because they were young horses, foals were much harder to train well, thus Berenice demonstrated an even greater skill in breeding and horsemanship than Cynisca had with horses who were fully grown.

Now the Ptolemies not only competed in races, like the other Successors they also established festivals that included athletic competitions and equestrian events in Alexandria. One of these was the *Ptolemaia* which Ptolemy II initiated around 278 for his late father. In his Horse-racing section Posidippus actually mentions this new game venue. We learn about a victor in the single horse race at Delphi that:

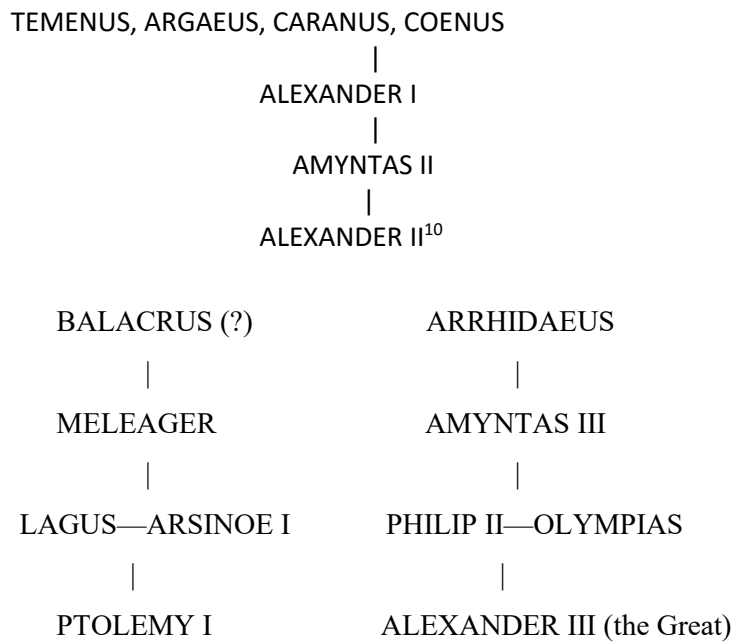
Stretched flat out, galloping on the edge of its hooves,
this famous horse bears away the prize for Etearchus.

Having won at the Ptolemaia and Isthmia and twice at Nemea,
he does not intend to overlook the Delphic crowns. (76 A-B)

What is interesting about the victory list as Posidippus records it—Ptolemaia, Isthmia, Nemea, Delphi—is the absence of Olympia. While it could merely reflect the historical accuracy of Eteachus' victories, it also seems to replace the most important of the pan-Hellenic venues with the new games held by Ptolemy in Alexandria. The games of the Ptolemaia not only enhanced the status of the monarchy, they help to promote the new city as first among other Greek cities.

Throughout his epigrams Posidippus forges a link between Ptolemy I and Alexander. And Posidippus insists that the Ptolemies are 'Macedonian', probably because he himself is from Macedon. Callimachus, who was from Cyrene, however, chooses to emphasize a different aspect of Ptolemaic ancestry. He too celebrated their interest in chariot racing with a victory ode clearly modeled on Pindar. And as is the case for most of Posidippus' *Hippika* it is for a victorious queen—now Berenice II, who won a victory with the four-horse chariot at Nemea (probably in 245). Originally over two hundred lines, it is now quite fragmentary, but enough remains to glimpse of how Callimachus employed Greek myths to link Berenice genealogically with both Greece and Egypt. Callimachus begins his poem by calling Argos the land of 'cow-born' Danaus, then proceeds with what looks to be a detailed treatment of Argive genealogy starting with Inachus:





The purpose of the genealogy would have been double: first, to bear witness to the Greek heritage of the Macedonian Ptolemies. Historically, Alexander's line based its claim to be Greek on descent from ancestors who came from Greek Argos. According to the historian Herodotus: when his competitors challenged Alexander I's right to compete at Olympia on the grounds that he was not Greek, he demonstrated his family's descent from ancestors who stretched back in a direct line to Danaus (5.22.2). Of course, the Ptolemies were not closely related to Alexander, though via an ancestor of Arsinoe, Ptolemy I's mother, they did claim descent from a cadet line of the Argive house. In Callimachus' epinician we find that claim bolstered: Danaus, Aegyptus, and Proetus, who was the grandfather of Perseus and ancestor of Heracles, are all named. But, Callimachus' genealogy performs another function: Danaus is described as 'cow-born', an allusion to the Greek story of Io, who after she has been turned into a cow, wanders to Egypt where, touched by Zeus, she gives birth to Epaphus, who is the direct ancestor of Danaus. From Egypt, Danaus then returns to Greece, where he becomes king of Argos. By rehearsing the mythological beginnings of Ptolemaic house Callimachus not only locates Berenice as the descendant of Argive Danaus, he reminds his readers that Danaus was also Egyptian and that

¹⁰ After Alexander II, the exact lines of descent are unclear.

Danaus' descendents are in some sense also Egyptian, thus ideal to rule over a city that includes both Greek and Egyptian residents.

Callimachus wrote one other victory poem (now also a fragment) for Sosibius, who was a native of Alexandria. Sosibius won victories at Nemea and Isthmia, and as a young man also at the Alexandrian Ptolemaia. In celebrating Sosibius' victories Callimachus moves away from more traditional Greek myths: rather he positions Sosibius firmly in North Africa. The poem begins with news of the victories being celebrated from Alexandria to the Kinyps. Kinyps was the Greek name for the river that bordered the western edge of the territory of Cyrene: so Callimachus provides us with a vivid image of residents across the whole of Libya and Egypt as they rejoice in news of Sosibius' victory. The poem continues with a speech by the Nile, who announces that although he is the mightiest of rivers, far greater than all others, in one particular he could not compete—no son of Egypt had ever won in Greek games. But now Sosibius has remedied this. The speech of the Nile is a clever way, again, of marking the overall superiority of the new place. If Posidippus emphasizes the Ptolemies' triumph over Spartan kings, Callimachus' victory poems emphasize the novelty and significance of the Egyptian location of the victors. It is Berenice as the decendent of Danaus (who was Egyptian according to Greek myth) and Sosibius as a son of the Nile whose victories he celebrates.

To conclude: what Posidippus and Callimachus are doing in their poetry is constructing the image of Alexandria for Greek readers. Initially they image it as a magnet that draws people, wealth, and power away from older Greek-speaking locations and then as a place that breeds kings and commoners who cannot only compete with, but triumph over citizens of other Greek cities. Both poets now proclaim Alexandria as the new center—not just as equal to but the superior of old Greece.

S.S