CHAPTER ONE

Approaching the Hellenistic World

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1 Alexander's Legacy

After his victory at Actium in 31 BC Augustus pursued his defeated rivals, Antony and Kleopatra, to Alexandria in Egypt. After capturing the city, he soon had the opportunity to view its sights. One of the few places he is known to have visited during his residence there is the tomb of Alexander the Great. Rome's future emperor is said to have reverently placed a golden crown on the embalmed body laid out in front of him and then scattered flowers on it. When asked if he would also like to see the tombs of Ptolemies, the Greco-Macedonian dynasty that had ruled over Egypt since the death of Alexander, he abruptly dismissed the suggestion, saying that 'he wanted to see a king, not some corpses'. So, at least, reports Suetonius in the early second century AD (Suet. *Aug.* 18, cf. Dio 51.16, Erskine 2002a).

This story in many ways captures the Hellenistic Age. It was the transforming power of Alexander that brought Alexandria into existence, a major Greek city which had grown up in the foreign land of Egypt, something which would have been unthinkable to a Greek of the fifth century BC. Here, as the dead Alexander lies before the new ruler of the world, the beginning and the end of the Hellenistic period meet, Alexander the Macedonian king who changed the East by his conquest of the Persian empire, Augustus the Roman who overthrew the last of the successor kingdoms with his occupation of Ptolemaic Egypt. The Ptolemies themselves are of no interest; they are simply written out of history, and with them go the centuries that intervened between Alexander and the coming of Rome. The Roman emperors wanted to look back to the almost mythical figure of Alexander; they saw themselves as heirs not to the kingdoms that developed out of Alexander's empire but as the heirs of Alexander himself.

Of course Augustus may never have uttered the disparaging comment attributed to him by Suetonius; such anecdotes tend to evolve with each telling. Nonetheless, the dismissive outlook evident in the story reflects a general and continuing neglect of the Greek world after Alexander. From antiquity onwards this has been seen as a period of decline, both political and cultural. The great figures of the Greek past were to be

found in earlier times, not in the years following Alexander. This way of thinking about the past was not limited to Romans; Greeks of the early empire would often by-pass their Hellenistic ancestors and look for inspiration to the Classical period. A complex attitude can already be detected during the reign of Augustus; Latin poets may have admired and emulated their Alexandrian predecessors but a critic such as Dionysios of Halikarnassos could see Alexander as marking a turning-point in literary culture and one for the worse (cf. Gelzer 1979). This has had important consequences for the study of the Hellenistic world. Whereas Classical literature was valued and preserved, its post-Alexander counterpart has survived only very poorly.

This neglect was to continue until the nineteenth century when Johann-Gustav Droysen virtually invented the Hellenistic period in a series of studies devoted to Alexander and his successors. For him Alexander's conquests led to a fusion of Greek and Oriental culture that eventually gave Christianity the opportunity to flourish. Since the publication of Droysen's work the discovery of new inscriptions and papyri has provided historians with an ever-increasing wealth of evidence to exploit, allowing a far more subtle and nuanced picture to emerge.

Nonetheless, in spite of the work of some great scholars the Hellenistic world has never received the same degree of attention as its Classical predecessor. The dominance of Classics as an academic discipline among the elite of more modern times has kept the ancient world alive but it has also tended to exclude those areas that have less to contribute to Classics as traditionally understood. It is therefore the periods that produce the literary canon that are most studied: Classical Greece (Herodotos, Thucydides, tragedy), Republican Rome (Cicero, Sallust), the Roman Empire (Horace, Vergil, Tacitus). To appreciate the Hellenistic world one must abandon the value system that sees the centuries after Alexander as some kind of epilogue to the achievement of Classical Greece. Increasing interest in Hellenistic literature, philosophy and art in their own right suggests that this is changing, perhaps in part as a result of the recent decline of traditional Classics, but also because academics, however categorized, are asking different questions about both present and past.

On the simplest level the Hellenistic period is defined and bounded by political events. Alexander's conquest of the sprawling Persian empire marks the beginning, but his premature death in 323 BC was followed by the fragmentation of his possessions as leading figures in the Macedonian military struggled for control. Out of these conflicts emerged three main dynasties: the Antigonids in the Macedonian homeland; the Seleukids in Asia; and the Ptolemies in Egypt, supplemented in the later third century by the Attalids in Asia Minor. The period traditionally ends with the fall of the Ptolemaic kingdom to Rome after Actium, the culmination of two centuries of Roman success in the East. All historical periods are in some sense the arbitrary constructs of historians. If political events are the criteria, then establishing the end of the Hellenistic period is problematic. Alexander may have created a dramatic and decisive beginning but the end is not so neat; the extension of Roman power occurred gradually, affecting different areas at different times. The disappearance of the last of the successor kingdoms is a convenient terminal point rather than one of profound significance. The present volume takes the narrative of events through to the death of Augustus, in order to allow some consideration of Augustus' role in the creation of a Roman East.

As Droysen saw, however, the Hellenistic period is as much a cultural phenomenon as a political one. It may have its origins in a political event – the demise of the Persian empire – but that event was to have enormous repercussions beyond politics, repercussions that would not recognize Actium as a boundary. When the Greco-Macedonian elite took power throughout much of the east, they not only replaced the old order, they also brought their own way of life. Greek cities were founded and developed – centres of Greek culture and language in an alien environment, cities such as Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch on the Orontes, Seleukeia on the Tigris, or in the far east the Greek settlements in Baktria, now in modern Afghanistan. A sign of the cultural change that had taken place was the location of the world's largest collection of Greek books; this library was to be found not in Athens nor in one of the old Greek cities but in Egypt. Change, of course, is always easier to notice than continuity and it is important not to overlook the latter. To understand the Hellenistic world it is essential to grasp both.

Greek communities and culture settled among non-Greek populations. It is the resulting cultural interaction that offers one of the more fascinating areas of study. Its extent and nature have been the subject of considerable debate: in which direction did influence go? Or did Greeks and non-Greeks remain largely separate? What did it mean anyway to be Greek? What was the relationship between immigrant and native, between town and country? To what extent did non-Greeks, such as Iranians or Egyptians, participate in the royal administration and up to what level? The answers and approaches to such questions may change from region to region. The area conquered by Alexander was vast and varied; its very diversity acts as a warning against too uniform a response, a point increasingly stressed in modern scholarship. Greek culture may have been new to Baktria but there had long been coexistence and interaction in Asia Minor between Greeks and Karians, Greeks and Lykians, and so on. And the Greeks of Asia Minor were in any case very different from those of say Athens or Sparta. Other areas may rarely have seen a Greek.

The present volume begins with a section of narrative before adopting a thematic approach. Some chapters are concerned with subjects that have long interested students of Hellenistic history, others are less familiar. Topics may vary – dynasties, religion, the *polis* (city-state), local tradition, geography – but underlying themes recur – regionalism and diversity, cultural interaction, ethnicity, change and continuity. Old certainties have disappeared; it used, for instance, to be commonplace to lament the death of the *polis*, crushed by the rise of the kings, but now there is an increasing tendency to stress the vitality of civic life.

It is the legacy of Alexander, both political and cultural, that gives the Hellenistic period its sense of unity and coherence. This may lead to an over-emphasis on the Greek at the expense of what is more regional. Alternative perspectives are possible. The Seleukids when considered as part of the history of Iran may look rather different from the dynasty presented as part of Greco-Macedonian history. From the perspective of a student of Greek history Alexander can be viewed as the founder of the Hellenistic world, but a historian of the Persian or Achaimenid empire might reasonably hold him to be 'the last of the Achaimenids' (Briant 1996: 896). Thus our ideas of change and continuity are themselves dependent on emphasis and perspective.

2 Reviewing the Evidence

The Classical period offers the historian a series of dominating texts – Herodotos, Thucydides, Xenophon – which shape the way we think about the period and establish a framework for further investigation. The Hellenistic world, on the other hand, has none of this, a circumstance that is at once both frustrating and liberating. There are no contemporary narrative histories until Polybios' account of the rise of Rome appears in the mid-second century BC and even here, disappointingly, much of his text is now lost. Nor can too much enlightenment be sought among later historians whose coverage of the Hellenistic period is sketchy at best.

There has always been a tendency for scholars investigating the ancient world to prioritize histories but the study of ancient history has changed over time. Its goal is not simply (if it ever was) to produce a political narrative; issues, such as economic activity, gender, ethnicity and cultural change, are at the forefront of current historical investigations; yet the emphasis on the importance of historical texts remains. There is often a sense, not shared by historians of more modern periods, that history is merely a commentary on these ancient texts.

The historian of the Hellenistic period might regret the lack of such texts and the resulting haziness in narrative and chronology, but there is much by way of compensation. In particular there is no shortage of alternative source material: large quantities of papyri unearthed in Egypt, the inscriptions that were so much part of Greek civic life, coins minted by cities and kings, continuing archaeological discoveries, both through excavation and survey. This body of evidence is growing all the time. A satisfactory narrative may be elusive but the variety and richness of the source material available gives the historian the chance to confront other questions and issues. Thus, for example, although individual wars, such as the Second Syrian War or the Chremonidean War, may be badly documented, much can said about the phenomenon of warfare itself.

The challenge lies in combining all this evidence, material that often pulls in different directions. Papyri tell of administration and life in rural Egypt, inscriptions reveal something of the values and society of Greek cities, literary texts focus on personalities and kings. What survives is a partial and in some ways rather fragmented picture, oriented towards the Greek elite. The non-Greek inhabitants of this world are not, however, completely without a voice, although it still tends to be the elite who speak, sometimes in Greek, sometimes in native languages. Texts appear on various materials and in various scripts; there is Egyptian in hieroglyphs and demotic, Akkadian on cuneiform tablets from Babylonia, Hebrew from Judaea. These can offer a different perspective, although they are not so plentiful as we might want nor are they so familiar to classically-trained historians. The rest of this chapter will offer a survey of the written evidence available, beginning with the Greco-Roman literary tradition, before turning to inscriptions and papyri, and finally to non-Greek voices from the Hellenistic world. The handling of the evidence of archaeology and art is treated elsewhere in this volume (Alcock et al.; Stewart).

3 Literature

The lack of contemporary histories means that students of the Hellenistic world must often turn to later writers, who may have lived centuries after the events they are describing. Even here the focus is much greater on some periods than others; Alexander's reign and the wars with Rome attract the most attention.

The only Hellenistic history to survive in any quantity is the study of Rome's rise to power written by Polybios in the second century BC. Polybios was a member of a distinguished family from Megalopolis in the Peloponnese; he had been a high-ranking official in the Achaian League, one of the more powerful confederacies in Greece, but after the Roman victory over the Macedonian king Perseus in 168 his political career came to an abrupt end. The following year he was among a thousand Achaians deported to Italy where he was compelled to remain until 150. He used this enforced leisure in Rome to begin his history, an ambitious work of high quality in forty books which took the whole Mediterranean as its subject. After two introductory books the history proper commences with the 140th Olympiad (220–216 BC), the date at which he believed the history of Italy and Libya merged with that of Greece and Asia (1.3). He sought to explain to his fellow Greeks 'how and by what sort of government in less than 53 years the Romans came to conquer and rule almost the whole inhabited world' (1.1.5). These 53 years ended with the fall of the Macedonian kingdom in 168/7, but he later decided to extend his history so that it covered not only Rome's acquisition of power (bks 3–29) but also the years that followed, up to 145/44 (bks 30–39). As a contemporary observer he offers a rare insight into Roman expansion and the Greek reaction to it, but his work is not exclusively concentrated on Rome; there is, for instance, an important account of the history of the Achaian League, much about the early years of Antiochos III, a vivid picture of disturbances in Alexandria. Only the first five books are intact, the remainder surviving in 'fragments', albeit some quite substantial. These are largely the work of Byzantine excerptors, although numerous citations can also be found in Strabo, Athenaeus and Plutarch. Some idea of what is missing can be obtained from the Latin historian Livy, who used Polybios extensively as his source for events in the east in books 31–45 of his history of Rome, although his work too is incomplete, ending in 167 BC.

Other historians from the Hellenistic period are for the most part only known through the work of their successors. Lost are the early writers on Alexander, such as Aristoboulos of Kassandreia (*FGrH* 139), Kallisthenes of Olynthos (*FGrH* 124), Kleitarchos (*FGrH* 137) and Ptolemy I of Egypt (*FGrH* 138); so too are the major third-century figures, Douris of Samos, Hieronymos of Kardia, Phylarchos, and Timaios of Tauromenion. Douris' writings included a history of Macedonia from 370 through to the time of the battle of Koroupedion in 281, a history of Samos of which he was tyrant, and a rather sensational biography of fellow tyrant Agathokles of Sicily (*FGrH* 76). Hieronymos' history, spanning the years from the death of Alexander in 323 to the death of Pyrrhos in 272, is probably the most serious loss from this

period. He was closely involved in the struggles of the successors, in the service first of his compatriot Eumenes and afterwards of the early Antigonids, and was consequently well-informed if slightly partial. Much used by later writers such as Diodoros and Plutarch, his work appears to have been of an especially high standard (*FGrH* 154). Phylarchos covered the central section of the third century, moving from the death of Pyrrhos to the death of the Spartan king Kleomenes in 220/19. His sympathetic portrait of the revolutionary Kleomenes, which features prominently in Plutarch's *Lives of Agis and Kleomenes*, provoked the Achaian Polybios to subject Phylarchos to a savage critique (*FGrH* 81; Polyb. 2.56–63). The Sicilian historian Timaios was another victim of Polybian polemic; he is criticized for spending too much time with books, not seeing cities and places for himself, and lacking political and military experience, charges that reveal much about Polybios' own conception of history. Timaios was, nonetheless, a very influential historian who wrote extensively on the western Greeks during some fifty years spent as an exile in Athens (*FGrH* 566; Polyb. 12). The most important lost work from the later Hellenistic period is probably the continuation of Polybios written by the Stoic polymath Poseidonios from Apameia in Syria. One of the leading intellectuals of the first century BC and close to members of the Roman elite, he wrote a history in 52 books covering the years from 146 to the 80s BC.

These lost writers form the basis of the accounts that survive; sometimes they are cited by name, at other times material is unattributed, leaving modern historians to speculate on a likely source. Named citations are rather misleadingly referred to as 'fragments', a term that suggests that they are verbatim quotations that have somehow become displaced from their original text. Occasionally this may indeed be the case, for instance if the text has been preserved on papyrus, or is among the extracts from historians collected for the Byzantine emperor, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. More often these citations are abridgements or re-wordings of what was written and may even have been reproduced from memory. Some abridgements can be substantial, notably the so-called *Bibliotheca*, or 'Library', of Photios, a ninth century AD scholar who wrote numerous summaries of books he had read. These included works now completely lost, such as *On the Red Sea* by Agatharchides of Knidos (*FGrH* 86) or the history of his home-town written by Memnon of Herakleia Pontike (*FGrH* 434). The modern historian needs to be wary of placing too much faith in the evidence of such 'fragments'; far from offering an authentic glimpse at a lost text, the process of selection, re-wording, and abridgement may have done much to distort the original work (cf. Brunt 1980).

Alexander's career is well documented in later writers; Arrian and Q. Curtius Rufus both wrote histories of his reign, Diodoros of Sicily devoted book 17 of his world-history to the Macedonian king, and Plutarch included a life of Alexander among his *Parallel Lives*. The most authoritative treatment was written in the second century AD by Arrian, a distinguished Greek author from Nikomedia in Bithynia, whose friendship with the emperor Hadrian brought him a consulship. His self-consciously stylish history was based primarily on the writings of Ptolemy I, who served as an officer with Alexander before establishing himself as king of Egypt, and of Aristoboulos, who also accompanied Alexander on campaign. Arrian concluded with the death of Alexander, but he also wrote ten lost books entitled *The Affairs after Alexander*, which covered the four years after the king's death; in addition to a summary by Photios some quite

lengthy fragments of this survive on papyrus and in medieval manuscripts (*FGrH* 156; Dreyer 1999b). Curtius' account in ten books, composed in the first or second century AD and extending as far as the immediate aftermath of Alexander's death, may be admirable as a moralizing work of rhetoric, but as history it is less satisfactory.

It is to the Augustan age that we owe the only extant narratives of the hundred years or so which followed Alexander's death, one in Greek by Diodoros, the other in Latin by Pompeius Trogus, although Trogus is known only through a later and not always reliable abridgement composed by a certain Justin. Both are universal histories, that is to say they take the history of the world as their subject, or rather the Greco-Roman world. Their composition at this time and the emphasis they place on the Hellenistic period may indicate a sense of closure, a realization that Rome now controlled the East and that the era of the great kingdoms was over. Diodoros' history, written in forty books between approximately 60 and 30 BC, began in the mythological past and extended until 60 BC. It thus included Pompey's victory over Mithradates and the subsequent reorganization of the East which resulted in the end of the Seleukid kingdom. The implications of this would not have escaped Diodoros who records Pompey's verdict on his own achievement: he 'brought the limits of Roman rule to the limits of the earth' (Diod. 40.4). Pompeius Trogus, a Gaul who wrote a history in 44 books some years after Diodoros, showed a similar awareness, but for him it is with Augustus that the whole world becomes Roman (Just. 44.8). At this point universal history turns into Roman history.

In books 18–20 Diodoros provides a valuable narrative of the turbulent years after the death of Alexander, years during which the king's successors (known as the Diadochoi) battled with each other for power and territory. For his material Diodoros is usually believed to have drawn heavily on Hieronymos of Kardia, a belief which has helped to give his account greater authority. Book 20, which ends in 302 with the prelude to the battle of Ipsos, is, however, the last book to survive complete, the remaining twenty known mainly through Photios and Byzantine excerpts. It is left, therefore, to Pompeius Trogus, as processed by Justin, to tell the narrative of the third century. Whether Justin was selecting the parts he liked, abridging Trogus, or doing both, is not clear; it is possible that Justin's text is as little as one tenth the length of Trogus' original text. Nevertheless, whatever Justin was doing, he has bequeathed a very unsatisfactory and often sketchy narrative to generations of frustrated historians, yet one that offers tantalizing sights of otherwise unknown events.

Once the Romans become involved in the East, our knowledge of the narrative becomes better, but its Romano-centric character means that the record can be silent when Rome has no one to fight there. In addition to Polybios and Livy, there is Appian, an Alexandrian Greek who in the second century AD wrote a history of Rome's conquest of the world. Rather than organizing his history on strictly chronological principles, he structured it around the peoples conquered by the Romans, an approach which served to emphasize the geographic and ethnographic extent of the Roman empire. Valuable where more reliable sources are lost, Appian is especially useful for events in the first century BC, in particular for Rome's wars with Mithradates.

The narrative and nature of the Hellenistic world can be further illuminated by others whose writings are not directly historical. Three stand out: Plutarch, Pausanias and Strabo. Plutarch, an extraordinarily prolific and wide-ranging writer from

Chaironeia in Boiotia, was active in the late first and early second century AD. In addition to numerous essays collected together now under the title, the *Moralia*, his output included a series of biographies, the *Parallel Lives*, in which illustrious Greeks are paired with Roman counterparts; his prime concern here is with the moral character of his subjects. He treats a number of leading Hellenistic figures, though significantly none of the major monarchs; there are no lives of such as Seleukos I, Ptolemy I, or Antiochos III. Instead we read of those who evince the spirit of Classical Greece, men who try to stand up for the *polis* against the great powers, the Athenian Phokion, the Achaians Aratos and Philopoimen, the revolutionary kings of Sparta, Agis and Kleomenes. Several *Lives* do feature those who operate outside the *polis* but they tend to be the unorthodox and atypical: Eumenes of Kardia, Greek secretary of Alexander turned warlord, Demetrios Poliorketes, the womanizing, heavy-drinking son of Antigonos the One-eyed, Pyrrhos, king of Epeiros and Alexander *manqué*. His Roman *Lives* include some who were commanders in wars in the East, notably, T. Quinctius Flamininus, L. Aemilius Paullus, Sulla and Pompey. Together all these lives with their characterization and anecdote add personality to our image of the Hellenistic age.

A very different type of text is the *Geography* of Strabo of Amaseia, a native of Pontos writing during the reign of Augustus. This seventeen-book opus takes as its subject not people or events but places, and thus encapsulates the known world at the conclusion of the Hellenistic period. It is as if Augustus has brought history to an end and all that is left is to describe the world Rome rules. As Strabo moves around the Mediterranean, he tells of the cities that populate it, their present and their past; Korakesion prompts a digression on Cilician piracy, Pergamon comes with a history of the Attalids, his own residence in Alexandria allows him to offer an eye-witness portrait of the late Hellenistic city, and everywhere local traditions are evoked, whether through stories or monuments. Local traditions feature prominently too in Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, a guidebook to ancient Greece written in the second century AD. Detailed descriptions of sites and monuments are supplemented by stories, historical and mythological, some widely-known, others local. Both Strabo and Pausanias are valuable for giving a sense of the variety and complexity of the Greek world; these are places inhabited and distinct rather than absorbed into a streamlined narrative.

It is not only historical texts that will be discussed and cited in the chapters that follow. Poetry, scientific writings and philosophy can reveal much about Hellenistic society, its ways of thinking, its values and its ideology. Poetry has survived rather better than history. There are the *Idylls* of Theocritus, the *Argonautica* of Apollonios of Rhodes, the hymns of Callimachus, the mimes of Herodas, the enigmatic *Alexandra* of Lykophron, and the *Phaenomena* of Aratos of Soloi. Some scientific writing survives, perhaps as it was less vulnerable to the vagaries of style: the astronomical works of Aristarchos and Hipparchos, and the mathematical writings of Euclid, Archimedes, and Apollonios of Perge. Philosophical texts fare much worse. Apart from Theophrastos' *Characters* and some philosophical letters and maxims of Epicurus little now remains of the voluminous output of the Hellenistic schools.

4 Inscriptions

In many cultures texts are written for public display; they may be epitaphs, dedications, or advertisements; they may be inscribed on stone or bronze, pasted on hoardings, or lit up in neon. Greek fondness for inscription is evident in the tens of thousands of inscribed texts that survive from the cities of the Hellenistic East, especially the cities of Asia Minor, but it is not the quantity that is distinctive so much as the character of the texts themselves. Many of these are civic decrees, treaties and letters from kings, in other words documents that were not primarily intended for public display. The original text, written on a more manageable material such as papyrus, would most likely have been kept in a city archive. Far from being short and simple, these texts were frequently detailed and dense; for instance, a treaty between Rhodes and the Cretan city of Hierapytna runs to over a hundred lines (*SIG*^{3} 581; Austin 95), while almost two hundred lines remain of the incomplete decree honouring Protogenes of Olbia on the Black Sea for services to his native city (*SIG*^{3} 495; Austin 97). Accumulatively documents such as these, edited and published by specialist scholars known as epigraphists, provide an invaluable resource for the study of the Hellenistic world (for an example, Figure 19.1).

Such texts have an immediacy that a historical narrative, often composed much later, does not have. It is not merely that they are contemporary but that in reading the text of an inscription we are faced with the participants and their concerns in a very direct way. Obscure cities come to life, both in their local preoccupations and occasionally, more alarmingly, as they are drawn into the conflicts of the powerful. The city of Teos on the coast of Asia Minor furnishes us with a good number of such documents. Here we find inscribed the regulations for a school which has been established with money donated by Polythros, a prominent local citizen; the teachers will include a kithara-player to teach the children music and the school interestingly provides for the education of both boys and girls (*SIG*^{3} 578; Austin 120). When pirates occupy the harbour, the wealthy of Teos whose names are all inscribed contribute to a fund to rid the city of the intruders and reclaim their captured fellow-citizens (*SEG* 44.949). Antiochos III's take-over of the city prompts extensive cult honours as it adjusts to the disappearance of Attalid power in the region (Herrmann 1965a: 33–40; Ma 1999: nos. 17–18).

Only a selection of a city's public documents will ever have been inscribed and it is worth considering why some become civic monuments. If we look at the Teian texts discussed above, it is evident that their content is varied – education, piracy and royal cult – but in each case, directly or indirectly, someone is remembered and honoured by the act of inscription, Polythros, the contributors, the king. This is not to suggest that all inscription is honorific but in a culture in which the rich are expected to perform services for their city honour is highly prized and may consequently help to shape our image of a city. It may even be the city itself which is honoured. An important verse inscription, recently discovered in Halikarnassos, begins by asking 'What is it that brings honour to Halikarnassos?'; the response, a fascinating insight into civic pride and local tradition, outlines the city's mythical past before turning to celebrate its poets and historians (Isager 1998; Lloyd-Jones 1999).

The decision to inscribe is often contained within the document itself and may be justified by reference to future observers; the permanence of a treaty can be represented by engraving it on stone, thus the following clause negotiated between Rhodes and Hierapytna:

> And so that what was resolved about the alliance and the treaty might be engraved on stone stelai and visible for all time, let the people (of Rhodes) set up a stele at Rhodes in the sanctuary of Athena, and let the *poletai* (officials responsible for letting state contracts) put out to tender a contract for making the stele out of Lartian stone and for engraving and erecting in the sanctuary what was decided by the cities about the alliance, as directed by the commissioner for works, at a cost of not more than 100 drachmas. Let the treasurers pay for this expense out of the fund for matters to do with decrees. Let the Hierapytnians also engrave the alliance and erect it among themselves in whatever sanctuary they think fit. (*SIG*[3] 581.95–101; Austin 95)

Inscribed stones were both symbols of civic life and part of the physical make-up of the city. This is vividly demonstrated by the agora of Magnesia-on-the-Maeander. Inscribed on the south and west walls of the city's central public space was an impressive collection of over sixty decrees and royal letters from around the Greek world. Magnesia had launched a major diplomatic campaign to ensure recognition of its newly-established panhellenic festival of Artemis Leukophryene and these documents, collected from the cities and kings visited by their ambassadors, were the outcome. Here the aspirations of the city have become a physical presence within the city (*I.Magn.* 16–87; Rigsby 1996: 179–279). The bulk of Hellenistic inscriptions come from Greek cities and their sanctuaries, a striking testament to the vitality of civic life in this period and a useful rejoinder to those who see Alexander as marking the end of the *polis.*

5 Papyri

In 1900 the excavation of a cemetery at Tebtynis in the Fayum area of Egypt produced somewhat unexpected results. Workmen, hoping to find humans buried with their most valued possessions, found instead dozens of mummified crocodiles, carefully preserved and interred by pious Egyptians. One of the men, uninhibited by a sense of religious awe in the face of these sacred animals, gave vent to his frustration by smashing up a crocodile with his spade. The rips in the mummy casing exposed handwriting; waste papyri, in a form of papier mâché known as cartonnage, had been moulded round the body of the animal (Bowman 1986: 173). This ancient practice, developed for the mummification of both humans and sacred animals, has been a vital source of papyrus texts for the Ptolemaic and the Augustan periods.

Papyrus was a writing material made from the *Cyperus papyrus*, a plant that grew in the marshes and lakes of Egypt and especially in the Nile Delta. Outside Egypt it was rare, giving the region a virtual monopoly over papyrus production. Although used for writing throughout the ancient world, it has survived best in Egypt, where it has been found as cartonnage, in rubbish dumps, and in the ruins of buildings. An important reason for its survival in Egypt is the climate; the dry ground of the desert is ideal for its preservation. There may, however, be other factors at work; although

papyri have been found elsewhere, for example at Qumran near the Dead Sea, at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, and carbonized at Herculaneum in Italy, its availability in Egypt may have meant that it was more readily used there than elsewhere (Bagnall 1995: 26–9). Expense and distance from Egypt may have encouraged the use of alternative materials, for instance the fragments of pottery known as ostraka or wooden writing tablets such as those found at a rather later period at the Vindolanda fort on Hadrian's Wall (Bowman 1994).

Like inscriptions papyri have a sense of immediacy, but whereas inscriptions offer the public, monolithic face of the city, monumentalized in stone, papyri take us closer to the individual. The subject matter of the Egyptian papyri is varied: petitions, private letters, deeds of sale, wills, marriage contracts, tax records, assorted documents from the state administration. Such documents will often survive without context, but sometimes whole collections, linked together by an individual or a place, have been discovered. Here it is possible to study the inter-relationships between the documents as names, families, problems and themes recur, allowing the creation of a context and a fuller picture of the world that produced the documents. Two of the more important collections, or archives as they tend to be known, are the mid-third-century Zenon archive and the second-century texts from the sanctuary of Sarapis in Memphis. Zenon was the manager of a large estate at Philadelphia in the Fayum, a property of Apollonios, chief minister of Ptolemy II. This collection of some two thousand documents gives a remarkable insight into the running of an estate, ranging from agricultural matters (where Zenon's approach is fairly experimental), problems with tenants, both Greek and Egyptian, to dealings with Apollonios and the state administration (Pestman 1981; Clarysse and Vandorpe 1995). The much smaller archive of Ptolemaios, a man who spent about twenty years of his life in seclusion in the Sarapeion at Memphis, has provided the focus for an important study of the interaction between Greek and Egyptian culture at the city which had for centuries been considered its capital and which remained its religious centre even after the court had moved to Alexandria (D. J. Thompson 1988: 212–65). Other archives allow similar studies (Lewis 1986).

Papyri offer a valuable point of access to the world of native Egyptians. Not only are Egyptians a common presence in the Greek papyri that survive but there are also a substantial number of documents written in a script of Egyptian known as demotic. Especially in the early years of Ptolemaic rule Egyptians would often use demotic as the appropriate language for contracts and other transactions among themselves, though that gradually gave way to the language of the Greek rulers (D. J. Thompson 1994b). Papyri thus can make a significant contribution to modern debates about culture and ethnicity in Egypt, revealing a complex society in which the ethnic character of the individual, as expressed for instance in name and language, may change according to context (Bagnall 1995: 20; D. J. Thompson 2001; Rowlandson, this volume).

Abundant as the papyrological evidence is, there is also a need for the historian to exercise a certain degree of caution. Alexandria and the Nile Delta were the most populated regions of Egypt but the dampness of the soil has not favoured the survival of papyri. Papyri tend to come from marginal areas where dry conditions and lack of later settlement have aided preservation – or from areas such as the Fayum where the desert has reclaimed the land. Nor is this material evenly spread out over time. This

presents a problem for the historian: how safe is it to generalize from such evidence? Can one extrapolate from one well-documented village to others? Can such local Egyptian evidence illuminate the Hellenistic world beyond Egypt? It is important to be aware of such methodological problems but not to be paralyzed by them. The careful and sensitive use of comparative material can do much to illuminate beyond the immediate context (Bagnall 1995).

6 Other Voices

Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire brought a large number of different cultures and peoples under Greco-Macedonian rule. The native voice, however, is not so readily heard as its Greek counterpart. This is partly a problem of evidence; there is less of it and, being in less well-known languages, it is not as accessible as writings in the more familiar Greek and Latin. It may also, however, be a problem of perspective; the ancient historian frequently comes to the Hellenistic world with a classical training and sees Greek rule as the unifying factor. This can lead to an overemphasis on Greekness and Greek culture. While much of the non-Greek population may remain silent, some still speak to us, notably the Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Jews.

Texts in Aramaic, a semitic language written in alphabetic script, are quite widely dispersed, largely because of its role as one of the main languages of the now-defunct Persian administration. For instance, when the Mauryan king Asoka sought to spread the word of Buddha to the inhabitants of his Indian kingdom, the languages he chose for his north-western territories were Aramaic and Greek, as is attested in a bilingual inscription on a pillar from Kandahar in modern Afghanistan. This is not the only bilingual text of Asoka in the region; Aramaic was also used in combination with Prakrit, a language of India (Thapar 1997; MacDowell and Taddei 1978: 192–8). At the other end of the former Persian empire Aramaic is to be found among the languages used in Jewish writings, and features in the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran community, discovered in caves there in the 1940s and 1950s (Beyer 1984). Its continuing importance in administration is demonstrated by its use in various bilingual Greek/Aramaic documents from Seleukid Babylonia (S. Sherwin-White 1987: 23–5).

Jewish religion placed considerable emphasis on the written word; hence a large amount of Jewish religious writing survives, notably the scriptures that go to make up the Old Testament, mostly in Hebrew but with a little Aramaic. The demands of the large Greek-speaking Jewish diaspora generated Greek translations of these scriptures that together came to be known as the Septuagint, reputed to have been begun by a team of seventy-two scholars working in Alexandria at the request of Ptolemy II. This pressure for Greek texts is evident also in the first two books of Maccabees, both important sources for the history of the Jewish people in the second century. They give two separate and varying accounts of the circumstances and consequences of the revolt of Judas Maccabaeus, the first written in Hebrew but translated into Greek, the second composed in Greek, probably abridged from a more substantial work by a certain Jason of Cyrene. Many of these Greek-speaking Jews would have lived in Egypt, primarily but not only in Alexandria. The city of Herakleopolis along the Nile valley, for example, has recently turned up an important collection of Jewish papyri in

Greek; the texts include petitions to the archon of the *politeuma* of the Jews, valuable evidence for Jewish social organization in Egypt (Cowey and Maresch 2001).

In Egypt there was a large, native population, some of whose concerns, as was noted in the previous section, have been unearthed on papyri in both demotic Egyptian and in Greek. Papyrus preserves not only the more everyday aspects of their life but also literature written in demotic. Narrative fiction, such as the adventures of Setna Khaemwase, or moral guidance, as in the *Instructions of Ankhsheshonqy*, stand in a long Egyptian literary tradition that goes back well before the Ptolemies (Tait 1994; texts in Lichtheim 1980). But it was the priests and temples that were the chief medium for the transmission of Egyptian tradition; here that tradition was articulated through the archaizing scripts of hieratic and hieroglyphic, scripts that emphasized the priests' role as the keepers of arcane knowledge. Nonetheless, the priests had a dual role; they connected the Egyptian people with their past but at the same time they were at the interface between the people and their Greek rulers. Their decrees honouring the Ptolemaic kings would be inscribed in hieroglyph, demotic and Greek, as for example the Kanopos decree and the famous Rosetta stone that played such a crucial role in the modern decipherment of hieroglyphic script (*OGIS* 56, 90; trans. Austin 222, 227). One priest, Manetho, even wrote a history of the Pharaohs in Greek, thus presenting the Egyptian past to the Greek present. This, unfortunately, survives only through later writers.

Babylonia, too, had long, literate cultural traditions which continued through Persian and into Seleukid rule. Again there is archaizing, evident in the use of Akkadian, a language no longer spoken; it was written in cuneiform script, usually formed by impressing the end of a reed into clay tablets. This language was the preserve of scholars, centred on temples, and finding expression in documents such as chronicles, astronomical diaries, legal texts, administrative documents and horoscopes. Such archaizing, far from being a sign of a moribund culture, is a sign of the strength and resilience of Babylonian tradition under a series of foreign rulers. The chronicles on the wars of the successors and on the early Seleukids, incomplete though they are, give a valuable Babylonian perspective on the events of the time (Grayson 1975a: nos. 10–13). As in Egypt, the temples may act as the custodians of indigenous tradition but their officials can also address a Greek-speaking audience, although by virtue of using Greek they are altering their voice. Thus Berossos, a Babylonian priest, produced the *Babyloniaka*, a history of Babylon in three books, which now exists only in fragments; it is evident, even so, that it is shaped by the principles of Greek historiography (*FGrH* 680; Burstein 1978; Kuhrt 1987).

However much our evidence may show an accommodation between the native population and Greco-Macedonian intruders, there is one form of literature that suggests an underlying resentment. From a number of parts of this Hellenistic world there were prophetic writings, exercises in wishful thinking, that often foretold the overthrow and expulsion of foreign rulers, whether individuals or peoples. From Babylon there is the Dynastic prophecy written in Akkadian; it is critical of Alexander and seems to date from the period of the successors (S. Sherwin-White 1987: 10–14). The apocalyptic *Book of Daniel*, written in Hebrew and Aramaic around the time of the Maccabaean revolt, culminates by dramatically prophesying the end of contemporary empires and the emergence of the kingdom of God. Out of Egypt come the *Demotic Chronicle* and the *Oracle of the Potter*; the latter, a Greek translation from

the Egyptian, foretells the abandonment of Greek Alexandria and revival of the traditional capital of Memphis (A. B. Lloyd 1982; Koenen 1968; Burstein 106).

Just as the non-Greek population and their priests could express themselves in the language of the rulers, so the Greek kings could adopt a native voice. An inscribed foundation cylinder from a temple in Babylonian Borsippa allows Antiochos I to speak in Akkadian and importantly in the manner of a native king (Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991). In Egypt royal decrees were sometimes translated into demotic and may today survive only in demotic (cf. Burstein 97). The visual equivalent of this is the way in which portraits of Ptolemy I and his successors show these kings as Pharaohs (figure 7.2), a striking expression of the complex and multifaceted character of Alexander's legacy.

FURTHER READING

There are a number of surveys of the Hellenistic World, each with its own approach, notably Préaux 1978 (in French), Green 1990, Walbank 1992, Shipley 2000; Will 1979–82 offers a thorough political history; Rostovtzeff's *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (1941) is a classic. For an overview of recent scholarship, see Cartledge 1997. Translations of source material, in particular inscriptions and papyri, are usefully collected in Austin 1981, Bagnall and Derow 1981, Sherk 1984, and Burstein 1985. *OCD*^{3} is an invaluable reference work for anyone interested in the ancient world.

Translations of the writers discussed in this chapter can usually be found in the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard UP) or Penguin Classics. The importance of Polybios is matched by Walbank's monumental commentary (1957–79); for a more concise assessment, see Walbank 1972; see also Derow 1979, Eckstein 1995 and Erskine 2000. For other authors note: Appian (Brodersen 1989), Arrian (Bosworth 1988), Curtius (Baynham 1998), Diodoros (Sacks 1990), Justin (Yardley and Develin 1994, which provides translation), Livy (Luce 1977), Pausanias (Habicht 1985, Arafat 1996, Alcock and Thurnau 2001), Plutarch (C. Jones 1971, Russell 1972), Strabo (K. Clarke 1999, J. Engels 1999, Dueck 2000). S. Swain 1996 offers a valuable survey of Greek writers of the early centuries AD with particular emphasis on their attitude to Rome. More literary texts are discussed in Hunter, this volume. Alexandrian science, literature and scholarship are treated exhaustively in Fraser 1972.

The 'fragments' of lost writers are collected (without translation) and discussed in F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (*FGrH*; relevant Jacoby references are given in the text above). For fragments of Poseidonios, see Edelstein and Kidd 1989 with Kidd 1988 (commentary) and 1999 (translation). What is left of lost Alexander historians is translated in Pearson 1960. Burstein 1989 translates and discusses Agatharchides. Important studies of individual writers include Hornblower 1981 on Hieronymos, Momigliano 1977: 37–66 on Timaios and Pédech 1989 on Douris and Phylarchos.

Millar 1983 and Pleket 1996 provide accessible introductions to the often confusing world of inscriptions; so too does the 1961 essay by Louis Robert, the French epigraphist who dominated the discipline for much of the twentieth century. Import-

ant collections include the *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*), Dittenberger's *OGIS* and *SIG*[3], Moretti's *ISE* and Welles's study of royal letters (*RC*, with translations). New publications are reviewed annually in *SEG* and *Bulletin Épigraphique* (*BE*), the latter incorporated in *Revue des Études grecque* since 1888. For recent epigraphy of Asia Minor, see the invaluable account of Ma 2000a.

The best guides to papyrology are Turner 1980, with an emphasis on literary papyri, and Bagnall 1995, directed at the historian. The best representative sample of Greek papyri (arranged by type of document and date, including a translation but almost no editorial help) is still the Loeb *Select Papyri*, vols. I and II, eds A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar (Cambridge, Mass. 1932–34). Rowlandson 1998 is a model collection of papyri in translation with useful introduction. The bewildering array of papyrological abbreviations are decoded in the *Checklist* of Oates et al. 2001. Although the *Checklist* now includes Demotic papyri, for various reasons it has not been usual in Egyptology to cite texts in this way, but rather by inventory number with the full reference to their place of publication. Depauw 1997 is an important guide both to what is available in Demotic and where it has been published.[1]

Babylonia and its literature are discussed in Oelsner 1986 and Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987; some texts are available in translation: Grayson 1975a (chronicles), Grayson 1975b (prophecies, with S. Sherwin-White 1987) and Sachs and Hunger 1988, 1989 (astronomical diaries). Jewish literature is surveyed in Schürer 1979, and more recently in Alexander 2001, cf. also Gruen, this volume. For the Dead Sea Scrolls, see the encyclopedia of Schiffman and Vanderkam 2000. A basic reference work for the archaeology and culture of the Near East, including Babylonia, Palestine and Egypt, is Meyers 1997.

1 This paragraph written with Jane Rowlandson.