

Article

# Monsters of Military Might: Elephants in Hellenistic History and Art †

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† Dedicated in friendship to Robert A. Lunsingh Scheurleer.

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**Abstract:** Elephants were first deployed in warfare by Indian and Persian armies. The Greco-Macedonian troops first encountered these fearsome creatures in battle during the campaign of Alexander the Great. Subsequently, the Successors and later Hellenistic rulers similarly used elephants in battle. From this time, the animal began to appear in Greco-Roman art. Tracing the appearance of the elephant in Hellenistic history and art, I suggest that the elephant not only continued to be associated with its Asian and African origins and came to symbolize military triumph over exotic foes, it retained religious and mythic proportions as a fearsome, fabulous monster connected with the martichora and unicorn, griffon and sphinx, dragon and hippocampus. In particular, I re-examined the posthumous portrait of Alexander the Great in which he wears an elephant scalp as a headdress, similar to Heracles’ lion scalp. This deified portraiture not only depicts Alexander as descendant of Heracles and Dionysus, both sons of Zeus, but also—through connections with Ammon and Indra—as the legitimate ruler of the three continents of the known world, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

**Keywords:** elephants; animals; mythic monsters; Hellenistic history; art history; military history; ideology; Alexander the Great

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## 1. A Behemoth of a Monster

“Behold the wild beasts around you”, God spoke to Job, and continued describing a fearsome and mighty monster, literally a Behemoth, likened to bulls, with ribs made of bronze and a spine cast of iron, a tail like cedar and teeth like swords.<sup>1</sup> In Hebrew, *behemoth* (בהמות) means “wild beast”; hence the Septuagint Greek translation *thēria* (θηρία). The latter term was also used in ancient Greek for the serpentine monster Typhon, as well as for sharks and elephants.<sup>2</sup> The Biblical Behemoth was feared for the strength of its loins and the might of its stomach; it eats in the mountains where the wild beasts play; it lies by the papyrus, reed, and sedge; it does not fear the flood and strikes the Jordan to pour the river’s water into its mouth. As this wild beast remains unnamed in the Old Testament *Book of Job*, the Hebrew “Behemoth” has become its substitute name since the Latin Vulgate translation. The

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<sup>1</sup> LXX *Job* 40:15–24 = Vulg. *Job*. 40.10–19; (Kinnier Wilson 1975; Drewer 1981; Wolfers 1990; Jones 2013, esp. pp. 860–63). The Septuagint and Vulgate translations both diverge at times from the Hebrew original.

<sup>2</sup> Hdt. *Hist.* 6.44; Plat. *Phaedr.* 230A; Polyb. 11.1.12.

identity of this Behemoth of a monster, considered the chief of the Creation, continues to spark the imagination—much like the Leviathan also mentioned in *Job*. The Behemoth was explicitly connected with the plains of the Jordan as well as implicitly with the Nile Delta and Valley (the papyrus, reed, and sedge), not to mention the forests of Lebanon (cedar). If the Leviathan might be understood as the great whale, perhaps the Behemoth reflects the great pachyderm?

The comparison with bulls is interesting, as much later the Romans did call elephants “bulls (*boves*)” when they were first encountered in Lucania during the campaign against Pyrrhus.<sup>3</sup> The first Greek author to mention elephants, the historian Hecataeus (ca. 485–425 BCE), though he had never seen the animal himself, included it among the fabulous beings (*κατάψευστα*) and wild beasts (*θηριώδης*) that he had heard infested Eastern Libya.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the elephants, lions, bears, snakes, and “many other beasts that are *not* fabulous (*ἀκατάψευστα*)”, he listed enormous serpents, horned donkeys,<sup>5</sup> dog-headed creatures, headless animals with eyes in their chest, and savages. Suggestions as to their exact nature include pythons, unicorns, baboons, and other apes or monkeys. Irrespective of one’s predilections, it must be stressed that the line between actual animals and fabulous beasts was blurred.

A generation later, the Greek physician and historian Ctesias (fl. ca. 400 BCE)—who must have seen the elephant for himself as he worked at the Achaemenid court—described the animal in his *Indica* (of which only an epitome survives in the 9th century CE *Bibliotheca* by Photius).<sup>6</sup> For his part, Ctesias discussed the elephant in connection with the man-eating (*ἀνθρωποφάγος*) *martichora* (known elsewhere as the mantichore), a fabulous beast with the body of a lion, a human head with a face of vermillion (*κιννάβαρι*), light-blue eyes, three rows of teeth, and a tail in the shape of a scorpion’s sting.<sup>7</sup> According to Ctesias, the sting of the *martichora* is fatal to all except the elephant; Indians supposedly hunted and killed the animal in great number with spears and arrows while mounted on elephants. It may well be that he meant an Asian, specifically Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*); however, it should again be emphasized that the lines are evidently blurred between actual and fabulous creatures. A few paragraphs farther on in the treatise, the same author discussed griffons (*γρύπες*)—black birds the size of a wolf, with red breast feathers and leonine claws—that protect the goldmines in the Indian mountains.<sup>8</sup>

The elephant was discussed by various other authors in the subsequent centuries. For instance, the philosopher and zoologist Aristotle (384–322 BCE), in various passages of his *Historia Animalium*, discussed the elephant in the same context as the *martichora* (like Ctesias), claiming that the animal could live for 200 or 300 years, and that it could be taught to kneel in the presence of a king.<sup>9</sup> Diodorus (fl. 60–30 BCE), the Sicilian historian, cited Ctesias in reference to the Indian invasion of the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis, in which her opponent, the Indian king Stabrobates, outfitted his elephants to strike terror on the battlefield.<sup>10</sup> The geographer Strabo (63 BCE–24 CE), for his part, mentioned elephants about 50 times in his work: referencing Onesicritus’ assertion that elephants can

<sup>3</sup> Varr. *Ling. Lat.* 7.39–40; Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 8.6 (16); cf. Flor. *Epit.* 13.1 (18) (*ferarum terrore*, of elephants).

<sup>4</sup> Hdt. *Hist.* 4.191.3–4; (Scullard 1974, pp. 32–33; Asheri et al. 2007, pp. 713–14).

<sup>5</sup> Hdt. *Hist.* 4.192 recognizes several types of antelopes: *πύραργοι* και *ζορκάδες* και *βουβάλιες* (white-rump antelopes, dorcas gazelles and hartebeests); the *ὄνοι κέρεα* mentioned at 4.191.4 are therefore unlikely to refer to a type of antelopes; (Asheri et al. 2007, pp. 714–15).

<sup>6</sup> (Scullard 1974, pp. 33–36; Tola and Dragonetti 1986, pp. 172–84; Schneider 2009, pp. 310–13).

<sup>7</sup> Ctes. *Epit. ap. Phot. Bibl.* 72 §7. For the *martichora* (or mantichore), also see: Arist. *Hist. Anim.* 2.1; Plin. *Hist. Nat.* 8.21 (30); Ael. *Nat. Anim.* 4.21; Paus. 9.21.4 (751); (Brown 1955, pp. 22–23; Bartelink 1972; Tola and Dragonetti 1986; Romm 1989, p. 572; Bigwood 1993; Karttunen 1997, pp. 97–98; Li Causi 2003). For the Greek *κιννάβαρι*, see: (Trinquier 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Ctes. *Epit. ap. Phot. Bibl.* 72 §12; (Brown 1955, p. 29; Tola and Dragonetti 1986, pp. 179–83; Karttunen 1997, pp. 27, 188).

<sup>9</sup> Arist. *Hist. Anim.* 2.1, 8.9 and 9.46; (Scullard 1974, pp. 37–52; Tola and Dragonetti 1986, pp. 185–88; Romm 1989, esp. pp. 572–73; Bigwood 1993; Karttunen 1997, pp. 188–89; Schneider 2009, p. 310).

<sup>10</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 2.16.2; (Brown 1955, pp. 23–27; Sacks 1990, p. 76; Bigwood 1993, p. 543; Bosworth 1996, pp. 122–23; Karttunen 1997, p. 188; Schneider 2009, p. 311; Muntz 2012, pp. 23–31).

live up to 300, and in rare cases even 500 years; citing Megasthenes, who claimed to have seen a Bacchic chase with elephants; and Artemidorus, who discussed elephants in Ethiopia in the same context as sphinxes and dragons that can master elephants.<sup>11</sup> Moving to the Roman Imperial age, Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) explained that elephants and dragons fight each other to the death in India, the dragon (or serpent) strangling the elephant with the coils of its tail, but as the elephant falls it crushes the dragon.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the rhetorician Aelian (ca. 175–235 CE) described the elephant in his *De Natura Animalium*, a paragraph before dragons.<sup>13</sup> His contemporary Philostratus (ca. 170–250 CE) gave a detailed account of the elephant that led directly into descriptions of unicorns and dragons.<sup>14</sup> Evidently, despite the elephant being known for centuries, its association with fabulous beasts remained throughout the Hellenistic age and into the Roman Imperial period. As an aside, it may be opportune to note that the Greek *drakōn* (δράκων), like the Latin *draco*, denotes “dragon” as well as “(sea) serpent”, and may be interchangeable with “snake”, but might also refer to the mythic Typhon, the serpentine giant of chaos.

The standard reference to elephants in antiquity remains Howard Hayes Scullard’s *Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* (1974), which understandably focused on the historical role occupied by elephants in the literary and artistic evidence of ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>15</sup> In the following, I would rather like to substantiate the notion that—at least in ancient thought—elephants belong to the same order of fabulous beasts as the martichora and unicorn, griffon and sphinx, dragon and hippocampus. While acknowledging their actual existence (then and now), in their fabulous nature they are fierce and frightful, I contend, and monsters of military might that fit best in the mythical realm rather than historical reality. In order to illustrate this notion, the following is *not* structured according to a precise chronological or geographic order (although something of a combination of the two). Rather, the presentation is a more associative meandering journey along historical literary examples as well as art historical illustrations. The focus is on the Hellenistic period, specifically because this was the precise era in which Greek and Roman authors lived when elephants were actually seen, and yet conceptions of their religious, mythic, fabulous nature continued to persist both in art and history. In the course of the argument, there is also occasion to delve deeper into the iconography of the posthumous portraiture of Alexander the Great bedecked with *exuvia elephantis* (a headdress made of an elephant scalp).

## 2. From Alexander to Hannibal

Greek and Macedonian soldiers first encountered the elephant when Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) took his army on campaign into Persia.<sup>16</sup> Arrian (fl. ca. 130–145 CE) stated that Darius arrayed 15 elephants at the Battle of Gaugamela (331 BCE), but their absence in any of the descriptions of the actual engagement would seem to lead to the conclusion that they were ultimately not deployed on the battlefield itself.<sup>17</sup> The use of elephants for hunting and battle was at any rate a practice that had spread to Persia from India, where they may have served that purpose since the Harappan Civilization (ca. 3rd–2nd mill. BCE).<sup>18</sup> The symbolic significance of the elephant is strikingly

<sup>11</sup> Strab. *Geogr.* 15.1.43 (705), 15.1.55 (710) and 16.4.16 (775); (Brown 1955, p. 31; Scullard 1974, pp. 52–60; Karttunen 1997, pp. 190, 227; Schneider 2009, pp. 322–24; Pajón Leyra 2012, pp. 338, 349; Kosmin 2014, pp. 261–71).

<sup>12</sup> Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 8.11. For the mythic theme of dragons/serpents fighting elephants in antiquity, see: (Hofmann 1970; Karttunen 1997, pp. 227–28; Pajón Leyra 2012, pp. 349–50; Massiera 2015) (predynastic Egypt).

<sup>13</sup> Ael. *Nat. Anim.* 11.15 and 16; (Scullard 1974, pp. 222–30).

<sup>14</sup> Philostr. *Vit. Apollon.* 2.13–24; (Scullard 1974, pp. 230–32).

<sup>15</sup> (Bigwood 1993; Charles 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2014, 2016; Charles and Rhodan 2007; Epplett 2007; Schneider 2009; Alonso Troncoso 2013; Kosmin 2014, esp. pp. 1–21, 33–37; Trautmann 2015).

<sup>16</sup> (Scullard 1974, pp. 64–66; Bosworth 1988, pp. 74–85; Schneider 2009, p. 313).

<sup>17</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.4; (Bigwood 1993, p. 548; Karttunen 1997, p. 38; Charles 2008a).

<sup>18</sup> (Mackay 1935; Possehl 1993; Trautmann 2015; Singh 2009, pp. 132–81). For the supposed “Syrian” elephant (viz., the Asian elephant imported from India), present in the Near East in the Bronze Age (ca. 18th–8th century BCE), now see: (Çakırlar and Ikram 2016).

expressed, for instance, on a steatite seal stamp from Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan (Figure 1).<sup>19</sup> After the Battle at Gaugamela, Alexander's general Parmenion captured the elephants from the Persian camp, along with their baggage, chariots, and camels.<sup>20</sup> As the Macedonian army advanced towards Susiana, Abulites, the *satrap* (provincial governor) of Susa, opened the city gates to Alexander's troops and offered 12 more elephants.<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 1.** Stamp seal from the Indus Valley (BM reg. no 1947,0416.5); steatite; Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan; ca. 2600–1900 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

Farther east along the campaign, the Macedonian army acquired another 125 to 150 pachyderms in the Punjab, either from hunting or from the local ruler Omphis of Taxila (mod. Attock, Pakistan).<sup>22</sup> The Macedonian troops first encountered war elephants in actual fighting at the Battle of the Hydaspes (326 BCE), the westernmost of the five main tributaries of the Indus (mod. Jhelum).<sup>23</sup> The Macedonians were by then well-trained for the encounter. Their opponent, the local ruler Porus (perhaps Paurava, i.e., “King of the Purus”, a Vedic tribe), fielded anywhere between 85 and 200 war elephants against the Macedonians. When the Macedonian cavalry attacked from the flanks, the animals trampled infantry troops indiscriminately in the ensuing confusion.<sup>24</sup> After the decisive victory, the Macedonians apparently captured 80 elephants from the Indian prince.<sup>25</sup>

At the River Hyphasis (mod. Beas), Alexander received intelligence about the vast forces awaiting in the Ganges Valley beyond (namely the Nanda kingdom)—including news of about 3000 elephants, by the lowest count.<sup>26</sup> After a “mutinous” incident, the Macedonian troops turned southward along the Indus Valley, where they obtained a total of about 200 to 250 more elephants.<sup>27</sup> One of Alexander's generals, Craterus, was then tasked to return a large part of the forces to Persia; he reached Carmania (southern Iran) through Arachosia (southern Afghanistan) with an unspecified

<sup>19</sup> BM reg. no 1947,0416.5 (steatite stamp seal, Mohenjo-daro, ca. 2600–1900 BCE); cf. MFA acc. no. 36.970 (seal stamp, Chanhu-daro); (Mackay 1935, pp. 69–70, 79, 140, 172, 193, pl. M; Singh 2009, p. 173).

<sup>20</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.15.5.

<sup>21</sup> Curt. Ruf. 5.2.10.

<sup>22</sup> Curt. Ruf. 8.12.11; (Bosworth 1988, p. 125; Karttunen 1997, pp. 31–33; Schneider 2009, p. 313). Greek and Roman authors refer to the ruler as Taxiles or Omphis, the latter probably reflects the Sanskrit name Ambhi; the ancient city from which he ruled is called Takshasila in Sanskrit.

<sup>23</sup> (Glover 1944, p. 264; Gowers 1947, p. 42; Glover 1948, pp. 4–5; Goukowsky 1972; Scullard 1974, pp. 66–71; Bosworth 1988, pp. 125–30; Karttunen 1997, pp. 19–20, 34–38; Schneider 2009, pp. 313–14).

<sup>24</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 5.17–18.

<sup>25</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 17.89.2; cf. Philostrat. *Vit. Apollon.* 2.12 (relating that an elephant that fought at the Hydaspes still lived some 350 years later).

<sup>26</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 2.37.2–3, 17.93.2–4 and 18.6.1–2; Curt. Ruf. 9.2.2–9; Plut. *Alex.* 62.2–3 (200,000 infantry, 80,000 cavalry, 8000 chariots, and 6000 elephants); Metz *Epit.* 68–69; (Glover 1948, p. 1; Bosworth 1996, p. 120; Schneider 2009, p. 314; Kosmin 2014, pp. 263–64; Singh 2009, p. 273).

<sup>27</sup> (Scullard 1974, pp. 72–74). For the return from the Hyphasis, *infra* n. 142.

number of elephants (in 325/4 BCE). At Susa (324 BCE), 200 elephants are mentioned under Alexander's second-in-command Hephaestion.

The importance of the elephant for Alexander's eastern campaign is vividly illustrated by 10 surviving examples of large-size silver coins known as the elephant or Porus medallions.<sup>28</sup> The obverse features Alexander on horseback attacking Porus and his mahout on an elephant; the reverse immortalizes Alexander standing with a thunderbolt in one hand and holding a spear in the other as Nike hovers toward him with a wreath (Figure 2).<sup>29</sup> In 1973, an Iraqi hoard (allegedly found in or near Babylon) included not only half a dozen of the 10 examples, but also added two more types: one featuring an archer standing with bow drawn (obv.) and a standing Indian elephant (rev.); the other showing an archer standing in or next to a chariot drawn by four horses (obv.) and two men wearing turbans riding an Indian elephant (Figures 3 and 4).<sup>30</sup> This is not the place to go into details of exact date, mint, and monograms, nor to dwell on the golden modern pastiches of the 1990s.<sup>31</sup> Suffice it here to emphasize the importance of the elephant for Alexander's military victory in India.



**Figure 2.** Porus Medallion (BM reg. no. 1926,0402.1); silver; Babylon, Iraq (?), local mint; ca. 324–321 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].



**Figure 3.** Archer Medallion (ANS inv. no. 1990.1.1); silver; Babylon, Iraq (?), local mint; ca. 324–321 BCE. [Image courtesy of the American Numismatics Society, New York].

<sup>28</sup> BM reg. nos. 1887,0609.1 and 1926,0402.1; ANS inv. no. 1959.254.86 = *SNG Berry* no. 295; (Bieber 1965, pp. 185–86, pl. 1, figs. 3a–b; Scullard 1974, pp. 75–76; Nicolet 1978; Price 1991; Lane Fox 1996; Holt 2003; Dahmen 2007, pp. 109–11, pl. 2, figs. 1–2; Holt and Boppearachchi 2011; Schneider 2009, p. 316; Picón and Hemingway 2016, p. 110, no. 10a).

<sup>29</sup> BM reg. no. 1926,0402.1 (decadrachm or five-shekel, prop. Babylon, local mint, ca. 324–321 BCE). Note that Nike can only be well determined on a single specimen.

<sup>30</sup> ANS inv. nos. 1990.1.1 and 1995.51.68 (silver tetradrachms, prob. Babylon, local mint, ca. 324–321 BCE); (Van Alfen 2000, pp. 9–10 (with refs.); Picón and Hemingway 2016, p. 110, nos. 10b–c).

<sup>31</sup> (Boppearachchi and Flandrin 2005; Holt and Boppearachchi 2011); *contra* (Chugg 2007; Bracey 2011; Alonso Troncoso 2013, p. 256, with n. 6; Callataÿ 2013); cf. Pieper (2013).



**Figure 4.** Archer in Chariot Medallion (ANS inv. no. 1995.51.68); silver; Babylon, Iraq (?), local mint; ca. 324–321 BCE. [Image courtesy of the American Numismatics Society, New York].

After Alexander's sudden death in Babylon, his embalmed body was supposed to be returned to Macedon under the supervision of general Arrhidaeus for burial at the old capital Aegae (mod. Vergina).<sup>32</sup> A magnificent carriage was prepared for the funeral cortege. In his description of that carriage, Diodorus mentioned a tablet showing war elephants following the royal bodyguard and added that the elephants carried Indian mahouts; fully-equipped Macedonian troops followed in tow.<sup>33</sup> Although the funerary carriage was eventually hijacked by Ptolemy and Alexander's body transferred to Memphis (321 BCE), the panel again illustrates the importance of the elephant as an expression of Alexander's military might. Through the funeral procession, the elephants also became associated with Hellenistic military processions and later Roman triumphs.

A succession crisis erupted in Babylon after Alexander's death, as the Macedonian king died without leaving a viable heir to ascend to the throne.<sup>34</sup> Meleager counseled the appointment of either Alexander's mentally unfit half-brother Arrhidaeus or Heracles, the son of Alexander's mistress Barsine (i.e., born out of wedlock). Perdikkas, for his part, proposed waiting for the birth of Roxane's child. In the ensuing conflict, in which the Macedonian infantry under Meleager faced the opposition of the Macedonian cavalry under Perdikkas and most other generals, Perdikkas even deployed elephants.<sup>35</sup> According to Curtius Rufus, after an ad hoc trial found Meleager guilty, hundreds of supposed instigators among the infantry were executed by being trampled to death by the elephants—Meleager was murdered soon after.<sup>36</sup> From a fabulous beast none had seen before, within a single generation the elephant had become an instrument of fear used to instill terror even among the Macedonian troops.

While the reign of Alexander the Great deserves a lengthier treatment, as it was the first generation in which Greeks and Macedonians first encountered the elephant in significant numbers, the Age of the Successors is here illustrated only with a few key moments and iconic images. From there, we quickly pass from Ptolemy I and his son Ceraunus via Pyrrhus' Italian campaign to Hannibal's war against Rome.

As Ptolemy (ca. 369/8–282 BCE) had diverted Alexander's funeral cortege to Memphis, Perdikkas invaded Egypt with the Macedonian royal army, including a number of elephants (320 BCE).<sup>37</sup> After Perdikkas' disastrous defeat at the Nile, the elephants probably fell to Ptolemy. As there were 200 elephants mentioned with the Macedonian army at Babylon (323 BCE), and since Antigonos received 70 at Triparadisus (319 BCE) and Antipater took another 70 to Europe, perhaps some 50 or 60 came

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Diod. *Bibl.* 18.26–28; Strab. *Geogr.* 17.1.8; Paus. 1.6.3; Just. *Epit.* 13.4.1–8.

<sup>33</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 18.27.1; (A. Stewart 1993, pp. 216–21; Schneider 2009, pp. 317–18; Alonso Troncoso 2013, pp. 255–56, with n. 1).

<sup>34</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 18.2; Curt. Ruf. 10.6–9; Just. *Epit.* 13.2–4; Arr. *Succ. ap. Phot. Bibl.* 92.

<sup>35</sup> Curt. Ruf. 10.9.1 and 16.

<sup>36</sup> Curt. Ruf. 10.9.18; Alonso Troncoso (2013), p. 256, with n. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 18.33–36; (Glover 1948, p. 1; Scullard 1974, pp. 78–80).

into Ptolemy's possession.<sup>38</sup> Incidentally, the elephants in Antipater's train might well have become the first elephants seen in the Greek peninsula and thus in Europe at large.

After his proclamation of kingship, Ptolemy issued his own portrait coinage (ca. 305/4–298 BCE) that featured his head bound by the royal fillet (*diadēma*) and his bust covered by the sacred fleece (*aegis*) on the obverse (Figure 5).<sup>39</sup> Of particular interest here is his choice of reverse image, which shows the deified Alexander holding a scepter and a thunderbolt—as on the Porus medallions—standing in a chariot drawn by four elephants (*quadriga*). The obvious connection between Alexander and Ptolemy's proclaimed kingship is therefore further emphasized by the symbolic association between the elephants and military victory.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 5.** Alexander in Elephant Chariot (MFA acc. no. 11.1754); gold; Alexandria, Egypt; ca. 304–298 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston].

Moreover, when still nominally acting as Egyptian *satrap*, Ptolemy had minted the famous posthumous portrait coinage of Alexander the Great (ca. 319–305 BCE).<sup>41</sup> The divinized portraiture depicts him with ram's horn over his temple, an elephant scalp as headdress (*exuviae elephantis*), and a plain or, later, scaled *aegis* (Figure 6).<sup>42</sup> The reverse shows the standing Athena Alcideus, the patroness of Pella (the Macedonian capital), with various marks and symbols that need not detain us here. Both Seleucus and Lysimachus imitated Ptolemy's coinage, but usually without either *exuvia* or ram's horn.<sup>43</sup> Scullard suggested that Alexander's *exuviae elephantis* was therefore somehow ideologically connected with Ptolemy's victory against Perdiccas.<sup>44</sup> Below, we return in more depth to the religious symbolism of Alexander's divinity as expressed in this exquisite coinage.

<sup>38</sup> Plut. *Eum.* 5.1; Arr. *Succ. (ap. Phot. Bibl.* 92) 28; Just. *Epit.* 13.6, 8; Oros. *Adv. Pag.* 3.23.19–20 and 23.

<sup>39</sup> MFA acc. no. 11.1754 (gold stater, Alexandria, ca. 304–298 BCE); (Dahmen 2007, p. 113, pl. 4, figs. 6–7; Alonso Troncoso 2013, pp. 262–63; Lorber 2018, no. 99).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Athen. *Deipn.* 5.31–32 (200D–F); (Rice 1983, pp. 85, 90) (elephant *quadrigae* appearing in the Grand Procession of Ptolemy II).

<sup>41</sup> (Jenkins 1960; Bieber 1965, esp. pp. 185–86, pl. 6, fig. 12; Nicolet-Pierre 1995; Bianchi 2007; Dahmen 2007, pp. 112–13, pl. 4, figs. 1–4; Schneider 2009, pp. 320–21; Lorber 2011, pp. 299–304, figs. 2–3; Lorber 2012, p. 25, fig. 2; Alonso Troncoso 2013, p. 256); Kakavas in Picón and Hemingway (2016, pp. 70–72, fig. 86).

<sup>42</sup> MFA acc. no. 20.768 (silver tetradrachm, Alexandria, ca. 315/300 BCE); (Lorber 2018, no. 73).

<sup>43</sup> (Bieber 1965, p. 186, pl. 7, figs. 13a–b; Hadley 1974, esp. p. 52; Dahmen 2007, pp. 116–17, pl. 6 (Agathocles of Syracuse), pp. 117–18, pl. 7, fig. 1–3 (Seleucus), pp. 119–20, pl. 8, figs. 1–4 and pp. 120–21, pl. 9 (Agathocles of Bactria); Alonso Troncoso 2013, p. 259; Picón and Hemingway 2016, fig. 93 and no. 139).

<sup>44</sup> (Scullard 1974, pp. 80–81); endorsed by Alonso Troncoso (2013, p. 257).



**Figure 6.** Alexander in Elephant Scalp (MFA acc. no. 20.768); silver; Alexandria, Egypt; ca. 315/300 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston].

Among the Successors (viz., early 3rd century BCE), sources report some approximate numbers of elephants, including 40 each for Ptolemy and Cassander, an astounding 400 to 500 for Seleucus, and 20 for Pyrrhus—for the most part, these animals disappeared mysteriously from the historical record afterward (post 275 BCE).<sup>45</sup> After the death of Lysimachus at the Battle of Corupedium (280 BCE), Ptolemy Ceraunus (ca. 319/8–279 BCE; the eldest son of Ptolemy with his wife Eurydice) murdered Seleucus to appear as the avenger of Lysimachus. According to Wilhelm Hollstein, Ceraunus continued Lysimachus' portrait coinage featuring Alexander with ram's horn and *diadēma* (Figure 7).<sup>46</sup> Significantly, the reverse of this very rare gold and silver coinage minted at Lysimachia in Thrace shows Athena Nikephorus with various marks and symbols, including not only a lion's head, but also an elephant (ca. 281/0 BCE). He must thus have obtained some elephants from the Seleucid forces.<sup>47</sup> In fact, he rode on the back of an elephant against the invading Gauls under the command of Belgius.<sup>48</sup> Ceraunus was, however, thrown off his elephant during the battle, captured and beheaded—his head was allegedly carried about on a spear, as Justin added in apparent delight, to strike terror in the enemy (279 BCE).<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 7.** Alexander and Athena Nicephorus (CNG 101, lot 2037); gold; Lysimachia, Thrace (mod. Turkey); ca. 281–280 BCE. [Image courtesy of Victor England, the Classical Numismatic Group, London].

<sup>45</sup> (Scullard 1974, pp. 98–100); cf. Rice (1983, pp. 90–92) (counting 96 elephants in the Grand Procession of Ptolemy II, derived from expeditions into Nubia and the Sudan).

<sup>46</sup> CNG 101, Triton XIX (6 January 2016), lot 2037 (gold stater, Lysimachia, ca. 281–280 BCE); ex CNG 72 (14 June 2006), lot 499; Hollstein (1995), fig. 3 (Leu 50, 25 April 1990, lot 93); Picón and Hemingway (2016), fig. 93.

<sup>47</sup> (Scullard 1974, pp. 99–100; Strootman 2005, pp. 105–7).

<sup>48</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 22.3; Just. *Epit.* 24.4–8; Paus. 10.19.7; Memn. *ap. Phot.* = FGrH 434, 8.8; Mitchell (1993, I: p. 13).

<sup>49</sup> Just. *Epit.* 24.5.6 (*Ptolomeus multis vulneribus saucius capitur; caput eius amputatum et lancea fixum tota acie ad terrorem hostium circumfertur*); Alonso Troncoso (2013, p. 256) (pointing out that Ceraunus is the only Hellenistic king known to have fought on the battlefield on the back of an elephant).



When Pyrrhus of Epirus (319–272 BCE) set out on his Italian campaign (280–275 BCE), he took with him 20 elephants.<sup>50</sup> It remains unclear whether he had captured the animals from Antigonus' son Demetrius, or had received them either from Lysimachus or Ceraunus.<sup>51</sup> Pyrrhus had earlier requested support from Ptolemy II (308–246 BCE), who could then still afford to promise 5000 infantry, 4000 cavalry, and 50 elephants.<sup>52</sup> (Pyrrhus and Ptolemy II were related through the former's marriage to Antigone, a daughter of the latter's mother Berenice from her first husband, before she married Ptolemy I.) Despite his elephant force, Pyrrhus was unable to effect a decisive victory and was eventually defeated at Beneventum (274 BCE) by the Roman troops under consul Manius Curius Dentatus. Various ancient sources report that a calf and its mother caused great confusion among Pyrrhus' ranks, which gave the Romans the upper hand in the battle.<sup>53</sup> Dentatus was able to capture four elephants—the first elephants ever seen in Rome—which he exhibited as his most magnificent triumph.<sup>54</sup> A ceramic plate from Capena (dated ca. 275–270 BCE), now at the “Villa Giulia” in Rome, illustrating a turreted elephant with a rider and two fighters, followed by an elephant calf, appears to commemorate the Roman victory over Pyrrhus (Figure 8).<sup>55</sup>



**Figure 8.** Elephant plate (MNE inv. no. 23.949); ceramic; Capena, Italy; ca. 275–270 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Museo Nazionale Etrusco, “Villa Giulia”, Rome].

By the time of the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE), the Carthaginians had acquired elephants for use in battle as well, although their source lay in Africa (like that of the Ptolemies and

<sup>50</sup> (Glover 1948, pp. 2, 4; Gowers 1947, p. 44; Scullard 1974, pp. 101–19).

<sup>51</sup> Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 8.16; Plut. *Pyrrh.* 15–17; Paus. 1.12.3; Just. *Epit.* 8.1 and 17.2.14.

<sup>52</sup> Trog. *Procl.* 17; Just. *Epit.* 17.2.12–15. In this passage, Justin apparently refers to three different Ptolemies indiscriminately: Ptolemy I (whose “daughter”, Antigone, was married to Pyrrhus), Ptolemy Ceraunus (who is the main subject of the chapter), and Ptolemy II (who must have been the king supplying the troops under question); (Hammond 1988).

<sup>53</sup> Dion. *Rom. Ant.* 20.12.3 (14); Flor. *Epit.* 1.12–13; Plut. *Pyrrh.* 25; Zonar. *Epit.* 8.6.

<sup>54</sup> Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 13.3 (*primus Curius Dentatus in triumpho duxit elephantos*); Eutrop. *Brev.* 2.14 (*Curius in consulatu triumphavit. Primus Romam elephantos quattuor duxit*); (Shelton 2006, p. 9).

<sup>55</sup> MNE inv. no. 23.949 (polychrome ceramic plate, diam, 29.5 cm, Capena, ca. 275–270 BCE); (Bar-Kochva 1989, p. 584, pl. 12; Ambrosini 2005; Picón and Hemingway 2016, pp. 118–19, no. 21).

Numidians).<sup>56</sup> When Hannibal (247–ca. 182 BCE), crossed the Pyrenees from the Iberian peninsula with 50,000 infantry and 9000 cavalry, his forces also included 37 war elephants. In his crossing of the Alps a month later, he suffered heavy losses. While the sources indicate that Hannibal reached the Po Valley with 20,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry, the number of surviving elephants remains unstated. He nevertheless crushingly defeated the Roman consular armies at the Battle of the Trebia (ca. December 218/January 217 BCE), in which he employed an (again) unspecified number of elephants among the cavalry on both wings. How many survived is (once more) unclear, but Livy reports that seven elephants perished in a winter storm.<sup>57</sup> Although reinforcements including elephants did eventually reach Hannibal, like Pyrrhus, he was unable to effect a decisive victory over the Roman forces, even at the final battle at Zama (202 BCE). Still, the ideological importance of elephants for Carthage was powerfully expressed on a series of coins. For instance, on Punic silver shekels from Spain, the portrait of a bearded Hannibal in the guise of a wreathed Melqart with a club over his shoulder graces the obverse, while the reverse features an African forest elephant with a cloaked rider holding a goad in hand on its back (Figure 9).<sup>58</sup> Notice the absence of the turret, which could only be used on Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*).<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 9.** Hannibal as Melqart (BM reg. no. 1911,0702.1); silver; Mogente, Spain; ca. 237–209 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

### 3. From Rome to India

Let us now follow the elephant from Rome via Northern Africa and the Near East back to India, meandering associatively through time. The following is, once again, not intended to present an exhaustive catalogue of literary references or iconographic representations. However, the aim is to relate some of the most striking examples regarding elephants in the wider context of Hellenistic history and art, from to late-Republican and early-Imperial Rome.

Allegedly the *cognomen* of Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE) derived from the Moorish word for “elephant”, *caesai*, “because he felled an elephant in battle”, rather than from *caesius* or *caeruleus* (pertaining to the color of the sky).<sup>60</sup> According to Polyaeus, Caesar entered Britain across the Thames with an elephant (54 BCE); he added that the animal had never before been seen there.<sup>61</sup> During the great Roman Civil War (49–45 BCE), King Juba of Numidia supplied elephants to the

<sup>56</sup> (Gowers 1947, pp. 44–47; Hoyte 1960; Scullard 1974, pp. 154–77; Edwards 2001; Charles and Rhodan 2007; Rance 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 21.58.11.

<sup>58</sup> BM reg. no. 1911,0702.1 (silver double shekel, Mogente Hoard, Spain, ca. 237–209 BCE); *SNG BM Spain*, no. 97; (Charles and Rhodan 2007, p. 367).

<sup>59</sup> *Suda* θ 438 s.v. Θωράκιον; (Glover 1944, p. 259; Gowers 1947, p. 43; Charles 2008b, 2014; Rance 2009).

<sup>60</sup> *Hist. Aug., Ael.* 2.3 (*ab elephanto, qui lingua Maurorum caesai dicitur, in proelio caeso*); (Scullard 1974, pp. 194–98, pl. 24d).

<sup>61</sup> Polyaeus. *Strat.* 8.23.5; cf. Caes. *Bell. Gall.* 5.18 (where no word is said about the elephant); (Gowers 1947, pp. 48–49; Stevens 1959, pp. 626–28).

Pompeian forces.<sup>62</sup> At Thapsus in Tunisia (46 BCE), Caesar captured over 60 elephants, and displayed 40 elephants in the triumphal procession at Rome to commemorate his “African” victory.<sup>63</sup> Caesar’s coinage even alluded to the victory of good over evil, with an elephant trampling a serpent with his *cognomen* in the exergue (Figure 10).<sup>64</sup> Associated with Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon, the series of silver denarii bears down the continued importance of the trope of the fighting elephant and dragon or serpent.

After Octavian (63 BCE–14 CE) annexed Egypt, he had Caesarion—the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra VII (69–30 BCE)—killed and brought Cleopatra’s children with Mark Antony (83–30 BCE) to Rome.<sup>65</sup> Their daughter Cleopatra Selene (40–5 BCE) was subsequently married to Juba II (52 BCE–23 CE), who had been restored to his father’s kingdom of Numidia (30 BCE).<sup>66</sup> Juba and Cleopatra were established as rulers of Mauretania when Numidia was turned into a Roman province (25 BCE). One of the most beautiful and intriguing works of Hellenistic art, certainly the most precious artefact among the Boscoreale treasures, is a gilded silver *emblemata* dish with an allegorical portrait supposed to be of Cleopatra Selene, surrounded by a plethora of religious symbols and attributes within a garland of myrtle berries and laurel leaves (Figure 11).<sup>67</sup> She wears an *exuviae elephantis*, evincing that the elephant remained a powerful image even in the post-Hellenistic age.



**Figure 10.** Elephant Trampling Serpent (BM reg. no. R.8822); the reverse features the pontifical emblems of the *culullus* (sacrificial vessel), *aspergillum* (lustral implement), *apex* (priestly cap), and *securis* (sacrificial axe); silver; Roman empire, traveling mint; ca. 49/48 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

<sup>62</sup> Caes. *Bell. Civ.* 2.40; Vell. *Hist.* 2.54; Suet. *Jul.* 39; App. *Bell. Civ.* 2.14.96. For the death of Juba, see: Strab. *Geogr.* 17.3.12; Suet. *Jul.* 35.

<sup>63</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 36; App. *Bell. Civ.* 2.15.101.

<sup>64</sup> BM reg. no. R.8822 (silver denarius, travelling mint, ca. 49/48 BCE); *BMCR* II: 390, no. 27, pl. 103, fig. 5; *RCC* no. 443/1; (Dayet 1960; Hofmann 1970; Woytek 2006; Nousek 2008; Woods 2009) (pointing to an association between the serpent’s crest, *iuba* in Latin, and the Numidian king’s name; if correct, the association of the *cognomen* with the elephant might even be explicit here); (Amela Valverde 2013).

<sup>65</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.5; Plut. *Alex.* 36, 54, 87; Dio Cass. *Hist. Rom.* 49.41 and 51.15; (Roller 2003, pp. 76–90). For a possible portrait of Cleopatra Selene, see: AMC inv. no. S 66(31); Walker and Higgs (2001, p. 219, no. 197 (with lit.)).

<sup>66</sup> For a portrait bust of Juba II, see: MAR inv. no. 99.1.12.1340; (Baradez 1960; Roller 2003, pp. 147–48, fig. 19; Landwehr 2007; Picón and Hemingway 2016, pp. 311–12, no. 262).

<sup>67</sup> Louvre inv. no. Bj 1969 (silver *emblemata* dish, discovered at the Villa della Pisanella, Boscoreale, created ca. 25 BCE–25 CE); (Linfert 1984; Walker and Higgs 2001, pp. 312–13, no. 324; Roller 2003, pp. 141–42, fig. 16). For the Boscoreale Treasures, esp., see: (Héron de Villefosse 1899, pp. 39–43, no. 1, 175–86, fig. 7, pl. 1; Baratte 1986, pp. 77–81).



**Figure 11.** Cleopatra Selene (Louvre inv. no. Bj 1969); silver; Boscoreale, Italy; ca. 25 BCE–25 CE. [Image courtesy of the Louvre Museum, Paris].

Much earlier, at the end of the Fourth Syrian War (219–217 BCE), Ptolemy IV (244–204 BCE) had defeated Antiochus III (ca. 241–187 BCE) at the Battle of Raphia (22 June 217).<sup>68</sup> The Seleucid infantry numbered about 70,000 opposite 62,000 Ptolemaic infantry, and while Antiochus is said to have deployed over 100 war elephants, Ptolemy is said to have fielded just under 75.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, this was perhaps the only ancient battle in which African elephants fought against Asian.<sup>70</sup> Even though Ptolemy's smaller elephants panicked at the sight of Antiochus' larger pachyderms, the Egyptian phalanx ultimately effected a decisive victory.

Earlier still, Seleucus I (ca. 358–281 BCE) had obtained his 400–500 elephants from Chandragupta (r. ca. 322/1–299/8 BCE), the founder of the Mauryan dynasty that overthrew the power of the Nanda kingdom in the Ganges Valley after the death of Alexander the Great.<sup>71</sup> Seleucus deployed them against Antigonus at Ipsus (301 BCE)<sup>72</sup> and against Lysimachus at Corupedium (281 BCE)<sup>73</sup>, after which they disappear from the historical record. Seleucid coinage frequently features elephants, demonstrating their symbolic importance as expression of power. For instance, Seleucus I struck silver coins (ca. 296–281 BCE) featuring the laureate head of a bearded Zeus on the obverse and Athena, brandishing a spear in one hand and holding a shield in the other, standing in a chariot drawn by horned elephants (*biga* or *quadriga*), on the reverse, often with an anchor above (Figure 12).<sup>74</sup> Of note are the horns that adorn the elephant's head, which signify the animal's divine nature. Bronze coins struck during the reign of Antiochus I (ca. 281–261 BCE), with a Macedonian shield decorated with anchor and lunar crescents on the obverse, depict a walking horned elephant on the reverse

<sup>68</sup> *I.Cair.* 31088a (Raphia Decree); (Scullard 1974, pp. 137–43; Bricault 1999; Grainger 2010, pp. s195–218).

<sup>69</sup> Polyb. 5.65 and 79–87 (102 vs. 73 elephants resp.).

<sup>70</sup> (Glover 1944, pp. 267–69; 1948, p. 5; Gowers 1947, p. 43; 1948; Karttunen 1997, pp. 194–97; Sick 2002; Charles 2007, 2016; Schneider 2009, pp. 332–34; Brandt et al. 2014). For Ptolemaic elephant hunting expedition, esp. see: (Casson 1993; Thiers 2001; Burstein 2008; Cobb 2016).

<sup>71</sup> (Tarn 1940, pp. 84–89; Scullard 1974, pp. 95–100; Bosworth 1988, pp. 180–81; Bosworth 1996, pp. 119–20; Schneider 2009, p. 319; Kosmin 2014, pp. 32–33; Wheatley 2014). For the Mauryan Empire, see: (Singh 2009, pp. 320–67).

<sup>72</sup> Strab. *Geogr.* 15 (724), 16 (752); Plut. *Alex.* 62.2 and *Demetr.* 28.3; (Glover 1944, pp. 257, 261; 1948, p. 2; Gowers 1947, pp. 42–43; Schneider 2009, p. 319).

<sup>73</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 20.113 (mentioning 480 elephants); App. *Syr.* 62.

<sup>74</sup> ANS inv. no. 1944.100.44992 (tetradrachm, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris mint II, ca. 296–281 BCE); (Hadley 1974, p. 52 n. 7, p. 58 n. 49, and p. 60; Houghton and Lorber 2002, p. 130, no. 39b; Schneider 2009, p. 320; Iossif and Lorber 2010, esp. fig. 1; Coşkun 2012, p. 66, n. 30; Alonso Troncoso 2013, pp. 260–63).

(Figure 13).<sup>75</sup> Later, Seleucus II (r. 246–225 BCE) issued bronzes with either his diademed head or the helmeted head of Athena on the obverse, and an elephant with rider on the reverse (Figure 14).<sup>76</sup> Evidently, the elephant was a popular theme in early-Seleucid ideology and iconography.



**Figure 12.** Zeus and Athena (ANS inv. no. 1944.100.44992); silver; Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, Iraq; ca. 296–281 BCE. [Image courtesy of the American Numismatics Society, New York].



**Figure 13.** Macedonian Shield and Elephant (APM inv. no. 5147); bronze; Antioch, Syria; ca. 280–261 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].



**Figure 14.** Seleucus II and Elephant (APM inv. no. 5148); bronze; Ecbatana, Iran; ca. 228–226 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].

<sup>75</sup> APM inv. no. 5147 (bronze coin, Antioch, ca. 280–261 BCE); *SNG Cop.* 35, no. 67; (Houghton and Lorber 2002, pp. 339–40; Jurriaans-Helle 2011, p. 23, fig. 5a–b; Coşkun 2012, p. 66, n. 29).

<sup>76</sup> APM inv. no. 5148 (bronze coin, Ecbatana, ca. 228–226 BCE); *SNG Cop.* 35, no. 146; Houghton and Lorber (2002, no. 819a).

According to Appian (fl. ca. 140–150 CE), Antiochus I owed his cult epithet *Sōtēr* (“Savior”) to driving out the Galatians.<sup>77</sup> These Gallic tribes had crossed the Balkans and—after the successive deaths of Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ceraunus (280–279 BCE)—moved from Europe into Asia Minor. The satirical rhetorician Lucian of Samosata (ca. 125–post 180 CE), relates that Antiochus’ 16 elephants instilled panic among Galatians, who supposedly had never seen the animal before (despite the battle against Ceraunus).<sup>78</sup> They caused such great carnage that Antiochus was able to claim a decisive victory although greatly outnumbered. In gratitude, he supposedly engraved a trophy only with the image of an elephant. While Altay Coşkun has rightly questioned the accuracy of this “Elephant Victory”,<sup>79</sup> there is no reason to doubt the historicity of the Seleucid king’s engagement against the invading Galatians, and that Antiochus deployed war elephants in the battle (ca. 275/4 BCE).<sup>80</sup> The importance of the elephant for the war against the Gauls is borne out visibly by terracotta figurines, such as that found in a grave at Myrina (Figure 15).<sup>81</sup> It shows a decked-out war elephant with a rider and a wooden turret with metal shields charging a Gaul—recognizable by his Celtic shield. A similar imagery on a limestone cake- or bread-stamp, without the enemy, suitably illustrates the enduring popularity of the turreted-elephant theme (Figure 16).<sup>82</sup>



**Figure 15.** Elephant Trampling Gaul (Louvre inv. no. Myr. 284); terracotta; Myrina, Asia Minor (mod. Turkey); ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Louvre Museum, Paris].

<sup>77</sup> App. *Syr.* 65.343; (Scullard 1974, pp. 120–23, pl. 7b; Mitchell 1993, I: p. 18; Coşkun 2012, p. 62, n. 17, and p. 69).

<sup>78</sup> Luc. *Zeuxis* 8–11; (Glover 1944, pp. 260–61; Mitchell 1993, I: p. 18; Coşkun 2012, p. 63, n. 19).

<sup>79</sup> (Coşkun 2012, pp. 62–65).

<sup>80</sup> Pomp. *Trog. Prol.* 25; Suda s.v. Σιμωνίδης = *FGrH* 163F = *Suppl. Hell.* 723; (Strootman 2005, pp. 115–17; Coşkun 2012, p. 62, n. 15, 67–68, n. 34).

<sup>81</sup> Louvre inv. no. Myr. 284 (terracotta figurine, Myrina, ca. 3rd century BCE); (Pottier et al. 1887–1888, I: pp. 318–27, pl. 9; Bar-Kochva 1989, p. 586, pl. 13b; Mitchell 1993, I: p. 18; Coşkun 2012, p. 65; Perrot 2013, pp. 30–31; Picón and Hemingway 2016, p. 119, no. 22).

<sup>82</sup> APM inv. no. 7855 (limestone stamp, diam. 18.5 cm, Egyptian Delta (?), late Roman (?)); (Allard Pierson Museum 1937, p. 65, no. 578; Moormann 2000, p. 205 (with lit.), no. 277, pl. 95a).



**Figure 16.** Turreted Elephant (APM inv. no. 7855); limestone; Delta (?), Egypt; late Roman (?). [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].

Regardless of the role of elephants in relation to the fight with the Gauls, the “Galatian Victory” became a trope consciously modeled not only as the Hellenistic equivalent of the historical Graeco-Persian Wars (499–449 BCE), but also as the mythic *Amazonomachia* and the *Gigantomachia*.<sup>83</sup> The Pergamon Altar itself is a deliberate imitation of the relief friezes of the Athenian Parthenon.<sup>84</sup> The various statues of wounded, dying, and otherwise defeated Gauls express in sculpture what Callimachus conveyed in hymnic poetry.<sup>85</sup> Among the reliefs of Pergamon, a reused and thus damaged block portrays an elephant head in naturalistic detail.<sup>86</sup> In Hellenistic ideology, reality was influenced by myth, history modeled after legend; if myth can bleed into reality, it is clear that “myth” and “reality” were not mutually exclusive categories.

On a much smaller scale, the same point is illustrated by Ptolemaic faience artefacts. Particularly poignant in this respect is a sherd of a faience vase, now in Amsterdam, depicting a battle scene of an unmanned elephant and a winged griffon fighting side by side (Figure 17).<sup>87</sup> The elephant chases after a human figure that has only been partially preserved to the left of the sherd. It is nonetheless clear that the (probably nude) figure represents a Gallatian warrior running away from the pachyderm, as he can be recognized from his oval Celtic shield. Another fragment may show a unicorn, its horn pointing forward, and a rider on horseback in a hunting or battle scene (Figure 18).<sup>88</sup> Again, what seems to be the rear side of an elephant appears to the left of the sherd. Other fragments of vessels, appliques, and figurines not only reveal the immense popularity of the elephant as a theme in the minor arts, but also the notably accurate observations of the animal’s anatomy, harness, and

<sup>83</sup> (Mitchell 1993, I: 21–26; Darbyshire et al. 2000; Barbantani 2002, esp. pp. 32–44; Strootman 2005, pp. 129–34; Thonemann 2015; Picón and Hemingway 2016, no. 100a–c (with lit)).

<sup>84</sup> (Mitchell 1993, I: p. 21; Strootman 2005, pp. 122–29; Prignitz 2008; Grüssinger et al. 2011); A. Scholl in Picón and Hemingway (2016, pp. 44–53, figs. 53–63).

<sup>85</sup> (Howard 1983; Chamoux 1988; Mitchell 1993, I: pp. 21 and 46, fig. 7; Strobel 1994; Barbantani 2002, esp. pp. 44–47; Strootman 2005, esp. pp. 118–21; Coarelli 2014; Kosmin 2014, p. 3); M. Papini in Picón and Hemingway (2016, pp. 40–43, figs. 48–52, pp. 176–81, nos. 97 and 100b).

<sup>86</sup> AS-SMB inv. no. AvP VII 265 (marble relief block, h. 15 cm, Pergamon, ca. 3rd–1st century BCE); (Grüssinger et al. 2011, pp. 466–67, no. 3.41; Picón and Hemingway 2016, p. 131, no. 38).

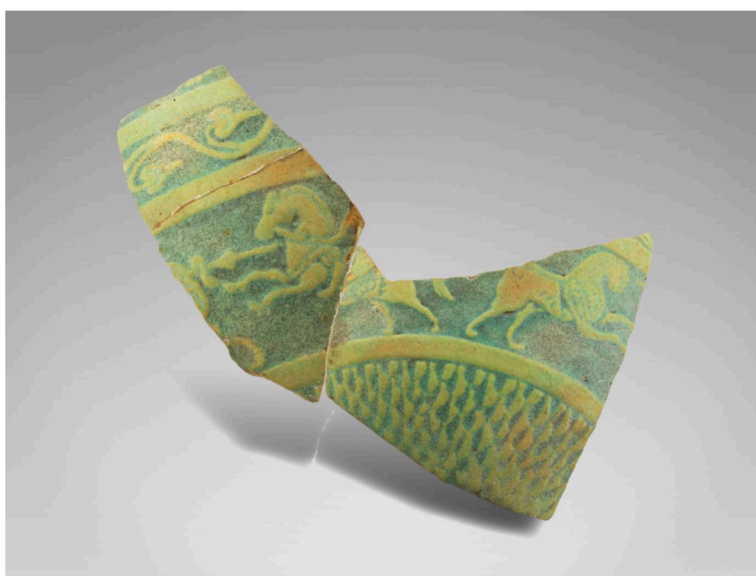
<sup>87</sup> APM inv. no. 7614 (faience sherd, Memphis (?), ca. 3rd century BCE); cf. APM inv. no. 7569 (kneeling warrior, winged sphynx and partial elephant trunk); (Allard Pierson Museum 1937, p. 177, nos. 1623–1624; Scheurleer 1979, pp. 100–1, no. 2, figs. 2–4, and cf. nos. 1 and 3, figs. 1 and 5).

<sup>88</sup> APM inv. no. 7609 (faience sherd, Memphis (?), ca. 3rd century BCE).

decoration (Figures 19 and 20).<sup>89</sup> Moreover, traces of gilding and polychromy indicate that— notwithstanding their small size (and therefore imitations of larger-scale works of art)—these were expensive artefacts fashioned for domestic use among the affluent population of Ptolemaic Memphis and Alexandria, as well as elsewhere in Hellenistic Egypt.



**Figure 17.** Battle Scene with Elephant and Griffon (APM inv. no. 7614); faience; Memphis (?), Egypt; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].



**Figure 18.** Hunting Scene perhaps with Elephant and Unicorn (APM inv. no. 7609); faience; Memphis (?), Egypt; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].

<sup>89</sup> APM inv. nos. 7572 and 7578 (faience appliques, Memphis (?), ca. 3rd century BCE); (Allard Pierson Museum 1937, p. 177, nos. 1630–1631; Scheurleer 1979, pp. 103–4, nos. 4–5, figs. 8–9, and cf. pp. 105–06, nos. 6–7, figs. 10–17).





**Figure 19.** Elephant Head (APM inv. no. 7572); faience; Memphis (?), Egypt; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].



**Figure 20.** Attacking Elephant (APM inv. no. 7578); faience; Memphis (?), Egypt; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam].

The turreted war elephant, furthermore, is beautifully illustrated on twin decorative gilded silver harness plaques (*phalerae*) said to have been discovered in a grave during Russian excavations in Eastern Iran (Figure 21).<sup>90</sup> In nearly identical but mirrored design they depict an elephant (*Elephas maximus*) wearing a bell on a string around its neck. Atop the animal's neck sits a mahout wearing a turban, with a goad in his hand. From the crenulated turret, which is decorated with *croix pattées* and upright arrows, emerge two heads, one in profile with a broad-brimmed helmet, the other (nearly) facing with a turban. In addition to their deployment on the battlefield, these *phalerae* illustrate the persistent association of the elephant with mythic creatures, in this case the hippocampus shown within a border of waves on the saddle cloths on the animal's back.

<sup>90</sup> SHM inv. nos. S-64 and 65 (chased and gilded silver *phalerae*, diam. ca. 25cm, Eastern Iran (?), ca. 3rd–2nd century BCE); (Scullard 1974, pl. 12; Bar-Kochva 1989, p. 585, pl. 13a; Pfrommer 1993, p. 10, fig. 4).



**Figure 21.** Elephant *Phalerae* (SHM inv. nos. S-64 and 65); silver; Eastern Iran (?); ca. 3rd–2nd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia].

Farther still to the East, elephants were depicted on many coins and seals from Hellenistic Bactria and India—a practice going back to Harappan stamp seals of the Indus Civilization (Figure 1). For instance, the Greco-Bactrian king Demetrius I (r. ca. 205–171 BCE) is portrayed wearing an *exuvia elephantis*, *diadēma*, and *chlamys* (Macedonian cloak) on the obverse of his silver coins (Figure 22).<sup>91</sup> The elephant scalp, first devised for Alexander the Great on the coinage of Ptolemy I, was thus appropriated in a Greco-Indian context.<sup>92</sup> The reverse depicts a youthful, nude Heracles standing with the lion's skin and his club in his left hand, while placing an ivy wreath on his head with his right hand.



**Figure 22.** Demetrius I in Elephant Scalp (ANS inv. no. 1995.51.23); silver; Panjshir, Afghanistan; ca. 190–171 BCE. [Image courtesy of the American Numismatics Society, New York].

Rare silver tetradrachms of the Indo-Greek king Antialcidas (r. ca. 115–95 BCE)<sup>93</sup> feature his portrait bust with his diademed head facing to (the viewer's) left, thrusting a spear with his right

<sup>91</sup> ANS inv. no. 1995.51.23 (silver tetradrachm, Panjshir, ca. 190–171 BCE); Mitchiner (1975, no. 103d); cf. Chase (1948, p. 40, fig. 4).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Abdullaev (2017).

<sup>93</sup> Little is known about Antialcidas beside his ample coinage, except that he sent his ambassador Heliodorus of Taxila to King Bhagabhadra of the Shunga dynasty (ca. 185–75 BCE) in eastern and central India; at Besnagar (mod. Vidisha), near the Buddhist stupa's at Sanchi, Heliodorus erected a pillar on which he declared his devotion to the Hindu deity Krishna; for which, see: (Bieber 1965, pl. 1, fig. 4; Puskás 1990, p. 43; Karttunen 1997, p. 296).

hand, the shoulders frontal from the back draped with an *aegis* (Figure 23).<sup>94</sup> The bilingual coins record the king's name and epithet, Nikephorus ("Bearing Victory"), in both Greek and Prakrit. The reverse shows a standing deity, dressed in a heavily pleated garment, his head radiate, holding a scepter in his left hand; behind him stands an Indian elephant facing left with a raised trunk and a bell hanging around its neck; a small figurine of Nike stands on the animal's head, holding a wreath in her outstretched right hand. The identity of the radiate deity is unclear, but might be understood as Krishna.



**Figure 23.** Antialcidas and Krishna (?) with Elephant (MFA inv. no. 47.128); silver; Taxila, Pakistan; ca. 115–95 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston].

In the Mauryan kingdom (ca. 321/0–185 BCE)—established by Chandragupta shortly after Alexander's death and ultimately overtaken by the Shunga dynasty—punch-marked silver coins called *karshapana* were issued featuring beside an elephant, a bull, a *chakra*, the sun, and a tree on a hill (Figure 24).<sup>95</sup> To be sure, all five images refer to esoteric Hindu and Buddhist symbols: the bull, of course, has been held sacred in South Asia since the Harappan civilization; the tree represents the *ficus religiosa* ("sacred fig") of Hindu and Buddhist worship; *sūrya*, the divine sun, was already revered in the Vedic hymns; and the *chakra* (lit. "disc"; cognate with "cycle") is a Tantric nerve nexus. The combination of these symbols thus intimates the sacred status of the elephant in the Indus valley at the onset of the Hellenistic period.



**Figure 24.** Mauryan Karshapana (BM reg. no. OR.7296), featuring a sacred tree on a hill, the sun, an elephant, a bull, and the *chakra* (clockwise from the top); silver; Maurya, India; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

<sup>94</sup> MFA inv. no. 47.128 (silver tetradrachm, Taxila, ca. 115–95 BCE); (Chase 1948, p. 41, fig. 5; Brett 1955, no. 2345).

<sup>95</sup> BM reg. no. OR.7296 (silver *karshapana*, Maurya, ca. 3rd century BCE); Allan (1936, p. 79, no. 5, pl. 8.2); cf. Sick (2002, pp. 132–33).

If I could beg for the reader's patience, one last example may suffice to illustrate the elephant's lasting importance in the Indian subcontinent well into the common era. The elephant continued to be depicted frequently on coinage of the Kushan Empire (1st–4th century CE). King Huvishka (r. 151–190 CE), for instance, issued gold coins on which he is shown riding an elephant, holding a scepter and goad; the reverse depicts the goddess Ardochsho, standing in a heavily pleated dress, her head surrounded by a nimbus, holding an overflowing cornucopia in her left hand (Figure 25).<sup>96</sup> The goddess, identified by the legend in Kushan-Greek script (Αρχδοχφο), was an Avestan deity of good fortune who—by the attribute in her hand—was equated with the Greek Agathe Tyche, the Roman Fortuna, and the Gandhara-Buddhist Hariti.<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 25.** Huvishka and Ardochsho (ANS inv. no. 1948.34.1); gold; Peshawar, Pakistan; ca. 151–190 CE. [Image courtesy of the American Numismatics Society, New York].

#### 4. Elephants as Religious Symbols

The—admittedly associative—journey taken in this paper from Persia via India to Greece, and from there via Rome back to India, illustrates first of all that most, if not all, regions of the Mediterranean witnessed Asian or African elephants in the Hellenistic period. Indeed, the Hellenistic period was the great age of the animal's deployment in warfare. However, neither Darius nor Porus could claim victory against Alexander the Great, and neither Pyrrhus nor Hannibal could decisively defeat Rome, despite their elephant forces. Conversely, Ptolemy I defeated and captured the elephant forces both of Perdiccas (320 BCE) at Memphis and Demetrius I at Gaza (312 BCE), despite his own lack of elephants.<sup>98</sup> Thus, notwithstanding its powerful embodiment of military might, the pachyderm's actual tactical advantage remains questionable. Scores of people would have seen actual elephants with their own eyes, either on the battlefield, or in military parades or triumphal processions. Even more may have seen images of the animal, for instance on coins and statues or other works of art. As the preceding sections endeavored to illustrate, throughout the period the elephant nevertheless retained religious, mythical associations across the Hellenistic world and beyond. I therefore propose that these associations be examined a little further.

Let us return to the *emblema* portrait identified as Cleopatra Selene to consider the profusion of religious symbolism exhibited by the imagery (Figure 11). By this period (ca. 25 BCE–25 CE), the elephant hide worn as headdress appears to have become associated with Africa in general or Egypt in particular, although some scholars assume the association with Alexander's Indian triumph still remained, or that the headdress came to evoke Alexandria specifically.<sup>99</sup> In her left hand, the queen carries a *cornucopia* adorned with a lunar crescent, decorated with a bust of Helios, an eagle, and two

<sup>96</sup> ANS inv. no. 1948.34.1 (gold *dinara*, Peshawar, ca. 151–190 CE); Göbl (1984, no. 305a.2); cf. Alonso Troncoso (2013, p. 269 n. 3). For the coins of Huvishka, see: Rosenfield (1967, esp. pp. 59–66).

<sup>97</sup> For Ardochsho, see: Rosenfield (1967, pp. 74–75).

<sup>98</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 19.80–84.

<sup>99</sup> (Coltelloni-Trannoy 2000; Maritz 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Fulinska 2012).

stars above two *pilei* (felt caps). The overflowing horn of plenty, symbol of fecundity and abundance, was an attribute associated with Ptolemaic power throughout the Hellenistic age. The moon sickle identifies the subject of the portrait as Cleopatra Selene (the Greek goddess of the moon). Her twin brother was called Alexander Helios (the Greek sun god). The two star-topped caps allude not only to the Dioscuri, the divine twins Castor and Pollux, but also to the apothotic divinization of which they were the agents in Lagid royal ideology.

In her right hand, the queen holds an upright cobra, which might refer to the instrument of her mother's suicide, to the *uraeus*—the protective snake of Egyptian royalty—or to the goddess Thermouthis, the serpentine form of Isis whose earthly manifestation was embodied by Cleopatra VII. The cobra faces a female panther depicted on the queen's chest, together with an abundance of fruit and an ear of grain. The animal is sacred to Dionysus, the god with whom Ptolemaic kings and even Mark Antony himself were closely assimilated. The other attributes include the bow and quiver of Artemis, the club and lion of Heracles, a *sistrum* (the ritual rattler of Egyptian religion), the peacock of Hera, the dolphin of Poseidon, the tong of Hephaestus, the caduceus of Asclepius, the sword of Ares, and the lyre of Apollo. The interesting close reading of the *emblema* by Jane Draycott (2012) that the whole design should be interpreted as an allegory of Cleopatra Selene as the descendant of Heracles and Dionysus—via Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony—who (unlike her parents) chose virtue over vice within the dominance of the *Pax Romana* may ultimately be an overinterpretation. At any rate, the religious symbolism with which the *emblema* portraiture is imbued should be apparent.

Selene's husband, Juba II, was, among other endeavors, a noted natural historian, quoted by Plutarch (46–120 CE) as stating that elephants, “without instruction, deliver prayers to the gods, purify themselves in the sea, and make obeisance to the rising sun by raising their trunks instead of hands.”<sup>100</sup> Pliny adds that elephants venerate the stars, pray to the earth, and worship not only the sun, but also the moon, and purify themselves by sprinkling their bodies with river water.<sup>101</sup>

Plutarch continued by citing Ptolemy IV Philopator, who had apparently testified that elephants are the most beloved creatures of the gods.<sup>102</sup>

For, after he [Ptolemy] had defeated Antiochus [III], he wished to pay the divine extraordinary honor for his victory in battle [at Raphia], he sacrificed four elephants among many other offerings. The next night he had dreams in which the deity angrily threatened him because the sacrifice was unwelcome to him. [Ptolemy] performed many rites of placation and set up bronze [statues of] elephants instead of the four he had slaughtered.<sup>103</sup>

The victory in question is the aforementioned Battle of Raphia (217 BCE), in which Ptolemy's African elephants had faced Antiochus' Asian elephants.<sup>104</sup> The Platonic philosopher Plutarch refrains from mentioning the name of the god who appeared in Ptolemy's nightmare. Aelian, evidently paraphrasing the same text by Ptolemy IV, however, makes clear that the deity in question was Helios.<sup>105</sup> The implication thus being that because elephants are religious animals that worship the sun god by lifting up their trunks to the heavens at dawn—as they may have done at the morning before the battle—they are beloved by Helios, who therefore was angered that Ptolemy had slaughtered four as offering to the god.

<sup>100</sup> Plut. *Soll. Anim.* 17.1 (= *Mor.* 972B–C) = *FGrH* III: 146–147, F 51a, 53; cf. *Ael. Nat. Anim.* 7.44.

<sup>101</sup> Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 8.1 (the reference to Mauretania indicating that Juba was the source for this statement); for similar statements, cf. *Ael. Nat. Anim.* 4.10; Cass. Dio 39.38.5.

<sup>102</sup> Plut. *Soll. Anim.* 17.2 (= *Mor.* 972C); *Ael. Nat. Anim.* 7.2 (for a similar claim).

<sup>103</sup> Plut. *Soll. Anim.* 17.2 (= *Mor.* 972C); cf. *Ael. Nat. Anim.* 7.44.

<sup>104</sup> *Supra* p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> *Ael. Nat. Anim.* 7.44; (Lorber 2011, p. 302). Note that, in the Raphia Decree (*I.Cair.* CG 31.088a = CG 50.048), Ptolemy IV is hailed as youthful Horus, beloved of Isis, to whom Ra (Helios) has given victory, the living image of Amun (Zeus-Ammon); the gods and goddesses appear to the king in an oracular dream before the campaign against Antiochus III; Bricault (1999) (suggesting that Ptolemy IV honored Isis and Sarapis as his saviors at Raphia); (Klotz 2013, pp. 50–51). Also note that in ancient Egyptian the elephant's trunk is called its “hand (*drt*)”; (Newberry 1944).

A lovely illustration of the religious connotations associated with the elephant might be gleaned from an early Hellenistic terracotta bread-stamp from Bubastis (mod. Tell Basta), now in the British Museum (Figure 26).<sup>106</sup> Within a circular wreath, it shows two winged cupids riding an elephant, its back covered by a draped cloth. The little Eros figure in front sits astride the animal's neck and plays a lyra (*cithara*). The iconography might well be an allusion to a Dionysian procession of the Ptolemaic era such as the Grand Procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, which included 24 war chariots drawn by elephants.<sup>107</sup>



**Figure 26.** Cupids on Elephant (BM reg. no. 1889,1014.60); terracotta; Bubastis, Egypt; ca. 3rd–2nd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

It bears repeating, as Michael Charles and Peter Rhodan aptly observed (in relation to Hannibal's elephants), that while "elephants could strike terror into inexperienced troops (and especially horses), the animals were just as likely to turn on their own ranks if defenders stood their ground and retaliated."<sup>108</sup> The trope of "instilling fear" is repeated throughout ancient sources about the deployment of war elephants. The reader might well wonder why generals would be interested in recruiting these pachyderm monsters in warfare at all, when there is little strategic advantage in employing them against each other. We may take as a clue the idea that fear, like panic, was divinely inspired, that is to say, the elephant beast should first of all be interpreted as a religious symbol.

Here, I would like to offer some possible connections and influences derived from Avestan and Vedic deities riding elephants in Zoroastrian and Hindu religions. Conceding its much later date (ca. 720–740 CE), a wall painting from the so-called "Red Hall" of the Medieval Palace at Varachsha in Sogdiana (mod. Uzbekistan) depicts an Avestan deity in mythic battle scenes riding on the back of an elephant, attacked variously by tigers, panthers, and griffons (Figure 27).<sup>109</sup> This mural thus reiterates the argument of the present essay: that the elephant was a mythic being associated with griffons. The heroic or divine rider is not recognizable through identifying attributes. His preternatural proportions as well as other features are reminiscent of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, particularly in his Chinese manifestation, Puxian.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps the absence of attributes was a

<sup>106</sup> BM reg. no. 1889,1014.60 (terracotta stamp, max. diam. 12.8 cm, Bubastis, ca. 3rd–2nd century BCE); cf. UCL, Petrie Museum, inv. no. 69.097 (terracotta mould, Memphis, ca. 1st–2nd century CE); GRMA inv. no.18.759 (terracotta group, 13.5 cm, Egypt, ca. 1st–2nd century BCE); (Savvopoulos et al. 2014, pp. 122–23, no. 40).

<sup>107</sup> Athen. *Deipn.* 5.22 (194F–195A), 31–32 (200D–F) and 34 (202A); (Rice 1983, p. 85; Schneider 2009, pp. 325–29).

<sup>108</sup> (Charles and Rhodan 2007, p. 368).

<sup>109</sup> SHM inv. no. SA-14.658–675 (mural, Varachsha, ca. 720–740 CE); (Shishkin 1963, pp. 54–59, 152–53, 204–5, pl. 4; Belenitskii and Marshak 1981, pp. 31–33, 47–49; Gorshenina and Rapin 2001, pp. 112–13, 155; Kiy et al. 2014, pp. 90–97, 202–3, no. 135).

<sup>110</sup> (Jian 2003, p. 161).

deliberate effort to represent Ahura Mazda himself, the supreme divinity called Adbag in Zoroastrian Sogdian.<sup>111</sup> It should be stressed that Sogdiana, north of Bactria, across the Oxus River (present-day Amu Darya), was close to the homeland of Zarathustra (Zoroaster).<sup>112</sup>



**Figure 27.** Ahura-Mazda (?) on Elephant (SHM inv. no. SA-14.658–675); mural, Varachsha, Uzbekistan; ca. 720–740 CE. [Image courtesy of Vincent Boele (former curator), Hermitage Amsterdam].

Various Hindu deities have likewise been associated with elephants.<sup>113</sup> Indra, the Lord of Heaven, rides a white elephant called Airavata, which symbolizes his victory over the dragon Vritra, his adversary.<sup>114</sup> It may be noted that Indra, with whom Adbag and thus Ahura Mazda were identified, wields the thunderbolt like Zeus and Alexander the Great. Bhairava and his consort Varahi are also shown seated on a white elephant (Figure 28).<sup>115</sup> Bhairava, the “frightful” avatar of Shiva, is clad in elephant’s skin and tiger’s hide, and can be recognized by his attributes the drum, corpse, trident, bowl, stick, and deer in his six hands; his traditional mount (*vāhana*), the dog, is seen behind the elephant on the (viewer’s) left. The mother goddess Varahi can likewise be identified by her attributes the plough, sacred tree, elephant goad, and noose. She represents the *shakti* (feminine energy) of Varaha, an avatar of Vishnu. While this particular image illustrated here is early-modern, the association of Shiva with the elephant skin goes back centuries.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, there is the popular elephant god Ganesha, Lord of Hosts, who belongs to the retinue of Shiva—if the former is not a emanation of the latter.<sup>117</sup> The earliest textual references date to the Sanskrit lexicon *Amarakosha*

<sup>111</sup> (Belenitskii and Marshak 1981, pp. 29–33).

<sup>112</sup> For ancient Zoroastrianism, e.g., see: (Boyce 1979, esp. pp. 1–12; Rose 2011, pp. 8–64; Foltz 2013, pp. 1–74). For the elephant as a symbol of sovereignty in Avestan belief, esp. see: (Tafazzoli 1975).

<sup>113</sup> (Bhattacharji 1970; Murthy 1985, pp. 6, 13, 17, 28, 31–34, 46–47; Williams 2000, esp. figs. 4–5; Sick 2002; Trautmann 2015). For (ancient) Indian religion, e.g., see: (Basham 1989; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, pp. 15–118; Singh 2009, pp. 182–255).

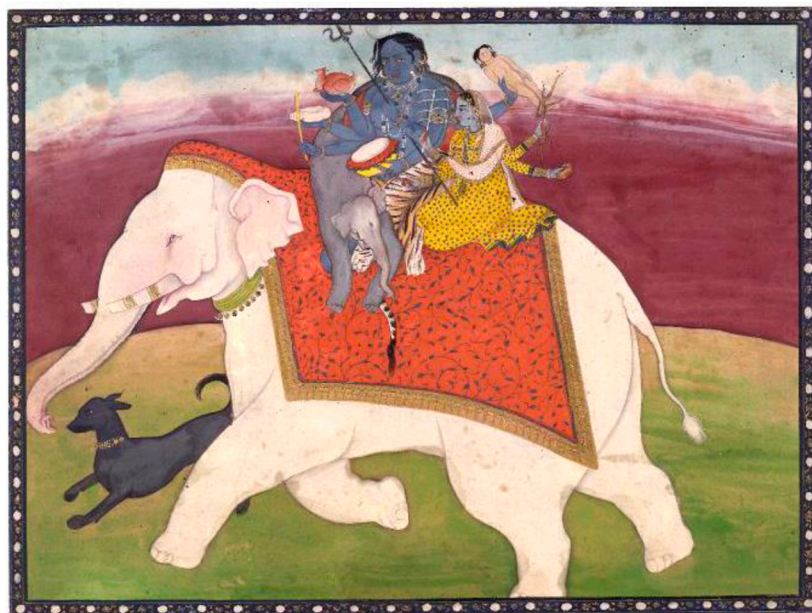
<sup>114</sup> For the association of Shiva with Airavata, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 55, 60 and 180; Dahlquist 1977, p. 140; Danielou 1979, pp. 124, 143 and 202; Murthy 1985, pp. 13, 32; Basham 1989, p. 108; Karttunen 1997, pp. 89–90; Mann 2007, esp. pp. 449, 457). For contact between India and Greece, e.g., see: (Tola and Dragonetti 1986; Karttunen 1997, pp. 1–18, 26–30).

<sup>115</sup> BM reg. no. 1925,1016,0.15 (tantric gouache painting, Pahari School, Punjab, ca. 1790–1800); (Ahluwalia 2008, p. 159, fig. 106).

<sup>116</sup> For Bhairava and the elephant skin, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 130, 197 and 205; Long 1971, pp. 192, 205; Dahlquist 1977, p. 73; Basham 1989, p. 108; Linrothe 1999, pp. 123–24, 252–53 and 277–303; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, pp. 109, 230–31; Bosma 2018, p. 168, n. 462, pp. 190–91, 276).

<sup>117</sup> (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 141, 159, 183–84, 193; Danielou 1979, pp. 74, 114; Murthy 1985, pp. 31–34, pl. 7, figs. 49–50; Basham 1989, p. 108; Dhavalikar 1990) (drawing a direct connection between Ganesha and Alexander

attributed to Amarasimha, who may have worked at the court of Chandragupta II (r. ca. 380–414 CE). While the worship and iconography of Ganesha may have developed only in the first centuries of the common era, he has, however, been traced back to a tusked demon (*Vināyaka*) already attested in the *Manava-Gṛhyasutras* (ca. 5th–2nd century BCE).<sup>118</sup> The sacred status of the elephant and its association with instilling terror appears to have been well established in India.



**Figure 28.** Bhairava and Varahi on Elephant (BM reg. no. 1925,1016,0.15); painting; Punjab; ca. 1790–1800. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

## 5. Alexander's Exuvia Elephantis

With all of the foregoing in mind, allow me now to revisit the *exuvia elephantis* of Alexander the Great.<sup>119</sup> As an emblem of the victory over Porus, the elephant scalp is commonly understood as a representation of Alexander's Indian Triumph. Víctor Alonso Troncoso, indeed, argues cogently that the headdress can thus be interpreted as an attribute of military might.<sup>120</sup> This is frequently attested on Hellenistic bronze figurines and decorative appliques, of which several examples can be found in museums across the world and which regularly appear as popular artefacts on the art market (Figure 29a,b).<sup>121</sup> The portrait features of the head are normally recognized as portraits of Alexander the Great, although occasional reticence is expressed in the attribution, for instance by identifying the head as a portrait of one of the Successors (*Diadochoi*), even though none are known in other media to have been depicted with the headdress. Some of these small-scale bronze statuettes may have been

the Great); (Narain 1991; Krishan 1994, 1999; Bopearachchi 1993; Karttunen 1997, p. 311; Williams 2000, fig. 6; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, esp. pp. 4–5; Meister 2009, pp. 296–98, 313–15).

<sup>118</sup> For the association of Ganesha with *Vināyaka*, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, p. 183; Murthy 1985, p. 32; Narain 1991, pp. 22–23; Krishan 1994, 1999; Thapan 1997; Linrothe 1999, pp. 20, 45–46, 90, 139 and 214).

<sup>119</sup> (Fredricksmeyer 1997, p. 102; Plantzos 2002; Schneider 2009, pp. 320–21; Fulinska 2012; Lorber 2012; Alonso Troncoso 2013, p. 257; Collins 2012, p. 382). While the headband is worn over the forehead, like the Dionysian *mitra*, I understand its function on Alexander's portrait as an intentional reference to the royal fillet (*diadēma*), thus drawing an implicit connection between both.

<sup>120</sup> Alonso Troncoso (2013); also, see: Epplert (2007).

<sup>121</sup> E.g., (a.) Bonhams, London, 25 April 2012, lot 43 (bronze applique, 4 cm, unknown provenance, ca. 3rd century BCE); (b.) SHM inv. no. GR-27.178 (bronze figurine, 5.7 cm, unknown provenance, ca. 2nd–1st century BCE); cf. BM reg. no. 1871,0619.4 (bronze applique, 4.8 cm, Egypt, Graeco-Roman) and 1858,0526.11 (bronze applique, 3.4 cm, Egypt, Graeco-Roman); MMA acc. no. 26.7.1430 (bronze applique, 5 cm, Egypt, ca. 2nd century BCE–1st century CE); (Yalouris et al. 1980, p. 123, pl. 46).



based on large-scale marble or other stone sculptures depicting Alexander in combat, perhaps on horseback or even riding an elephant. For instance, a figure of a rider—whose animal is now missing—wearing an elephant scalp as headdress, said to be from Athribis, Egypt (ca. 3rd century BCE), is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Figure 30).<sup>122</sup>



**Figure 29.** (a) Alexander in Elephant-Scalp (Bonhams, London, 25 April 2012, lot 43); bronze; unknown provenance; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image taken from bonhams.com]. (b) Alexander in Elephant-Scalp (SHM inv. no. GR-27.178); bronze; unknown provenance; ca. 2nd–1st century BCE. [Image courtesy of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg].



**Figure 30.** Alexander as Rider (MMA acc. no. 55.11.11); bronze; Athribis (?), Egypt; ca. 3rd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

<sup>122</sup> MMA acc. no. 55.11.11 (bronze statuette, Athribis (?), ca. 3rd century BCE); (Scullard 1974, p. 144 and pl. 16g; Kyrieleis 1975, p. 166, no. B2, pl. 10, figs. 1–3; Smith 1988, p. 153, app. 8, no. 4, pl. 70, fig. 2; Cheshire 2009, pp. 11–63; Schneider 2009, p. 329; Bianchi 2010; Picón and Hemingway 2016, p. 111, no. 12). The figurine has been identified variously as Alexander the Great, Ptolemy II and III, and Demetrius of Bactria; only the first and last kings are otherwise known to have been portrayed with the *exuvia elephantis* (the Egyptian origin of acquisition make the latter unlikely).

It bears reiterating that Alexander's posthumous portraiture with the elephant scalp, among other attributes, was first devised under Ptolemy in Egypt (Figure 6).<sup>123</sup> With significant variations, this iconography was adapted by his fellow Successors, specifically Lysimachus and Seleucus (Figure 7). Alexander's facial features on Ptolemy's coinage are full of vigorous pathos, his *diadēma* signifying his royalty, his large bulging eyes intimating his divinity. The widespread popularity of this imagery is additionally evinced by an engraved semiprecious seal-stone portraying (a Hellenistic ruler in the style of) Alexander with ram's horn, *exuvia elephantis*, and *aegis*, very much like the coinage of Ptolemy I (Figure 31).<sup>124</sup> The particular combined attributes of the elephant scalp, the ram's horn, and the sacred fleece remain poorly understood. Catharine Lorber rightly points out that the portrait as a whole makes little sense from a classical Greco-Macedonian perspective.<sup>125</sup> Her suggested Egyptian interpretation I take as a step in the right direction that I would suggest advancing a little further.



**Figure 31.** Alexander in Elephant Scalp (BM reg. no. 1866,0804.1); jasper; unknown provenance; ca. 3rd–2nd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London].

The elephant hide was an attribute of Indian deities such as Indra, Shiva, and Krishna. As discussed above, this admittedly unproven hypothesis—as far as the early-Hellenistic period is concerned—would piece together the puzzle of Alexander's posthumous portrait. Notice especially the protuberance on the elephant's forehead, which is typical of the Asian elephant species (*Elephas maximus*); notice also the size of its ear, which is significantly smaller than that of the African elephants (*Loxodonta*, both *africana* and *cyclotis*) and features a laterally folded dorsal border, which is again typical of the Asian elephant (esp. *Elephas maximus indicus*). In other words, the design of the numismatic portraiture of Alexander depicts an Indian elephant, rather than an African one.<sup>126</sup> The association with India is therefore as explicit as can be.

<sup>123</sup> *Supra* p. 7, n. 39.

<sup>124</sup> BM reg. no. 1866,0804.1 (dark blue jasper, unknown provenance, ca. 3rd–2nd century BCE); (Walters 1926, no. 1188; cf. Plantzos 2002) (for a silver intaglio).

<sup>125</sup> (Lorber 2011, esp. p. 300; 2012, esp. p. 25).

<sup>126</sup> Acc. to Bigwood (1993), *Arist. Hist. Anim.* describes the African elephant, and only since Alexander's campaign did authors point out that the Indian elephant was larger than the African (which implies they knew about the size of the latter); this observation also means that, even though earlier authors such as Ctesias were aware that elephants were found both in Asia and Africa, they did not realize their differences. Furthermore, if Ptolemy IV indeed left a memoir of his campaign against Antiochus III (the so-called Fourth

Moreover, as Lorber rightly remarks, the elephant's trunk curls up as if raised in prayer to the heavens—just as ancient authors as Pliny, Plutarch, and Aelian observed.<sup>127</sup> The trunk might also have been curved purposely to resemble the *uraeus*, the upright cobra that was considered the protector of Pharaonic kingship. Furthermore, the *exuvia elephantis* is worn over the head just as Heracles wore the scalp of the Nemean Lion—an image regularly struck by the royal mint during Alexander's reign and beyond (Figure 32).<sup>128</sup> Heracles, the son of Zeus, to be sure, was considered the forefather of the Temenids and the Argead royal house of Macedon. Like Heracles, Alexander is thus portrayed appropriating a monstrous attribute as an emblem of his victory over a foe, and, so as to bring this discussion back to India, ancient authors such as Megasthenes recognized Heracles in a local Hindu divinity.<sup>129</sup>



**Figure 32.** Heracles in Lion Scalp (MFA inv. no. 04.727); silver; Side (?), Asia Minor (mod. Turkey); ca. 326–318 BCE. [Image courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston].

Conceding that the identification of Indian gods with their Greek counterparts remains an unsettled scholarly question, let us look a little closer at the matter.<sup>130</sup> Indra, the sky god and king of gods, who wields thunder and lightning, like Zeus and Alexander the Great, is the son of Dyaus Pitar (*Dyáus Pitṛ*, lit. “Sky Father”), the heavenly father of the Rigvedic pantheon, who may be compared to the Greek Zeus Pater (Ζεὺς πατήρ) and Latin Jupiter (*Iūpiter*).<sup>131</sup> Thus, Indra may have been assimilated by Greeks and Macedonians with Zeus, but may also have been understood as the son of Zeus.<sup>132</sup> Shiva, another principle divinity in Hinduism and the supreme deity within Shaivism, has benign and auspicious as well as fearful and destructive aspects.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, his name, *Śiva*, means “Auspicious”, which was an epithet originally applied to the Rigvedic Rudra (lit. “Howler” or

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Syrian War, ending with the Battle of Raphia), he would certainly indicate their differences in physical appearance (not in the least their size).

<sup>127</sup> (Lorber 2011, p. 302); *supra* nn. 100–105.

<sup>128</sup> MFA inv. no. 04.727 (silver tetradrachm, Side (?), ca. 326–318 BCE); (Brett 1955, no. 679; Bieber 1965, p. 185, pl. 6, figs. 10–11; Fredricksmeyer 1991, p. 204; Hsing 2005, p. 111, fig. 9; Dahmen 2007, pp. 108–9, pl. 1, fig. 1 and 3; Lorber 2012, fig. 3).

<sup>129</sup> Diod. *Bibl.* 2.39.1; Arr. *Ind.* 5.13 and 8.4–6; (Puskás 1990, pp. 42–46; Sacks 1990, p. 67; Arora 1992, esp. pp. 316, 319; Bosworth 1996, pp. 121–22; Hsing 2005, pp. 108–10).

<sup>130</sup> (Dahlquist 1977; Zambrini 1982, 1985; Karttunen 1997, pp. 210–19; Puskás 1990, pp. 41–47; Hsing 2005, esp. pp. 118–23; Muntz 2012, pp. 32–34).

<sup>131</sup> For the origin of Indra, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 249–83; Basham 1989, pp. 9–13; Hackstein 2003, p. 134; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, esp. pp. 103–4).

<sup>132</sup> For the identification of Indra with Heracles or Zeus, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 280–81; Dahlquist 1977, esp. pp. 164–74; Puskás 1990, pp. 43–44; Karttunen 1997, pp. 89–90).

<sup>133</sup> For the origin of Shiva, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 23–210; Long 1971, pp. 185–88; Basham 1989, pp. 4, 44 and 82; Linrothe 1999, pp. 181–83; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, esp. pp. 109–10, 218–31).

“Frightful”).<sup>134</sup> In turn, this Rudra Shiva, the divine destroyer and slayer of demons, might well be compared to Bhairava. Shiva thus embodies aspects that Greeks and Macedonians might have associated with Heracles as well as Dionysus, both sons of Zeus.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps not incidentally, according to some traditions, the Macedonian royal house was also believed to descend from Dionysus via Deianira, the wife of Heracles.<sup>136</sup> Krishna (*Kṛṣṇa*, lit. “Dark”), another major deity in Hinduism, is understood as an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu.<sup>137</sup> This divine hero, son of Prince Vasudeva, whose exploits are famously recounted in the *Mahabharata*, might also have been identified by the Greeks and Macedonians with Heracles.<sup>138</sup>

From the elephant scalp, let us now turn to the other attributes of Ptolemy’s posthumous portraiture of Alexander the Great. The ram’s horn that curls over Alexander’s temple is associated with Ammon, whose cult lay in the desert oasis at Siwah that Alexander visited after annexing Egypt to his empire (332–331 BCE).<sup>139</sup> This Libyan oracular deity had long been identified with Olympian Zeus and Egyptian Amun-Ra, both supreme deities of their respective pantheons. Amun, too, could be depicted with a ram’s horn—although not of circular but lateral form. At his Pharaonic coronation in Memphis (332 BCE), Alexander was recognized as “son of Ra (*š3-R*)”, “chosen by Ra (*štp-n-R*)”, and “beloved of Amun (*mrj-’Imn*)”, as expressed in his royal titulature.<sup>140</sup> Although this is not the place to go into this question in any depth, that sonship was confirmed by the Ammonian priest at Siwah.<sup>141</sup> Alexander’s divine sonship re-emerged during the incident at Hyphasis (326 BCE), when he was told to continue the campaign with “his father”.<sup>142</sup> At any rate, Alexander’s alleged sonship of Zeus-Ammon or Amun-Ra is manifestly expressed by the ram’s horn.

Lastly the sacred goat’s fleece, or *aegis*, was originally an attribute of Zeus, the king of the Olympian pantheon, to whom Homer gave the epithet Aegiochus (*αιγίοχος*; lit. “fleece-bearing”).<sup>143</sup> Zeus lent the *aegis* to his daughter Athena, who is commonly depicted wearing the fleece decorated with the evil-averting head of Medusa (*gorgoneum*). Moreover, a freestanding sculpture of Alexander wearing the *aegis* like a *chlamys*, perhaps with the Palladium (an archaizing figure of Athena) in his left hand, was an important cult statue in Alexandria and elsewhere in Egypt (Figure 33).<sup>144</sup> The city of Alexandria, indeed, was said to be laid out like the shape of that long Macedonian military cloak. On the numismatic portraiture of Ptolemy, Alexander is shown with the *aegis* tied around his neck by two writhing snakes. According to Arrian, Ptolemy I avowed that two speaking serpents (*δράκοντες*) guided Alexander and his followers across the desert to Siwah.<sup>145</sup> The snakes of Alexander’s *aegis* might also be an allusion to the head of Medusa, which had writhing snakes for hair. Their coiling bodies might furthermore be understood as a further reference to the *uraeus*. They

<sup>134</sup> For the meaning of Shiva and Rudra, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 109–57; Long 1971; Basham 1989, pp. 15–16; Linrothe 1999, pp. 215–16; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, esp. pp. 219–22).

<sup>135</sup> For the identification of Shiva with Heracles or Dionysus, see: Diod. *Bibl.* 2.38; Strab. *Geogr.* 15.1.6–9; Arr. *Ind.* 1, 5, 7 and 9; (Brown 1955, pp. 27–28; Long 1971; Dahlquist 1977, esp. pp. 278–89; Danielou 1979; O’Flaherty 1980; Puskás 1990, p. 46; Arora 1992, p. 319; Bosworth 1996, pp. 121, 123).

<sup>136</sup> Satyr. *ap.* Theophil. 2.7 = *FGrH* 631 F 2; (Nock 1928, pp. 21–30; van Oppen de Ruiter 2013, p. 81, n. 4).

<sup>137</sup> For the origins of Krishna, see: (Bhattacharji 1970, pp. 301–16; Basham 1989, pp. 73, 90–93; Klostermaier [1989] 2007, pp. 60, 63, 77–80, 111 and 200–04; F. Stewart 2010, p. 113).

<sup>138</sup> For the identification of Krishna with Heracles, see: Strab. *Geogr.* 15.1.6–9; Arr. *Ind.* 5 and 8–9; (Puskás 1990, pp. 42–45; Arora 1992, p. 319; Karttunen 1997, p. 89).

<sup>139</sup> (Bosworth 1988, pp. 71–74; Fredricksmeier 1991, pp. 199–201; Anson 2003; Lorber 2012, p. 25; Bosch-Puche 2013, p. 151; Howe 2013; Collins 2014).

<sup>140</sup> For Alexander’s titulature, now see: Bosch-Puche (2013, 2014) (with lit.).

<sup>141</sup> For the intricate matter of Alexander’s “sonship”, e.g., see: Diod. *Bibl.* 17.49–51; Strab. *Geogr.* 17.1.43; Curt. Ruf. 4.7.23–25; Plut. *Alex.* 27; Arr. *Anab.* 3.4.5; cf. lit. cit. *supra* n. 139.

<sup>142</sup> (Bosworth 1988, pp. 132–34; Fredricksmeier 1991, pp. 208, 211; Robinson 1993; Carney 1996, pp. 33–37; Karttunen 1997, pp. 35–36; Howe and Müller 2012; King 2013, p. 107).

<sup>143</sup> E.g., Hom. *Il.* 2.375.

<sup>144</sup> WAM acc. no. 54.1075 (bronze statuette, Alexandria (?), ca. 1st–2nd century BCE); (A. Stewart 1993, pp. 243–52; Parlasca 2004; Reinsberg 2005, pp. 226–29).

<sup>145</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 3.5 (I owe this suggestion to Robert S. Bianchi).

might even hint to the snakes connected with Alexander's mother Olympias; in one tale, Olympias was accustomed as a *bacchant* to handle snakes, whereas other legendary tales claimed that she was in fact impregnated by a snake—or rather, Zeus-Ammon or Amun-Ra in serpentine form, or even Pharaoh Nectanebo (Nachthoreb) II (r. 360–343 BCE) in the guise of Ammon (Amun).<sup>146</sup>



**Figure 33.** Alexander Aegiochus (WAM acc. no. 54.1075); bronze; Alexandria, Egypt (?); ca. 1st–2nd century BCE. [Image courtesy of the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore].

The argument put forth here is then as follows: the three combined attributes—apart from the *mitra* or *diadēma*—depicted on Ptolemy's posthumous coin portraiture of Alexander the Great consciously evoke three supreme divinities associated with three different cultures of three separate continents. The *aegis* belongs to Olympian Zeus, the ram's horn to Libyan Ammon (assimilated with the Egyptian Amun-Ra), and the *exuvia elephantis* to Indra, thus representing Europe, Africa, and Asia, respectively. Each of these three attributes, moreover, present the respective deity as Alexander's father and are thus connected to his mythical ancestral lineage—namely, his descent from Heracles and Dionysus as well as his earthly embodiment of Apollo, who in turn were identified with the Indian gods Krishna and Shiva as well as the Egyptian gods Osiris and Horus. The underlying relation between these ancestors is that they proclaim Alexander's divine and heroic descent of mythic slayers of demons: Dionysus, the twice-born son of Zeus, and Heracles, another son of Zeus; Shive Rudra (Bhairava), the avatar of Indra, and Krishna Vasudeva, the avatar of Vishnu; and Horus, the reincarnation of Osiris. Finally, the fourth attribute, the *mitra* or *diadēma* bound around Alexander's wavy hair, symbolizes his divine right to rule both as descendant of these three supreme beings, and as son of three kings of gods belonging to three different religions of three separate continents, of which he is therefore the rightful ruler.

## 6. Triumph of Fame over Death

The undying fame of Alexander the Great is well illustrated by the early-Renaissance Italian poet Petrarch (1304–1374)—or rather, a Flemish tapestry illustrating his “Triumph of Fame (*Trionfo della Fama*).” One of six *Trionfi*, written two-by-two over the course of at least three decades (ca. 1344–1374), the poem symbolizes the triumph of fame over death—although fame itself is overcome by time. Among famous

<sup>146</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 2; Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.2; ps.-Callisth. 1.1–12; (Henrichs 1978, esp. p. 143; Bosworth 1988, pp. 19, 282–84; Ogden 1999, pp. 27–29; King 2013, pp. 88–93; van Oppen de Ruyter 2019, pp. 92–93).

legendary and historical figures of Biblical, Greek, Roman, and later times, Petrarch names Dionysus and Heracles, Plato and Aristotle, Hannibal and Caesar, even King Arthur and Charlemagne, as well as Alexander the Great, who “from Pella to India/swiftly won diverse lands (*che da Pella agl’Indi/correndo vinse paesi diversi*).” Later generations of artists have frequently illustrated Petrarch’s *Trionfi* as they represent the path of virtue towards redemption.<sup>147</sup> In one such work of art, a Flemish tapestry of *The Triumph of Fame over Death* made for the Bishop of Soissons (Septmonts, ca. 1500–1530), now in New York, the personification of Fame stands in a chariot drawn by two white elephants as they trample death and fate (Figure 34).<sup>148</sup> Fame is accompanied by Plato, Aristotle, Alexander, and Charlemagne. The shape of the elephants’ trunks resembles the trumpet that Fame herself sounds. Alexander’s triumph over death thus owes more than is usually acknowledged to the elephant.

In the preceding sections, I have endeavored to argue that the elephant in Hellenistic history and art should be understood as a mythic monster and an emblem of military might. Ancient authors regularly affirmed the elephant’s capacity to strike fear in one’s opponents. It has to be emphasized, though, that panic was believed to be divinely inspired. At any rate, there is an obvious association made with victory and power. Nonetheless, neither Darius nor Porus could defeat Alexander the Great, and neither Pyrrhus nor Hannibal could defeat Rome despite their elephant forces; even Ptolemy IV defeated Antiochus III at Raphia, his inferior elephant forces notwithstanding. The elephant’s function to instill terror was thus more symbolic. In that respect, it may well be compared to the *aegis* and *gorgoneum* that similarly served the apotropaic function to ward off one’s foes and evil forces generally. The *aegis* is associated with protection and thus defense. In fact, it might be added here that the ram’s horn was likewise connected with terror and fear, as it could also be considered an attribute of Pan and the satyrs of Dionysus’ retinue.



**Figure 34.** The Triumph of Fame over Death (MMA acc. no. 41.167.2); tapestry; South Netherlandish; ca. 1500–1530. [Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

<sup>147</sup> For instance, V&A inv. no. 439–1883 (tapestry, Brussels, ca. 1507–1510); MNAC inv. no. 214.101–000 (tapestry, Brussels, ca. 1520–1548); (Campbell 2004, 2007, pp. 149–55).

<sup>148</sup> MMA acc. no. 41.167.2 (tapestry, 3.66 cm × 3.25 m, South Netherlandish, ca. 1500–1530); (Cavallo 1993, pp. 463–78, no. 33a).

These attributes—the elephant’s scalp, the ram’s horn, and the sacred goat’s fleece—together with the royal fillet, are featured significantly on Alexander’s posthumous portraiture on the coinage of Ptolemy I. This portraiture, I argue, expresses Alexander’s divine sonship and thus his right to rule the world—that is, the three continents of the then-known world, Europe, Africa, and Asia. After Alexander’s death, the *exuvia elephantis* was appropriated for the portraiture of Demetrius I of Bactria and Cleopatra Selene in Mauretania. Over the course of the three and a half centuries before the common era, from India to Mauretania via Egypt and Persia, Greece and Rome, scores of people will have seen actual elephants—whether as soldiers on the battlefield or as onlookers at religious or military processions—and many more will have seen images of the animal on works of art, from life-sized sculpture and monumental reliefs to small-scale figurines and miniature coins and engraved gems. Irrespective of its actual physical, historical presence, the elephant retained its religious proportion throughout the Hellenistic period as a mythic monster of military might. From a Hellenistic perspective, the elephant therefore belongs in the same category as other fabulous beasts such as the griffon and the sphinx, the martichora and the unicorn, and the dragon and the hippocampus.

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## Abbreviations

AMC	Archaeological Museum of Charchell.
ANS	American Numismatic Society, New York.
APM	Allard Pierson Museum, the archaeological collection of the University of Amsterdam.
AS-SMB	Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin [Antiquities Collection, State Museum of Berlin].
BM	British Museum, London.
BMCRR II	Grueber, H. A. 1970. <i>Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum, II: Coinages of Rome (continued), Roman Campania, Italy, the Social War, and the Provinces</i> . London: British Museum.
CNG	Classical Numismatic Group, London.
GRMA	Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria.
<i>I.Cair.</i>	Kamal, A. B. 1904–1905. <i>Stèles ptolémaïques, CG 22001-22208</i> , 2 vols. Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale.
Louvre	Musée du Louvre, Paris.
MAR	Musée Archéologique de Rabat/Musée de l’histoire et des civilisations [Archaeological Museum of Rabat/Museum of History and Civilizations], Morocco.
MFA	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
MMA	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
MNAC	Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya [National Art Museum of Catalonia], Barcelona.
MNE	Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia [National Etruscan Museum, “Villa Giulia”], Rome.
RCC	Crawford, M. H. 1974. <i>Roman Republican Coinage</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
SHM	State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
<i>SNG BM Spain</i>	Meadows, Andrew R. and Peter Bagwell-Purefoy. 2002. <i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum IX: The British Museum, II: Spain</i> , London: British Museum.
<i>SNG Cop.</i>	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Denmark, The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals</i> . Copenhagen: Danish National Museum.
UCL	University College London, Petrie Museum, London.
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
WAM	Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Md.

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