

ALEXANDER'S LYSIMACHEIA: ANNA COMNENA 15.7.8

ABSTRACT: Anna Comnena 15.7.8 says that Alexander founded "Lysimacheia in Ethiopia." Aithiopia should be emended to Aetolia; Lysimacheia in Aetolia was founded in the 280s under the auspices of Lysimachus. Anna's statement about Alexander, though mistaken, can nevertheless suggest that Lysimachus' agent in the foundation may have been his son Alexander, whom Anna or her source confused with Alexander the Great.

Praising her father as founder of numerous cities, Anna compares, a bit dismissively, the city foundations of Alexander the Great (*Alexiad* 15.7.8):

ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἀλέξανδρος ἐκεῖνος ὁ Μακεδὼν αὐχεῖται μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ κατ' Αἴγυπτον Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ, ἐπὶ τῇ κατὰ Μήδους Βουκεφάλῃ, ἐπὶ τῇ κατ' Αἰθιοπίαν Λυσιμαχίᾳ.

Well then, let that Alexander of Macedon exult in Alexandria in Egypt, in Bucephala among the Medes, in Lysimacheia in Ethiopia.

At this last city, a reader surely must pause and ask directions.¹

The valuable index prepared by F. Kolovou and D. R. Reinsch hints at an explanation: "urbs de Lysimacho Alexandri Magni comite nominata," and of 15.7.8 "re vera ad Hellespontum."² This might suggest that being Alexander's companion was enough of a connection to attribute the foundation of Lysimacheia to Alexander. But Lysimachus' capital on the Thracian Chersonese was founded in 309 B.C., long after Alexander's death; no connection of Alexander with that city is possible.

Nor was Ethiopia ever visited by either Alexander³ or Lysimachus. Anna may have

1 Earlier, noting kings who named cities for themselves, Anna had mentioned Alexander's Alexandrias in Egypt and India, and adds (7.5.3): ἴσμεν δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ Λυσιμάχου ἑνὸς τῶν ἀμφ' αὐτὸν στρατιωτῶν Λυσιμαχίαν κατονομάζεσθαι, "we know also that from Lysimachus, one of the soldiers under him, was named Lysimacheia." There, stating no special location, she must mean the familiar Chersonese city, in contrast to the mention of Ethiopia later.

2 *Annae Comnenae Alexias* (CFHB 40.2: Berlin 2001) 49.

3 Except perhaps in a lost version of the *Alexander Romance*. The Latin translation (but no other extant version) of the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle portrays Alexander as viewing from afar the Ethiopia that verged on India, but not as going there: M. Feldbusch, *Der Brief Alexanders an Aristoteles* (Meissenheim 1976) 74. That Anna had seen the lost Greek original of this notice and postulated a civic foundation is unlikely. In the *Romance* Alexander corresponds extensively with the queen of Meroe. And in the ε recension he founds a city for the pygmies, but unnamed and unlocated (26.2

known the vague and unparalleled statement in Malalas (8.3) that after marrying Candace, Alexander went to Ethiopia and other countries (εἰσῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὴν Αἰθιοπίαν καὶ εἰς ἄλλας χώρας); in John of Nikiu (whose Coptic Anna cannot have known) this becomes “thereupon the Ethiopians submitted to him” (59.8, transl. Charles). But such can hardly have been the source of Anna’s more specific claim, that he founded a Lysimacheia in Ethiopia. That is, Anna cannot have read somewhere either that Alexander founded Lysimacheia in the Chersonese or that there was a Lysimacheia in Ethiopia.

Anna could make mistakes about names—so she misremembered Themistocles as Alcibiades (6.10.11). But the collocation of names here, Alexander’s Lysimacheia, should have been glaring and obvious to her unless she had a reason to believe it. Evidently she is seeking *variatio* in the three cities she specifies: for few foundations of Alexander were not named Alexandria. She has culled a list, written or mental, of his cities—a topic of some modern debate⁴—in order to find three different names. Where in the sentence is the problem? Alexander did found cities, and Lysimacheia was real. The weak link, the impossibility, is “Ethiopia.” The explanation must be that the city is the other Lysimacheia: the one in Aetolia.⁵ A virtue of this is that it clarifies and enlarges upon her *variatio*: one city on each of the three continents. To cover all the world by invoking the continents was a satisfying conceit that enjoyed a long life.⁶

This much is to give arguments to support what was said long ago by Georgina Buckler, who stated briefly that what Anna “certainly meant or should have meant was κατ’ Αἰτωλίαν where there was a Lysimachia called after Alexander’s general, though not actually founded by him.”⁷ But it should be added that Anna, who had a strong and specific feel for geography, is unlikely to have written something geographically silly. The emendation is slight: I suggest that she in fact did write κατ’ Αἰτωλίαν, and a copyist erroneously replaced an unfamiliar toponym, Aetolia, with one that was well known to him, Ethiopia.⁸

ed. Trumpf); on the theme of city-founding in this recension see C. Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d’Alexandre* (Paris 2002) 372. But no version of the *Roman* has him found a city in Ethiopia, or of course a Lysimacheia anywhere. According to Diodorus (1.37.5) no Greek had set foot in Ethiopia before the expedition of Ptolemy II.

4 P. M. Fraser, *Cities of Alexander the Great* (Oxford 1996); R. Ziegler, “Alexander der Grosse als Städtegründer. Fiktion und Realität,” in *Stephanos Nomismatikos* (Berlin 1998) 679–697; N. G. L. Hammond, “Alexander’s Newly-founded Cities,” *GRBS* 39 (1998) 243–269.

5 Pliny the Elder names another, in Mysia, otherwise unknown: *HN* 5.122, *intercidere Canae, Lysimachea, Atarneia* ...; G. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Europe, the Islands, and Asia Minor* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1995) 167.

6 E.g., Philo *Leg.* 283; Plut. *Pomp.* 45.5 (Pompey’s triple triumph); Nic. Mesar. *Renunt.* p.47 Heisenberg (οὐ Λιβύη Εὐρώπη τε καὶ Ἀσία τῆς τῶν Γραικῶν διαλέκτου πεπλήρωται;).

7 *Anna Comnena, a study* (London 1929) 208; not noted by Leib (ed. 1945); accepted by E. R. A. Sewter, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena* (Harmondsworth 1969) 495 n. 24 (“An error for Aetolia”), and by D. R. Reinsch, *Anna Komnene, Alexias* (Cologne 1996) 538 n. 103 (“Wahrscheinlich Gedächtnisfehler Annas,” citing Buckler).

8 Ms. Αἰθιοπίην, corr. Reifferscheid. A person of Anna’s rank might have dictated; but she did her own writing: 1.13.3, 1.15.6, 13.6.3.

What then of Anna's Alexander? It is a provocative fact about Lysimacheia at the western edge of Aetolia⁹ that no claim about its foundation has reached us from antiquity. Its immediate neighbor, Arsinoe, is stated by Strabo to have been founded by the Arsinoe who was the wife of Ptolemy II.¹⁰ This is at best murky: queens did not found cities. Moreover, the Ptolemies never ruled in Aetolia, and the cities named for Arsinoe Philadelphus were all maritime places. Hence, since Woodhouse, the majority view has been that the Aetolian city was named for Arsinoe in the 280s, when she was the wife of Lysimachus and not yet of Ptolemy. This obviously is supported by the name of neighboring Lysimacheia. The earliest extant mention of Lysimacheia is toward 270 B.C. (*IG IX.1*² 13.7), of Arsinoe in the mid-third century (17.57).

Lysimachus too, however, never ruled in Aetolia. The favored explanation is that the Aetolians so named the two cities because they had good relations with Lysimachus during his sole rule in Macedonia (286–281 B.C.).¹¹ Parallels for royal toponyms in Aetolia would be Attaleia and Ptolemais, attested only by their ethnics.¹² Attalus I paid for the fortification of Eloros, “a strong place” in Aetolia (Polyb. 4.65.6: *τι χωρίον ὄχυρόν*). Probably material support of this sort from Lysimachus,¹³ more than friendship, gave Lysimacheia and Arsinoe their names. But who “founded” the two cities?

Pace Anna, not Alexander the Great. In his two southern campaigns in 335/4, Alexander was never west of Boeotia; after that he was in Asia and did not return. He cannot have founded cities in western Aetolia. Nor is he likely to have named any city for an unrecorded Arsinoe or for his soon-to-be companion Lysimachus.¹⁴

During the 280's Lysimachus and the Aetolians were active allies¹⁵ as he fought successfully to expel Pyrrhus of Epirus from Macedonia and Thessaly and added these lands to his kingdom. He also won over the Phocians to his alliance (*Syll.*³ 360); in making friends he was active as far south as Messene (*SEG XLI* 322). During his rule in Europe, he may well have been able to work such euergetism as to found or at least to fund two cities on the Aetolians' western frontier, perhaps on land conquered in the course of the

- 9 Description and bibliography in Bölte, “Lysimacheia (1),” *RE* 13 (1927) 2552–2554; W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography* VI (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1989) 136.
- 10 Strab. 10.2.22. K. Mueller, *Settlements of the Ptolemies* (Leuven 2006) 201, includes Arsinoe in her Gazetteer of Ptolemaic foundations but tags it as “uncertain, or discarded.”
- 11 W. J. Woodhouse, *Aetolia* (Oxford 1897) 219–220; cf. K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*² IV.1 (Berlin/Leipzig 1925) 241 n. 2 (founded by the Aetolians in honor of Lysimachus); Bölte, “Lysimacheia” (as in n. 9) 2554; P. Funke, *Boreas* 10 (1987) 94–95; M. B. Hatzopoulos, *Une donation du roi Lysimaque* (Athens 1988) 21; Cl. Antonetti, *Paideia* 4 (1989) 73–74; Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Europe* (as in n. 5) 33–34, 109–110.
- 12 Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Europe* (as in n. 5) 111, 118–119. In *IG IX.1*² 95 a group of Attaleians in Phistyon do a manumission (late III B.C.); 107 an Attaleian hieromnemon to Delphi (mid II B.C.); *CIDelphes* IV 87.6 a Ptolemaian hieromnemon (late III B.C.).
- 13 So e.g. Bölte, “Lysimacheia” (as in n. 9) 2554.
- 14 And there was the tradition that Alexander hated Lysimachus because he was a good general: Ael. *VH* 12.16. Aetolian hostility to Alexander is reported at Diod. 18.8.6, Plut. *Alex.* 49.15.
- 15 Cf. M. B. Hatzopoulos, *Macedonian Institutions under the Kings* II (Athens 1996) no. 44 (*Syll.*³ 380), Cassandreia under Lysimachus honoring an Aetolian friend of the city.

war with Pyrrhus and given over to the Aetolian League. So far as we know, he was never there himself.

During Lysimachus' years as ruler of Macedonia, one of his sons, Agathocles, was delegated to govern the Asiatic lands in the face of Lysimachus' enemies. Because our literary sources focus on the adventures of Demetrius Poliorcetes, we hear much about Anatolia in these years and much about Agathocles.¹⁶ Toward the end of Lysimachus' reign he was murdered, allegedly as a result of intrigue at court. Concerning the European side of Lysimachus' kingdom almost nothing is recorded.¹⁷

But Lysimachus had another son—Alexander. Where was he during his father's last years and while his half-brother managed the Asian holdings? We hear of him only toward the end of the reign, when, again amid the palace intrigue, he is reported to have turned on his father, going over to Seleucus. The battle of Corupedium and Lysimachus' death followed in 281. Alexander begged the body of his father from the victors and gave him heroic burial in the capital Lysimacheia on the Chersonese, apparently conducting himself as his father's successor.¹⁸ His subsequent fate is unknown.¹⁹

It seems that Lysimachus in the 280s felt too old to rule his enlarged realm alone. I suggest that his son Alexander, guided by Anna, played a role in the (larger) western side of the realm that was comparable to the role of his half-brother Agathocles in Anatolia; and that it was Alexander who as Lysimachus' surrogate presided over the establishment of the two cities in Aetolia.²⁰

Such a division of labor was frequent in the Hellenistic kingdoms; size recommended the practice. Already in the 290s Antiochus I was assigned the eastern satrapies by his father Seleucus I (Plut. *Demet.* 38.8), and such delegations would be frequent for the Seleucids.²¹ Lysimachus, nearly 70 when he doubled the size of his kingdom, can well have felt the need to distribute the tasks of kingship.

16 Agathocles had title to a plot of land in the vicinity of Amphipolis: Hatzopoulos, *Une donation* (as in n. 11) 38 [SEG XXXVIII 619.9]. This however does not reveal anything about his regional sphere of authority.

17 H. Bengtson, *Die Strategie in der hellenistischen Zeit I* (Munich 1937) 227–231: of the European administration of Lysimachus “virtually nothing is known” (229).

18 Paus. 1.10.5, App. Syr. 64. Polyaeus 6.12 has him besieging Cotyaeum in Phrygia, without stating his sovereign or a date; since Droysen this has been placed under his service to Seleucus.

19 Diod. 22.3.4 lists an Alexander as briefly ruling Macedonia: F. R. Walton (Loeb ed. ad loc.) thought that this might be Lysimachus' son; see on the passage N. G. L. Hammond and F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia III* (Oxford 1988) 581. M. Rostovtzeff, *A Large Estate in Egypt* (Madison 1922) 20–21, suggested that he ended his days as a hostage in Egypt; see however T. C. Skeat on *P.Lond.* VII 2052.

20 Possibly this was the Alexander to whom Eretria on Euboea appealed for greater freedom: D. Knoepfler, *Décrets érétriens* no. 15. But Knoepfler's case for a date in the 250's is substantial: “Elire ses magistrats conformément aux lois,” in C. Feyel et al. (eds.), *Communautés locales et pouvoirs centrales* (Nancy 2012) 117–138.

21 E. Bickerman, *Institutions des Séleucides* (Paris 1938) 21–24.

City foundation by a royal delegate is also well attested. In India, Leonnatus founded an Alexandria,²² and Alexander ordered Philippos to found a city on the Indus.²³ Gerasa and Samaria probably were founded by Perdiccas acting for Alexander.²⁴ Alexander had Craterus oversee the building of Bucephala.²⁵ Under the Ptolemies,²⁶ Philotera on the Red Sea was founded by Satyrus as agent of Ptolemy II,²⁷ the *strategos* Aetos founded Arsinoe in Cilicia,²⁸ and the *strategos* Boethus was founder of three cities in Egypt.²⁹

The inference from Anna, then, would be that somewhere in ancient literature was a description or mention of this Alexander, Lysimachus' son, as presiding over the founding of Lysimacheia in Aetolia, his father's agent in benefiting an ally. Perhaps the best candidate for a source would be Diodorus' lost Book 21, which could still be read at least as late as the tenth century. Anna then would be guilty of only a venial sin: she recalled the wrong Alexander.

Or perhaps even less than a venial sin. She may have come to the notion of Alexander the Great by way of some truncated information in the encyclopedic literature, an entry that commented about Aetolian Lysimacheia simply κτίσμα Ἀλεξάνδρου.³⁰ If that is what Anna read, the unspecified Alexander might easily mislead her.

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22 Plin. HN 6.997: *condita a Leonnato iussu Alexandri*; G. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2013) 297.

23 Arr. 6.15.2: πόλιν τε ἐνταῦθα κτίσαι ἐκέλευσεν; Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East* (as in n. 22) 291.

24 H. Seyrig, *Syria* 42 (1965) 25–28; G. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2006) 248, 275; cf. Ziegler, “Alexander” (as in n. 4) 688; A. Lichtenberger, *Kulte und Kultur der Dekapolis* (Wiesbaden 2003) 220, 232.

25 Arr. 5.20.1; Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East* (as in n. 22) 309.

26 See H. Heinen, *Studia Hellenistica* 36 (2000) 123–153.

27 Strab. 16.4.5: Φιλωτέραν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδελφῆς τοῦ δευτέρου Πτολεμαίου προσαγορευθεῖσαν, Σατύρου κτίσμα; Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria* (as in n. 24) 339.

28 SEG XXXIX 1426.22–23 (III B.C.): Ἀετὸς ... πόλιν ἔκτισεν Ἀρσινόην ἐπώνυμον τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως.

29 OGIS 111.8–9 (II B.C.): στρατηγού καὶ [κτί]στου τῶν ... πόλεων; SB 15974.3–5: ἐν τῇ κτιζομένῃ πόλει Εὐεργέτιδι ὑπὸ Βοήθου ... κτίστου.

30 So e.g. Steph. Byz. s.v. Δίων: ... κοίλης Συρίας, κτίσμα Ἀλεξάνδρου. Usually Stephanus specifies “the Macedonian” or “the son of Philip.” Our extant tenth-century epitome of Steph. Byz., s.v. Λυσιμάχεια, lists first the famous one, Lysimachus' capital, and then: ἔστι καὶ πόλις Αἰτωλίας.