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TWO POSTSCRIPTS ON THE MARRIAGE OF PHILA AND BALACRUS

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 73 (1988) 116–118

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## TWO POSTSCRIPTS ON THE MARRIAGE OF PHILA AND BALACRUS

Waldemar Heckel (ZPE 70,1987,161-2) has done a service to prosopography of Alexander and the Diadochoi by his acute demonstration that the marriage of Phila and Balacrus, Alexander's satrap of Cilicia, must be accepted as historical fact. In view of the inadequacy of our source for the connection (the writer of romance, Antonius Diogenes, as recorded by Photius), it had been inconclusively discussed ever since Droysen first accepted it and then changed his mind about it.<sup>1)</sup> The dedication by an Antipater son of "Balagros" indeed establishes the fact. There is perhaps slight further confirmation for the identification discovered by Heckel in the spelling of "Balagros": the inscription coincides with Photius in this detail, and the spelling is a very rare variant.<sup>2)</sup>

a.) Heckel should not, however, be followed in his acceptance of the authenticity of the letter cited by the Greek novelist. His statement that Photius "preserves, on the testimony of Antonius Diogenes, the details of a letter ..." is followed by his use of the letter in order to show that Phila cannot have been with her husband when he took over the satrapy of Cilicia, since he still wrote to her from Tyre.

In fact, there cannot be any doubt that the letter is fictitious: it provides the setting for Diogenes' romance and the details are historically worthless. Nor should we conclude from the letter that Balacrus really served at Tyre and was present at its capture. Arrian (II 12,2) puts his appointment to his satrapy straight after Issus, and it is highly unlikely that he is mistaken (which would mean that the important satrapy of Cilicia was left without a governor until after the capture of Tyre) or that Alexander did not wish the newly appointed governor to take up his command at once, but kept him in the field and left the province vacant throughout this time. The occasion, as well as the letter itself, cannot be historical.<sup>3)</sup> It is puzzling that Diogenes based his fiction on a true fact (the marriage of Balacrus and Phila) nowhere recorded in any other source that survives: indeed, it is this that has prompted many scholars to disbelieve the fact and that makes Heckel's demonstration so valuable. Since it is unlikely that the novelist read deeply

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1) See Gesch. d. Hell.<sup>2</sup> II 1, 86 n.1. Berve suspended judgment, but ended by leaning in favour of acceptance, for reasons set out s.v. Βάλακρος 200. (Cf. also Φίλα 772). W.Hoffmann, in RE s.v. Phila 2, is non-committal. Forty years earlier, Kaerst, s.v. Balakros 1, had rejected the item.

2) See Preisigke, Namenbuch, and Foraboschi, Supplemento, s.v. The only person of any note for whom the spelling is attested - apart, now, from Alexander's satrap - is the historian "Balagros" (see RE s.v., where Schwartz considers, but rejects, emendation).

3) This, of course, actually made it methodologically right to reject the presupposition of the marriage as well. For Antonius Diogenes and his romance, see (briefly) already RE s.v. Antonius 49.

on the history of Alexander, resorting to sources that we do not have, one possibility is that the marriage was mentioned by one of the main sources (perhaps the most popular of all, Clitarchus); and since there was no obvious occasion to mention it later, perhaps the connection was stressed when the appointment of Balacrus was recorded. Alternatively, Phila may have been mentioned (by Hieronymus?) on the occasion of Balacrus' death, or Balacrus on the occasion of her second marriage, to Craterus. In any case, it is difficult to see how an item of information thus acquired in casual reading would have furnished a basis for a fictitious letter written by the new satrap of Cilicia from Tyre. It therefore seems unlikely that Diogenes got his information directly from any historical author.

An alternative might be considered. I would suggest that a fictitious correspondence between Balacrus and Phila was composed, and circulated, in Hellenistic times, just as other volumes of fictitious correspondence (including numerous volumes of Alexander's own) are known to have been produced - probably as a form of historical fiction rather than as forgeries, though some of our own sources (notably Plutarch) were apparently deceived. The writer of such a collection would know the basic historical facts that would make it plausible, just as the modern writer of historical fiction does: it would be he, rather than Diogenes (whom it is hard to imagine picking up the recondite fact), who knew that Balacrus and Phila were married and, at least at times, geographically separated. He may not have known (or if he did, he may not have cared about it) the precise time of Balacrus' appointment to Cilicia, which precludes his presence at Tyre: that may well have been recorded only in Ptolemy (hence Arrian), whom not many read. But we must assume (if this hypothesis is right) that letters from the siege of Tyre were included, or were at least compatible with the corpus, to give Diogenes his idea.

We simply do not know where Phila spent the years of the long war, or how much she saw of her husband. Heckel assumes that she joined him in Cilicia soon after his appointment; as is indeed reasonable, for the appointment was for an unlimited time, and his stay there almost outlasted Alexander. Berve, however, for reasons he does not state, preferred to believe that she remained in Macedonia throughout (s.v. Φίλα 772). If my conjecture of the existence of a volume of letters between them is correct, then it would now seem that Berve guessed right: a long separation, known and recorded, would alone make such a volume possible. (Of course, they need not have been separated for all of the decade of Balacrus' tenure; but at least a fair part of it should be assumed).

b.) At Eumenes 4,4 Nepos reports that Eumenes sent Craterus' body back uxori eius et liberis. Since Craterus had only one son by Phila,<sup>4)</sup> Heckel

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4) RE s.v. Krateros 1. See J.Seibert, Hist. Beiträge zu den dynastischen

suggests that the plural *liberis* is either rhetorical or refers to Phila's earlier children as well, whom Craterus had presumably adopted. It is more probable that it is neither.

Heckel has overlooked the well-known point of Latinity that the plural *liberi*, in writers of the Republic, could refer without difficulty to a single child. The point is noted by Gellius (II 13,1) and examples are numerous.<sup>5)</sup> As it happens, we can be sure that this usage is found in Nepos; indeed, we can be sure of it by virtue of the same life. At Eum. 2,2; 6,3; 13,2 Nepos refers to Alexander's *liberi*. Scholars from the Humanists to the eighteenth century discussed whether 2,2 takes children other than the (yet unborn) Alexander (IV) into account (notably "Heracles son of Barsine", of course). But at 6,3 the reference is certain, and only young Alexander and his mother can be meant. This one instance suffices for our purpose here; but it should be noted that it also makes the limitation to Roxane's son almost certain in the other two cases. We need not assume that Craterus adopted Phila's earlier children; indeed the fact that in the inscription adduced by Heckel the younger Antipater describes himself as the son of Balacrus perhaps makes adoption less likely. On the other hand, on the assumption that Nepos had a source for his statement and that the source was reliable (a reasonable assumption, I think, since no one would have any good reason to invent the addition of *liberi* to the mention of the wife), we may confidently eliminate the old guess that Craterus' son by Phila was born posthumously.<sup>6)</sup> That, in any case, was probably due to a compressed chronology which has been decisively refuted.<sup>7)</sup>

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Verbindungen in hellenistischer Zeit (Historia, Einzelschr. 10,1967) 12f. for the son and the date of the marriage; but cf. n.6 below.

5) See TLL s.v. *liberi* col.1303, with the Gellius quotation and numerous Ciceronian instances.

6) Thus, e.g., Seibert, loc.cit. (n.4 above).

7) Seibert explicitly puts the death of Craterus in spring 321, which hardly leaves enough time for the boy to be born before. For a full and conclusive development of the alternative chronology, which puts the death of Craterus (and that of Perdikkas) in 320, see R.M.Errington, JHS 90,1970,49-77, esp. 65 and 75f.