Alexander the Great in the Olympic Games according to the Alpha Recension of the Greek *Alexander-Romance*[*]

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The deeds and exploits of Alexander the Great fascinated countless generations well after the unexpected death of the Macedonian king in Babylon. Alexander's conquests, invincibility and relentlessness, coupled with the mysterious circumstances surrounding his early demise, facilitated his transformation into a mythical figure. One of the many media that disseminated the legend of Alexander was the *Alexander-Romance*, a literary work which constitutes an amalgam of stories and anecdotes woven together to fashion a quasi-biography of Alexander.[1] Though today the *Alexander-Romance* is available in a slew of languages in more than a hundred different versions, the earliest extant version is the Greek alpha recension, compiled by an anonymous author prior to 300 AD.[2] Among the various episodes, ranging from the historical to the fabulous, there is one particular story, unique to the Alexander-Romance tradition, in which Alexander participates in the four-horse chariot race (τέθριππον) in the Olympic Games and wins. In spite of the intriguing connection between Alexander and the famous Olympic festival, this story has received fairly limited scholarly attention.[3] Consequently, the main purpose of the

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1 E.g. Merkelbach (1954, 20-72) suggests that the main sources of the *Romance* are a Hellenistic biography of Alexander, two collections of *Letters* attributed to Alexander and Darius III (preserved on papyri and dated to the 1st century BC) and a source which recounts Alexander's last days. On the letter collections, see: Cizek 1978, 594; Gunderson 1980; Stoneman 1991, 8-9. Similarly, Samuel (1986, 427-37) argues that a work entitled *Alexander's Last Days,* which is a political document aimed at blackening Antipater as Alexander's assassin, constitutes a possible source of the *Romance*.

2 For a comprehensive summary of the numerous versions of the *Alexander-Romance*, see: Stoneman 2008, 230-45. Interestingly, Selden (2012) explores how the *Romance* was so successful at crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries. On the various branches of the *Greek Alexander-Romance*, see: Cary 1956; Stoneman 1991, 28-32; Stoneman 1996; Jouanno 2002. The Greek alpha recension is dated to the beginning of the fourth century AD since it was translated into Latin by Julius Valerius, who served as consul in 338 AD. See: Cary 1956, 24-5; Berg 1973, 381-2 with n. 2; Samuel 1986, 427 n. 2; Stoneman 1994, 118. Henceforth, all references to the *Alexander-Romance* refer to the Greek alpha recension unless stated otherwise.

3 Nöldeke (1890, 4) argues that the Olympic episode is pure invention while pointing out possible allusions to certain anecdotes found in Plutarch's biography of Alexander. His conclusion is followed by Ausfeld (1907, 131-2) and Merkelbach (1954, 12, 76). Pfister (1946, 82-93) analyses several episodes about Alexander as a youth, but the Olympic

present study is to address the historicity of the tradition in which Alexander becomes an Olympic victor, its origins, date of composition and the circumstances under which this tradition was contrived. I argue that the Olympic episode is likely to be a late invention that echoes an attempt to reassert the prestige and popularity of Olympia's famous Panhellenic festival during the third century BC. This effort was likely to be a response to the emergence oof new Panhellenic gymnastic festivals which were established throughout the Hellenistic world.

At this point it may be helpful to summarize the story in which Alexander becomes an Olympic victor.[4] Alexander, at the age of fifteen, approached his father Philip and asked for his permission to participate in the Olympic Games. Philip, after Alexander revealed his intention to compete in the four-horse chariot race, embraced his son and happily granted his request. At Olympia, Alexander decided to take a stroll accompanied by his good friend Hephaestion, during which they encountered Nicolaus, the king of the Acarnanians. The conversation, which began cordially, took a turn for the worse after Nicolaus learned that Alexander, in spite of his young age, planned to compete in the chariot race. In a fit of rage Nicolaus spat in Alexander's face while wishing him bad luck. Alexander, on the other hand, managed to restrain his fury. On the day of the contest, Alexander, Nicolaus and seven other competitors positioned themselves at the starting point. The signal was given and the race began. Soon enough, it became clear that Nicolaus sought to eliminate Alexander rather than emerge victorious. Alexander, cunningly, allowed the Acarnanian to bypass him. Distracted by the prospect of winning the race, Nicolaus lost control of his chariot and crashed. Immediately thereafter, Nicolaus was trampled to death by Alexander's chariot. Wearing an olive wreath, Alexander ascended triumphant to the temple of Olympian Zeus, where a local priest foretold that Alexander, just as he conquered Nicolaus, would conquer many foes in the future.

On the face of it, the title of Olympic victor suits Alexander well. Throughout his many campaigns Alexander demonstrated time and again his physical prowess, stamina and unwavering determination, traits that befit an athlete.[5] For young Alexander, so it seems, there was no better stage on which to advertise his capabilities and promise than the Olympic Games, the most prestigious athletic festival in ancient Greece. Nevertheless, from the information that can be gleaned from the available ancient sources, one can safely conclude that Alexander never participated in the Olympic festival. To begin with, according to the Romance, Alexander, born in the summer of 356 BC, was fifteen years old at the beginning of the episode.[6] As such, he could have participated in the 110th Olympiad, which was held in 340 BC. However, the 109th

episode is not one of them. Stoneman has published a number of studies on the *Alexander-Romance*, but none addresses the episode in which Alexander participates in the Olympic Games. In a relatively recent study, Jouanno (2002, 147-8, 179, 247-53) discusses the Olympic episode, but she is interested mainly in the elements which are unique to the epsilon recension of the *Romance*, which is dated to the eighth century AD.

4 *Alexander-Romance* 1.18-20. For the Greek text and translation, see: appendix 1.

5 Kyle 1998, 236. Plutarch (*Alex.* 4.10; *Mor*. 179.2, 331B) reports that Alexander, being a gifted sprinter, was encouraged by his father Philip to participate in the foot race at Olympia.

6 *Alexander-Romance* 1.18.1.

Olympiad held in 344 BC is out of the question since on this occasion it is recorded that Arrybas of Epirus won the four-horse chariot race.[7] By 336 BC Alexander had already succeeded his father, and though much is known in respect to his movements in mainland Greece before he crossed the Hellespont, there is no evidence for his presence at Olympia.[8] Yet, in 340 BC Philip was laying siege to Perinthus and Byzantium, and while he was absent Alexander reigned as regent.[9] Philip's Thracian campaign began in July and ended by September, which means that Philip's absence and Alexander's regency overlapped with the Olympic festival, which took place in the middle of summer (July/August). Moreover, while presiding as regent, Alexander had to suppress a revolt of the Maedi, a Thracian tribe which dwelled in the region between Thrace and Paeonia. It is highly improbable that Alexander was able to find time to address his diplomatic and military obligations, while preparing for and competing in the Olympic Games. Alexander's participation in the Olympic Games becomes even less likely since, according to Pausanias, athletes who were to compete in the Olympic Games were required to undergo preliminary training for a period of no less than ten months, in addition to a month-long training camp which took place in Olympia prior to the festival.[10] Furthermore, with the exception of Alexander himself, we have no information that corroborates the possibility that Nicolaus and the rest of Alexander's rivals in the contest were contemporary or even historical figures.[11] Lastly, the *Alexander-Romance* is the only source preserving the tradition of Alexander's participation in the Olympic Games.[12] In short, the aforementioned tradition lacks any feasible historical basis. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the historicity of the Olympic episode is doubtful, a fictional story in which Alexander becomes an Olympic victor is far from useless. I will follow the injunction of Tarn, who rightly asserts that 'to show that a story is untrue is only half the battle unless one can also show how it got there'.[13]

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7 See: *IG* II^2 226= *Syll*.^{3} 228.

8 Bosworth 1989, 28-34.

9 Plut. *Alex*. 9.1. Hammond and Griffith (1979, 384) note the Macedonian custom of appointing a regent while the presiding king embarks on a campaign beyond the borders of the Macedonian kingdom. They bring as an example the decision of Perdiccas II to appoint a regent before his campaign in 432 BC, as reported by Thucydides (1.62).

10 Paus. 5.24.9. For further reading on this subject, see: Crowther 1991, 161-6.

11 Berve 1926, II 279-80. The rivals of Alexander are the following (*Alexander-Romance* 1.19.2): Nicolaus of Acarnania, Xenias of Boeotia, Cimon of Corinth, Cleitomachus of Achaea, Aristippus of Olynthus, Peirus of Phocaea, Lacon of Lindos and Nicomachus of Locris.

12 Diodorus, Arrian and Justin pay little to no attention to Alexander's early life. Regarding the account of Curtius Rufus, the first two books of his work were unfortunately lost. Plutarch does include several anecdotes from the early life of Alexander, but a participation in the Olympic Games is nowhere to be found among them.

13 Tarn 1948, II 273.

The Olympic Episode and the *Romance*

As stated above, the *Alexander-Romance* constitutes a compilation of various sources.[14] The considerable number of episodes which place an emphasis on Alexandria and Egypt gave rise to the hypothesis that the author/compiler of the *Romance* was an Alexandrian or at least a denizen of the Ptolemaic capital.[15] Ausfeld suggests that the Olympic episode is of Alexandrian origin as well, mainly due to the decision to cast Alexander as a contestant in the chariot race, which was a very popular event in Alexandria.[16] There are several shortcomings in Ausfeld's hypothesis. First, chariot races were popular not only in Alexandria but throughout the ancient world.[17] Second, in contrast to other episodes identified as Alexandrian, Egypt, Egyptian gods, Alexandria and the Ptolemies are strikingly absent from the Olympic episode.[18] In fact, the story is entirely Greek in context and content. The episode takes place in Olympia during the most famous gymnastic festival in antiquity, Alexander's rivals are, of course, exclusively Greeks and the only divine deity that is being mentioned by name is Zeus. The Olympic episode, therefore, seems likelier to have originated from mainland Greece itself.[19]

This hypothesis is strengthened by the probability that the Olympic episode constitutes a self-contained literary unit. First, Hephaestion appears only twice in the Greek alpha recension: as the companion of Alexander on his journey to Olympia, and later (3.17), as one of Alexander's close advisors. Hence, the appearance of Hephaestion in the Olympic episode may indicate that its origin is different than other episodes.[20] Second, the integration of the Olympic episode into the sequence of events is far from seamless. According to the *Romance*, immediately after his victory Alexander returned to Pella, where he was shocked to hear about his father's intention to divorce Olympias. Philip's marriage to Cleopatra took place, at the earliest, in 338 BC, which means that there is a two year gap between the conclusion of the Olympic festival in 340 BC and the

14 See n. 1 above.

15 Ausfeld 1907, 251-2; Pfister 1946, 44-6; Barns 1956, 33; Berg 1973, 381-87; Stoneman 1994, 122. On the Egyptian literary motifs employed in the *Romance*, see: Barns 1956; Perry 1966, 327-33; Fraser 1972, I 680; Stoneman 1991, 10-12; Stoneman 1992, 110-11; Jouanno 2002, 10-12.

16 Ausfeld (1907, 131-2) bases his assumption on an observation made by Dio Chrysostom (*Disc*. 32.41), namely that the Alexandrians were famous for their moderation, though it was replaced by madness whenever they entered the theatre or stadium.

17 On the prestige of chariot races in antiquity, see: Robinson 1955, 82-3, Miller 2004, 74-8, Kyle 2007, 126-7.

18 If this story reflected Ptolemaic propaganda, one would have expected Ptolemy, rather than Hephaestion, to accompany Alexander on his journey to Olympia.

19 Other episodes in the *Romance* were identified as Greek in origin. For instance, Samuel (1986, 430-32) convincingly demonstrates how the list of Alexander's teachers and instructors (*Alexander-Romance* 1.13) is of Greek rather than Alexandrian origin.

20 Jouanno (2013, 69-70) argues that the absence of Hephaestion, one of Alexander's closest confidantes, was no accident, but rather an attempt to suppress the tradition which depicts Alexander and Hephaestion as lovers.

time when the marriage between Philip and Olympias was terminated.[21] In spite of this chronological gap, the decision to insert the Olympic episode at this point in the plot seems to be far from coincidental. The preceding chapter is concerned with the famous encounter between Alexander and his loyal horse Bucephalus.[22] The introduction of Bucephalus corresponds with Alexander's determination to rely on horses he himself reared from infancy rather than horses from the royal stable.[23] In addition, Paschalis points out a substantial semantic connection between the Olympian episode and the following one, concerned with the divorce of Philip and Olympias. He highlights the employment of the words 'Olympic' and 'Olympias' and argues that the first of Alexander's future victories, as prophesied by the priest of Olympian Zeus following Alexander's victory in the games, was saving Olympias after Philip's decision to divorce her.[24]

In short, all of the above can be summarized as follows: (1) the origins of the story are probably Greek; (2) the story could have existed as an independent literary unit; (3) the author/compiler of the *Alexander-Romance* sought and found a fairly suitable place to integrate the story in which Alexander becomes an Olympic champion into the plot sequence of the *Alexander-Romance*.

Cui Bono?

Without a doubt, Alexander is depicted in the Olympic episode in a favorable light. He is brave, determined, shrewd and, most importantly, victorious. Therefore, it is not impossible that the story originated at Alexander's court, as a part of an attempt to exploit the prestige of an Olympic victor for political ends.[25] If that was the case, Alexander was not the first Macedonian king to have exploited the prestige of the Olympic Games for his own personal gain. Herodotus (5.22) recounts how Alexander I was the first Macedonian king to participate in the foot race at the Olympic Games.[26] Interestingly, several of his opponents tried to debar his participation by claiming that he was a barbarian rather than a Greek. Alexander, however, proved that the Argead royal

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21 Hammond and Griffith (1979, 676, 726) suggest the spring or summer of 337 BC. Stoneman (2004, 10, 18) dates Philip and Olympias' divorce to 338 BC.

22 *Alexander-Romance* 1.17. In the Greek alpha recension Bucephalus consumes human flesh!

23 Interestingly, in the epsilon recension of the *Greek Alexander-Romance*, dated to the eighth century AD, Bucephalus is explicitly mentioned as one of the horses which drew Alexander's chariot at Olympia. See: Trumpf 1974, 18 (1.5.5).

24 Paschalis 2007, 93-102.

25 The four-horse chariot race was by far the most prestigious event in the Olympic program. Only the rich and powerful had the means to participate in this competition, which allowed them to showcase their wealth, and, if victorious, to improve their social and political status. For instance, Thucydides (6.16) reports that Alcibiades claimed to have the right to command the Sicilian expedition partly because he sent no less than seven chariots to the Olympic Games with the purpose of glorifying Athens.

26 Justin (7.2.14) claims that Alexander participated in various events (*uario ludicrorum genere*) at the Olympic Games. This led Hammond and Griffith (1977, 102-3) to conclude that Alexander participated in the pentathlon event.

household was of Argive stock, and thus was allowed to participate in the race.[27] It should be noted that the historicity of Herodotus' report is contested, as Borza claims that the entire episode was concocted by Alexander I himself, who wished to legitimize the Greekness of the Argeads.[28] It is possible that Alexander (III) followed the footsteps of his ancestor by seeking to confer upon himself the honor of being an Olympic victor. This suggestion seems plausible when taking into consideration that both Philip and Alexander framed the campaign against the Persians as a Panhellenic expedition to liberate the Asiatic Greeks from the yoke of barbarian rule.[29] Hence, a victory at Olympia would have definitely bolstered Alexander's claim for the position of supreme commander in the war against Persia. Nevertheless, endorsing a favorable yet false claim could have jeopardized Alexander's reputation, as many of his contemporaries must have known that Alexander never actually went to Olympia. Therefore, who, if not Alexander, might have benefitted from such a story?

As stated above, the achievements of Alexander encouraged the creation of countless legends and myths. This phenomenon began while Alexander was still among the living and intensified in the decades and even centuries after his death. It is quite possible that the story in which Alexander participates in the Olympic Games was similarly a post-mortem development. It should be noted that Alexander's victory at Olympia pales in comparison to Alexander's actual and mythical achievements. Thus, it is possible that the Olympic episode, just like many other traditions, was not invented exclusively to celebrate Alexander but rather to promote and safeguard the interest of certain groups who lived in the Hellenistic world. There are many examples of such traditions. Alexander's will, a document which concludes the *Alexander-Romance*, provides a revealing example.[30] Oddly enough, the will opens with a letter addressed to the people of the island of Rhodes, which recounts significant privileges granted by Alexander to the Rhodians.[31] The emphasis on the local affairs of Rhodes, the official style and tone, and above all the appearance of a second preface in the fifth paragraph of the will, led scholars to believe that the first four paragraphs are most likely to be a late addition to

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27 There are various suggestions concerning the date of Alexander I's participation in the Olympic Games. Hammond and Griffith (1979, 60) suggest 496 BC, Badian (1982, 34-5) favors 476 BC while Roos (1985) argues that Alexander's participation occurred earlier than 496 BC, i.e. before he ascended the throne of Macedon. Recently, Kertész (2005) reasserted 476 BC as the year in which Alexander I visited Olympia. For a summary of the debate, see: Adams 2003, 214 n. 6.

28 Borza 1990, 110-14. The claim for Argive descent had been envisioned as the product of Macedonian propaganda, beginning in the time of Alexander I and continuing well into the 4th century BC. See: Borza 1992 and more recently Asirvatham 2009. In regard to Herodotus' report, several scholars have suggested that Herodotus functioned as a mouthpiece for Macedonian propaganda: e.g. Daskalakis 1965, 26-29; Hammond and Griffith 1979, 59, 98-9; Errington 1981; Errington 1990, 13; Borza 1992; Borza 1999, 6.

29 See: Flower 2000.

30 *Alexander-Romance* 3.33-4.

31 *Alexander-Romance* 3.33.2-8: 300 talents, seventy seven war ships, a yearly supply of grain from Egypt and Asia, and the removal of the Macedonian garrison stationed on the island. Compare: *Metz Epitome* 107-8.

Alexander's will.[32] It is almost certain that this interpolation expresses a Rhodian attempt to promote Rhodes' political, economic and military interests, which probably occurred shortly after Alexander's death.[33]

In similar fashion, the Olympic Games themselves are presented in a strikingly positive manner. First, when responding to Alexander's wish to compete at Olympia, Philip demonstrates impressive familiarity with the Olympic program, the importance of training and the set of skills that each event required. This knowledge can be seen as a sign of Philip's great interest in the Olympic festival. Second, Philip explicitly states that the Olympic Games are of the highest repute, a statement which corresponds well with Philip's own investment in the Olympic Games.[34] Third, Alexander's zeal to travel to Olympia and to participate in the chariot race reflects Alexander's favorable attitude toward Olympia, an impression that is bolstered when we are told that Alexander gave his victory crown to his father as a sign of honor and respect.[35] Lastly, the prophecy given to Alexander by a priest of Olympian Zeus is by far the most effective measure through which Olympia and the Olympic Games are celebrated in this episode. As stated above, after he emerged triumphant, Alexander, crowned with an olive wreath, arrived at the temple of Olympian Zeus, where a priest declared that as he conquered Nicolaus, he would conquer many enemies in the future.[36]

Prophecies concerning the future greatness of Alexander, allegedly uttered well before Alexander earned his famous epitaph, are a recurring feature in many traditions that recount the life and exploits of the Macedonian king. For instance, Plutarch (*Alex*. 14.6-7) reports that Alexander travelled to Delphi to consult the Pythia. Unfortunately, the priestess was prohibited from prophesying due to religious restrictions. This did not stop Alexander, who forcefully dragged the Pythia into the temple. Amazed by his relentlessness the priestess turned to Alexander and said: "You are invincible, my son."[37] Alexander, interpreting the exclamation of the Pythia to be a favorable omen regarding his campaign against Persia, soon departed.[38] Another famous episode which includes a prophecy about the future success of Alexander is the famous Gordian knot affair. There are several versions regarding the way in which Alexander disentangled the intricate knot, but all of them feature a prophecy which claimed that the man who would

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32 Stoneman 1991, 11, 195 n. 122. In regard to Alexander's relationship with the Rhodians, Diodorus (20.81.1) reports that Alexander did in fact entrust the people of Rhodes with such an important and sensitive document.

33 For a summary of the debate concerning the date of the letter to the Rhodians, see: Fraser 1972, III 947-9 n. 16. On Alexander's Will, see: Bosworth 2000.

34 *Alexander-Romance* 1.18.4: ἀγὼν ἐνδοξότατος. Three Olympic victories were attributed to Philip, all in the course of the equestrian events, see: Plut. *Alex*. 3.8; Just. 12.16.6. See also: Moretti 1959, nos. 434, 439, 445. Plutarch (*Alex*. 4.9) notes that Philip commemorated his Olympian victories on coins, a claim which is corroborated by the numismatic records, see: Perlman 1965, 57-8; Roman 1990, 75.

35 *Alexander-Romance* 1.20.

36 Ibid. 1.19.6: ὁ δὲ νεωκόρος φησὶν αὐτῷ· 'Ἀλέξανδρε, ὡς Νικόλαον ἐνίκησας, οὕτω καὶ πολλοὺς πολεμίους νικήσεις'.

37 Plut. *Alex*. 14.7: 'ἀνίκητος εἶ, ὦ παῖ'.

38 Diodorus (17.93.4) mentions as well that the Pythia called Alexander = ἀνίκητον 'invincible'. Amitay (2010, 66-8) argues that the entire anecdote is probably fictional.

successfully untie the knot would rule Asia in its entirety.[39] A similar prophecy was given to Alexander by a priest of Ammon in Siwa, though in this case Alexander was told that he would conquer the world.[40] In the various traditions concerned with Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, we are told that the high priest informed Alexander about a local prophecy. A Greek man, so it was prophesized, was destined to overthrow the Persian Empire, allegedly foreshadowing Alexander's victory at Gaugamela.[41] In essence, it is not impossible that the invention of a story in which Alexander becomes an Olympic victor exploited the image of Alexander in order to celebrate Olympia and its gymnastic festival. In a similar fashion to Alexander's interactions with the various priests and oracles in Delphi, Siwa, Gordion and Jerusalem, Alexander's victory in the chariot race and the prophecy given to him by the local priest constitute an implicit affirmation of the authorities at the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games were in fact a religious festival that was dedicated to Zeus, and it was Zeus who inspired his priest to acknowledge Alexander's forthcoming greatness while the Macedonian king was still a youth. In other words, this episode validates the notion that the gods, and by extension the authorities at Olympia, sanctioned Alexander.

The Olympic Games in the Hellenistic Age

Since the Alexander-Romance is a compilation of a variety of sources, stemming from as early as the late fourth century BC and well into the Roman era, it is a challenge to date the Olympic episode. Nevertheless, there are several hints within the text itself that indicate a plausible chronological framework. The dramatic date of the Olympic episode is roughly the third quarter of the 4th century BC. As such, the claim that Alexander's rivals in the contest were sons of kings and satraps is clearly anachronistic.[42] In the fourth century BC the vast majority of Greek city-states was ruled by democracies and oligarchies, while monarchy could be found only in Sparta, Macedon and Cyprus.[43] The revival of monarchy took place only at the end of the century, when Alexander's successors assumed royal titles.[44] Similarly, it is highly unlikely that any of Alexander's Greek rivals was the son of a satrap. Under the Achaemenids, the office of satrap was traditionally dominated by the Persian nobility. Only after the Macedonian conquest of the Persian Empire, which was followed by Alexander's decision to adopt the Persian

39 For the Gordian knot affair, see: Arr. *Anab*. 2.3; Curt. 3.1.11-18; Plut. *Alex*. 18.1-4; Just. 11.7.3-16.

40 For Alexander's visit to Siwa, see: Diod. 17.51.2, 93.4; Arr. *Anab*. 3.3.1-4.5; Curt. 4.7.5-32; Plut. *Alex*. 27.6; Just. 11.11. The prophecy is not explicitly mentioned in Arrian's report, though we are told that Alexander received the answer he desired. Strabo (17.1.43) recounts a more specific prophecy, namely that Alexander will defeat the Persians at Gaugamela.

41 Joseph. *AJ* 11.337. Compare: Talmud Babli, tractate *Yoma* 69; Megillat Taʿanit on Kislev 21sr.

42 *Alexander-Romance* 1.19.1: ἐξ ὧν τέσσαρες υἱοὶ βασιλέων… οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι στρατηγῶν καὶ σατραπῶν υἱοί.

43 Romm 2005, 8.

44 In 306 BC Antigonus claimed the title of king for himself and for his son Demetrius, and soon enough Ptolemy, Lysimachus and Seleucus made similar proclamations. See: Diod. 20.53.2; Plut. *Dem*. 17.2-18.2; Just. 15.2.10.

administrative apparatus, Greeks and Macedonians were appointed as satraps.[45] Thus, Greek kings and satraps became a reality only in the Hellenistic period and not before.

The probability that this story was created sometime during the Hellenistic period is strengthened by the central role of Tyche, the Greek goddess of fortune. When Alexander encounters Nicolaus for the first time we are told that the latter was excessively self-confident, mainly due to his impressive physical strength, wealth and good fortune, the latter two explicitly described as the most capricious of gods.[46] In the decades following Alexander's death, the popularity of Tyche soared, partly due to the chaos and brutality which characterized the war of the Diadochi and attributed to Tyche's fickle disposition.[47] In sum, the anachronisms in the Olympic episode clearly indicate a Hellenistic context.

If the above is correct, one wonders what necessitated the creation of a tradition which places an emphasis on Alexander's positive attitude toward Olympia and claims that Alexander learned about his future greatness, for the first time, at Olympia. The answer might be found in a phenomenon unique to the Hellenistic period. The spreading of Greek culture, religion and language among the numerous nations that found themselves under Greco-Macedonian rule enabled the proliferation of one of the most famous Greek institutions, the gymnastic festival.[48] The emergence of new festivals meant keener competitions in the field of Greek athletics, which was likely to be perceived by the organizers of the Olympic Games as a threat to Olympia's lofty status as a Panhellenic center and the prestige of its famous festival. When considering these circumstances it becomes apparent that the Olympic episode might be an attempt to cope with this new competition, namely an effort to interpolate the image of Alexander the Great, the quintessential Hellenistic symbol of legitimacy, into the history of Olympia.

In the Hellenistic age a gymnastic festival allowed communities to express their identity and to elevate their status among their peers, while the Hellenistic kings saw this institution as an instrument to showcase their political, economic and military powers.[49] Some of the new gymnastic festivals were established *ex nihilo* while others constituted an upgraded rendition of a preexisting local festival. It should be emphasized that there were two main categories of gymnastic festivals. The first category is the Panhellenic festival, which was traditionally a quinquennial or biennial event. The 'Big Four' Panhellenic festivals of mainland Greece, namely the Olympian, Pythian, Isthmian and

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45 For a survey of satrapal appointments under Alexander, see: Ashley 2004, 385-92. On the preservation of Achaemenid administration, institutions, offices and regulation during the reign of Alexander and his Seleucid successors, see: Aperghis 2004, 263-94. It should be noted that Greeks who served the Persian King as autocrats of the Greek city-states in Asia Minor were branded as tyrants. See, for example, the catalog of Ionian tyrants provided by Herodotus: Hdt. 4.136-8. On the Greek tyrants of Asia Minor, see: Austin 1990.

46 *Alexander-Romance* 1.18.6: πλούτῳ καὶ τύχῃ, δυσὶ θεοῖς ἀστάτοις, φρυαττόμενος καὶ τῇ τοῦ σώματος δυνάμει πεποιθώς.

47 On Tyche's status and importance in the Hellenistic period, see: Matheson and Pollitt 1994; Gasparro 1997; Baynham 1998, 104-11. On Fortune's function in Polybius' work, see: Walbank 2008.

48 Kyle 2007, 232-34.

49 König 2005, 27; Kyle 2007, 229-30. On the intricate interaction between the Hellenistic kings and the Greek city-states, see e.g.: Billows 1995 (especially Ch. 3); Ma 2000.

Nemean Games, were dubbed sacred crown games (ἀγῶνες ἱεροὶ καὶ στεφανῖται). The victors in these festivals were rewarded with a wreath made of a tree or plant with religious importance, and nothing more.[50] In spite of the absence of material rewards, the prestige and glory which were conferred upon their victors increased the social and at times political status in their home towns.[51] It should be emphasized that a gymnastic festival became 'stephanitic', i.e. sacred crown games, not due to the decision of the hosting city but through the recognition of other cities. To put it differently, the Panhellenic status of an athletic festival was established by a network of reciprocity and trade of honors. Ensuring a stephanitic status must have rendered the new festivals more attractive to talented athletes, since the honors conferred upon the victors were recognized as equal to those of Olympia, Delphi, Nemea or Corinth. The second category consists of local festivals, which could be either a yearly or a one-time event such as funerary ceremonies in honor of a local dignitary.[52] In contrast to the sacred crown games, cash or valuable prizes were given to the victors, while the organizers could decide whether non-locals could participate or not.[53] In the following, the focus is placed on festivals which received a Panhellenic status upon their establishment.

One of the most impressive new festivals established in the Hellenistic period is without a doubt the Alexandrian Ptolemaea. Founded by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, probably in 279 BC, the Ptolemaea was a quinquennial festival celebrated in honor of Philadelphus' parents, Ptolemy I Soter and Berenice.[54] The main purpose of the festival was to ensure a seamless transition of regal power from Soter to Philadelphus while supplying a most suitable pretext to exhibit the wealth and power of Ptolemaic Egypt.[55] Envoys were dispatched from Alexandria to various destinations throughout the Greek world with the purpose of inviting numerous Greek communities to take part in the celebrations. Interestingly, Philadelphus based his new Panhellenic festival on the

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50 The victory wreath was made of olive in Olympia, laurel in Delphi, wild celery in Nemea and pine in the Isthmos of Corinth.

51 For instance, Plato (*Ap*. 36d) recounts how Socrates, when asked what would be an appropriate punishment for his crimes, answered that the Athenians should furnish him with meals at the public's expense, a privilege which was conferred upon Olympic victors.

52 One famous example is the funerary games which were held in honor of Patroclus in book twenty three of the Iliad.

53 Pleket 1975, 56-9. Victors in the Heraea of Argos received a bronze shield, while in the Athenian Panathenaea Attic amphorae filled with local olive oil were given to the victors as rewards. For further reading on prize/money festivals, see: Miller 2004, 129-49. Moreover, Pleket (1975, 57-9) criticizes the romantic scholarly view, which led scholars to ignore evidence which reveals that material prizes were given in sacred crown games as well, e.g. in the early Olympiads. Nevertheless, there are no known instances in the classical or Hellenistic periods in which Olympic victors received prizes, whether in kind or cash.

54 For 279 BC as the foundation date of the Ptolemaea, see: Fraser 1954, 56-8; Fraser 1972, 230-2; Foertmeyer 1988. In contrast, Bousquet (1958, 81-2) argues in favor of 269/8 BC.

55 Thompson 2000, 368-9; Murray 2008, 19. Athenaeus (197c-203b) preserves in his work a highly detailed description of the grand procession in Alexandria. His source is Callixenus of Rhodes, who witnessed the overwhelming extravagance of the grand procession in the streets of Alexandria. Thompson (2000, 375, 385) and Newby (2006, 38) convincingly argue that the grand procession took place in the context of the Ptolemaea.

Olympic model and requested that the Ptolemaea should be recognized as *isolympian* (ἰσολύμπιον), i.e. equal to the Olympic Games in respect to its program, regulations and honors.[56] The vast amount of resources invested in the Ptolemaea reflects Philadelphus' intention to mark Alexandria not only as the new capital of Egypt but also as a Panhellenic center.

Another new Panhellenic festival was the Aetolian Soteria. In 279 BC the forces of the Aetolian League successfully warded off Gallic invaders that were about to sack the temple of Apollo at Delphi.[57] The Aetolians, seeking ways to enhance their political influence in mainland Greece, were quick to take advantage of their recent victory by establishing the Soteria festival. It was held at Delphi and its main purpose was to celebrate the role of the Aetolians as the saviors of Greece and Delphi.[58] Soon after, the Aetolians reorganized the festival, which was upgraded as a quinquennial Panhellenic festival dedicated to Apollo and Zeus.[59] In a similar fashion to the efforts of Ptolemy, the Aetolian League declared that the expanded Soteria was equal to the Pythian Games in respect to its musical competitions and to the Nemean Games in regard to its equestrian races.[60] The Soteria enjoyed immediate success which lasted at least until the end of the third century BC.[61]

The people of Magnesia on the Maeander in Asia Minor fancied a Panhellenic festival of their own. There may have been a failed attempt to establish a Panhellenic festival in 221 BC, but the Magnesians tried again in 208 BC, and this time they were successful.[62] Envoys were sent from Magnesia to announce the completion of the temple

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56 Philadelphus' efforts to ensure that his festival would be acknowledged as Panhellenic is commemorated in two inscriptions. The first, dated to 280 BC, preserves the positive reply of the Nesiotic League to the invitation to the games (*Syll*^{3} 390). The other, dated by Thompson (2000, 385) to 262/1 BC, consists the approval of the Amphictyonic council. See also: Fraser 1954.

57 For the role of the Aetolians as the defenders of Delphi against a Gallic invasion, see: Paus. 10.19.4-23.14. Polybius' usage of the Gallic incursion of 279 BC as a point of reference when dating less important events reflects the gravity of this event. See: Polyb. 1.6.5, 2.20.6, 4.46.1-2.

58 Austin 2007, 129.

59 Scholten (2000, 99) argues that the increasing hostility between the Aetolian League and the Antigonids motivated the Aetolians to seek additional ways to assert their influence in central Greece. Moreover, there is a debate concerning the date in which the Soteria was reorganized, as suggestions range from 249 to 245 BC. For a summary of the chorological debate, see: Scholten 2000, 237-40.

60 The classification of the events in the Soteria is mentioned in a decree, dated to 246 BC, issued by the Aetolian League to the people of Chios. See: *Syll*^{3} 402. Similarly, the Panhellenic status of the Soteria was acknowledged by Athens (*Syll*^{3} 408 = *IG* II^2 680) and the Amphictyonic council (see: Scholten 2000, 251-2).

61 Champion (1995, 213 n. 3) claims to have identified five additional inscriptions that he associates with the foundation of the Aetolian Soteria.

62 The Magnesian failure demonstrates that claiming a stephanitic status was dependent of the acknowledgment of peer cities, kings and various other political entities.

of Artemis and the establishment of a new festival, the Leucophrynea.[63] The request of the people of Magnesia, namely that their festival was to be acknowledged as equal to the Pythian Games, was granted by an overwhelming number of kings and cities.[64] The wide recognition of the stephanitic status of the Leucophrynea indicates not only a successful establishment but also the continuous popularity of the Magnesian gymnastic festival well into the second century BC.

The same trend continued well into the second century BC. In 181 BC Eumenes II of Pergamum founded the Nikephoria festival with the purpose of commemorating his victory over Prusias I of Bithynia.[65] As expected, Eumenes sent envoys to announce the establishment of the new stephanitic festival, which featured *isopythian* music contests and *isolympian* athletic and equestrian events.[66] At about the same time, the Athenians decided to transform their famous Panathenaea into a Panhellenic festival, whose popularity is reflected in an inscription which contains a list of Panathenaic victors from 170 to 162 BC. The victorious athletes hailed from cities such as Sparta, Antioch, Alexandria and even Seleucia on the Euphrates.[67]

In essence, the Panhellenic festivals founded in Alexandria, Delphi, Magnesia, Pergamum and Athens were products of the social, economic, cultural and political conditions of the Hellenistic period. Though the Panhellenic festival was far from an institutional novelty, the determination of the organizers of the new festivals to adopt preexisting models and to ensure that their newly founded establishments were granted stephanitic status was unprecedented. There were, however, various other factors that could have enhanced the popularity of a Panhellenic festival. The festivals of Olympia, Delphi and Magnesia benefited from their connection to important religious centers. The Ptolemaea and the Nikephoria were at a disadvantage in this respect, but they had the full support of the powerful Ptolemies and Attalids respectively. In a similar vein, one might imagine that the extended Panathenaea benefited from the prestige of Athens and similarly that the popularity of the Soteria was on the rise as the influence and power of the Aetolian League increased.

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63 For the foundation decree of the Leucophrynea, dated to 208/7 BC, see: *I. Magn* 16 [=*Syll*^{3} 557]. On the Magnesian effort to establish the Leucophrynea, see: Thonemann 2007; Sosin 2009.

64 In the first decade following the foundation of the Leucophrynea, the Panhellenic status of the festival was recognized, *inter alia*, by Antiochus III (*I. Magn*. 18; *OGIS* 231), Antiochus IV (*I. Magn*. 19; *OGIS* 232), Ptolemy IV (*I. Mag*. 23), and Attalus I (*I. Magn*. 22). Moreover, a great many Magnesian inscriptions, commemorating the positive reply of a multitude of cities, reveal the impressive magnitude of the success of the Leucophrynea. See: *I. Magn*. 20-23, 25a-b, 26, 28, 33-50, 52-60, 62-64, 66, 68, 70-72, 73b, 78, 82, 83, 86, 87.

65 For the victory inscription of Eumenes and the letter in which he orders the establishment of the Nikephoria, see: Allen 1983, 211-12, 215-17.

66 Three inscriptions preserve the invitation sent by Eumenes: to an anonymous Carian city (*RC* 49), to the people of the island of Cos (*RC* 50) and to the Amphictyonic Council (*Syll*^{3} 629-30). The Nikephoria was such a success that additional festivals, also named Nikephoria, were established in Pergamum. See: Hansen 1971, 449-50.

67 On the Panhellenic rendition of the Panathenaea, see: Tracy and Habicht 1991.

The establishment of new Panhellenic festivals must have had profound consequences on the field of Greek gymnastic festivals. First of all, during the Archaic and Classical periods, a harmonious cycle of Panhellenic festivals, i.e. the περίοδος, was established (see table 1 below). Greek athletes and spectators were able, at least in theory, to take part in all four Panhellenic festivals of mainland Greece without having to choose one over the other. The addition of new festivals must have disrupted the aforementioned harmony. For instance, according to Athenaeus (12.522c-d), in 512 BC the people of Sybaris, a Greek colony in southern Italy, decided to establish a new gymnastic festival which was held simultaneously with the Olympic Games. This was no accident, because the organizers, so we are told, sought to undermine the prestige and popularity of Olympia and they even offered cash prizes to lure talented athletes away from the Olympic Games.[68] This early example reflects the difficulties that must have arisen due to the addition of new stephanitic festivals to the Panhellenic circuit.

The complications which were the outcome of an increase in the number of Panhellenic festivals were aggravated by the unprecedented geographical scope of the Hellenistic world. The conquests of Alexander and the emergence of the Hellenistic kingdoms incorporated many new regions into the Greek cultural and political spheres. Thus, the vast distances that athletes and spectators had to travel from one festival to another must have necessitated the choosing of one venue over the other. An anecdote preserved in the account of Pausanias sheds light on the difficulties athletes encountered due to long-distance travel. Concerning the 218th Olympiad, i.e. 93 AD, Pausanias (5.21.12-14) recounts how an Alexandrian boxer named Apollonius was disqualified by the Elian judges since he failed to arrive on time. The Alexandrian athlete, however, claimed that his late arrival was caused by a storm, which forced him to prolong his stay in the Cycladic islands. Unfortunately for Apollonius, one of his rivals, another Alexandrian named Heraclides, produced evidence that showed that Apollonius' excuse was in fact a lie. Succumbing to greed, Apollonius made a detour to Ionia, where he participated in a local festival which offered cash prizes. After his lie was exposed, Apollonius was fined and banned from the competition, while Heraclides won by default. The anecdote ends with Apollonius attacking his countryman while the latter was still crowned with his victory wreath. In spite of the fact that this event is dated to the first century AD, the conditions and circumstances are identical to those of the Hellenistic era. Apollonius' attempt to deceive the Elian officials by claiming that his delay was caused by bad weather indicates that a scenario in which athletes were delayed due to the unexpected hardships of both sea and land travel could and probably did happen before. Furthermore, this incident exemplifies the schedule conflicts between The Olympian Games and other festivals, whether sacred crown games or local prize festivals. The greed, which overtook Apollonius, must have pushed other athletes to opt for a festival which, even if not as prestigious as that of Olympia, offered substantial material rewards.

68 Crowther (1996, 35) suggests that the foundation of an equivalent festival in southern Italy was an attempt of the Greek inhabitants of Magna Graecia to expresses their 'national' pride.

Table 1: the Panhellenic Circuit	
Year 1	Isthmian Games (April/May) Olympian Games (July/August)
Year 2	Nemean Games (July/August)
Year 3	Isthmian Games (April/May) Pythian Games (July/August)
Year 4	Nemean Games (July/August)

Evidence from the Olympic Victories Lists

The evidence presented above for possible threats to the popularity of the Olympic Games is fairly plausible but circumstantial. Therefore, additional evidence should and could be marshalled to demonstrate that the success of the new Panhellenic festival came at the expense of the Olympic Games. With this goal in mind, the remainder of the study is devoted to an important but somewhat underused body of evidence, namely the Olympic victory lists. A comprehensive catalogue of Olympic victories was compiled by Moretti, a monumental scholarly effort which brings together all of the known evidence from literary, papyrological, numismatic and epigraphic records that recount all known Olympic victors and victories.[69] Moretti updated his catalogue three times, and presently there are between 969 to 983 victories that are firmly dated within half a century or less, while a little more than half of them are dated to a specific Olympiad.[70] An assessment of the reliability of Moretti's catalog is presented by Farrington. First, Farrington calculates the upper and lower limits of the total number of Olympic victories won from the first to the last Olympiad, i.e. from 776 BC to 393 AD. Farrington concludes that there were between 3,092 and 4,447 Olympic victories overall. According to Farrington, the lowest number of recorded Olympic victories is 979, which means that we have knowledge of about 22% to 25% of all Olympic victories.[71] This percentage is simply staggering, especially considering the much lower percentage of the extant literary, numismatic and epigraphic corpus, upon which modern scholars rely to reconstruct the history of the ancient past. Therefore, the catalogue of Olympic victories is relatively reliable, and as such can be used to draw conclusions regarding the popularity of Olympia throughout the centuries.

According to table 2 (below), Elian athletes dominated the Olympic Games during the fourth and third centuries BC. There are twenty three known Elian victories dated to the fourth century BC, which constitute 16% of the total number of known victories.[72]

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69 Moretti's catalogue consists of 944 Olympic victories, 43 of uncertain date and additional 40 that were deemed victories in a local rendition of the Olympic Games. See: Moretti 1957. For earlier compilation of Olympic victories, see: Krause 1838; Förster 1891-2; and especially Klee 1918, who provides a catalogue of Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean victories.

70 Farrington 2014, 159. For Moretti's corrections, see: Moretti 1970; Moretti 1987.

71 Farrington 2014, 159-180. There are, of course, many *caveat*s underlying these calculations, which are addressed in detail by Farrington.

72 Victories by victors from Elis, dated to the 4th century BC: Moretti 1957, nos. 367, 369, 374, 375, 383, 387, 391, 401, 402, 404, 412, 413, 452, 462, 466, 476, 480, 489, 494, 497,

Though there are only seventeen known Elian victories dated to the third century BC, they comprise no less than 19% of all known victories.[73] Local success in the Olympic Games may signify a decrease in Olympia's overall popularity. Gardiner argues that Elian athletes were likely to be most successful when the festival was at its weakest. For instance, he points out that after the Spartan invasion of 399 BC, the games were marked by a series of local victories, caused by a falling off in the competition.[74] Conversely, Crowther asserts that Elian success in the fourth and third centuries BC was not caused by a drop in Olympia's popularity. He asserts that Olympia was far from being a local festival, since during the fourth century BC there are nineteen victors who came from the east and twelve who came from the west, while during the third century BC, nineteen Olympic victors hailed from the east and two from the west.[75] Both assertions give reason for pause. In respect to Gardiner's argument, there are in fact no less than four Elian athletes who were victorious in the games held in 396 BC. Even so, there is no record of Elian success in the following Olympiad, while the remainder of Elian victories are evenly distributed throughout the fourth century BC. Therefore, it seems that the Spartan invasion had an immediate rather than a long-lasting effect on the popularity of the Olympic Games. Next, though there is merit in Crowther's caution regarding the interpretation of Elian dominance in the games during the fourth and third centuries BC, the success of local athletes demands a more in-depth explanation.

501, 505, 506. There are two additional victories attributed to athletes from the city of Leperum, which was situated in the region of Elis: Moretti 1957 nos. 405 and 426.

73 Victories by victors from Elis, dated to the 3rd century BC: Moretti 1957, nos. 522, 530, 531, 536, 540, 544, 560, 562, 563, 564, 570, 577, 583, 585, 587, 588, 601.

74 Gardiner 1910, 165.

75 Crowther 1988, 303.

Table 2: Olympic Victories by Century[76]						
Century	Total Number of Known Victories	Elian Victories	%	Most Successful City/State	Victories	%
BC 8	24	2	8.5	Messenia	7	29.0
7	55	1	2.0	Sparta	32	58.0
6	85	2	2.5	Croton	16	19.0
5	185	10	5.5	Sparta	12	6.5
4	143	23	16.0	Elis	23	16.0
3	90	17	19.0	Elis	17	19.0
2	51	2	4.0	Rhodes	15	29.5
1	78	28	36.0	Elis	28	36.0
AD 1	78	4	5.0	Xanthus	8	10.5
2	68	1	1.5	Alexandria	20	29.5
3	35	0	0	Salamis	5	14.5
4	2	0	0	(Cyprus)	0	0
Undated	46	25	54.5	- Elis	25	54.5
Totals	940	115	12.0			

Let us begin with the fourth century BC. It seems that Elian success was not caused by a decline in the popularity and prestige of the Olympic Games, but rather was due to what seems to be a golden age in Elian athletics. As seen in table 3 (below), Elian athletes excelled in the Olympic, Pythian and Nemean festivals throughout the fourth century BC.[77] More than a third (35%) of the known victories in the Pythian Games and a little less than half (49%) of victories in the Nemean Games were won by Elians. As a result, one can argue that in the fourth century BC Elis produced an impressive number of highly skilled athletes who asserted their dominance in the field of Greek athletics. On the other hand, in the following century Elian victories constitute only 16.5% of all known victories in the Pythian Games and 12.5% in the Neman Games. Though the percentage of Elian victories in the third century is still substantial, it becomes apparent that the cause for Elian success in the Olympic Games in the fourth century BC was probably different from that of the subsequent century. Though there are no indications that the success of Elian athletes was due to certain domestic circumstances, the rise of new Hellenistic gymnastic festivals provides a plausible external explanation. As stated above, the fierce competition with the new prize and stephanitic festivals during the Hellenistic period meant that athletes had numerous possibilities to choose from. Some probably preferred the extravagance of the Ptolemaea, while others may have chosen to travel to Asia Minor to participate in the Leucophrynea. It is more than possible that in

76 Based on Crowther 1988, 303 (Table II).

77 For Elian victories in the Pythian Games during the 4th century, see: Klee 1918, 84 (nos. 79-81, 84), 85 (nos. 93-95). Nemean Games: Klee 1918, 104 (no. 163), 105 (nos. 168-72, 174, 184-188, 192-199). According to Pindar (*Ol.* 10.25-33) and Pausanias (5.1.9-2.4), the Elians banned themselves from taking part in the Isthmian Games.

this new reality, when the competition was much more formidable than before, it became easier for Elian athletes to dominate the Olympic Games.

Table 3: Elian Victories in Delphi and Nemea[78]			
Delphi			
Century	Total Known Cities/states of Victors	Elian Victories	%
BC 5	58	1	1.5
4	20	7	35.0
3	18	3	16.5
1	6	1	16.5
Other centuries BC	25	0	0
Totals	127	12	9.5
Nemea			
Century	Total Known Cities/states of Victors	Elian Victories	%
BC 4	41	20	49.0
3	16	2	12.5
1	17	2	12.0
Other centuries BC	172	0	0
Totals	246	24	10.0

Elis never became a major power in the Greek mainland. The sanctuary at Olympia and the Olympic Games, however, constituted the main and perhaps only source of prestige, influence and income for the Elians, who organized and officiated at the games.[79] Therefore, the Elians, in the face of the new competition, are likely to be the driving force behind a tradition in which Alexander the Great himself participated in the Olympic Games. It is possible that the Olympic episode is a product of intentionally fabricated propaganda or perhaps a pre-existing tradition that emerged independently but was later picked up, modified and spread by the organizers of the Olympic Games.

This hypothesis is supported by various earlier occasions in which the Elians demonstrated their determination to safeguard their control over Olympia and the prestige of its gymnastic festival. For example, Herodotus recounts the arrival of an Elian expedition at the court of the Egyptian King Psammis, who reigned from 595 to 589 BC.[80] The Elians, so we are told, sought and received the approval of the Egyptian king regarding the way the Elians organized the games at Olympia.[81] While the

78 Based on Crowther 1988, 308 (Table IV).

79 On Elis' control over Olympia and its gymnastic festival, see: Crowther 2003.

80 Hdt. 2.160.

81 The Egyptians, it should be noted, pointed out that the fact that the Elians presided as judges created an unfair bias in favor of Elian athletes who participated in the games.

historicity of this expedition is doubtful,[82] Robinson suggests that the establishment of the Panhellenic festivals at Delphi, Corinth and Nemea in the first quarter of the sixth century BC encouraged the Elians to claim that the Olympian Games were sanctioned by the Egyptian king and his wise advisors, thus gaining an advantage over their new competitors.[83] The resolve of the Elians to protect their interest in Olympia is reflected in their willingness to censure and conceal any event which might seem to undermine their hold over Olympia. For example, after Elis was defeated by the Arcadian League in 365 BC, the 104th Olympiad, which took place a year later, was organized by the Arcadians, together with the people of Pisatis.[84] According to Pausanias, after the Elians regained their control over Olympia, they deemed the Olympiad held by the Arcadians as void (ἀνολυμπιάδα) and erased the names of the victors from the official records.[85] In sum, the Elians employed various propagandistic measures whenever Elian hegemony over Olympia was threatened. If they tampered with the history of the Olympic Games once, it is at least possible that they turned to the same course of action once more, this time embellishing instead of censuring.

One question remains: how could a tradition in which Alexander becomes an Olympic victor benefit the Olympic Games? With the emergence of new Panhellenic festivals the Elians probably sought ways to remind the Greek communities of the Hellenistic world the antiquity, importance and prestige of the Olympic Games. There are several indications that the Olympic episode in the *Alexander-Romance* reflects such an effort. First of all, as shown above, the Olympic episode is extremely favorable toward Olympia's gymnastic festival. Second, the casting of an Acarnanian as the villain should not be deemed accidental. If one seeks to reassert the Panhellenic status of Olympia, it would be far from prudent to antagonize regions or city states of considerable political, military or economic sway. Acarnania, on the other hand, never became politically or militarily important. Hence, Acarnania's insignificance could be the reason for the author's decision to cast an unknown figure from an unimportant region in central Greece as Alexander's main rival.[86] Third, in the decades-long succession war that erupted after the death of Alexander in Babylon, the only monarch whose reign was beyond dispute in the eyes of the Diadochi was Alexander himself. As such, the Macedonian king became the first and foremost source for political legitimacy. Alexander's successors exploited the image of Alexander in various ways in order to legitimize their own claim over the legacy of the Macedonian king. For instance, Curtius Rufus (10.6.4) reports how Perdiccas, who reigned as regent after Alexander's demise,

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82 Arguments in favor of the historicity of the Elian expedition to Egypt, see: Decker 1974, 34-41; Decker 1992, 18. *Contra*: Lloyd 1988, 164-7.

83 Robinson 60-61. The Pythian Games were upgraded from a local to a Panhellenic event in 586 BC. See: Miller 2004, 95-112; Valavanis 2004, 162-276. The first Isthmian Games took place in 582 or 580 BC. See: Morgan 2002, Miller 2004, 101-5; Valavanis 2004, 268-303. Lastly, the Nemean Games were inaugurated in 573 BC. See: Miller 2004, 105-112, Valavanis 2004, 304-35.

84 Xen. *Hell*. 7.4.28-32; Diod. 15.78.1-3; Paus. 6.4.2, 6.8.3, 6.22.3.

85 Paus. 6.4.2, 8.3. According to Pausanias (6.22.2-3) the Elians employed the same solution in the case of the 34th Olympiad, which was organized by Pheidon of Argos and the people of Pisa.

86 It should be noted that there is no evidence for an Acarnanian Olympic victor.

ordered that the throne of Alexander be displayed in public, upon which the late king's signet ring, cloak and crown were carefully placed. Meeus rightly observes that this act served as a constant reminder that Perdiccas' authority stemmed directly from Alexander himself.[87] Ptolemy I took a gamble when he kidnapped the body of Alexander *en route* to Macedon and entombed it first in Memphis and later in a magnificent compound in Alexandria.[88] Ptolemy clearly sought to enhance his claim as the legitimate heir of Alexander while cementing the status of Alexandria as the new capital of Ptolemaic Egypt.[89] Those who were not successful at obtaining the body of Alexander or any of his personal belongings found imaginative ways to harness Alexander's image and reputation for their own personal interests. Eumenes of Cardia, Pyrrhus of Epirus, Demetrius Poliorcetes and Seleucus I, all claimed that Alexander visited them in their dreams.[90] Another important source which reflects the political importance of Alexander decades after his passing is the wealth of coins bearing the portrait of Alexander which were minted by the Diadochi.[91] Though all of the above constitute the actions of the first generation of successors, the image and legacy of Alexander kept evolving for centuries after his death, as each generation adopted the various legends of Alexander and modified them to correspond with contemporary religious, political, cultural and social circumstances.[92]

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87 Meeus 2009, 238.

88 Diod. 18.26-28; Strabo 17.1.8; Curt. 10.10.20; Paus. 1.6.3.

89 Diod. 18.28.4-6. The above conclusion is corroborated by the annual funerary games and ceremonies held in Alexandria in honor of Alexander under the aegis of the Ptolemies. Moreover, Green (1990, 14) highlights the existence of a Macedonian tradition, in which the successor had the responsibility of burying his predecessor, a tradition that Ptolemy was likely to be familiar with and sought to exploit. In the same vein, Saunders (2006, 33-4) speculates that soon after the death of Alexander it became clear to all that the site of Alexander's burial would emerge as a religious center which would engender wealth and confer prestige upon those who would control it. This notion manifested itself fairly early when, according to Diodorus (18.28.3-5), after Ptolemy snatched Alexander's body, many Macedonian soldiers deserted Perdiccas and sided with Ptolemy.

90 After his nightly vision of Alexander, Eumenes claimed that the late king had instructed him to erect a royal tent and to place a throne in it in honor of Alexander, see: Diod, 18.60.1-61.3, 19.15.3-4; Plut. *Eum*. 6.5, 13.3-4. For Pyrrhus' dream of Alexander: Plut. *Pyrrh*. 11.2. Seleucus: Diod. 19.90.4. Demetrius: *Plut*. Dem. 29.1.

91 Antigonus I Monophthalmus continued to issue coins which preserved the design set by Alexander himself (See: Mørkholm et al. 61 nos. 80-6). Lysimachus did the same, though he made sure to imprint his own name and royal status on the coins he issued (See: Mørkholm et al. 1991, 81 nos. 176-7, 180; Arnold-Biucchi 2006, 36; Dahmen 2007, 16-17). Seleucus I issued a series of coins which commemorated how, just like Alexander, he accomplished a successful anabasis (See: Mørkholm et al. 1991, 71 nos.132-36; Houghton 2002, I 15 nos. 1-2). Until 304 BC Ptolemy continued to mint coins with the design of Alexander. A change took place when Ptolemy I issued a new series of coins which exhibited the portrait of Ptolemy on one side, while on the other the image of Alexander driving a chariot drawn by four elephants was depicted (See: Mørkholm et al. 1991, 63-5 nos. 90-5). It should be noted that as Ptolemaic rule stabilized, the Ptolemies gradually superseded the image of Alexander with dynastic iconography (See: Mørkholm et al. 1991, 59; Dahmen 2007, 17).

92 Amitay 2010, 99-103.

Hence, the choice to cast Alexander as an Olympic victor seems only natural if one was seeking to elevate the status of Olympia in the Hellenistic era. Alexander's positive attitude toward the Olympic Games, his transformation into an Olympic victor and the prophecy of his future victories all constitute good publicity for Olympia. Moreover, there is one aspect of the tradition in which Alexander becomes an Olympic victor which provides the Olympic Games with a considerable advantage over the other Hellenistic festivals. Since all of the new Panhellenic games were established long after the death of Alexander, none of them could claim that they had the honor and privilege of having the Macedonian king participate in the chariot race or any other event. To some extent, the Olympic episode can be deemed an attempt to 'rebrand' the Olympic festival. The foundation stories of each of the Big Four crown games include a strong divine element. Allegedly, Herakles was the founder of the Olympic Games, Apollo established the games in Delphi and Theseus initiated the games at the Isthmus in honor of Poseidon.[93] It is possible that the Olympic episode constitutes an attempt to enrich the already mythological history of the Olympic Games by inserting Alexander into the chronicles of Olympia. Since the Macedonian king became an everlasting source of political legitimacy there was no better candidate.

Conclusions

The incorporation of new territories into the Greek sphere of influence in the wake of Alexander's campaign changed the trajectory of Greek history. Asia Minor, Egypt, the Levant and the Eastern Territories were now under Greek political and to a large extent cultural domination. In light of this new geo-political reality, Panhellenic festivals allowed kings, city states and confederate leagues to exhibit their military prowess, political sway and religious devotion. The recognition of these new festivals as Panhellenic is striking. On the one hand, the decision to adopt of the models of the Big Four crown games expressed the contemporary prestige of the festivals of Olympia, Delphi, Corinth and Nemea. On the other hand, the determination of organizers of the new establishments to ensure an equal Panhellenic status changed everything. It should be emphasized that there was no crisis in Olympia. The Olympic festival was held regularly, Greek athletes from various regions, near and far, came to Olympia to compete, while Olympia's status as an important Panhellenic center endured. Nevertheless, the success of these new festivals in the third century BC must have caused a decline in the popularity of the Olympic Games, which is manifested in contemporary

93 In regard to the foundation of the Olympic Games, there are two main traditions. One claims that Heracles was the founder of the gymnastic festival at Olympia. See: Pind. *Ol*. 3.10-27, 10.27-77; Lys. 33.1-2; Diod. 5.64.3; Paus. 5.1.9-2.4. The alternative tradition asserts that it was actually Pelops, a mythical Greek hero, who established the games. See: Diod. 4.73; Hyg. *Fab*. 84. Philostr. *Imag*. 1.30; Paus. 5.13.1-2, 6.12.9, 8.14.10. For Apollo as the founder of the Pythian Games, see: Hyg. *Fab*. 140. Theseus and the foundation story of the Isthmian Games: Plut. *Thes*. 25.4. The Nemean Games are the only exception since no hero or god was the driving force behind the festival's establishment. Instead, the foundation story is centered on a baby named Opheltes, who was bitten by a snake and died. See: Paus. 2.15.2; Hyg. *Fab*. 74.

Elian success in the Games. In the light of this interpretation, the Olympic episode, preserved in the *Alexander-Romance*, functioned as a reminder of Olympia's ancient tradition and reputation, which could not be matched by any new gymnastic festival, Panhellenic or not, and redefined the place of the Olympic Games in the Hellenistic era.

Appendix

Text[94]

[18] ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος πεντεκαιδεκαέτης γεγονὼς ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν εὐκαιροῦντα τὸν πατέρα εὑρὼν καταφιλήσας φησί· 'Πάτερ δέομαί σου, ἐπίτρεψόν μοι εἰς Πίσας πλεῦσαι.' ὁ δὲ εἶπεν' {βούλει θεάσθαι τὸν ἀγῶνα τῶν Ὀλυμπίων; λέγει ὁ παῖς} οὐχὶ πάτερ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἀγωνίσασθαι.'— **2** 'Καὶ ποῖον', φησίν, 'ἄσκημα ἀσκήσας τοῦτο ἐπιθυμεῖς; οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ὡς βασιλέως υἱὸς οὐδὲν πλέον πολεμικῶν ἀσκημάτων ἀγωνίζῃ· οὔτε γὰρ πάλην οὔτε παγκράτιον οὔτε ἕτερόν τι τῶν γυμναστικῶν ἐγυμνάσω.' **3** Ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος ἔφη· 'Ἁρματηλατῆσαι βούλομαι πάτερ.' Ὁ δὲ εἶπε· 'Τέκνον, προνοηθήσονται ἵπποι ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν ἱπποστασιῶν, καὶ οὗτοι συμπαρα-κολουθήσουσιν εὐθέως· σὺ δὲ ἐπιμελῶς ἑαυτὸν ἐπίσχες, ὡς ὁ ἀγὼν ἐνδοξότατος.' **4** Ὁ δὲ εἶπε· 'Σύ μοι μόνον ἐπίτρεψον· ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔχω ἐμαυτῷ ἵππους, οὓς ἐκ νέας ἡλικίας ἔθρεψα.' Καταφιλήσας τοῦτον ὁ Φίλιππος καὶ θαυμάσας τὴν προθυμίαν αὐτοῦ φησι· 'Τέκνον, εἰ βούλει πορεύου.' **5** Ἀπελθὼν οὖν ἐπὶ <τὸν> λιμένα ἐκέλευσε νῆα καινὴν καθελκυσθῆναι καὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἅμα τοῖς ἅρμασιν ἐμβληθῆναι [εἶπεν]· ἐπενέβη δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἅμα τοῖς ἅρμασιν ἐμβληθῆναι [εἶπεν]· ἐπενέβη δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἅμα τῷ φίλῳ Ἡφαιστίωνι καὶ εὐπλοήσας παρεγένετο εἰς Πίσας. ἐκβὰς δὲ καὶ λαβὼν ξένια ἐκέλευσε τοῖς θεράπουσι γενέσθαι περὶ τὴν τῶν ἵππων **6** ἐπιμέλειαν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἅμα τῷ Ἡφαιστίωνι ἐπὶ περίπατον ἐξῄει. Τούτοις συνήντησε Νικόλαος ὀνόματι, ἀνδροφυὴς τῇ ἡλικίᾳ, βασιλεὺς [ἀβέβαιος] Ἀκαρνάνων, πλούτῳ καὶ τύχῃ, δυσὶ θεοῖς ἀστάτοις, φρυαττόμενος καὶ τῇ τοῦ σώματος δυνάμει πεποιθώς. <καὶ> προσελθὼν ἠσπάσατο τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον, ἅμα δὲ ἐπί τί πάρεστι θέλων μαθεῖν [καὶ] εἶπε· 'Χαίροις μειράκιον.' Ὁ δὲ εἶπε· 'Χαίροις καὶ σύ, ὅστις ποτὲ τυγχάνεις.' Ὁ δέ φησι· 'Τίνα που ἐμὲ προσαγορεύεις; ἐγώ εἰμι Νικόλαος τοὔνομα βασιλεὺς Ἀκαρνάνων.' Ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος εἶπε· 'Μὴ οὕτως γαυριῶ Νικόλαε βασιλεῦ, ὡς ἱκανὸν ἔχων περὶ τῆς αὔριον ἐνέχυρον ζωῆς· ἡ τύχη οὐχ ἕστηκεν ἐφ' ἑνὸς τόπου, ῥοπὴ δὲ μεταβάλλει καὶ τοὺς ἀλαζόνας αὐχενίζει.' Ὁ δέ φησι· **8** 'Λέγεις μὲν ὀρθῶς· ἐπὶ τί δὲ παρεγένου ἐνταῦθα; ἔμαθον γὰρ ὅτι Φιλίππου Μακεδόνος παῖς τυγχάνεις.' Ὁ δὲ εἶπε· 'Πάρειμι ἀγωνισόμενος οὐ τὸν ἱππαστήν (καὶ γὰρ ἔτι μικρός εἰμι τῇ ἡλικίᾳ) οὐδὲ <τὸν> συνωρίδος οὐδὲ ἕτερόν τινα τοιοῦτον.' **9** Ὁ δὲ εἶπε· 'Τί οὖν βούλει;' Ὁ δέ· 'Ἁρματηλατῆσαι θέλω.' Διαζέσας <δὲ> τῇ χολῇ ὁ Νικόλαος καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ καταφρονήσας ἡλικίας, οὐ μαθὼν τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔγκυμον ἐνέπτυσεν αὐτῷ **10** καὶ λέγει· 'Μή σοι καλὸν γένοιτο.' Ὁ δὲ δεδιδαγμένος τῆς φύσεως ἐγκρατεύεσθαι, ἀπομαξάμενος τὸν ἐν ὕβρει πτύελον καὶ μειδιάσας θανάσιμόν φησι· 'Νικόλαε, ὄμνυμι ἁγνὴν τοῦ ἐμοῦ πατρὸς σπορὰν καὶ μητρὸς γαστέρα ἱεράν, ὡς καὶ ἐνθάδε ἅρματί σε νικήσω καὶ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι Ἀκαρνάνων δόρατί σε λήψομαι.' Ταῦτα εἰπόντες ἀπέστησαν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων διαδακνόμενοι.

[19] Μετὰ δὲ ὀλίγας ἡμέρας ἐνέστη ἡ τοῦ ἀγῶνος προθεσμία, καὶ εἰσῆλθον ἁρματηλάται ἐννέα, ἐξ ὧν τέσσαρες υἱοὶ βασιλέων, αὐτὸς ὁ Νικόλαος καὶ Ξανθίας Βοιώτιος καὶ Κίμων Κορίνθιος καὶ αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος· οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι στρατηγῶν καὶ σατραπῶν υἱοί. **2** ἐτέθη

94 The Greek text is derived from Kroll's edition of the alpha recension of the *Greek Alexander-Romance,* which was first published in 1926. Curly brackets indicate a lacuna in the manuscript which was amended on the basis of Bergson's edition (1956) of the beta recension of the *Greek Alexander-Romance*.

ὑδρία καὶ ἐκληρώθη· ἔλαχεν α΄ Νικόλαος, β΄ Ξανθίας, γ΄ Κίμων, δ΄ Κλειτόμαχος Ἀχαιός, ε΄ Ἀρίστιππος Ὀλύνθιος, ζ΄ Πίερος Φωκαεύς, η΄ Λάκων Λίνδιος, θ΄ Ἀλέξανδρος Μακεδών, ι΄ Νικόμαχος Λοκρός. **3** ἔστησαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἱππαφεσίαν ἐποχούμενοι τοῖς ἅρμασιν· ὠλόλυξεν ἡ σάλπιγξ τὸ ἐναγώνιον μέλος, ἀφέθη ἡ ἀφετηρία, προεπήδησαν πάντες ὀξεῖ ὁρμήματι {χρησάμενοι} **4** πρῶτον καμπτῆρα καὶ δεύτερον καὶ τρίτον τε καὶ τέταρτον. {οἱ μὲν οὖν} ὑστερήσαντες ἀτονησάντων τῶν ἵππων λιποψυχησάντων· τέταρτος ἦν Ἀλέξανδρος ἐλαύνων, ὄπισθεν <δὲ> αὐτοῦ Νικόλαος οὐχ οὕτως ἔχων τὸ νικῆσαι ὡς τὸ ἀνελεῖν τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον· ἦν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ Νικολάου ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ ὑπὸ Φιλίππου ἀναιρεθείς. **5** τοῦτο οὖν γνοὺς ὁ φρενήρης Ἀλέξανδρος, πεσόντων τῶν ἐλαυνόντων πρώτων συγχωρεῖ τῷ Νικολάῳ παρελθεῖν· ὁ δὲ Νικόλαος οἰηθεὶς νενικηκέναι τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον διαβαίνει ἐλπίδας ἔχων στεφανωθῆναι ὡς νικητής· μετὰ δὲ δύο καὶ τρία στάδια κονδυλίζει ὁ <δεξιὸς> ἵππος Νικολάου καὶ καταπίπτει ὅλον τὸ ἅρμα σὺν αὐτῷ τῷ ἡνιόχῳ· ὁ δὲ ἐπιβὰς τῇ ὁρμῇ τῶν ἵππων ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος παραυτὰ ἀνῄρηκε τὸν Νικόλαον. **6** καὶ ἀναβαίνει ἐστεμμένος τὸν κότινον παρὰ τὸν Ὀλύμπιον Δία. ὁ δὲ νεωκόρος φησὶν αὐτῷ· ‘Ἀλέξανδρε, ὡς Νικόλαον ἐνίκησας, οὕτω καὶ πολλοὺς πολεμίους νικήσεις.’

[20] Ταύτην λαβὼν τὴν κληδόνα Ἀλέξανδρος ὑποστρέφει καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς τὴν Πέλλην καὶ εὑρίσκει ἀπόβλητον γεναμένην τὴν Ὀλυμπιάδα ὑπὸ Φιλίππου, γαμοῦντα δὲ τοῦτον τὴν ἀδελφὴν Ἀττάλου Κλεοπάτραν. **2** ἐπιτελουμένων δὲ τῶν γάμων ἔχων τὸν Ὀλύμπιον τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον εἰσέρχεται καὶ ἀνακλιθεὶς λέγει· ‘Πάτερ, δέξαι τῶν πρώτων μου ἱδρώτων τὸν νικητικὸν στέφανον. Ὅταν μέντοι κἀγὼ ἐκδώσω τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ μητέρα πρὸς γάμον, καλέσω σε εἰς τοὺς ἐμῆς μητρὸς γάμους.’ **3** Ὁ δὲ Φίλιππος ἐπὶ τοῖς εἰρημένοις ἐτρύχετο.

Translation

[18] One day, Alexander, at the age of fifteen[95], found his father relaxing. After kissing (his father) Alexander said: “Father, I beseech you, allow me to sail to Pisa[96].” Philip replied: “Do you wish to observe the games at Olympia?” (Alexander) replied: “Not at all, father. I wish to compete.” **2** “In what event you wish to participate in?”, asked (Philip), “for I know that you, as a son of a king, would not participate in the events with marital affinity, for you haven’t trained yourself in wrestling, pankration or any other gymnastic (contest).” **3**. Alexander answered: “I wish to take part in the chariot race, father.” Philip said: “My child, horses shall be given to you from my own stables, and they shall accompany you immediately. And you, you should prepare yourself, since the competition is of high repute.” **4** Alexander said: “Entrust the matter to me, for I have my own horses, which I nurtured since they were foals.” Philip, astonished by Alexander’s determination, embraced his son and said: “Son, if you wish, embark on your journey.” **5** Thus, after making his way to the port, Alexander commissioned the construction of a new ship and had the horses and chariots loaded onto it. Alexander, along with his friend Hephaestion, boarded the ship, and after a peaceful voyage, he arrived at Pisa. After he disembarked and arranged the necessary accommodations, Alexander ordered his servants to attend the horses while he himself went on a stroll with Hephaestion. **6** (During their stroll) they encountered Nicolaus, king of the Acarnanians, who was impetuous due to his physical prowess, wealth and good fortune, the latter two were the most treacherous of gods. When (Nicolaus) crossed paths with Alexander, he greeted Alexander wondering what he was doing in Olympia: “Greetings, young man.” (Alexander) replied: “Greetings to you too,

95 About 341 BC.

96 Pisa, i.e. Pisatis, the region in which Olympia is located.

whoever you may be." **7** (Nicolaus) responded: "Who do you think you are speaking with? I am Nicolaus, the king of the Acarnanians." In reply Alexander said: "Do not boast, O king Nicolaus, as if you hold sufficient security in respect to your life tomorrow. Tyche does not stay in one place but changes [her position] and strikes down those who are arrogant." **8** Nicolaus said: "You speak correctly. But what are you doing here? For I learned that you happened to be the son of Philip of Macedon." Alexander replied: "I came to compete, not in the horse race, since I am still too young, nor in the two-horse chariot race, or any other event of this sort." **9** Nicolaus asked: "Well then, in what contest you wish to take part in?" Alexander replied: "I wish to compete in the (four-horse) chariot race."[97] Nicolaus, filled with rage and contempt due to (Alexander's) young age, could not restrain himself and so he spat at Alexander and said: Let no success occur to you." **10** Alexander, on the other hand, maintained self-control, and while wiping off the spit, he grimly smiled and said: "O Nicolaus, I swear in the pure seed of my father and the holy womb of my mother that in the same manner in which I will defeat you in the chariot race, so I will defeat you in your homeland of Acarnania by the force of the spear." After this exchange, they angrily parted ways.

[19] After several days, the appointed date of the competition arrived. There were nine contestants in the race. Four of them were sons of kings: Nicolaus, Xenias of Boeotia, Cimon of Corinth and Alexander himself. The rest were sons of generals and satraps. **2** The ballot urn was set and the lots were cast: Nicolaus drew the first position, Xenias the second, Cimon the third, Cleitomachus of Achaea the fourth, Aristippus of Olynthus the fifth, Peirus of Phocaea the sixth, Lacon of Lindos the seventh, Alexander of Macedon the eighth and Nicomachus of Locris the ninth. **3** The competitors were ready on their chariots at the starting point when the trumpet made a blast, signaling the beginning of the race. The Starting point opened, and the chariots rushed forward. **4** At the turning point the leading contestant appeared, followed by the second, third and fourth, while the rest lagged behind because the spirit of their horses was broken as they succumbed to exhaustion. Alexander was third, and behind him was Nicolaus, who preferred to have Alexander eliminated rather than winning the race since his father was killed in a war against Philip. **5** Alexander, being prudent, perceived the situation he was in, and when the chariots of the leading competitors crashed, he allowed Nicolaus to bypass him. Nicolaus, thinking that he defeated Alexander and hoping to win the victory wreath, rushed forward. After two or three stadia, however, the right hand horse of Nicolaus, along with his chariot, crashed along with its charioteer. Alexander, speeding forward with his horses, trampled Nicolaus to death. **6** Crowned with an olive wreath, (Alexander) ascended the temple of Olympian Zeus. The priest told him: "Alexander, as you defeated Nicolaus, so will you defeat many enemies in the future."

[20] After he heard this prophecy, Alexander departed and arrived at Pella. There he discovered that Olympias was discarded by Philip, who married Cleopatra, the sister of Attalus, in her stead. **2** In the midst of the wedding celebrations, Alexander presented himself, still crowned with the olive wreath, reclined and said: "Father, please accept my first victory wreath, which I have earned with much toil. But, when I will hand my mother in marriage, I shall invite you to the weeding celebrations." **3** Philip was disturbed by these actions.

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97 The equestrian events in the Olympic program were the four-horse chariot race (τέθριππον), the two-horse chariot race (συνωρίς) and the horse race (κέλης). At this point it seems apparent that Alexander intends on entering the four-horse chariot race. On the various equestrian events in Olympia, see: Miller 2004, 75-89.

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