

THE GRAND PROCESSION OF PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS

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(probably around the Dongola reach, much further north than Meroe).¹⁹⁴ Unlike those in the Marissa painting, these giraffes are life-like and suggest that their makers knew real giraffes. If giraffes did live in Upper Nubia in ancient times,¹⁹⁵ they would have been within easy access for the Ptolemies, especially if the Ptolemies exploited the route along the Nile in their search for elephants. Later, they may have been obtained from the Horn of Africa and shipped north via the Red Sea ports. Alexandria may then have been the source of many of the giraffes sent outside Africa; Varro mentions a giraffe which had recently arrived in Rome from Alexandria (*De Ling. Lat.* v. 100).

The final animal in the parade of beasts is a single Ethiopian rhinoceros, the two-horned variety (as opposed to the one-horned Indian type),¹⁹⁶ and certainly the White Ethiopian animal which is much more docile than the Black Ethiopian one. Found today in the southern Sudan, rhinoceroses, like giraffes, once lived further north; Pliny says that they came as far north as Meroe in his day (*HN* vi. 185), and thus they would have been accessible to the Ptolemies through trade or exploration. (Pliny, *ibid.*, 173 says that rhinoceros horns were traded by the Ethiopians.) A peculiar representation of a two-horned Ethiopian rhinoceros in the Marissa painting¹⁹⁷ provides further evidence that this animal was known on the fringes of the Mediterranean. The one-horned Indian rhinoceros was encountered for the first time during Alexander's campaigns in India (Curt. Ruf. viii. 9, 16; ix. 1, 5); this suggests that its African counterpart may have had a special significance in the Indian triumph of Dionysus.

Many of the animals in this parade had an original connection with India, Alexander, and Dionysus, but many were African in origin and are specifically called 'Ethiopian'. Certainly African animals would have been more readily available to the Ptolemies than those from the East, but there may be other reasons why African animals appear in a triumphal train returning from India. Various mythological traditions associate Dionysus with Arabia, Libya, and Egypt, where he established himself over his defeated opponents as a divine king (D. S. iii. 62 ff., *passim*). Like Dionysus, Alexander also conquered Egypt before he went to India, and the letter of the Ethiopian queen Candace to Alexander, preserved in the *Alexander Romance* (Ps.-Call. III 18, 5 ff., ed. Kroll), records a list of animals sent as gifts to Alexander (parrots, elephants, *παρδάλεις*, rhinoceroses, *πάνθηρες*, and fierce dogs) as well as tribute, which is in striking similarity to that recorded in Kallixeinos (Ethiopian youths, ivory caskets and tusks, ebony logs, and gold). Although the letter of Candace is clearly fanciful, it may have stemmed from the tradition of Alexander as the

¹⁹⁴ B. G. Haycock, *JEA* liii (1967), 117.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Toynebee, *Animals*, 125.

¹⁹⁷ Peters and Thiersch, 26 and Pl. X.

conqueror of the eastern desert and the inheritor of its fabulous spoils. The Indian triumph of Dionysus in the procession may be a composite triumphal train which by rights could have included African as well as Indian spoils, and which, on both counts, could symbolize a hypothetical triumphal train of Alexander. A further explanation for the appearance of African and Indian animals and spoils side by side may have been the fact that Alexander is known to have thought that the Nile was somehow connected to the Indus River or that both flowed from a common source (he believed that he had found the source of the Nile in India; *Arr. An.* vi. 1; Strabo 696). Consequently, Indian and African animals may have been considered more or less interchangeable if they were thought to originate from the same general geographical source. Arrian's remark that India and Ethiopia were similar geographically and in terms of their inhabitants (*Ind.* 6, 5 ff.) may derive from this belief in their geographical link.

7. *Dionysus at the Altar of Rhea* (201C) The part of the Dionysiac procession which follows the triumphal return of Dionysus from India presents numerous textual, mythological, and historical difficulties which previous discussions have not completely disentangled. As the text stands in the manuscripts, the cart which appears after the rhinoceros apparently contains one large tableau: Dionysus at the Altar of Rhea, and a group of Alexander, Ptolemy Soter, Priapus, Arete, and Corinth preceding personifications of Cycladic, Ionian, and Asian cities (201C-D; line 194). It is clear that the characters of a more or less contemporary, historical nature have little to do with the mythological scene of Dionysus at the Altar of Rhea, and that two distinct tableaux have been run together because of a lacuna in the text after the description of the statue of Hera in the Rhea scene. Ehrenberg supplied the required sense of the missing words: *μετὰ δὲ ταύτην εἶπετο ἄλλη τετράκυκλος* (then the measurements), *ἐφ' ἧς ἦν* 'Ἀλεξάνδρου . . .'¹⁹⁸ This suggestion complies with the words used to introduce the other carts, satisfactorily completes the otherwise incomplete sentence beginning with 'Ἀλεξάνδρου, separates two scenes which are thematically distinct, removes the problem of Priapus appearing twice in one scene, and restores one scene to each cart in agreement with all the other carts.

The scene depicting Dionysus' absolution at the Altar of Rhea is yet one more in the series of tableaux illustrating events from the mythological life of the god, but its rarity in ancient art and literature requires some comment. According to a legend known as far back as the fifth century, Dionysus was afflicted with madness by Hera in revenge for her husband's infidelity with Semele (Eur. *Cyclops* 3 ff.), but the story of his absolution

¹⁹⁸ *Alexander and the Greeks* (Oxford, 1938), 6.

Although Dionysus must be understood as the focus of attention, it is most surprising that the god's name appears nowhere in the description of this cart. This confusion is unlikely to have arisen if the text of Kallixeinos is quoted verbatim here, but it is comprehensible if Athenaeus is still the abbreviator. He may have paraphrased the original description of the scene by Kallixeinos rather carelessly, omitting the name of Dionysus whose appearance he took for granted, and failing to notice that his summary did not actually name the main character of the scene. By far the easiest suggestion is that his paraphrase continued through the cave scene and that his direct quotation began again at the beginning of the following scene, the Triumphal Return of Dionysus from India (200D).

The representation of the rearing of Dionysus by the Nymphs is the logical sequel to his birth-scene. Artistic representations of the god being entrusted to his divine nurses are common,¹²⁹ especially as the cult of the Nymphs increased in popularity in the Hellenistic Age. These Nymphs may reasonably be interpreted as those inhabiting Nysa, if the statue of Nysa represents the god's supposed birthplace. The more popular version of the legend of the rearing of Dionysus, where Hermes and not Zeus brought the infant to the Nymphs,¹³⁰ is the one depicted in the procession. The cave contains typical Dionysiac elements as part of its idyllic decoration: fountains of milk and wine bubble forth, which were apparently simulated on the cart since Kallixeinos says what the liquids are. Askoi with controlled openings may have been concealed on top of stepped rocks in the cave so that the milk and wine could be seen to 'bubble' down over the rocks and collect in pools on the 'ground'. These two liquids have already appeared in connection with the statue of Nysa, whose head was crowned with vines and who poured a libation of milk. The cave of the Nymphs who inhabit Nysa naturally reflects the same features, and here too the milk probably symbolizes the nursing aspect of the region (as well as of the Nymphs) in addition to its general fertility. Since wine appears in the cave, this scene perhaps commemorates the invention of the substance by the divine baby soon after his arrival at Nysa. The inclusion of this scene in the procession of Dionysus may also reflect certain mystic elements in the cult of Dionysus: when children were later admitted to the fully developed Mysteries of Dionysus, the representations of the childhood of Dionysus, especially the legend of his rearing by the Nysaeon Nymphs, assumed a greater symbolic significance within the ritual of the Mysteries.¹³¹

6. *Triumphal Return of Dionysus from India (200D-201C)* The central part of the procession of Dionysus is a pageant celebrating his triumphal return from India, which is depicted as the most important

episode in the life of the god (200D ff.). The next cart contains the god reclining on a statue of a richly caparisoned elephant, directed by a Satyriskos sitting upon its neck (note the similar picture of Dionysus' Triumph in D. S. iv. 3, 1), and followed by a lengthy parade of his victorious army (200E ff.): 500 girls and 120 Satyrs in assorted panoply lead a long cavalry procession composed of asses ridden by Satyrs and Silenoi and chariots drawn by various exotic animals. These chariots were driven by boys dressed as charioteers and ridden by girls dressed as warriors (200F; line 167), representing the *ἠνίοχοι* and *παραβάται* of real Greek combat. This 'army' is followed by the fruits of victory: captive women, vast amounts of tribute, hunting spoils, and a long parade of animals, both wild and domesticated. This pageant is undoubtedly elaborated in detail by Kallixeinos because it contains much of the most fascinating exotica in the Grand Procession, and the theme of Dionysus' triumphal return from India was a convenient peg on which these elements could be hung. Although this may have been one reason for its prominence and length in the Dionysiac procession, the scene has much greater significance in terms of contemporary political propaganda.

Dionysus was a god who from early times was at home in military contexts. He and Silenos had participated in the primeval battle against the Giants (Eur. *Cyclops* 5 ff.), and in some cults at Thrace and Sparta Dionysus was endowed with warlike attributes.¹³² These associations were especially connected with Dionysus' exploits in the East. The Dionysus in the *Bacchae* of Euripides was portrayed as a god who had come from the East to conquer Greece (cf. lines 13-20) even as he had already conquered the eastern peoples. His route to Greece, the next 'unconquered land', could be seen as a triumphal procession from India. However, this triumphal aspect was not emphasized until the Hellenistic age, when the eastern successes of Alexander the Great provided a parallel to the Indian triumph of Dionysus. It has been disputed whether or not Alexander himself was the first to recognize, and emphasize, the comparison between his own victories and those mythical ones of the god.¹³³ Alexander may have been conscious of himself as the 'Neos Dionysos' since he was familiar with the worship of the god from his childhood in Macedonia, where the frenzied, orgiastic aspects of Dionysiac cult were especially popular. (Alexander's mother Olympias is said to have been one of the most uninhibited leaders of the women's rites in the yearly festival of Dionysus.) The historians of Alexander frequently made the analogy between Alexander and Dionysus explicit, tracing how the notion of Dionysus as an

¹³² Farnell, *Cults*, v. 292; cf. 60.

¹³³ For the view that Alexander was conscious of himself in this role see V. Ehrenberg, *Ost und West* (Brunn, 1935), 164-8.

¹²⁹ Cf. H. Heydemann, *Dionysus' Geburt und Kindheit* (Halle, 1885), 18 ff.

¹³⁰ *RE* s.v. Dionysos, 1036.

¹³¹ Nilsson, *Dionysiac Mysteries*, 111 ff.