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Article

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The Location of the Candace Episode in the *Alexander Romance* and the *Chronicle* of John Malalas

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Introduction

Alongside the standard historical record of Alexander the Great, Graeco-Roman Antiquity cultivated a fabulous account of the Macedonian conqueror, the *Alexander Romance*. The *Romance* was percolating from the century after Alexander's death in 323 BC, when we find in circulation parallels for many of its distinctive elements, until around the beginning of the fourth century after Christ, the rough date of our earliest evidence for a complete composition of the text as we know it.[1] This work has Alexander travel outside the ambit of the known world and encounter wonders that often beggar belief. But the *Romance*'s presentation of people and places we think we know can also strain our comprehension. The geography of the *Alexander Romance* is notoriously hazy and defies any attempt to impose a map upon the movements of Alexander as they are narrated. While the *Romance* maintains pretensions to being a history, the work's overall disregard for distance and direction—to say nothing of fidelity to the historical record—is one of the things that marks it out as a romance, no less than its tendency to populate the edges of the earth with monsters and marvels. But if modern readers find the routes and locations in the *Romance* puzzling, this is not a problem we can solve simply by divesting ourselves of our current preconceptions and adopting the mindset of the original audience. The geography of the *Romance* also seems to have perplexed its earliest readers.

We may observe this in the transmission and reception of one episode in particular: Alexander's visit to the realm of Candace.[2] Despite the clear but implicit indications that Candace's kingdom is Ethiopia, the region south of Egypt, Alexander seems to arrive there almost directly from India, where he has just defeated Porus. And Candace's dynasty is said to be bound to India by ties of history, pol-

1 Stoneman 2007, xxii–xxxiv; Jouanno 2002, 13–34.

2 Weever 1990 discusses the figure of Candace and particularly descriptions of her in the western medieval Alexander tradition.

itics, and marriage. With an entirely fictional affair like Alexander's visit to Candace a certain amount of leeway might be granted to woolly details, but Jacqueline Arthur-Montagne has shown that, at least in regard to the epistolary exchange between Candace and Alexander, there was some effort to give the whole incident an air of authenticity.[3] Nevertheless, such links to geographical reality as the text offers are frustratingly vague and incoherent. It is not altogether clear where Candace's kingdom is supposed to be or how it is related, in terms of space or human contact, to India.

This problem is underscored by manipulation of the *Alexander Romance*'s geography that we find in the *Chronicle* of John Malalas. This work, the fountainhead of the Byzantine narrative chronicle tradition, had the ambitious aim of covering the history of the world from Adam to the author's own day in the sixth century, but inevitably selected certain figures and events for inclusion and emphasis.[4] Alexander's career enjoys an unsurprising prominence at the opening of Malalas' eighth book. What may be surprising is the content of Malalas' account of Alexander, which is by and large ultimately based on the *Romance* and gives more space to his encounter with Candace than to any other episode in Alexander's reign. Malalas attempts to make sense of the clues and confusion offered in the *Romance* by presenting Candace as the queen of the Inner Indians, which would give her realm a definite location and a more sensible position in relation to India, the land of the River Indus and King Porus, at least to Malalas' contemporary audience.

Alexander's route and the relation of Candace's realm and India in the *Alexander Romance*

We are confronted with the intractable nature of the passage as a whole from the outset, beginning with Alexander's motivation for setting out to visit Candace in the first place. As he departs from India and arrives in Persia, Alexander takes it into this head to visit the famous palace of Semiramis, which is currently occupied by Candace of Meroë: ἐπῆγε τὰ στρατεύματα ἐπὶ τὰ Σεμιράμεως βασίλεια·ἐπιθυμητικῶς γὰρ αὐτὰ εἶχε θεάσασθαι. ('He made an expedition to the palace of Semiramis; for he was eager to see it.')[5] But if the question of why the

[3] Arthur-Montagne 2014, 166–170.

[4] Jeffreys et al. 1990; Treadgold 2007, 235–256; Meier et al. 2016; Carrara et al. 2017; Borsch et al. 2019; Gengler and Meier 2022.

[5] *Alexander Romance* (*Al. Rom.*) (α) 3.17.42–18.3, esp. 3.18.1, ed. Kroll 1926, 115. The translation of this same passage in Haight 1955, 108: 'Alexander led his forces to the kingdom of Semiramis' is actually a mistranslation. While ἐπῆγε τὰ στρατεύματα ἐπὶ τὰ Σεμιράμεως βασίλεια clearly means 'he made an expedition to the palace of Semiramis', the rendering

queen of a city recognized as sitting on the upper Nile should take up her abode in the palace of an Assyrian queen is meant to pique our interest, we are bound to be disappointed.[6] And the question is a somewhat pressing one, since whether or not the Assyrian Empire conquered Ethiopia was a matter of dispute in Antiquity. Diodorus Siculus, for instance, offers two different accounts of Semiramis' relations with Ethiopia: one, from the Assyrian perspective, in which she added the country to the empire she had inherited from her husband Ninus, and another, from the Ethiopian point of view, in which the Ethiopians repelled her invasion.[7] We never discover how this might relate to Candace's occupation of Semiramis' palace. As the *Romance*'s narrative proceeds Alexander's antiquarian curiosity is quickly forgotten and the interest of the narrative shifts to Alexander's encounter with Candace.

The introduction of Candace and her realm is vague, as well inconclusive. The *Romance* never refers to the scene of the Candace episode as Ethiopia, rather it has Alexander address himself to Candace, the queen of Meroë.[8] Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the inference that Candace's realm is indeed supposed to be Ethiopia. From the time of Herodotus Meroë, the city on the Nile between the Fifth and Sixth Cataracts, was known to be the metropolis and royal seat of the Ethiopians.[9] According to the *Romance*, moreover, Candace promised Alexander a gift of 500 Ethiopian youths, as well as other goods redolent of Ethiopia: 100 gold ingots, a crown made with emeralds and pearls, 1,500 ebony rods, 80 ivory

'he led his forces to the kingdom of Semiramis' would require the text to read ἐπῆγε τὰ στρατεύματα ἐπὶ τὴν Σεμιράμεως βασιλείαν, which it does not. The episode as a whole, moreover, manifestly includes protracted descriptions of Candace's wonderful palace, indicating that this was indeed the object of Alexander's enthusiastic interest. Malalas was probably writing his history sometime after the composition of the β recension, but I have consistently cited the A MS of the α recension, not only because I want to get as close as possible to the original composition of the *Romance*, but also because I suspect that Malalas' source on Alexander was an intermediary between the α and β recensions.

6 Julius Valerius (3.18) asserts that Candace was a descendant of Semiramis, ed. Rosellini 1993, 150: *proneptis erat haec Samiramidos supra dictae*, but this only postpones the question, how is it that Candace of Meroë has come to be descended from the Assyrian queen Semiramis?

7 Diodorus Siculus, 2.14.4–16.1, 3.3.1, ed. Eck 2003, 29–30, ed. Bommelaer 2002, 4; cf. Justin, *Epitome* 1.2.8, ed. Mineo 2016–2020, I, 26.

8 *Al. Rom.* (α) 3.18.3–5, ed. Kroll 1926, 115–116.

9 Herodotus 2.29.6–7, ed. Hude 1927, I, (no page numbers); Diodorus Siculus, 1.33.1–3, 3.6.1, 7.3, ed. Bertrac and Chamoux 2002, 74–75, ed. Bommelaer 2002, 7, 8; Strabo, 1.2.25, 17.2.2, ed. Meineke 1866–1877, I, 41–42, III, 1145–1146; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 6.(35) 185–86, ed. Mayhoff 1906, I, 507–508.

boxes, 90 elephant tusks, and 350 live elephants.[10] But it is Candace's name that inescapably insists that she ruled Ethiopia. Some Greek and Roman writers seem to have considered Candace a recurring personal name amongst Ethiopian royalty, others recognized the name for what it was, a royal title, but if any of them name an Ethiopian queen, she is bound to be called Candace.[11] Inasmuch as the *Romance* never says outright that Candace ruled the Ethiopians, however, there was a certain lingering indefiniteness. This ambiguity is compounded by the mingling of elements drawn from the lore of both Ethiopia and India in the descriptions of Candace's palace and the flora and fauna of her country, as has been demonstrated by Aleksandra Szalc.[12]

But even once we have some sense of the places involved, Alexander's movements render the passage more, not less, problematic. As the *Romance* presents it, Alexander seems to achieve a swift and unremarkable traverse from India to Ethiopia, with only one uneventful stopover in Persia. There is no indication of a lengthy and difficult transit, passing through many countries *en route*, no hint of intervening adventures along the way. As Krzysztof Nawotka says, 'this section brings Alexander in one stride from Persis to Africa'.[13] Nawotka assumes a second, fictional visit to Egypt on Alexander's part, necessitated by narrative considerations, that would have brought him to Meroë.[14] If this assumption could be corroborated, we would at least have some idea of the route from India to Ethiopia that the *Romance* compiler had in mind for Alexander, but the earliest versions of the *Romance* mention only one visit to Egypt, when Alexander set out on his war against Darius and the Persians.[15] We could not, however, ask for a better guide than Nawotka to the conceptions of direction, distance, and movement involved here when he says, 'no geographical precision can be expected of Ps.-Callisthe-

[10] *Al. Rom.* (α) 3.18.7–9, ed. Kroll 1926, 116. The *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes (*c.*550) is our best textual source for the commerce of the Red Sea and Arabian Sea in Late Antiquity, and it refers to gold (2.50–51), emeralds (11.21), ebony rods—described in precisely the same phrasing as in the *Alexander Romance*—(2.50), and ivory (11.23) as noteworthy exports from Ethiopia, ed. Wolska-Conus 1968–1973, I, 358–361, III, 352–355. The availability of ivory, of course, presumes the presence of live elephants in Ethiopia, which Cosmas also details.

[11] Strabo, 17.1.54, ed. Meineke 1866–1877, III, 1143–1145; Acts 8:27, ed. Aland et al. 1983, 447; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 6.(35) 186, ed. Mayhoff 1906, I, 508. See Dunham 1957, 8; Desanges 1968, 89–104 = Desanges 1999, 251–263; Adams 1977, 260, 709 n. 46.

[12] Szalc 2014, 377–390. The full context of this instance of the confusion or interference of Ethiopia and India is exhaustively examined by Pierre Schneider (2004).

[13] Nawotka 2017, 210.

[14] Nawotka 2017, 212.

[15] *Al. Rom.* (α) 1.30.2–34.9, ed. Kroll 1926, 27–39.

nes'.[16] It remains unclear just how Alexander was supposed to have passed from India to Ethiopia in the *Romance*.[17]

The *Romance* does present relations, if not distances, between India and Ethiopia as being particularly close. Candace's younger son, Thoas, is said to have been married to the daughter of the Indian king Porus, who, in the *Romance*, was slain by Alexander just before his visit to Candace's court; as a result, Porus' son-in-law is eager for revenge.[18] Such a dynastic marriage presumes extensive negotiations and the desire for a guarantee of friendly relations between the royal houses involved. It is evidence, in short, that stable diplomatic links were supposed to be maintained between Ethiopia and India. This marriage, moreover, must have been one of the original elements of the story of Alexander's encounter with Candace, since without it the hostility of Thoas and his wife, which puts Alexander in mortal peril and propels much of the drama of the episode, has no motivation.[19]

The Latin translation of Julius Valerius—our earliest evidence for the composite text of the *Romance*, and datable to some point between AD 270 and 330[20]—suggests that even closer relations than diplomatic ties and royal marriages had once prevailed between Ethiopia and India, perhaps even intimating a shared border.[21] Alexander addresses a letter to Candace, in which he says:

> Aegyptum adveniens ex eorum indigenis audivi illis terris et domos vestras et sepulchra esse defunctorum; ex quis palam fuit dominatos esse priscos reges vestri Indiamque tenuisse.[22]

16 Nawotka 2017, 210.

17 Such uncertainty over the routes of travel to and from India in Antiquity was not limited to accounts of Alexander. In his summary of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* Jerome (*Epistola* 53.1, ed. Hilberg 1910–1918, I, 442–445) has Apollonius pass through the lands of the Elamites, Babylonians, Chaldaeans, and other eastern peoples *after*—not *before*, as Philostratus has it—his visit to India, as if he had returned from India overland, not by sea to Babylon, once again as Philostratus says. These deviations are particularly germane to our discussion, since, as Jerome notes, Apollonius was on his way from India to Ethiopia *via* Alexandria. See Jones 2006, 55–56, 58–60.

18 *Al. Rom.* (α) 3.22.15, 23.2, ed. Kroll 1926, 121, 122.

19 The Candace episode itself would seem to be of rather early composition, because the fact that in the course of this story Ptolemy assumes Alexander's identity and position at Alexander's own behest (3.19.7–8) would seem to be entirely consistent with the propagandistic aims of the Ptolemaic dynasty, who were supposed to take the place and continue the lineage of Alexander as Pharaoh of Egypt.

20 Stoneman 1999, 174–177; Stoneman 2008, 236.

21 On Alexander's visit to Meroë in Julius Valerius as a whole, see Schöffberger 2023, 161–174.

22 Julius Valerius, *Res Gestae* 3.18, ed. Rosellini 1993, 150.

> Arriving in Egypt I heard from the natives that in those lands were your houses and the tombs of (your) dead; from which it was clear that the ancient kings of yours (*sic*) ruled (there) and held India as well.

And Candace replies in a letter of her own:

> Vetus nobis oraculum est Ammonis dei neque nos in Aegyptum militare neque Indiam nostram hac ex causa debere commoveri, enim si quis huc audeat, hisce utpote hostibus occursare.[23]
>
> We have an old oracle of the god Ammon that we should not make war on Egypt and for this reason our India ought not to be unsettled, for if anyone dared to do this, they (would) meet (them) as enemies.

I confess that the intention of Julius Valerius here is far from clear to me, if indeed this passage does reflect his intention—and some textual corruption is by no means out of the question. As it stands, however, the text of Julius Valerius can hardly be interpreted as saying anything other than that a bit of archaeological investigation led Alexander to the conclusion that the predecessors of Candace on the throne of Ethiopia had held sway over India and that, for her part, Candace took such an interest in the countries around her own as to maintain that anyone who invaded Egypt or disturbed the peace of India would incur the wrath of the gods.

If some questions must remain about how Julius Valerius came to this understanding of Ethiopia's relations with India or how his translation ended up reading this way, it is clear that the passage under discussion is a rather free rendering of the exchange between Alexander and Candace at the same point in the A MS of the α recension.[24] Alexander makes no mention of Ethiopian dominion over India:

> παραγενάμενος εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἤκουσα παρὰ τῶν ἐκεῖ ἱερέων † εἶδον ὑμῶν τάφους καὶ οἰκητήρια δηλοῦντα, ὅτι χρόνον τινὰ ἐκυριεύσατε Αἰγύπτου.[25]
>
> Arriving in Egypt I heard from the priests there […] I saw your tombs and what were clearly (your) dwellings, that one time you ruled Egypt.

[23] Julius Valerius, *Res Gestae* 3.18, ed. Rosellini 1993, 151.

[24] The Armenian translation, like the Greek text, does not mention India; see Wolohojian 1969, 132–133. Although Candace's response is abbreviated in the β recension, there is likewise no hint there that she took an interest in India: *Al. Rom.* (β) 3.18, ed. Bergson 1965, 152–154.

[25] *Al. Rom.* (α) 3.18.3, ed. Kroll 1926, 115.

Nor does Candace express any concern for India on her part or that of the gods:

> τότε μὲν ἔχρησεν Ἄμμων στρατεύειν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, νῦν δὲ μήτε αὐτὸν κινεῖσθαι μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ἐπιβαίνειν εἰς αὐτήν, τοὺς δὲ παραγινομένους πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀμύνασθαι καὶ χρῆσθαι ὡς πολεμίοις.[26]
>
> While then Ammon ordained (us) to march into Egypt, now neither is he himself to be moved nor is any other to approach the country, but we are to ward off any who come to us and treat them as enemies.

The obvious additions to the original found in Julius Valerius' translation indicate that he took the view that India stood in the same geographical and historical relation to Ethiopia as Egypt did.

And it was generally acknowledged that the relations of Ethiopia and Egypt had often been very close indeed. This was true in a perpetual sense. Although Ethiopia as conceived by the ancients covered a vast territory across the whole of the southern part of the African continent, it also butted up against the southern border of Egypt. To be sure, when the Greek terms for Ethiopia and its inhabitants first assumed a geographic, rather than a mythographic, meaning, they designated the land and people just south of Egypt, that is, Kush or Nubia, as we might otherwise say.[27] Specific instances of close ties between Egypt and Ethiopia were also recalled. In 25/24 BC the Roman general Publius Petronius had only to pass the frontier outpost of Syene in order to commence his invasion of Ethiopia from the province of Egypt, although he proceeded as far as the old capital of Napata.[28] It had been remembered much longer, however, that—as the *Alexander Romance* intimates—Ethiopians kings had in the past invaded and dominated Egypt. Herodotus speaks of an army of Ethiopians under their king Sabacos conquering Egypt and driving the native Pharaoh into hiding in the marshes for fifty years.[29] Manetho designates the invader Sabacos or Sabacon and two other Ethiopian

[26] *Al. Rom*. (α) 3.18.5, ed. Kroll 1926, 116.

[27] See Lesky 1959, 27–38; Snowden 1970, 101–105, 113; Snowden 1983, 26–28, 37–49; Thompson 1989, 57–60; Burstein 2002, 55–58; Goldenberg 2003, 41–47; Schneider 2004, 57–60; Selden 2013, 327–328.

[28] Strabo, 17.1.54, ed. Meineke 1866–1877, III, 1143–1145; *Monumentum Ancyranum* (= *Res Gestae Divi Augustae*) 26.5, ed. Cooley 2009, 90–91; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 6.(35) 181–82, ed. Mayhoff 1906, I, 506; Dio Cassius, 54.5.4–6, ed. Boissevain 1895–1931, II, 447. See Jameson 1968, 71–84; Cooley 2009, 224–228.

[29] Herodotus, 2.137–39, cf. 2.100.1, ed. Hude 1927, I, (no page numbers); see Lloyd 1988, 90–98.

kings as the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty.[30] Diodorus Siculus makes a doublet of the Ethiopian conquest of Egypt, having in one instance the Egyptians welcome the invading Ethiopian king Actisanes as a relief from the despotic rule of Amasis, and in the other Sabacon follow the reign of Bocchoris.[31] In Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* an Ethiopian invasion of Egypt that reaches as far as Memphis is the prelude to Moses' victorious campaign into the heart of Ethiopia.[32] The fragments of Artapanus relate a similar Jewish historical legend.[33] What the Greek original of the *Alexander Romance* has to say about the ties of Ethiopia and Egypt, then, would have had the ring of truth, and by extension what Julius Valerius' translation says about Ethiopia and India could claim a sort of derivative plausibility.

We moderns may think it ludicrous to imagine that Ethiopia could play the same role in the affairs of India that it had in those of Egypt, but the idea might not have been altogether outside of the realm of possibility for the citizens of the Roman Empire. In their pipe dreams of perpetual expansion and most vaunting ambitions of conquest, they considered India within the ambit of the political activity of Mediterranean powers and hardly beyond the reach of Roman arms. Virgil exaggerated the accomplishments of Augustus by opposing his legions to the might of the Indians and having them march as far as their imagined foes' dawnland home.[34] Plutarch had the best of the Greeks and Romans survey the field of Pharsalus and reflect that the forces of Caesar and Pompey might have been better employed in the conquest of Scythia and India, for what Indian wealth could withstand seventy thousand Romans under arms?[35] Dio Cassius made Trajan spot a merchantman on its way to India at the mouth of the Tigris and sigh that if he were a younger man he would have added India to his triumphs.[36] Eutropius seems to recall this intention in his brief note on the naval preparations Trajan made 'to

30 Manetho, ed. Waddell 1940, 166–169; see Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996, 146–147; Dillery 2015, 174, 339–341.

31 Diodorus Siculus, 1.60.2–61.1, 65.2–8, cf. 1.44.2, ed. Bertrac and Chamoux 2002, 120–122, 128–129, 97.

32 Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 2.10.1 (239–240), ed. Niese 1887–1895, I, 133.

33 Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 9.27.7–10, ed. Dindorf 1867, I, 499–500 (= *FGrH* 726 3a).

34 Virgil, *Georgica* 2.171–72, *Aeneid* 6.794–95, 7.605–6, 8.705, ed. Hirtzel 1900, (no page numbers).

35 Plutarch, *Pompeius* 70.3, ed. Ziegler and Lindskog 1964–1973, III/2, 331. Plutarch's sentiment seems to have retained some resonance in succeeding ages, since it recurs in the brief accounts of Pharsalus given by Eutropius (6.21.1, ed. Hellegouarc'h 2002, 79) and Orosius (6.15.25, ed. Arnaud-Lindet 2003, II, 209), though without any mention of Scythia and India.

36 Dio Cassius, 68.29.1, ed. Boissevain 1895–1931, III, 217.

harry the borders of India' (*Indiae fines vastaret*).[37] According to the *Historia Augusta*, the destruction of the statues of the imperial brothers Tacitus and Florian (r. 275–276) by lightning was the occasion for the haruspices to issue a prediction that a thousand years thence an emperor would arise from the same family who would establish his sovereignty in an unprecedented fashion on every frontier, including the imposition of a governor on Taprobane, that is, Sri Lanka (*qui Taprobanis praesidem imponat*), and restore rule to the Senate—the one expectation was no more wishful thinking than the other and the author suggests that the soothsayers knew as much, which was why they set the fulfillment of their prophecy so far in the future that it would have been forgotten when it did not come about.[38] The notion of the Roman conquest of India may have been impracticable, but it, nevertheless, held an enduring appeal. And what was considered possible for the dominion of the Romans must have been thought to have been an even more viable aspiration for the kingdom of the Ethiopians, whose centre of power stood so much closer to India than Rome's.

The rise of Aksum and the relations of India and Aksum in Palladius, *De Vita Bragmanorum*

The possibility of Ethiopian intervention in the affairs of India must have been even more conceivable with the rise of the kingdom of Aksum.[39] At roughly the same time that Julius Valerius was translating the *Alexander Romance* into Latin —if not when the *Romance* itself was coalescing into a unitary whole—that is, around the end of the third century, or at least in its latter half, an Aksumite king whose name is lost raised a monumental throne recording his accomplishments.[40] The throne itself has disappeared, but we still have most of the inscription that was written on it thanks to Cosmas, nicknamed Indicopleustes, including a transcription of it in his *Christian Topography* (*c.*550).[41] The king of Aksum recorded victories on every side and the subjection of his neighbours, leaving him in charge of a vast empire and—perhaps most significantly for observers in the Mediterra-

37 Eutropius, 8.3.2, ed. Hellegouarc'h 2002, 102–103.

38 Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Tacitus* 15.2–4, ed. Hohl et al. 1965, II, 197–198.

39 While the house style of the journal that has been gracious enough to publish this paper calls for the spelling 'Aksum', which is consistent with the ancient Abyssinian writing system, the spelling 'Axum' is a better transliteration of the Greek Ἀξομία or Ἐξομία or Αὐξούμη or Αὔξουμις and has been used in all translations of quotations from Greek texts.

40 Kirwan 1972, 171–176; Bukharin 2006, 3–13; Robin 2012, 257; Bowersock 2013, 44–62; Kominko 2013, 24–35.

41 Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography* (*Topogr. Christ.*) 2.60–63, ed. Wolska-Conus 1968–1973, I, 372–379 = Bernard, Drewes, and Schneider 1991, I, 378–382 (no. 277).

nean world—in effective control of the Red Sea trade.[42] We know from archaeological evidence that an Aksumite king had marched into Meroë and set up a monument to his victory in the midst of the city, Aksum thus forcefully displacing Meroë as regional metropolis, as well as the city and its rulers' prominence in the perception of the citizens of the Roman Empire.[43]

The kings of Aksum were a force to be reckoned with not only because of their territorial expansion and assumption of regional dominance. They were also canny players in the game of propaganda and political self-promotion. This is seen in the fact that the triumphal inscription Cosmas transcribed was written in Greek, and so accessible to a visitor from the Mediterranean like Cosmas. Later inscriptions and coin legends in the native Ethiopic language, Gəʿəz, continued to use Greek as well to broadcast their messages as widely as possible.[44] The Aksumite kings issued gold coinage in their own names, which was considered to be a prerogative of the emperor in Constantinople not infringed upon even by the kings of Persia.[45] They also adopted titles that were a challenge to the great rulers of both East and West: they styled themselves not only 'kings' using the Roman emperor's title of βασιλεύς, but also 'kings of kings' like the Persian *Shahanshah*.[46] Nor were these merely pretentious expressions of swollen ambition. At least one outsider, the Babylonian religious leader Mani (AD 216–276), acknowledged Aksum as one of the four paramount kingdoms in the world, along with Rome, Persia, and 'Silis'—perhaps China or India.[47]

Palladius, who wrote *On the Races of India and the Life of the Brahmans* or *Vita Bragmanorum* most likely in the third decade of the fifth century, depicts Aksum and India as knit together by a close and frequent commercial and political

[42] Bernand et al. 1991, I, 385–387 (no. 286). See Kobishchanow 1965, 137–41; Thompson 1969, 56; Curtin 1984, 100; Sidebotham 1986, 46–47; Sidebotham 1991, 34; Munro-Hay 2002, 234.

[43] See Kirwan 1960, 111 n. 2, 119; Hintze 1967, 79–86; Adams 1977, 382–390; Shinnie 1979, 252–271. Hägg 1984, 440, dates the inscription in question to the fourth or fifth century; cf. Hägg 1994, 45–48. Burstein 1981, 47–48, however, suggests that it was raised by one of Ezana's predecessors on the Aksumite throne, so sometime before the 320s. See also Burstein 2008, 53–54 and n. 35.

[44] Bowersock 2008, 383–384 and nn. 2 and 3.

[45] Procopius, *De Bellis* 7.33.5–6, ed. Haury 2001, II, 442–443. See Juel-Jensen 1994, 212; Hahn 1995, 92; Henze 2000, 31.

[46] Vycichl 1957, 193–203; Chrysos 1978, 42–46; Kobishchanov 1979, 195; Fowden 1993, 109–116; Munro-Hay 2002, 240; Robin 2012, 260–61; Bowersock 2013, 60–62, 64–65.

[47] Mani, *Kephalaia* 77, trans. Gardner 1995, 179. See Metzler 1989, 446–459; Fowden 1993, 12–14.

intercourse—although the relation of dominance works in the other direction than it does in Julius Valerius.[48] Palladius tells his readers that he had formed the intention of going to India to visit the Brahmans and observe the life they lived, but ill health prevented him from proceeding any further than what he calls 'the extremities of the Indian land' (τὰ ἄκρα μόνον ἔφθασα τῆς Ἰνδικῆς).[49] He had come this far 'in the company of the Blessed Moses, Bishop of the Adulites' (μετὰ τοῦ μακαρίου Μωϋσέως τοῦ ἐπισκόπου τῶν Ἀδουληνῶν).[50] So, it would seem that Palladius is using τὰ ἄκρα in the sense of frontiers or borderlands to say that he had come to Aksum and Adulis, its port, which were the outlying reaches of Indian territory.

This interpretation would seem to be confirmed when Palladius relates the adventures of his informant, who had actually been to India, the so-called Theban *scholasticus*. The *scholasticus* was like Palladius a curious traveller, but a more energetic one, and went first to Adulis and then proceeded to Aksum, where he found a minor petty king of the Indians was resident (ἐν ᾗ ἦν καὶ βασιλίσκος μικρὸς τῶν Ἰνδῶν ἐκεῖ καθεζόμενος).[51] But he was determined to go on to the island of Taprobane (Sri Lanka), where the great king of the Indians lived (ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ τῇ νήσῳ καὶ ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς κατοικεῖ τῶν Ἰνδῶν), to whom all the petty kings of the land were subject as satraps (ᾧ πάντες οἱ βασιλίσκοι τῆς χώρας ἐκείνης ὑπόκεινται ὡς σατράπαι).[52] According to the *scholasticus*, there were Indian merchants active in Aksum; he booked passage with some of them to get to India.[53] So, we may be inclined to think of Psammis, a character in Xenophon of Ephesus' novel, an Indian who enjoyed the title of king and had set up a household in Alexandria to carry on a business that took him along the route to India that passed through Ethiopia.[54] Psammis was resident as a king from India in Alexandria, but not as king of Alexandria. Derrett, to be sure, interpreted the situation

[48] Derrett 1960, 64–135, provides a detailed study of the manuscript tradition and a critical edition of the text. Cf. Berghoff 1967; Fredricksmeyer 1968, offered this second edition within a decade only ambivalent praise: 'This edition is highly welcome, but it does not supersede its predecessor'. There is an English translation of the text in Stoneman 2012, 34–56. See Derrett 1962, 21–31; Hansen 1965, 351–380; Berg 1974, 5–16; Stoneman 1994, 500–510.

[49] Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.1, ed. Derrett 1960, 108.

[50] Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.1, ed. Derrett 1960, 108. On Bishop Moses, see Monneret de Villard 1947, 613–623.

[51] Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.4, ed. Derrett 1960, 109.

[52] Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.4, ed. Derrett 1960, 109.

[53] Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.4, ed. Derrett 1960, 109.

[54] Xenophon of Ephesus, 3.11.2–3, 4.1.4–5, 3.1, 5, ed. Papanikolaou 1973, 43–44, 46, 48, 49.

along these lines: 'At Axum he [the *scholasticus*] found a small Indian community, ruled by a petty Indian 'princeling'. That the Indian exporters should wish to be represented at the headquarters of their middlemen was only natural'.[55]

But only very shortly after using such an odd word, βασιλίσκος, to indicate the presence of a ruler or governor of the Indians at Aksum, Palladius goes on to say that all the petty kings, βασιλίσκοι, of the land were subject as satraps to the Great King on Taprobane (ᾧ πάντες οἱ βασιλίσκοι τῆς χώρας ἐκείνης ὑπόκεινται ὡς σατράπαι).[56] Now, it may be uncertain what a βασιλίσκος is, but a satrap is not a resident consul or the leader of an expatriate community; a satrap is the governor an oriental king put in charge of the individual provinces of his empire. And the intervention the Great King of Taprobane makes in the affairs of one of his subject kings, sending an officer to investigate his conduct, and the terrible punishment he metes out to him, having him flayed alive, give us to understand that it was no nominal or ceremonial overlordship that he exercised over these petty kings.[57] Palladius seems to suggest that Aksum was one of the outlying territories of a vast Indian empire centred on Taprobane.

The later use of βασιλίσκος, the diminutive of βασιλεύς, by the rulers in the region of East Africa would seem to confirm, rather than undermine, this picture. In a few instances from the fifth or sixth centuries, including the famous Silko inscription of *c.*600, the rulers of Nubia use the word βασιλίσκος of themselves in Greek inscriptions they themselves caused to be incised on monuments to their own glory.[58] Silko refers to himself as 'I, Silko, Kinglet of Nobades and all the Ethiopians' (Ἐγὼ Σιλκω, βασιλίσκος Νουβάδων καὶ ὅλων τῶν Αἰθιόπων).[59] The diminutive form is a strange title to adopt in what turns out to be an unreservedly boastful pronouncement, and Chrysos and Hägg have concluded that Silko calls himself βασιλίσκος in order to indicate his federate or dependant status in relation to *the* βασιλεύς, the common Greek term for the Roman Emperor.[60] The kings of

55 Derrett 1962, 26.

56 Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.4, ed. Derrett 1960, 109.

57 Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.10, ed. Derrett 1960, 111.

58 Chrysos 1978, 42–46; Hägg 1990, 148–156; cf. Burstein 1998, 103, 149.

59 Hägg 2002, 299–300.

60 Chrysos 1978, 44–46; Hägg 1990, 152–156. Recurring to an old theory of Lepsius, Hansen 1986, 205, insisted that the title βασιλίσκος referred to the uraeus serpent or cobra worn on their crowns by the kings of Egypt and indicated that the kings of Nubia were to be considered Pharaohs and, moreover, that the kings who bore this title were pagan, but such a subtle nuance, if it was actually there to be apprehended, was probably lost on Palladius; see Lepsius 1876, 135. While the Roman Emperor was called βασιλεύς in everyday speech from the second century AD on, though instances can be found from the beginning of the Principate, in official documents he was referred to as αὐτοκράτωρ ('sole-ruler'), at least

Aksum never adopted the title βασιλίσκος. On the contrary, in their Greek inscriptions they applied this term to their defeated enemies and precisely those from the region of Nubia. In the first half of the fourth century the Aksumite king Ezana refers to himself as a βασιλεύς and speaks of overcoming six Beja, or Blemmyan, tribes, each with its own βασιλίσκος.[61] The use of the title βασιλίσκος, particularly in the context of East Africa, implies subjugation to an overlord, and the overlord of the βασιλίσκος the Theban *scholasticus* encountered was presumably the Great King on Taprobane.

The vast stretches of the Arabian Sea may appear to be an impassable barrier between India and Africa for all but the most intrepid of traders and seekers after wisdom, but that is not how Palladius conceived of it. Like those who dreamed of a Roman conquest of India, Palladius considered India within the ambit of Roman military action and insisted that so also did the Indians themselves. The *scholasticus*, Palladius tells us, was held prisoner for six years by one of his subject kings until the Great King of Taprobane heard of it, freed the *scholasticus*, and brutally executed his vassal.[62] According to Palladius, the prisoner was freed and his captor punished for abusing a Roman citizen because the Indians, from the Great King on down, live in dread of a Roman invasion:

> πάνυ γὰρ τιμῶσι καὶ φοβοῦνται τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν ὡς δυναμένην καὶ τὴν χῶραν αὐτῶν ἐκπορθῆσαι δι' ὑπερβολὴν ἀνδρείας καὶ εὐμηχανίας.[63]
>
> For they are much in awe of the Roman Empire and fear that, since it is so powerful, it could destroy their land on account of a superiority of courage and resourcefulness.

We may seriously doubt that the Indians of Palladius' day entertained the least fear of a Roman attack, but Palladius thought such a fear plausible and expected his readers to do so as well.[64] At the very least, the motive imputed to the king of

until the seventh century, when tectonic shifts in the geopolitical situation allowed the Roman Emperor to formally adopt the title of βασιλεύς; see Chrysos 1978, 66–67; Millar 1992, 613–615.

61 Chrysos 1978, 44 and nn. 92, 93; Hägg 1990, 148, 152.

62 Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.7–10, ed. Derrett 1960, 110–111.

63 Palladius, *Vita Bragmanorum* 1.10, ed. Derrett 1960, 111.

64 Derrett 1962, 25–26, however, considered the relation of Indian fear of a Roman invasion to be a factual report and made it one of the mainstays of his dating of the *Vita Bragmanorum* BC 375, when Roman military disasters would supposedly have made this fear ridiculous. Desanges 1969, 629, sensibly rejects the suggestion that the resort to arms, or the fear of it, had any influence on relations between Rome and India.

Taprobane implies that India was not utterly sundered from the Red Sea and the Mediterranean world, but was well within the sphere of potential travel and communication.

The *Alexander Romance* conveys the impression that there was easy communication and regular contact between India and Ethiopia. In his translation Julius Valerius goes even further and insinuates that one country had been under the dominion of the other. Such notions may seem impossibly muddled and confusing to us—but that is what they are: confusing, rather than confused. These ideas were by no means implausible to a contemporary audience. India was thought to be in the orbit of Roman ambition and activity. Palladius may have been wrong about the Aksumite king being a vassal of the Great King on Taprobane, but he considered such a relationship believable enough to be accepted by his audience. There remained, nevertheless, a lack of clarity and precision about just where the realm of Candace was supposed to be. Meroë, after all, was a lengthy journey from the coastal ports that made India accessible to Ethiopia and, to be sure, it was not the same as Aksum—though it was conquered by Aksum. John Malalas, however, managed to resolve this vague obscurity with a few judicious strokes of the pen.

John Malalas and the location of Candace amongst the 'Inner Indians'

John Malalas is rarely credited with bringing clarity to his material and untangling its messy knots—on the contrary, he is usually accused of doing just the opposite—but in this case he manages to straighten out some of the kinks in a stubbornly intractable source. Beyond calling Candace the queen of Meroë, the *Alexander Romance* does not indicate where her country was and further obscures matters by having Alexander pass immediately from India to whatever land she rules. Julius Valerius shows just how erratic the perception of Candace's situation in the *Romance* could be by playing up her dynasty's connections to India in his translation. Malalas identifies Candace as the queen of the Inner Indians, and so her realm as Aksum and thus manages to define its relation to India on the one hand and Ethiopia on the other. If the *Romance* had left its audience uncertain as to the geography involved, with a few slight changes Malalas clarified where Candace's kingdom was and its place in the network of neighbouring countries—at least for his contemporaries, who had a reasonably clear idea of the position of Inner India.

Malalas' account of the career of Alexander the Great is brief—no more than three pages of printed text—but it is set prominently at the opening of his eighth book and introduces his record of the Successor kingdoms. Much of this account

is ultimately based on the *Alexander Romance*, but some intermediary has manipulated this source and produced the narrative Malalas offers us.[65] This intrusive hand has done the work of selection and rearrangement necessary to reduce the three books of the *Romance* to a handful of chapters, but its intervention also produces a negative assessment of Alexander that is perhaps most obvious in the introduction of insinuations about Alexander's conduct toward women that do not redound to his credit.[66] In Malalas, Alexander sacrifices a maiden to inaugurate the new city of Alexandria, his marriage to his prisoner Rhoxane has dark undertones of rape and exploitation, and Alexander's encounter with Candace is disconcertingly eroticized. A more subtle and less tendentious adjustment of the account, however, elucidates the identity and position of Candace's kingdom, especially in relation to India and Ethiopia.

The elements that loom largest in the canonical histories of Alexander and so in references to the king throughout Graeco-Roman literature—his campaign against Darius and overthrow of the Persian Empire and his invasion of India—are largely elided or cursorily indicated in Malalas' account, while seemingly minor incidents receive generous attention. So, the defeat of Porus and conquest of India become nothing more than a precursor to the story of Alexander's undoing at the hands of Candace:

> παρέλαβεν δὲ καὶ πάντα τὰ Ἰνδικὰ μέρη καὶ τὰ βασίλεια αὐτῶν ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος, λαβὼν καὶ Πῶρον τὸν βασιλέα Ἰνδῶν αἰχμάλωτον· καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα τὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν βασίλεια δίχα τῆς βασιλείας τῆς Κανδάκης τῆς χήρας τῆς βασιλευούσης τῶν ἐνδοτέρων Ἰνδῶν· ἥτις συνελάβετο τὸν αὐτὸν Ἀλέξανδρον τῷ τρόπῳ τούτῳ.[67]
>
> This same Alexander came into possession of all the regions of India and their kingdoms, and took Porus, the king of the Indians, prisoner,

[65] That the treatment of Alexander in Malalas' *Chronicle* is dependent on the *Romance* in general is evident in the ascription of Alexander's true paternity to Nectanebo (7.17), the apparent course of events, which sets the foundation of Alexandria and the administration of Egypt before Alexander meets the Persians in battle (8.1), and the inclusion of the story of Alexander's encounter with Candace (8.3); ed. Thurn 2000, 144, 146–148; see *Al. Rom.* (α) 1.3–7, 31–33, 34.9–35.1, 41, 3.18–23, ed. Kroll 1926, 2–8, 28–37, 39, 45–47, 115–123. The intermediary between the *Romance* and Malalas has been identified as the lost work of the shadowy figure of Bouttios; see Garstad 2022a, 35–53.

[66] See Garstad 2020, 464–468. It is quite possible that Alexander, or rather his memory, was not the real target of this critique, but that it was instead a veiled attack on Julian the Apostate; see Garstad 2022b, 205–226.

[67] Malalas, 8.3, ed. Thurn 2000, 147.

> and all the other kingdoms of the nations, with the exception of the kingdom of the widow Candace, who reigned over the Inner Indians. This woman took Alexander himself captive in the following manner.

What follows, though perhaps the incident in Alexander's career elaborated at greatest length by Malalas, is simply a summary of the story told in the *Romance*. Candace learned that Alexander was in the habit of going in disguise as his own ambassador to spy out the lands he planned to conquer, so she had a portrait of Alexander painted surreptitiously, marking all of his distinguishing features, and when he appeared at her court she had him arrested, declaring, 'King Alexander, you have captured the whole world, but a single woman has captured you!' (Ἀλέξανδρε βασιλεῦ, τὸν κόσμον ὅλον παρέλαβες·καὶ γυνή σε μία παρέλαβεν).[68] In the *Romance* Alexander is rendered desperate and furious, literally gnashing his teeth, but in Malalas he does not lose his cool:[69]

> ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος εἶπεν αὐτῇ· 'διὰ τὸ σπουδαῖον καὶ περίεργον τῆς φρονήσεώς σου ἀβλαβῆ σε φυλάξω καὶ τὴν σὴν γῆν καὶ τοὺς σοὺς υἱεῖς, ἀγάγωμαι δέ σε καὶ εἰς γυναῖκα'. ἥτις Κανδάκη ἀκούσασα δέδωκεν ἑαυτήν· ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος εὐθέως ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ εἰσῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὴν Αἰθιοπίαν καὶ εἰς ἄλλας χώρας.[70]
>
> And Alexander said to her, 'Because your intelligence has been earnest and exceedingly careful, I shall keep you unmolested, as well as your people and your sons, and I shall take you to wife.' When Candace heard this, she surrendered herself; and Alexander immediately took her with him and entered Ethiopia and other countries.

At this point Malalas draws the curtain on a whole series of adventures that the *Romance* appears to set in the hinterland of Ethiopia—where Alexander meets Sarapis himself in the place where the gods dwell, the Amazons, and all sorts of monstrous races and comes to the Pillars of Hercules—and proceeds immediately to the great conqueror's deathbed.[71]

As in the *Romance*, so in Malalas Alexander proceeds from India where he had defeated Porus, to the kingdom of Candace. But Malalas does not call her the queen of Meroë, but rather designates her the ruler of the Inner Indians. These Indians are not the same as the subjects of Porus, nor are they the inhabitants of

[68] Malalas, 8.3, ed. Thurn 2000, 147. On the *Romance* establishing Alexander's reputation for going in disguise as his own messenger or spy, see Garstad 2018, 181–184.

[69] *Al. Rom.* (α) 3.22.13.

[70] Malalas, 8.3, ed. Thurn 2000, 147.

[71] Cf. *Al. Rom.* 3.24–29, ed. Kroll 1926, 123–131.

the interior of his kingdom. By Malalas' day 'Inner Indians' had been established as a designation for the Aksumites, so by saying she ruled the Inner Indians he identified Candace's realm as Aksum.

In his Latin translation and continuation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea, published in 402 or 403, Rufinus of Aquileia related the story of the captive turned courtier turned missionary bishop Frumentius.[72] It is clear from the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria and the official correspondence of Constantius II which he quotes that the scene of Frumentius' activities was the kingdom of Aksum.[73] But Rufinus called the country Further India (*India ulterior*) and described it as lying between Nearer India and Parthia, but inland by a long road (*sed longo interior tractu, India ulterior jacet*).[74] This gave the cue to those Greek Church historians who borrowed from Rufinus' account at one remove or another to refer to Frumentius' mission field as Inner India or India of the interior in one way or another. Sozomen spoke of 'the inner divisions of the peoples we call Indians' (τοὺς ἔνδον τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἰνδῶν).[75] For Socrates their country was 'the inner India' (ἡ ἐνδοτέρω Ἰνδία).[76] Ps.-Gelasius adjusted the adjective to a superlative and referred to 'Innermost India' (ἡ ἐνδοτάτη Ἰνδία), but the sense was much the same.[77] It seems to be in deliberate contrast to the Nicene Church historians that Philostorgius calls the Homerites, rather than the Aksumites, 'the Innermost Indians' (τοὺς ἐνδοτάτω Ἰνδούς), though Aksumites also are still Indians for him.[78]

It is clear from his treatment of the peoples on the Red Sea in his own day that Malalas accepted the geographical premises underlying the nomenclature of the Church historians, even if he does not precisely reproduce it. Orienting his readers in regard to the warring groups of so-called Indians, he says that 'the king of the Axumites is further removed into the interior than the Homerites' (ὁ τῶν Αὐξουμιτῶν βασιλεὺς ἐνδότερός ἐστι τῶν Ὁμηριτῶν).[79] And it is through the

[72] Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.9–10, ed. Schwartz and Mommsen 1908, 971–973; cf. Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.24, ed. Bidez et al. 1983, 328–334; Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.19, ed. Hansen 1995, 60–62; Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.23, ed. Parmentier and Hansen 1998, 73–74; ps.-Gelasius of Cyzicus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.9, ed. Hansen 2002, 121–123. See Atiya 1968, 51–52, 151–152.

[73] Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantium* 29.3, 31.1, 3, 4, ed. Brennecke et al. 2006, 302, 304. See Barnes 1993, 119–120.

[74] Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.9, ed. Schwartz and Mommsen 1908, 971.

[75] Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.24.1, ed. Bidez et al. 1983, 328.

[76] Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.19.2, ed. Hansen 1995, 60–61.

[77] Ps.-Gelasius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.9.4, 5, 16, ed. Hansen 2002, 122–123.

[78] Philostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.6, ed. Bidez 1913, 18.

[79] Malalas, 18.15, ed. Thurn 2000, 362.

Homerite country, he relates, that Roman merchants 'reach Axum and the inner kingdoms of the Indians' (εἰσέρχονται εἰς τὴν Αὐξούμην καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐνδότερα βασίλεια τῶν Ἰνδῶν); Aksum is presumably one of these inner Indian kingdoms.[80] If for Malalas the Aksumites are the Indians further into the interior, it is manifest that the Inner Indians Candace rules are the Aksumites.

In that same discussion of contemporary events Malalas distinguishes between Ethiopia and Inner India, just as he does in relating the story of Alexander and Candace. He speaks of seven kingdoms of Indians and Ethiopians in his own day, three of the Indians and four of the Ethiopians (εἰσὶ γὰρ Ἰνδῶν καὶ Αἰθιόπων βασίλεια ἑπτά, τρία μὲν Ἰνδῶν, τέσσαρα δὲ Αἰθιόπων). The Ethiopians are supposed to live more toward the Ocean and further to the East than the Indians (τὰ πλησίον ὄντα τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ἀνατολικώτερα μέρη).[81] The Indians, those who live on the Red Sea and in the Abyssinian Highlands, are differentiated from the Ethiopians, apparently those who live in what is now Somaliland. Just so, he says that Candace ruled not the Ethiopians, but the Inner Indians, and distinguishes between the two countries. After his escapades in Inner India, Alexander leaves that country and 'enters into Ethiopia' (εἰσῆλθεν ἐπὶ τὴν Αἰθιοπίαν), making the two quite clearly different lands. The country of the Ethiopians, moreover, closer to the Ocean and east of the 'India' on the Red Sea as it is, is thus further removed from the Graeco-Roman *oikoumene*, and so an apt setting for Alexander's strange and marvellous adventures in the 'outer space' beyond the civilized centre. These adventures may go unmentioned by Malalas, but many of his readers, familiar with the *Romance*, would have known that they followed upon Alexander's departure from the palace of Candace.

The implications of Malalas' identification of Candace's realm as Aksum

Malalas may not have considered Candace to be an Ethiopian queen, but as he describes it, Candace's realm does retain at least one significant attribute of Ethiopia: its inviolate status in the face of invaders and would-be conquerors. He stresses that Alexander captured 'all the other kingdoms of the nations' (τὰ ἄλλα πάντα τὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν βασίλεια), with the single exception of the kingdom of the widow Candace (δίχα τῆς βασιλείας τῆς Κανδάκης τῆς χήρας).[82] There is a ripe irony here, as the widow was supposed to be the very embodiment of defenceless frailty, and Alexander's magnificence is duly undermined. But this notable exception also recalls the tradition that Ethiopia was a country that never fell to an attack from outside its borders. Herodotus describes in stark terms the failure

[80] Malalas, 18.15, ed. Thurn 2000, 362.
[81] Malalas, 18.15, ed. Thurn 2000, 362.
[82] Malalas, 8.3, ed. Thurn 2000, 147.

of Cambyses' attempt to invade Ethiopia, as ill-advised as his sacrilegious effort to pillage the Oracle of Ammon on Egypt's other flank.[83] Ctesias may have allowed that Semiramis conquered Ethiopia, but his magnification of the victorious Assyrian queen put him in a distinct minority.[84] Diodorus, introducing the section on Ethiopia early in his *Bibliotheca*, offers as proof of the Ethiopians' piety and the gods' favour towards them the fact that their country has never endured the domination of a foreign invader.[85] As Diodorus tells it, Cambyses was joined in his failure by Semiramis, who for all her famous deeds advanced only a little way into Ethiopia before retreating again, as well as Heracles and Dionysus, who ranged the whole world over but could not bring Ethiopia of all countries to heel.[86] Shortly after Diodorus wrote, the Roman general Publius Petronius marched up the Nile against the Ethiopians and sacked their capital of Napata, and Augustus claimed this as one of the great deeds of his reign, but this was only a punitive expedition that never reached the further capital of Meroë and the Roman forces eventually withdrew.[87] Ethiopia did not succumb to the mighty empires she faced. Just so, the kingdom of Candace was alone in not falling before Alexander, who had conquered all the kingdoms of the world. The pointed application of Ethiopian exceptionalism to Candace's kingdom, however, does not so much confuse the geographical aspects of the story as add a borrowed lustre to the accomplishment of Candace in outwitting and capturing Alexander, the conqueror of the world.

On the whole, however, Aksum is appropriate—perhaps more appropriate than Meroë—to the circumstances of Candace's realm as described in the *Alexander Romance*. We have noted the odd situation set out in the *Romance* of Alexander moving from India to the kingdom of Candace almost immediately without visiting any intervening lands. But if Alexander had travelled from India to Africa by the route usually followed by Greek and Roman traders, by sea carried along by the monsoon winds, he would not have passed through any other countries.[88]

[83] Herodotus, 3.25, ed. Hude 1927, I, (no page numbers).

[84] Diodorus Siculus, 2.14.4, ed. Eck 2003, 29; cf. Justin, *Epitome* 1.2.8, ed. Mineo 2016–2020, I, 26; see Lenfant 2004, 41.

[85] Diodorus Siculus, 3.2.4, ed. Bommelaer 2002, 4–5.

[86] Diodorus Siculus, 3.3.1, ed. Bommelaer 2002, 4.

[87] Strabo, 17.1.54, ed. Meineke 1866–1877, III, 1143–1145; *Monumentum Ancyranum* (= *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*) 26.5, ed. Cooley 2009, 90–91; Propertius, 4.6.78, ed. Barber 1960, 152; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 6.(35) 181–182, ed. Mayhoff 1906, I, 506; Cassius Dio, 54.5.4–6, ed. Boissevain 1895–1931, II, 447.

[88] Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* 6.(26) 106, ed. Mayhoff 1906, I, 474–475: *navigant autem ex India vento volturno et, cum intravere Rubrum mare, Arico vel austro* ('they sail from India with a south-east wind and, once they have entered the Red Sea, with a south-west or south wind'). Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* 2.[46] 119, cf. 2.[47] 125, ed. Mayhoff 1906, I, 170, 173)

Rather, after leaving India there was a lengthy sea voyage without any ports of call and landfall was made, if not at Adulis, the port of Aksum, then very likely on the southern shore of the Gulf of Aden, territory often subject in Late Antiquity to the Aksumite king. So, the itineraries that give a catalogue of consecutive destinations on a journey one after the other list Aksum as the next stop right after India.[89] The conditions of travel across the Arabian Sea are given vivid description in the story of Frumentius, who is said to have been captured when the ship he sailed on from India was compelled to put in to land on an inhospitable coast to replenish her supply of water—no doubt exhausted after several months at sea on the open water and out of sight of land—and the passengers and crew were attacked and killed by the natives, who must have been subjects of the king of Aksum because the captives ended up at his court.[90] Even if it required him to tacitly ignore Alexander's stop in Persia, which is barely mentioned in the *Romance*, Malalas' identification of Candace's country as Aksum made Alexander's journey there straight from India consistent with the usual route of travelers, by sea, direct from India to Aksumite territory.

In the same way that Candace offers to send live elephants as part of her magnificent gift to Alexander in the *Romance*, the Aksumite kings—identified as Indians—occasionally sent elephants as diplomatic gifts to the emperor in Constantinople, and while this did not happen very often, it did not go unnoticed when it did. Marcellinus Comes records that in the year 496 'India sent an elephant, which our poet Plautus calls by the name of *lucabum*, and two giraffes as a gift to the emperor Anastasius' (*India Anastasio principi elephantum, quem Plautus poeta*

himself defines the *ventus volturnus* as a south-east wind blowing 'from the winter sunrise' (*ab oriente brumali*), but if what he is actually describing in the voyage from India is the north-east monsoon, as seems to be the case, then a direct sailing across the Indian Ocean with landfall at the mouth of the Red Sea would be even more likely. For the sensible interpretation of the wind carrying sailors home from India as the north-east monsoon, see Rackham 1942, 418 n. c; cf. Kobishchanov 1965, 137–138.

89 *Hodoiporiai*, ed. Rougé 1966, 352; cf. Klotz 1910, 609.

90 Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.9, ed. Schwartz and Mommsen 1908, 972: *aquae vel ceterorum necessariorum causa ad portam quendam navis qua vehebatur adplicuit* ('for the sake of water or some other necessities the ship on which he was sailing steered to something of a port'). Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.23.3, ed. Parmentier and Hansen 1998, 73: ὑδρείας δὲ χάριν εἴς τινα λιμένα τοῦ σκάφους προσορμισθέντος ('for the sake of watering the vessel came to anchor in some port'). Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.24.5, ed. Bidez et al. 1983, 330: συμβὰν δὲ κατὰ χρείαν ὕδατος ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδείων εἰς ὅρμον τινὰ προσχεῖν τὴν ναῦν ('it came about that on account of the necessity of water and other supplies the ship put in to a certain roadstead'). A dire mishap under similar circumstances seems to have led to Eudoxus of Cyzicus' discovery of the route from the Red Sea to India across the Arabian Sea; see Strabo, 2.3.4, ed. Meineke 1866–1877, I, 130–133.

noster lucabum nomine dicit, duasque camelopardalas pro munere misit).[91] As Burstein points out, the elephant being accompanied by two giraffes and the monopoly of the king of Aksum over trained elephants indicate that India here is Aksum.[92] Timotheus of Gaza, who wrote a book on animals, reports that he saw 'a man from Indian parts' passing through his native city, on his way from Aela, bringing these exotic beasts to Anastasius.[93] Burstein even suggests that a sketch of an African elephant and its handler on the back of a papyrus letter of invitation from one Roman official to another (P. Mich. inv. 4290) might be an eyewitness depiction of the elephant in this very gift to Anastasius as it passed through the country.[94] The continuator who brought Malalas' chronicle down to the death of Justinian also makes cursory mention of another 'Indian' embassy in 549/550 that was sent to Constantinople with an elephant (ἰνδικτιῶνος ιγ΄ πρεσβευτὴς Ἰνδῶν κατεπέμφθη μετὰ καὶ ἐλέφαντος ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει).[95] Malalas himself does not record a gift of elephants, but he does convey the remarkable report of the ambassador Nonnosus, who was received by 'the king of the Indians' in Aksum in spectacular fashion: mounted on a platform carried by four elephants.[96] The most impressive aspects of the diplomatic relations between Aksum and Constan-

91 Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon* (IIII. Pauli Solius), ed. Mommsen 1894, 94.

92 Burstein 1992, 56; cf. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topogr. Christ.* 11. 23, ed. Wolska-Conus 1968–1973, 3:354–355. Shahîd 1995–2010, I/1, 28–31, argues that the animals were a gift not from the king of Aksum, but from the ruler of South Arabia.

93 Timotheus Gazaeus, *Excerpta ex libris de animalibus* 24, ed. Haupt 1869, 15: ὅτι διὰ Γάζης παρῆλθέ τις ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ τῶν Ἰνδικῶν, Ἀελίσιος δὲ τὸ γένος, ἄγων δύο καμηλοπαρδάλεις καὶ ἐλέφαντα τῷ βασιλεῖ Ἀναστασίῳ ('[he says] that a certain man from Indian parts, a native of Aela, came through Gaza bringing two giraffes and an elephant to the emperor Anastasius'); see Bodenheimer and Rabinowitz 1949, 31.

94 Burstein 1992, 55–57.

95 Malalas, 18.106, ed. Thurn 2000, 411. It has long been recognized that there is a perceptible shift in the style and substance in the latter chapters of Book Eighteen. This shift has been explained by positing more than one phase in the writing of Malalas; Croke 1990, 17–25; Treadgold 2007, 236–240, 245. Earlier scholars considered it the result of Malalas' work being taken up by a different author; Gelzer 1880–1898, II/1, 129–138; Stein 1949–1959, II, 703; Hunger 1978, I, 320; cf. Croke 1990, 21. Olivier Gengler—in a paper presented at the *Time Calculation in Late Antiquity: The Chronicon Paschale And Beyond* conference, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 24 October, 2018, 'Time, Chronology, and Narrative in John Malalas', but to be elaborated in the forthcoming Tübingen Commentary on Malalas—revived a version of the thesis of a later continuator, the author of the entries from 18.78 and following, on an altogether firmer basis and appears to have offered the proposition upon which future scholarship must proceed.

96 Malalas 18.56, ed. Thurn 2000, 384–385. See Œconomos 1950, 177–178; Treadgold 2007, 256–258; Bowersock 2012, 287–289; Bowersock 2013, 108–111, 135–143.

tinople and the identification of Candace's kingdom as Aksum would have rendered the appearance of elephants in her diplomatic overtures to Alexander entirely comprehensible.

Malalas' distinction between Inner India and Ethiopia also reflects a shift in the perception of Ethiopians that accompanied the appearance of Aksum on the horizon of Graeco-Roman knowledge, as Cracco Ruggini perceived, a broader ethnic contrast that had grown up over time and marked the views of Late Antiquity as different from earlier ones.[97] This was a contrast between the Ethiopians, now chiefly identified with the Blemmyes and Nobades on the southern border of Egypt, and the Aksumites, whether or not they went under the name of Indians, further removed on the shores of the Red Sea. The Ethiopians, mostly known for their plundering raids, which erupted from the wilderness beyond the pale of stable Roman settlement, were seen as hostile and dangerous—indeed, as fit inhabitants for the scenes of Alexander's weird and hazardous adventures amongst savages and monsters once he leaves the land of Candace in the *Romance*. The Aksumites, by contrast, often amiable trading partners and potential allies, were perceived as members of the community of civilized nations, where not the blunt perils of spear and fang, but the more subtle menaces of palace intrigues and the conflicting loyalties compelled by marriage alliances might spell danger. Candace's realm is transferred from Ethiopia to Inner India because of a change in what was considered appropriate to Ethiopia—no longer consistent with what Alexander found in the queen's country—a change accommodated by the distinction of Aksum as Inner India.

Conclusion

If ancient readers did not share our difficulty in grasping just where the realm of Candace was supposed to be and how Alexander got there in the *Alexander Romance*, it would not have been possible or necessary for John Malalas to make Candace the ruler of the Inner Indians. But this is not the only manipulation of the *Romance* that we find in Malalas. Whereas the *Romance*—quite unhistorically—has Alexander kill Porus in a duel, Malalas says that 'he took Porus, king of the Indians, prisoner' (λαβὼν καὶ Πῶρον τὸν βασιλέα Ἰνδῶν αἰχμάλωτον), which is consistent with the historical record that Porus was captured at the Battle of Hydaspes and gallantly restored to his throne by Alexander.[98] In the *Romance*

[97] Cracco Ruggini 1974, 160–178; cf. Thompson 1989, 96–100; Burstein 2004, 82.

[98] *Al. Rom*. 3.4.2–3, ed. Kroll 1926, 102; cf. Diodorus Siculus, 17.88.6–7, 89.6, ed. Goukowsky 2002, 123–125; Plutarch, *Alexander* 60.7–8, ed. Ziegler and Lindskog 1964–1973, II/2, 232; Q. Curtius Rufus, 8.14.31–45, ed. Lucarini 2009, 291–293; Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.18.4–19.3, ed. Roos 1967–1968, I, 263–265; Justin, *Epitome* 12.8.1–7, ed. Mineo 2016–2020, II, 35–36. Justin, whose version of Alexander's history often veers closest to the legendary

Candace voices a motherly regard for Alexander, but in Malalas Alexander marries Candace after a rough and abrupt wooing.[99] Just like having Porus survive his encounter with Alexander, identifying Candace as the queen of the Inner Indians gives a greater historical verisimilitude to what Malalas and his readers may or may not have known was a fictional episode. Having Alexander marry a mother-figure, however, appears to be part of an intentional effort to blacken his memory by depicting him as subject to a rapacious lust and willing to abuse women—to say nothing of being guilty of bigamy. Those adjustments to the narrative of the *Romance* that make the Candace episode more believable lend a certain plausibility to the elements of tendentious, if muted, criticism of Alexander. So, if designating Candace's subjects Inner Indians brings clarity to the episode as a whole, it is not necessarily clarity for its own sake, but perhaps also a prop to the credibility of an incident that obviously interested Malalas.

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accounts in the *Romance*, says (*Epitome* 12.8.3) that Porus issued orders to his men to attack the Macedonians, but that Alexander was reserved for him as his personal opponent (*sibi regem eorum priuatum hostem deposcit*), ed. Mineo 2016–2020, II, 36. If not Justin, then his source might have thus suggested the duel we find in the *Romance*.

99 *Al. Rom*. (α) 3.23.8, ed. Kroll 1926, 122; Malalas, 8.3, ed. Thurn 2000, 147–148; see Garstad 2020, 467–468.

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Summary

The *Alexander Romance* is vague about Alexander's passage from India to the realm of Candace of Meroë, but seems to suggest it is accomplished swiftly and easily. The earliest versions of the *Romance*, moreover, indicate there were close relations between Candace's kingdom and India, even that her ancestors once held power over India. If Candace's realm is identified as Ethiopia, this is a perplexing state of affairs. But it seems to have taken on a plausibility with the rise of the kingdom of Aksum. In the *De Vita Bragmanorum* Palladius depicts Aksum as a province of a vast empire centred on Sri Lanka. But it is John Malalas, in his universal chronicle,

who modifies the story of Alexander and Candace to explicitly locate it in Aksum, or the land of the 'Inner Indians', as distinct from both India and Ethiopia. This modification not only made sense of several details in the *Alexander Romance*, but was also consistent with shifting attitudes toward Ethiopians and Aksumites in Late Antiquity.