

❧ *THE OCHLOS AND AULETES* ❧

ALEXANDRIAN AUTONOMY IN THE FIRST CENTURY BCE

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*If a man makes a pilgrimage round Alexandria in
the morning, God will make for him a golden
crown, set with pearls, perfumed with musk and
camphor, and shining from the East to the West.*

Ibn Dukmak

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CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

All dates are BCE, unless otherwise indicated. Common Era dates are marked as CE.

All texts and translations of Latin and Greek literary texts are from the Loeb Classical Library, unless otherwise indicated.

The names of the classical authors and the titles of their works are abbreviated following those listed in Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (2012) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary, Fourth Edition* (Oxford). For abbreviations of papyri, tablets, and ostraca I follow John F. Oates, Roger S. Bagnall, Sarah J. Clackson, Alexandra A. O'Brien, Joshua D. Sosin, Terry G. Wilfong, and Klaas A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>, November 2020.

Other abbreviations are as follows:

BM	The British Museum.
CG	Kamal, A.B. (1904–5). <i>Stèles Ptolémaïques et Romaines: Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire</i> (Cairo).
FGrH	Jacoby, F. (1923–). <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin).
MRR	Broughton, T.R.S. (1952–88). <i>Magistrates of the Roman Republic</i> (California).
OGIS	Dittenberger, W. (1903). <i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> (Hirzel).
PP	Peremans, W., Van't Dack, E., et al. (1950–) <i>Prosopographia Ptolemaica</i> (Leiden).
RE	Pauly's <i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart).
SB	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> (1915–).
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (Leiden).

Introduction

COMING TO ALEXANDRIA: MUTUAL INTEREST BETWEEN CITY AND KING

The aim of this thesis is to place Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos Philopator Philadelphos, best known by his derogatory (if convenient) nickname Auletes ('the Flute-Player'), within an Egyptian context. In doing so, I consider Auletes as a king who successfully managed challenging internal social and political conditions, rather than a weak and contemptible figure who ruled only on the sufferance of Rome. I argue that the inhabitants of Alexandria, among other powerful interest groups in Egypt, had a decisive influence on the policies and conduct of Auletes, both inside and outside the kingdom. By reinterpreting the broader relationship between the city and the Ptolemaic family, and by emphasising the need for the Ptolemies to negotiate with various stakeholders, I aim to challenge conventional Romanocentric interpretations of Auletes and present a more holistic and sympathetic picture of the king. In light of his financial, dynastic, domestic, and foreign political circumstances, I suggest that Auletes was remarkably resilient, and the longevity of his rule and preservation of the Ptolemaic empire for the next generation merits reconsideration.

My conclusions emerge from a synthesis of two recent but often separate approaches to the Ptolemies: on the one side, analyses of the Ptolemaic rulers in their own context; and, on the other side, reconceptualisations of the dynamic between the city and king in the Hellenistic age. I apply this approach to the career of Auletes, extending over his two reigns (80–58; 55–51), focusing particularly on his accession to the throne, retention of power, exile, restoration, and second rule.

Breaking the Mould: Romanocentric Approaches to the Last Ptolemies

Historical studies (100–30) have often cast the last century of Ptolemaic rule in terms of its inexorable decline.¹ Ancient sources and modern studies treat Auletes, the twelfth Graeco-Macedonian king of Egypt and penultimate ruler of the Ptolemaic empire, as a particularly weak ruler: he is portrayed as ineffective, lazy, debauched, and grossly unpopular among his people.² Above all, Auletes is depicted as a desperate ruler, a plaything of the Romans, who is, as one scholar notes, little more than “a hapless marionette pulled by the strings of [his] Roman masters.”³

In all of these assessments, there is a generally prevailing view that Egypt, either at or before the time of Auletes’ accession in 80, had lost all independence, or that there was no alternative for the Ptolemies but to obey Rome.⁴ Recent works by Welch and Hekster, however, have argued that this claim is exaggerated, noting that in Roman foreign policy Egypt was treated differently from other Hellenistic states, and, moreover, that this different treatment was tied in particular ways to the political instability of late Republican politics.⁵ Although they acknowledge the impact of Rome’s increasing power in the Mediterranean, especially once it had been buttressed by the practice of Hellenistic rulers leaving their kingdoms as bequests to the Romans and then the success of Pompey’s Eastern campaigns, they argue that the Ptolemaic kings and queens, while needing to keep one eye fixed firmly on Rome, could – and still did – act independently.

In this light, several scholars have attempted to evaluate Auletes’ kingship in view of the conditions of the first century and relative to his Ptolemaic predecessors.⁶ Siani-Davies, for instance, provides important context on Auletes’ reign, though aspects of his kingship, such as his use of pharaonic models, are not adequately considered, because they are not relevant to her project which is principally a commentary on Cicero’s *Pro Rabirio Postumo*.⁷ Hölbl, while appropriately accounting for Auletes’ religious policy, fails to remove himself entirely from a Romanocentric perspective in explicating Auletes’ actions, epitomised in the title of his chapter

¹ Bowman (1986) 32–33; Welch and Halsted (2019) 13. See, for example, Fraser (1972) I 115–31; Green (1990) 554–555; Lloyd (2000) 419–20; Goudchaux (2001) 130.

² Sullivan (1990) 247; Siani-Davies (2001) 1–2. Negative ancient treatments: Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.42; Strabo 17.1.11 [796], 13 [798]; Plut. *Cat. Min.* 35.3–5; Dio. *Chrys. Or.* 32.70; Ath. 5.206d. Disparaging modern assessments: Bevan (1927) 342–58; Elgood (1938) 137; Olshausen (1963) 22–38; Fraser (1972) I 124–25; Hazzard (2000) 145.

³ Siani-Davies (1997) 206. See also Will (1982) II 526; Green (1990) 140.

⁴ See, for example, Bevan (1927) 350; Lewis (1983) 12–13; Whitehorne (1994) 179–80; Lloyd (2000) 421; Meadows (2001) 19.

⁵ Welch (2006/7) 182–83; Hekster (2012) 184–202.

⁶ Sullivan (1990) 229–48; Hölbl (2001) 222–30; Siani-Davies (2001) 1–38.

⁷ Siani-Davies (2001) 1–38.

which examines the reigns of Auletes and Cleopatra in terms of their impact on Roman politics: ‘The final period: Egypt in the political designs of Roman leaders (80–30).’⁸ These revisionist approaches in no way seek to anachronistically redeem the Ptolemaic rulers or dismiss their violence and ruthlessness. Rather, they intend to force the reader to re-adjust their way of thinking to break free from the often misleading and derisive viewpoints of Roman historians.

Several scholars have sought to analyse the late Ptolemaic rulers in their own Egyptian context.⁹ These studies allow us to move past traditional coverage of the Ptolemaic kings and queens in histories of the Roman Republic, whereby in purpose and outlook Egypt is merely an ancillary character in narratives of Rome’s rise to power and descent into civil war. Ashton, Strootman, and Fulińska, among others, have shown how close attention to the sources can shed a different light on the reign of the last Ptolemaic ruler, Cleopatra VII, Auletes’ daughter.¹⁰ In various ways, these historians have illuminated how the Ptolemies, and particularly Cleopatra, skilfully used coinage, statues, and inscriptions to legitimise their rule in Egypt.¹¹

At this point, an example might suffice. On the first pylon at the Temple of Isis at Philae, Auletes is depicted as smiting his enemies in the presence of the goddess Hathor while holding the uraeus-sceptre (see Figure 1).¹²



Figure 1: Auletes smiting his enemies. Temple of Horus, Edfu: Pylon I. Reproduced from Ashton (2008) 45.

⁸ Hölbl (2001) 222–256.

⁹ Chauveau (2000) 1–3; Siani-Davies (2001) 2.

¹⁰ See also Peek (2008) 119–35; Minas–Nerpel (2015) 809–21; Welch and Halsted (2019) 10–15.

¹¹ Ashton (2008) 148–55; Fulińska (2010) 73–92; Strootman (2010) 139–58.

¹² Porter and Moss (1939) 214; Hölbl (2001) 272.

Elgood, for example, argues that Auletes, an “ignoble” and “dishonourable” king, “sought to obliterate his crimes and follies by commanding the Egyptian priesthood to record on temple walls his name and reign.”¹³ As evidence, he notes the relief on the pylon, “a fantastic inspiration, for Auletes had never drawn a sword in anger.”¹⁴ Yet, as subsequent studies of Egyptian iconography have shown, Elgood misses the point. Far from an attempt to falsify his achievements, Auletes’ depiction fits within the symbolic cultural and religious framework of the Egyptian pharaohs, on whom the Ptolemaic kings modelled their rule, and which formed an essential basis of their power.¹⁵ As Pfeiffer notes, such depictions were “performative: the extermination of the enemy happened because it was shown, and depictions did not give descriptions of reality but rather *produced* reality.”¹⁶

The Relationship Between Alexandria and the Ptolemaic Family

Central to my analysis of the internal social and political conditions of Egypt which help explicate Auletes’ actions is a consideration of the relationship between Alexandria and the Ptolemaic kings and queens. Underpinning this focus is Manning’s recent model of the Ptolemaic state as a “centralised bureaucratic empire.”¹⁷ Reflecting the general shift in scholarship towards the ‘bargain’ model between the city and Hellenistic rulers (see below), Manning argues that the power of the Ptolemies rested on two principles: (1) the notion that the ruler was the ‘centralising principle’ of the state; and (2) the ability of the king to bargain with key social groups.¹⁸ These stakeholders included the military, the Egyptian priests, and two Ptolemaic *poles*, Alexandria and Ptolemaïs (see Figure 2).¹⁹

¹³ Elgood (1938) 187.

¹⁴ Elgood (1938) 187.

¹⁵ Manning (2010) 92–97; Thompson (2012) 99–117.

¹⁶ Pfeiffer (2016) (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Manning (2010) 80; Manning (2019) 106–8.

¹⁸ Manning (2010) 73, 81. Cf. Strootman (2011) 145.

¹⁹ Manning (2010) 81. On the negotiation between military communities and king, see Fischer–Bovet (2014) 45–115. Priests and king: Clarysse (2000) 41–65; Gorre (2003) 23–43.

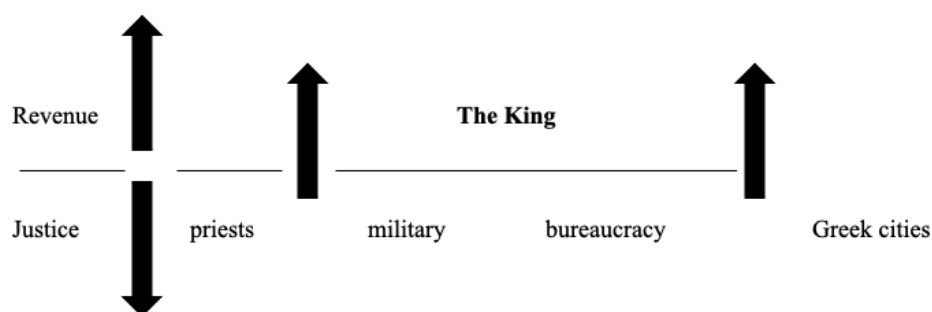


Figure 2: Model of the Ptolemaic State presenting the relationship between the king and Ptolemaic Society. Reproduced from Manning (2010) 84.

This model makes Alexandria an active participant and an important element in the politics of the dynasty. In what follows, I provide some background on the city, outline contemporary approaches to the city-king dynamic in the Hellenistic world, before establishing in more detail the basis of the dynamic on which the Alexandrians interacted – and influenced – the Ptolemaic rulers.

The City of Alexandria

Alexandria was the first “urban giant” of the Mediterranean, a *megalopolis* in the ancient world comparable to Rome and Constantinople.²⁰ Located at the western side of the Nile Delta (see Figure 3),²¹ the city was founded by Alexander the Great in 331,²² before becoming the seat of the Ptolemaic court by 311.²³ It remained the capital of the Ptolemaic empire until the end of the dynasty in 30.²⁴

²⁰ Manning (2010) 139. On Alexandria as a *megalopolis*, see Roueché (1998) 691. Cf. Will, Mossé, and Goukowski (1975) II 467–68; Cohen (2006) 413–14.

²¹ Fraser (1972) I 7–37.

²² Whether the city was founded *ex novo* or on top of the site of Rhakotis is disputed. For an overview of scholarly opinion, see especially Mueller (2006) 15–22; Cohen (2006) 355, n. 5 and n. 6. Cf. Chauveau (1999) 1–10; Depauw (2000) 64–65. On 331: Bagnall (1979) 46–49; Grimm (1996) 55.

²³ 311: ‘Satrap Stela’ (CG 22182). Cf. Mueller (2006) 147, esp. n 20.

²⁴ Alexandria as capital: Huss (1995) 75–82; Landvatter (2018) 128; *contra* Strootman (2011) 74.

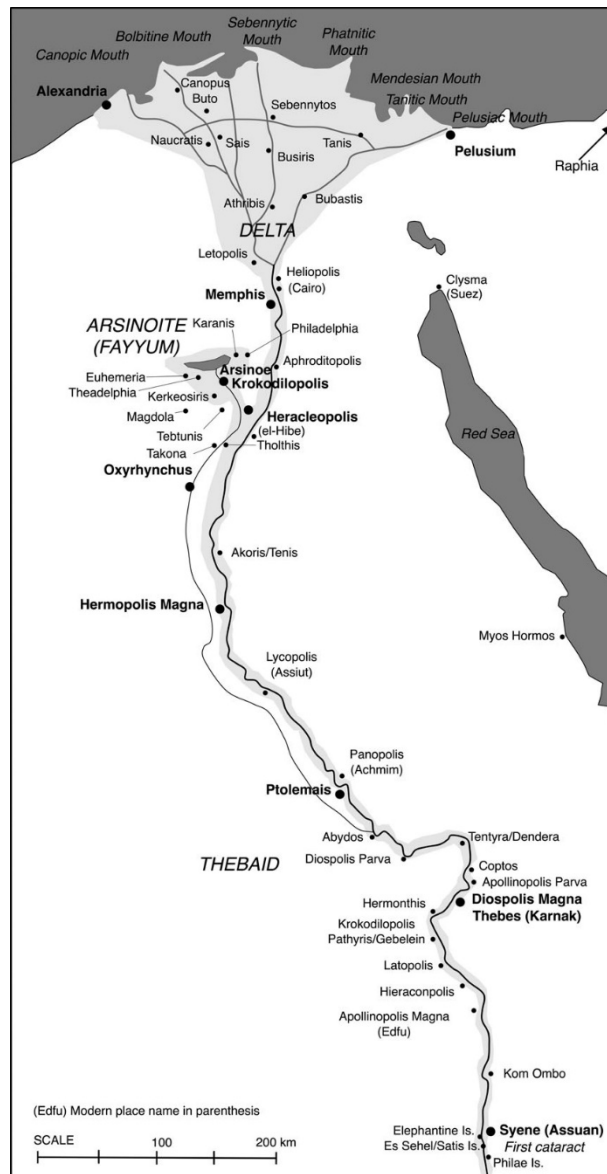


Figure 3: Map of Egypt from Fischer-Bovet (2014) xxii.

Owing to its favourable geographic location and secure harbour,²⁵ the city was a major import-export hub and served as the transshipment point for goods being transported between the interior of Egypt (via the Nile), the Red Sea ports, and the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁶

By ancient standards, the population of Alexandria was enormous, totalling somewhere between 300,000 and 1,000,000 at the height of the city's prosperity. It was heterogeneous and

²⁵ Strabo 17.1.13; Diod. Sic. 17.52.5; Arr. 3.2.2. Cf. Fraser (1972) I 133; Strootman (2019) 123.

²⁶ Cohen (2006) 357. On Alexandria's status as a commercial hub, see also Ehrenberg (1965) 414–416; Fraser (1972) I 134–35; Green (1996) 11.

largely immigrant-based.²⁷ A significant proportion came from Greek cities across the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁸ Polybius, who visited the city in the mid-second century,²⁹ observed three main groups: “Egyptians”, “mercenaries”, and “Alexandrians” who, although a “mixed people”, were “Greeks by origin and mindful of the customs common to the Greeks” (τρίτον δ’ ἦν γένος τὸ τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων ... καὶ γὰρ εἰ μιγάδες, Ἕλληνες ὅμως ἀνέκαθεν ἦσαν καὶ ἐμὲμνητο τοῦ κοινοῦ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἔθους).³⁰ By the Roman period, the population was even more diverse: Dio Chrysostom notes that there were Greeks, Italians, Syrians, Libyans, Cicilians, Ethiopians, Arabs, Bactrians, Scythians, Persians, and Indians.³¹

From its foundation, the city was distinguished from Egypt (the *chora*).³² By the mid-second century, its nomenclature is ‘Alexandria-by-Egypt’ (Ἀλεξάνδρεια ἡ πρὸς Ἀγύπτῳ; *Alexandreia ad Aegyptum*), rather than *in* or *of* Egypt.³³ This feature is highlighted in its special juridical status.³⁴ The Alexandrians were differentiated from the rest of Egypt in various ways, including their financial benefits.³⁵ In a royal decree from the first century, for instance, the *dioiketes*, the principal financial officer of Egypt who was equivalent to a modern finance minister, exempts Alexandrian landowners in the countryside from taxes and dues which are levied on cleruchic land.³⁶

Over time, the city grew into “the world capital of knowledge.”³⁷ It housed the Museion, the Library of Alexandria, and the Pharos of Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and attracted scores of intellectuals and philosophers.³⁸

Alexandria, in sum, was revered throughout the Hellenistic world as a magnificent and cosmopolitan *megalopolis*; its glorious and quasi-mythical reputation continued well into the Roman and Arabic occupations of the city.³⁹

²⁷ Diod. Sic. 1.50.7, 17.52.6; Strabo 16.2.5. Modern estimates: 300,000: Scheidel (2004) 47; 500,000: Hoepfner and Schwandner (1994) 237, 241; Shipley (2000) 215. 600,000: Delia (1988) 284. 1,000,000: Fraser (1972) I 91; Siani-Davies (2001) 15. See also Schubart (1927) 15; Sales (2013) 40.

²⁸ Fraser (1972) I 38; McKechnie (1989) 52–53, n. 213; Mueller (2005) 74–78, esp. 77. Cf. Cohen (2006) 356; Savvopoulos (2011) 14.

²⁹ Walbank (1979) 57.

³⁰ Strabo 17.1.12 [798] = Polyb. 34.14.1–8 (trans. Jones).

³¹ Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 32.40; cf. 32.35–36, 45–47; Barry (1993a) 82.

³² Cohen (2006) 356, 410.

³³ Bell (1946) 130–32.

³⁴ Fraser (1972) 108; Strootman (2019) 123. Cf. Cohen (2006) 356, 409, n. 2.

³⁵ Monson (2012) 262.

³⁶ C. Ord. Ptol. 75–76 (Herakleopolite); Monson (2012) 263.

³⁷ Sales (2013) 39. See also Erskine (1995) 42; Empereur (2001) 40.

³⁸ Museion: Strabo 17.1.8; el-Abbadī (1992) 84–89. Library: Josephus *AJ* 12.11–16; Cohen (2006) 379–81.

³⁹ Delia (1992) 1464; Green (1996) 3–5.

King and City in the Hellenistic World

The Hellenistic world was once conceived as the age of the kings.⁴⁰ The city, the Classical *polis*, was thought to have been subsumed by the emergence of several enormous Macedonian empires: the Seleucids, who ruled over the Middle East and Central Asia (312-64); the Antigonids of Macedonia, who periodically controlled Greece and the Balkans until 168; the Ptolemies, who ruled the Egyptian empire (323-30); and, later, the Attalids, located in Pergamon, Pontus on the Black Sea, and Armenia.⁴¹

This view of the cities' subordination and powerlessness has been revised. Thanks to the efforts of scholars like Ma, it is clear that the balance of power between the cities and Hellenistic kings was far more dynamic.⁴² The "language of euergetism" in epigraphic evidence, for instance, enabled cities to negotiate their interests with the Hellenistic kings under the pretence of friendship and equality.⁴³ The kings, in other words, were as reliant on the cities as the cities were on them: their rule was based on reciprocity, cooperation and coexistence.⁴⁴

The Role of Alexandria in the Ptolemaic State

Earlier treatments of the Ptolemaic period tended to view the Alexandrians as a distraction or backdrop that had little impact on the politics of the Ptolemaic dynasty.⁴⁵ The dominant view of the last century could be interpreted as even more negative. The Alexandrians were seen as an irrational and violent 'mob' which played a significant and detrimental role in destabilising the empire. Typical of this view is Fraser: "It was this fickle mob [...] which by repeated unconstitutional acts of violence destroyed 'the Kingdom of the Lagidae'."⁴⁶ In Chapter One, I deconstruct the misleading and ideologically charged conception of the Alexandrians as a 'mob' and demonstrate that even in moments of conflict the Alexandrians were still – paradoxically – loyal to the Ptolemaic family.⁴⁷ However, before that issue is addressed, there is another equally troubling assumption which must be tested and modified – namely, that the relationship between the Alexandrians and the Ptolemies was rooted in antagonism and that the king and people were locked in constant conflict.

⁴⁰ For a classical formulation from the early twentieth century, see Ferguson (1928).

⁴¹ Strootman (2011) 63.

⁴² Ma (1999) 186–94; Ma (2003) 180.

⁴³ See, for example, Mitchell (2009) 15–18; Ceccarelli (2017) 231–55.

⁴⁴ Shipley (2000) 59–107; Shipley and Hansen (2006) 62–63; Strootman (2011) 145–50.

⁴⁵ Barry (1993b) 416, n. 3 (with references).

⁴⁶ Fraser (1972) I 131. For a catalogue of this conception in the last twenty years of scholarship, see Chapter 1, n. 15.

⁴⁷ Cf. Jouguet (1948) 88; Todd (1963) 8.

Two issues make this difficult. Our ancient sources rarely discuss the Alexandrians except in the context of conflict or ‘mob’ action. Equally challenging is the fact that the internal political organisation of the city is vexed. Little is known, for instance, about how the Alexandrian inhabitants were organised and formally interacted with the central power.

Nevertheless, I suggest that the extant evidence, piecemeal though it is, indicates that a closeness and a sense of connection between the Alexandrians and the Ptolemies was fostered through the city’s unique topography and political apparatus.

Topography of the City

Alexander the Great is said to have directed the demarcation of the city, which resembled a *chlamys*.⁴⁸ It is also believed that the principles of Hippodamian town planning guided its densely packed street layout.⁴⁹

The city was divided into five districts, grouped by the Greek letters *A* to *E*.⁵⁰ With the exception of δ , it is uncertain where these quarters were located.⁵¹ We know, however, that some were inhabited by specific ethnic groups: the Jews, for instance, were settled – $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\omega}\kappa\iota\sigma\tau\omicron$ – in δ .⁵² Likewise, a number of native Egyptians resided in ϵ .⁵³

As the seat of the royal court, Alexandria possessed an enormous royal district known as the *basileia* (the palaces) which occupied between one-third and one-fifth of the total cityscape (1–2 km²).⁵⁴

This area contained both the inner palaces and the *basileia* proper, the “semi-public part of the Alexandrian *basileia* [which] dominated the centre of the city, lying between the inner palaces and the city as a kind of transitional area” (see Figure 4).⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Arr. *Anab.* 3.1.5–2; Diod. 17.52.1–2; Strabo 17.1.6; Plut. *Alex.* 26.2–5; Bosworth (1993) 247. Shape as *chlamys*: Diod. Sic. 17.52.3; Plut. *Alex.* 26.8; Strabo 17.1.8 [793]; Plin. *HN* 5.62.

⁴⁹ Orthogonal plan: Mueller (2006) 125–26; Gambetti (2009) 30. See also Hoepfner (1990) 275–78; Grimm (1996) 69–70, esp. n. 11 and n. 12.

⁵⁰ Philo *In Flacc.* 55; Josephus *BJ* 2.488; Hennig (2000) 594–611; Cohen (2006) 356, n. 14. On its genesis, see Fraser (1972) I 34–35; Fraser (1996) 215–16; Gambetti (2009) 32, n. 36.

⁵¹ Gambetti (2009) 32, n. 39.

⁵² Joseph. *BJ* 2.488, 2.495. Cf. Philo *In Flacc.* 55; Riad (1996) 29.

⁵³ Scheidel (2004) 51; Savvopoulos (2011) 8.

⁵⁴ Strabo 17.1.8 [794]; Plin. *NH* 5.62.2; Strootman (2014) 75, n. 102. For a survey of archaeological studies on the Alexandrian *basileia*, see Bagnall (2001) 230; Moyer (2011a) 27.

⁵⁵ Strootman (2011) 76, 79.

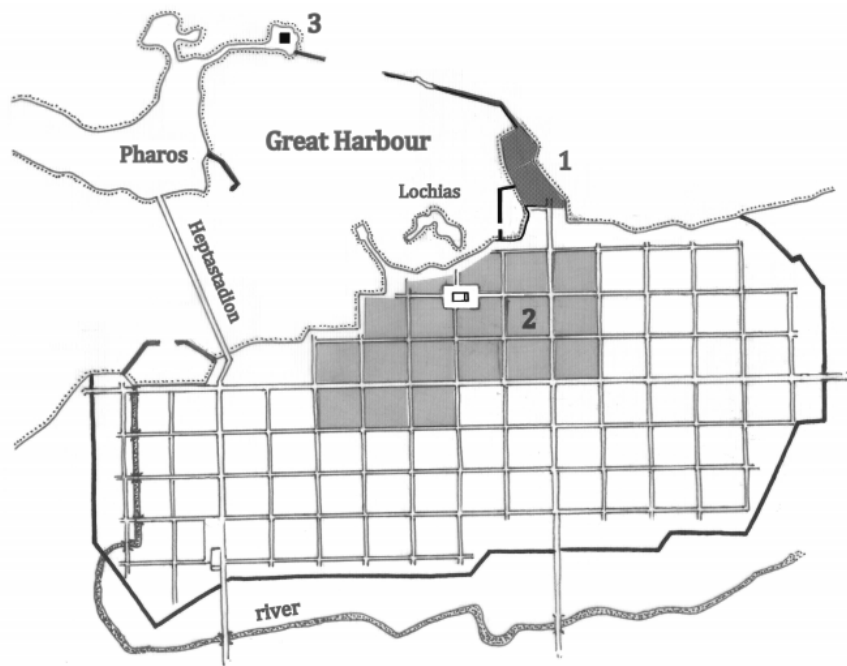


Figure 4: Map of Hellenistic Alexandria, indicating the relative location of (1) the inner palaces; (2) the *basileia*; and (3) the lighthouse on Pharos Island from Strootman (2011) 76.

Significantly, the threshold between the royal and civic space in Alexandria, as in other Hellenistic cities, was not rigidly demarcated.⁵⁶ Rather, it was a “performative area [... where] the rituals of both the city and the monarchy took place.”⁵⁷

The *basileia* contained a theatre, a stadium, the *gymnasion*, temples, law courts, parks, and gardens.⁵⁸ Other sources indicate that the wider public frequently visited these spaces. Theocritus, for instance, describes two countrywomen in attendance at the palace for the festival of Adonis.⁵⁹ Athenaeus, too, notes that the stadium near the palace was a cornerstone of the grand procession of Ptolemy II.⁶⁰

By virtue of its central location, the *basileia* was accessible from virtually every point of the city. Access to this area was facilitated by two particularly wide streets, the Canopic (longitudinal) and the Sema (latitudinal), which ran across the entire cityscape.⁶¹ Near the intersection of these two *viae* symbolically lay the *Sema*, the burial complex of the Ptolemies and the tomb of Alexander.⁶²

⁵⁶ Strootman (2011) 90.

⁵⁷ Strootman (2011) 79.

⁵⁸ Strabo 17.1.7–10 [793–95]. See also Fraser (1972) I 30–32; Strootman (2011) 79, esp. n. 117 and 118.

⁵⁹ Theoc. *Id.* 15.

⁶⁰ Athen. 5.196D–203B = *FGrH* 627, fr. 2; Rice (1983) 30–31; Barry (1993b) 424–25; Walbank (1996) 121–22, esp. n 16; Thompson (2000) 367.

⁶¹ Strabo 17.1.8 [793]; Riad (1933) 235; Fraser (1972) I 13.

⁶² Mavrojannis (2018) 251–52. See also Empereur (2001) 146; Erskine (2002) 165–67.

The Ptolemies had long associated themselves and the city with Alexander the Great through foundation myths,⁶³ dynastic cult practices and religious events,⁶⁴ commemorative effigies,⁶⁵ and, of course, the city's name.

Strikingly, the location of Alexander's body and the Ptolemaic family's burial place in the very centre of the public part of the city, accessible from virtually every point, would have had the greatest impact on the Alexandrians' understanding of who they were and their view of their rulers.⁶⁶ Through its location, the Ptolemies could be portrayed as inseparable from Alexander in life and in death, while the inhabitants could be cast as "the guardians of the body of this most significant talisman of the Mediterranean world", instilling them with an idiosyncratic sense of pride and difference from other Hellenistic cities.⁶⁷ In this way, the cityscape facilitated a positive connection between the inhabitants and the kings, which the Ptolemies promoted through careful urban planning.

Political Organisation of Alexandria

Although theoretically founded on the Greek model of the *polis*, Alexandria was no ordinary *polis*.⁶⁸ For one thing, the city was subject to the direct jurisdiction of royal law, which could override the operation of Alexandria's own civic laws and Egyptian law.⁶⁹ The influence of the Ptolemies on the governance of Alexandria also extended through, among other means, the presence of several royal officials in the city as well as the kings' supervision of civic registration.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Alexandria did possess several common polis institutions.⁷¹ A lacunose inscription from the mid-third century,⁷² for instance, provides evidence for the existence of a college of *prytaneis*,⁷³ an *ekklesia*,⁷⁴ a *boule*,⁷⁵ a board of higher magistrates, and an eponymous

⁶³ Cohen (2006) 355, 360–62; Climaco (2015) 171–74.

⁶⁴ Fraser (1972) I 213–26; Erskine (2002) 175; Cohen (2006) 378–79.

⁶⁵ Stewart (1993) 252.

⁶⁶ Strabo 17.1.8; Bingen (2007) 19–20.

⁶⁷ Erskine (2002) 165; Welch (2006–7) 186.

⁶⁸ Jähne (1981) 66; Kasher (1985) 168, 170–77; Mueller (2006) 125; Rathbone (2012).

⁶⁹ Fraser (1972) I 109–10; Manning (2010) 179.

⁷⁰ Fraser (1972) I 106–7; Kasher (1985) 171, n. 11.

⁷¹ On Alexandria as a *polis*, Schubart (1927) 15–18; Jones (1940) 3; Taubenschlag (1955) 573; Schneider (1967–69) I 554; Fraser (1972) I 47, 59, 98; Jähne (1976) 407; Jähne (1981) 64–66, 79; Bowman (1986) 210; Manning (2010) 53; Rathbone (2012); Strootman (2014) 75.

⁷² Fraser (1972) I 94, II 173–4; cf. Cohen (2006) 369.

⁷³ See also P. Oxy. XXVII 2465, fr. 2, col. 1, lines 10–11.

⁷⁴ Cf. Jähne (1981) 75, esp. n. 10.

⁷⁵ On the alleged abolition of the *boule*: Cohen (2006) 368–71. See, for example, Bell (1932) 173–84; Schneider (1967–69) I 554.

priest. Elsewhere, there is evidence for the existence of a *gerousia*.⁷⁶ Moreover, the surviving fragments from Satyros' poem *On the Demes*,⁷⁷ a *prostagma* from the mid- to late-third century,⁷⁸ and the survival of the names of some Alexandrian tribes and demes,⁷⁹ all indicate that the Alexandrian urban population with franchise was organised on a territorial basis into tribes, demes, and phratries.⁸⁰ Some have also sought to connect to Alexandria a fragmentary papyrus unearthed at Hibeh, which relates the territorial organisation of a large unnamed Greek city, in which there were five tribes, twelve demes to each tribe, and twelve phratries to each deme, though this association is not absolutely certain.⁸¹

The discovery and publication of the Herakleopolis papyri by Cowey and Maresch has also confirmed the presence of a Jewish *politeuma* in Ptolemaic Alexandria,⁸² that is “a recognised, formally constituted corporation of aliens enjoying the right of domicile in a foreign city and forming a separate, semi-autonomous civic body, a city within a city.”⁸³

Most importantly, the Alexandrian population was able to participate in the governance of the Ptolemaic empire by holding both state and municipal offices. A pathway to power, in other words, existed for certain individuals who were close to the king. An inscription from the late Ptolemaic period describes a certain Chrysermos of Alexandria who was a “kinsman, exegete, in charge of the Medical Corps, and president, or administrator of the Museion.”⁸⁴ Another tells of Lycarion who occupied the positions of “honorary archigeron, diokete, exegete, commander of the city, and gymnasiarch.”⁸⁵ Strabo also notes four municipal and state officials which existed in Alexandria: (1) the Interpreter (ἑξηγητής); (2) the recorder (ὑπομνηματογράφος); (3) the Chief Judge (ἀρχιδικαστής); (4) the Night Commander (νυκτερινὸς στρατηγός).⁸⁶

⁷⁶ *SB* I 2100; Fraser (1972) I 95–96; Jähne (1981) 77, n. 68; Kasher (1985) 172–73.

⁷⁷ *FGrH*, 631 F 1 = P. Oxy. XXVII 2465; Gambetti (2009) 38.

⁷⁸ P Hamb. II 168, II 5–10 = BGU XIV 2367.

⁷⁹ Fraser (1972) I 44–46; Delia (1991) 63–68.

⁸⁰ Fraser (1972) I 38–39; Gambetti (2009) 38, esp. n. 60.

⁸¹ P. Hib. I 28: Fraser (1972) II 112, n. 3; Delia (1991) 51, n. 10; Cohen (2006) 356. Connection to Alexandria: Schubart (1913) 100; Seyfarth (1955) 14–15; Fraser (1972) I 40–41; Cohen (2006) 356; Mueller (2006) 126. But see Delia (1991) 52–53; Gambetti (2009) 38–39, n. 62.

⁸² P. Polit. Jud.; Cowey and Maresch (2001). Kasher (2002) 268; Honigman (2003) 69; Czajkowski (2019) 81–82. See also Gambetti (2009) 48–52, esp. 60, n. 100.

⁸³ Smallwood (1981) 225, cited in Kasher (2002) 258–59. On Alexandria as a “collection of *politeumata*”, rather than a *polis*, see Tarn (1927) 147–48; Tarn and Griffith (1952) 185–87; Lüderitz (1994) 204–8; *contra* Bell (1948) 52, n. 25; Zuckerman (1985–88) 180. There is not enough evidence to positively support the organisation of other ethnic groups in Alexandrian *politeumata*: Kasher (1985) 180.

⁸⁴ *OGIS* 104 (trans. Fraser (1972) I 97); II 179–80, n. 31.

⁸⁵ *SB* 2100 (trans. Fraser (1972) I 97); II 177, n. 16.

⁸⁶ Strabo 17.1.12 [797] (trans. Jones); Fraser (1972) I 96–97; Kasher (1985) 173–74. Cf. Jähne (1976) 408.

The inextricable links between the city's internal organisation and the broader Ptolemaic state structure helped create a sense of political connectedness between the city and the king. The Alexandrians, in turn, could imagine themselves as part of a semi-autonomous community as well as a larger, more powerful, empire.⁸⁷

Mutual Interest Between City and King

Such interconnectedness between the Alexandrians and the Ptolemies underpinned the mutual support and unity which the Alexandrians variously shared with the Ptolemaic kings and queens.

The first hundred years of Ptolemaic rule, for instance, occurred virtually without recorded dispute. Though there is some evidence for discontent among the population, as exemplified by Sotades of Maroneia's criticism of Philadelphus' marriage to Arsinoë II,⁸⁸ their relationship was, on the whole, extremely good. In fact, Sotades' comments are evidence of dialogue between the Alexandrian elites and the royal family, in which there was perhaps a fair amount of license for individuals to express their opinion.

The links between city and king were cemented particularly in the religious realm.⁸⁹ Ptolemy I, for instance, adopted a policy of syncretism to unite the Greek and Egyptian elements of the population, in part, through his introduction of the cult of Sarapis.⁹⁰

A number of extant private dedications are dedicated to Sarapis (and Isis) 'for' or 'on behalf of' the Ptolemaic kings.⁹¹ The earliest extant example of this practice is an inscription from two members of an Alexandrian *deme*, which records their symbolic honouring of the Lagids:

“ὕπερ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ τῶν τέκνων Σαράπιδι, Ἰσιδι Νικάνωρ καὶ Νίκανδρος Νίκωνος Πολυδεύκειοι.

For King Ptolemaios and his children, to Sarapis and Isis, Nikanor and Nikandros, sons of Nikon, from the *demos* of Polydeukes (have made this dedication).”⁹²

⁸⁷ Jähne (1981) 78–79.

⁸⁸ Athen. *Deiph.* 621a; Ager (2006) 167–68.

⁸⁹ Fraser (1972) I 115. I will return to his 'mob thesis' in my discussion in Chapter 1. Cf. Mittag (2003) 168.

⁹⁰ Fraser (1972) I 115–19; Pfeiffer (2008) 392–93.

⁹¹ Fassa (2015) 136.

⁹² *OGIS* 21 (trans. Fassa (2015) 128, n. 54).

Here, these brothers affirm the dynastic rule and draw favourable comparisons between the divine couple, Sarapis and Isis, and the king. The cult of Sarapis figured as but one element which formed the basis of the positive relations between city and king; numerous dedications such as Nikanor's and Nikandros' indicate the solid basis on which the two parties interacted.⁹³

The mutual support between the Alexandrians and Ptolemies is similarly demonstrated through the unity they exhibited in moments of existential crisis. On two occasions, half a century apart, the Alexandrian population rejected calls by foreign interlopers to rise up against the Ptolemaic family, in a testament to their loyalty to the dynasty.

In 221 Cleomenes III, an Agiad king from Sparta but living as an exile in Alexandria, fell out of favour with the court and allegedly planned treasonous activities.⁹⁴ Placed under watch, Cleomenes succeeded in breaking out with thirteen associates and took to the streets, calling on the people to rise up.⁹⁵ Significantly, the Alexandrians responded to the opportunity to revolt with fear, surprise, and even indifference. Polybius reports that “no one paid any attention or consented to join the rising, as the whole plan had taken everyone completely by surprise.”⁹⁶ Plutarch describes the response in similar terms: “Cleomenes roamed up and down through the city, not a man joining with him but everybody filled with fear and flying from him.”⁹⁷ The Alexandrians rejected Cleomenes' calls to fight for freedom because there was no reason to do so.⁹⁸ The Spartan subsequently took his own life; the Ptolemies and Alexandrians remained united.

An episode involving Dionysius Petosarapis paints a similar picture.⁹⁹ Between 168 and 164,¹⁰⁰ Petosarapis, one of the *philoï* of the king, sought to gain control of the state.¹⁰¹ To do so, he spread a rumour that Philometor intended to murder his younger brother, Euergetes II.¹⁰² Having gathered in the stadium, the Alexandrians were preparing to kill Philometor until both kings entered the stadium in royal regalia and demonstrated their solidarity, rendering Petosarapis' accusations groundless.¹⁰³ Again, the incident demonstrates the Alexandrians' unity with the Ptolemaic family: first, they were motivated to act by concern for the safety of

⁹³ Fassa (2013) 128–29. See also Fraser (1972) I 118.

⁹⁴ Plots: Plut. *Cleom.* 35.1–4. Cf. Polyb. 5.34.10–11, 38.5; Jähne (1976) 412. Date: Mittag (2000) 417. Cf. 219: Hölbl (2001) 128.

⁹⁵ Polyb. 5.38.6.

⁹⁶ Polyb. 5.39.3–4 (trans. Paton).

⁹⁷ Plut. *Cleom.* 37.5 (trans. Perrin).

⁹⁸ Todd (1963) 30–31; Jähne (1976) 410–14, esp. 413; Mittag (2003) 168, n. 135.

⁹⁹ McGing (1997) 289–95.

¹⁰⁰ Mittag (2003) 175, n. 75. See also Fischer–Bovet (2014) 100, esp. n. 181.

¹⁰¹ Diod. Sic. 31.15a.1 (trans. Walton).

¹⁰² Diod. Sic. 31.15a.1; Huss (2001) 563–64.

¹⁰³ Diod. 31.15a.2–3.

one of their kings; second, as soon as they observed the sound relationship between Philometor and Euergetes II, they calmed down and instead forced Petosarapis out instead; and third, even if the Alexandrians had killed Philometor, they still desired to have a Ptolemy – Euergetes II – rule Egypt.

In a similar vein, the Alexandrians provided vital support to the Ptolemies during several revolts in the *chora* which threatened the family's control over Egypt. The 'Great Revolt' of 206–186 was the longest and most serious of these native uprisings.¹⁰⁴ For twenty years, Egyptian pharaohs, Haronnophris and later Chaonnophris, ruled Thebes, though their control – at times – extended further north (Coptos, Abydos, and Lycopolis) and south (Pathyris and the Edfu region).¹⁰⁵

Rather than take advantage of the instability and riot against the Ptolemies, as one might expect if the Alexandrians resented their rule, the Alexandrians chose to double down and band together. In fact, Alexandria was an important place for the Egyptian priests, the majority of who supported the Lagids, who met in the city on several occasions to negotiate and reinforce their close ties of connection with the Ptolemaic family.¹⁰⁶ Even after Ptolemy V Epiphanes remitted the requirement that the priests sail to Alexandria, the city continued to host some synods and was a bulwark against native opposition.¹⁰⁷

It is also significant that the city of Alexandria and the Ptolemaic family are linked in a number of apocalyptic and prophetic texts produced by the native elite in the third and second century which imagine the end of the Ptolemies' control of Egypt and the return of native rule.¹⁰⁸ The *Oracle of the Potter*, for instance, prophesies the desolation of Alexandria and the removal of the Greco-Macedonian rulers from the country: "Agathos Daimon will abandon the city [sc. Alexandria] that had been founded and enter Memphis and the city of foreigners, which had been founded, will be deserted."¹⁰⁹

The author of this text treats Alexandria and the Ptolemies as one and the same. Its logic is simple: Alexandria is the city of the Macedonian rulers; both must be removed to restore the

¹⁰⁴ McGing (1997) 285; Hölbl (2001) 155; Ludlow and Manning (2016) 166–67, n. 25. See also Vandorpe (1986) 294–302.

¹⁰⁵ Veïsse (2013) 508. On the names and identity of the pharaohs, see Pestman (1995) 125–27. For the coronation of the kings, see Veïsse (2004) 95–99; Eckstein (2006) 105.

¹⁰⁶ Clarysse (2010) 284.

¹⁰⁷ Moyer (2011b) 124. See, for example, the second Philae decree: Urk. II. 214–230; Crawford (1980) 33; Hölbl (2001) 156.

¹⁰⁸ McGing (2012) 513; Johstono (2015) 196.

¹⁰⁹ P. Oxy. XXII 2332, lines 50f (trans. Burstein (2004) 142–43).

glory of Egypt.¹¹⁰ In so doing, the text manifests the close relationship between the Alexandrians and the Lagids: in the eyes of the native elites, at least, the two were intimately connected and equally detestable.¹¹¹

Foundation of Relationship

In light of the foregoing discussion, I suggest that the underlying basis of the relationship between the Alexandrians and Ptolemies was one of mutual support and close connection, rather than constant conflict or antagonism. The Alexandrians were a people who possessed a secure identity, based on centuries of identifying themselves with Alexander the Great and the success of the Ptolemies. Buttressed by the topography and unique political organisation of the city, the Alexandrians conceived themselves as a royal people who were innately aligned with the Ptolemaic kings: the setbacks of the kings were their setbacks; the success of the kings their successes. Once we admit the possibility that their relationship was based on coexistence and negotiation, we can begin to appreciate the nuanced ways in which the Alexandrians sought to influence the Ptolemies.

¹¹⁰ Bowman (1986) 31. See also Lloyd (1982) 52; Dunand (1983) 60; Green (1990) 323; Frankfurter (2010) 530; McGing (2012) 513.

¹¹¹ Cf. Cohen (2006) 421–23.

Chapter 1

LIBERATING THE ‘MOB’: ALEXANDRIAN CROWD ACTION

Although the Alexandrians and Ptolemies were closely aligned, this did not mean that their relations were conflict-free. In fact, quite the opposite is true: in the second and first centuries, the ancient sources report that the Alexandrian population mobilised for, or against, particular Ptolemaic kings and queens on several occasions. Modern scholars have often used this phenomenon to argue that the Ptolemies were helpless rulers who were at the mercy of the Alexandrian ‘mob’, a generically mindless, violent, and inchoate group composed of the masses and dregs of Alexandrian society.¹

In this chapter, I argue that the assumption found in ancient sources and modern scholarship that the Alexandrians were a violent and irrational ‘mob’ hostile to the Lagids is ideologically charged and misleading and must therefore be abandoned.

Instead, I propose that these episodes are moments of activism, in which different parts of the Alexandrian community, brought together by a shared ideology relating to ‘correct’ kingship and appropriate governance of the empire, mobilised to effect the change which they saw necessary to maintain the success of both the Ptolemaic family and empire. The actual and potential mobilisation of these Alexandrian ‘crowds’, I contend, formed a decisive influence on the policies and behaviour of the Ptolemaic rulers. Yet crucially, even in these moments of conflict, the Alexandrians remained loyal to the Lagids: their choice to mobilise was *always* related to individual Ptolemies, rather than the family’s control of Egypt *per se*.

Though the Alexandrian ‘crowd’ often resorted to violence, the inference that the crowd itself was innately violent does not follow. In fact, on a close examination, the extant evidence

¹ See, for example, Fraser (1972) 82, 128–31. For a useful catalogue of scholarly opinions, see Barry (1993a) 83, n. 2; (1993b) 415, n. 1.

reveals that the crowd's use of violence was, for the most part, considered, often performed in legitimating contexts, and by no means part and parcel of their mobilisation.

In this way, the Alexandrian 'crowd', a heterogeneous group of citizens and non-citizens, is best conceived as conservative or reactionary. Above all, the crowd aimed to restore the *status quo ante*, rather than bring about fundamental change or revolution.²

Theoretical Challenges of Interpreting the Alexandrian Crowd

Scholars are now more receptive to the biases which influence the portrayal of crowds and crowd events.³ In the mid-twentieth century, Rudé published his seminal study of the crowd during the French Revolution, and argued that conservatives and "Republicans alike had projected their own political aspirations, fantasies, and/or fears onto the crowd", treating the 'mob' through abstraction and stereotype.⁴ Linguistic theorists now accept that there is an association between the political perspective of the commentator and the kind of language used to describe the crowd.⁵ Those critical of crowd participants' motives are more likely to refer to their 'collectivity' in negative terms (e.g. 'mob') rather than neutrally (e.g. 'crowd') or positively (e.g. 'community').⁶

'Elite' authors in particular tend to regard the 'mob' as made up of the rabble and dregs of society, such as peasants, miscreants, and malingerers. In consequence, their behaviour is often cast as revolutionary, irrational, and a threat to the social and political order.⁷ As Drury aptly observes: "The delegitimising functions of such negative language and explanations are obvious. If the crowd is pathologised and criminalised, then its behaviour is not meaningful. There can therefore be no rational dialogue with it."⁸

What makes analysis of the Alexandrian crowd particularly challenging, apart from the piecemeal nature of the evidence, is that almost all of it emanates from an 'elite' context.⁹ Our literary sources are written by men who either participated in government and administration (Cicero, Caesar, Josephus, Dio Cassius, and Herodian), came from wealthy families involved in leadership (Strabo, Philo of Alexandria, Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, and Appian), or whose

² Mittag (2003) 203; Fischer-Bovet (2014) 95.

³ For a useful overview, see McClelland (1989); Clement (2016) 2–13. On earlier approaches to the crowd, see Reicher (2011) 435, citing Le Bon (1947) 35–36.

⁴ Kaye (1988) 7.

⁵ Drury (2002) 42.

⁶ Drury (2002) 12. Accordingly, I refer to the Alexandrians as a 'crowd' throughout this thesis.

⁷ Barry (1993b) 422. Cf. McClelland (1989) 30–31.

⁸ Drury (2002) 5.

⁹ On the methodological challenges of interpreting ancient riots, see Kelly (2007) 152–54.

texts otherwise manifest a shared literary culture of the elite (Diodorus Siculus, Livy, Pausanias, Justin).¹⁰

This elite perspective has a noticeable impact on the historical portrayal of individuals, groups, and events. A recent study on Dio Chrysostom's Oration 32, a text which is critical to interpretations of the Alexandrians, has demonstrated that Dio's portrayal of the Alexandrians "seems to be the natural consequence of his own social political, and intellectual experience as an aristocrat."¹¹ Accordingly, Dio's analysis of the population must be considered in light of the author's elite background. His characterisation of the people as "savage beasts", for instance, reflects "his assumptions about the unruly and irrational nature of the mob and serves to reinforce the social hierarchy of the Roman world."¹²

Likewise, Haas has observed that ancient authors from elite backgrounds tend to consign everyone outside of their privileged status as τὰ πλήθη or οἱ ὄχλοι.¹³ Such descriptors, in the context of the Alexandrian crowd, are problematic. As Barry notes, both terms are "hopelessly vague [...] which, while conveying a note of moral opprobrium, conceal the precise social, political, and ethnic composition of the crowd."¹⁴

Perhaps even more challenging is the fact that almost every modern study has adopted the ancient sources' condemnation of the Alexandrians as a 'mob', naturally prone to outbursts of 'mob' violence, more or less at face value. A cursory examination of scholarship reveals that this 'mob' conception is alive and well even in recent literature.¹⁵

Fraser's influential *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, a three-volume work written in the context of British imperialism which is indispensable to any serious study of the city, is partly responsible for this misleading conception of the Alexandrians.¹⁶ In a chapter entitled 'City and Sovereign', Fraser asserts that the increase in popular violence during the second and first centuries was due to the "Egyptianisation" of the "lower classes" which produced a "hybrid mob", an "almost anthropophagous mob", capable of "mass bestiality" and "evil".¹⁷ A close

¹⁰ On this definition of 'elite', see Kelly (2007) 152, n. 13.

¹¹ Barry (1993a) 98. See, for example, Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 32.27–30.

¹² Barry (1993a) 98. See also Barry (1993a) 91, 92, 97, 98; (1993b) 422, n. 20.

¹³ Haas (1997) 52. οἱ ὄχλοι: Polyb. 15.32.4, 15.32.7, 29.23.4. Dio. 34/35.20. τὰ πλήθη: Polyb. 15.32.6, 34.14.7; Dio. 31.15a.1, 31.15a.2, 31.15a.3, 31.17c, 33.12, 34/35.14.1; Paus. 1.9.2. τὸ πλῆθος: Dio. 33.12. On the use of these terms, see especially Fraser (1972) II 231–32, n. 301; Barry (1993b) 415, n. 2; Mittag (2003) 161. For ancient prejudicial language on the crowd, see MacMullen (1974) 138–41.

¹⁴ Barry (1993b) 415.

¹⁵ See, *inter alia*, Hazzard (2000) 144; Meadows (2001) 21; Siani-Davies (2001) 15–16; Adler (2005) 27, 32; Manning (2010) 83; Vandorpe (2010) 165; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 94–95; Skinner (2016) 113, 118; Lanciers (2017) 124; Savvopoulos (2020) 90, n. 46. See also Turner (1984) 164.

¹⁶ Cf. Rostovtzeff (1941) II 1139.

¹⁷ Fraser (1972) I 81–83. For this summary, see Barry (1993b) 418.

examination of the evidence he relies upon, however, undermines the foundation of his argument.

To support his argument that the Egyptians were dangerous and responsible for the increase in unrest in Alexandria, Fraser principally relies on three pieces of evidence: Diodorus' record of the Alexandrians' violent reaction to a Roman killing a cat in 60,¹⁸ a papyrus of the New Kingdom which outlines remedies for human bites,¹⁹ and Polybius' account of the Agathocles incident of 203.²⁰

Yet, as Mittag points out, this evidence is inconclusive.²¹ A papyrus from the eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1550–1300) does not prove the danger of the Egyptians in the Hellenistic period. Likewise, the fate of a Roman who had killed a cat was as much concerned with religion as it was with an anti-Roman sentiment and also likely involved a number of Greeks.²²

Finally, Fraser argues that the native Egyptians were responsible for the unrest in the Agathocles incident because Polybius refers to “the inhabitants of Egypt” as the perpetrators of violence (τῶν κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἀνθρώπων).²³ However, this interpretation overlooks other comments about the diversity of the crowd, as I outline below, and the significant role that the soldiers, who were of a mostly Macedonian – rather than Egyptian – background, played in leading the crowd and initiating the violence.²⁴

For instance, Polybius states that the soldiers arriving in Alexandria from the garrisons in Upper Egypt (ἐκ τῶν ἄνω στρατοπέδων) encouraged the inhabitants to rise up in the crisis.²⁵ Moreover, the inhabitants were impelled to act only once the Macedonian troops encamped near the palace, hearing of the mistreatment of a soldier named Moeragenes, began to stir: “As the people had long been disposed to revolt and require only some man of courage to appeal to them, once the movement began it spread like wildfire.”²⁶ In fact, Polybius stresses that both the soldiers and civilians were united to rise up, just four hours later.²⁷ Further still, the soldiers took it upon themselves to find and bring the young Philopator to the stadium from the palace.²⁸ They, too, set off in search of Agathocles and Agathoclea,²⁹ brought them back in fetters, killed

¹⁸ Diod. 1.83.8.

¹⁹ Fraser (1972) I 82, 34; (1972) II 499, n. 23.

²⁰ Polyb. 15.33.9.

²¹ Mittag (2003) 164–66.

²² Mittag (2003) 164. Cf. Sullivan (1990) 232–33.

²³ Polyb. 15.33.10; Fraser (1972) I 82.

²⁴ Todd (1963) 35–39; Barry (1993b) 419, 427–28; Mittag (2003) 165; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 94–95.

²⁵ Polyb. 15.26.10.

²⁶ Polyb. 15.29.3 (trans. Paton).

²⁷ Polyb. 15.29.4.

²⁸ Polyb. 15.31.1–3, 32.1–3.

²⁹ Polyb. 15.32.10.

Philo, a confidant of Agathocles, with spears,³⁰ only after which they, along with other members of the crowd, killed Agathocles and his followers.³¹

We must, therefore, part company with the historiographical conception of the Alexandrians as a ‘mob’ composed of the lower classes and the Egyptians (who had somehow infected them!).

In what follows, I modify several other features of this ‘mob’ paradigm by analysing the instances of crowd action which punctuate the history of Alexandria by means of three lines of inquiry: the first asks what is known about the precise identity of the Alexandrians and their quality as social actors; the second examines the factors that motivated them to mobilise; and the third analyses their conduct, especially their use of violence and other forms of crowd action.³²

The Heterogeneous Alexandrian Crowd

Who, then, participated in the Alexandrian crowd? A close examination of the extant evidence reveals that the Alexandrian crowd, in as much as we can identify it, was composed not of the outcasts from society but of a heterogeneous group both young and old, male and female, citizen and non-citizen, Greek and non-Greek.³³

The first recorded crowd incident, the aforementioned Agathocles episode of 203, is, incidentally, the best documented. At various points in his narrative, Polybius emphasises the diversity of the crowd, describing it as a “mixed multitude” (ὄχλος παντοδαπός),³⁴ with men “of all nationalities” (πάντα τὰ γένη),³⁵ women,³⁶ some of whom were elite,³⁷ children,³⁸ and soldiers.³⁹ Although Polybius does not describe it in terms of ethnicity, he does mention that the crowd was drawn “from every part of the city”.⁴⁰ Considering that various ethnic groups were organised in different parts of the city and the population itself was remarkably diverse,

³⁰ Polyb. 15.33.4. Walbank (1967) II 492. Cf. Barry (1993b) 427; Huss (2001) 485.

³¹ Polyb. 15.32.11–33.9; Mittag (2003) 171.

³² This tripartite approach is based on Rudé’s “underlying ‘theoretical’ framework”: Singer (1989) 267–71, here 268.

³³ Barry (1993b) 416–18, 426, 431; Mittag (2003) 167; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 94. For similar analysis on the Roman ‘mob’, see Brunt (1966) 3–27.

³⁴ Polyb. 15.30.4.

³⁵ Polyb. 15.29.4 (trans. Paton).

³⁶ Polyb. 15.30.1, 30.9.

³⁷ Polyb. 15.29.10.

³⁸ Generally: Polyb. 15.30.9–10. Young girls of Arsinoe III: Polyb. 15.33.11–12.

³⁹ E.g., Polyb. 15.26.10–11, 29.1–4.

⁴⁰ Polyb. 15.30.9. Cf. Fischer–Bovet (2014) 94.

Barry's suggestion that it included "Greeks of different and mixed origin, Egyptians, and perhaps even some Jews, Syrians, and others who had been attracted to the city" is sound.⁴¹

Although the exact number of people involved in this crowd action is unknown, there are several hints that it was considerable. Polybius emphasises the density of the crowd within the cityscape: "not only level spaces but the roofs and steps were full of people."⁴² The repeated references to noise, cries, cheers, and shouting similarly impresses its size upon the reader.⁴³

Given the diverse make-up of the crowd in 203, Barry and Fischer-Bovet have argued that a similar composition, involving all elements of the population, may be extrapolated to the other crowds which feature in the dynastic disputes of the second and first centuries.⁴⁴ Of these events, the evidence is considerably more fragmentary; references to the crowd are often vague and include few details on its specific composition.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, a survey of the other incidents of crowd action, piecemeal and non-specific as they are, indicate that the crowd was generally composed of a cross-section of the population.

For example, several groups are identifiable in the crowd following Philometor's death in 145. First, Onias and Dositheos' leadership of Jewish contingents, as well as Euergetes' later reprisals against them, indicates the involvement of the Jewish population.⁴⁶ Second, the participation of the Greeks is implied through Justin's reference to *principes*, identified with Macedonian and Greek nobles, who were against Ptolemy VIII's accession.⁴⁷ Ptolemy VIII's reprisals against the intelligentsia and Greek elites, which included his exile of them and attack on the gymnasia, was likely based on their participation in earlier crowd resistance towards him.⁴⁸ Finally, Justin's suggestion of total opposition against the king (*ceterum infestus omnibus*), who was forced to rely on mercenaries (*peregrinis militibus*), indicates a lack of general Alexandrian support. In this case the crowd appear to have been aligned against the king.⁴⁹

In relation to Ptolemy VIII's flight from Alexandria to Cyprus in 132/1, our sources likewise emphasise the totality of Alexandrian opposition toward the king. Livy describes the

⁴¹ Barry (1993b) 417.

⁴² Polyb. 15.33.11–12. Cf. Polyb. 15.30.2, 30.4.

⁴³ Polyb. 15.30.3, 30.9, 31.1, 31.3, 32.3, 32.5, 32.9.

⁴⁴ Fischer–Bovet (2014) 95. See also Barry (1993b) 428–29.

⁴⁵ Barry (1993b) 429.

⁴⁶ Joseph. *Ap.* 2.48–57; Todd (1963) 63–67; Fraser (1972) I 121; Hölbl (2001) 194; Mittag (2003) 176–78.

⁴⁷ Just. *Epit.* 38.8.3; Otto and Bengtson (1938) 25–26. Cf. Mittag (2003) 176, 178.

⁴⁸ Exiles: Ath. 4.184c; Todd (1963) 60–62, 73 Cf. Hölbl (2001) 195. Gymnasia: Val. Max. 9.2, ext. 5; Todd (1963) 73–74; Fraser (1972) I 121, n. 232.

⁴⁹ Just. *Epit.* 38.8.5, 8.3; Diod. Sic. 33.6, 33.6a, 33.12. On Ptolemy VIII's temporary supporters, see Todd (1963) 61–62; Mittag (2003) 177, n.89.

hostility of the *populus* in their setting fire to Euergetes' palace.⁵⁰ Likewise, Justin notes that the king left because of the hatred of the foreigners in the city (*peregrino populus invisus*), a curious expression which Huss interprets as the Egyptians,⁵¹ although Mittag suggests it means non-Greek inhabitants living in Alexandria.⁵² In any case, the sources indicate an overwhelming opposition toward the king by the whole city: after Ptolemy VIII left, the Alexandrian populace tore down statues of the king (*populus statuas eius et imagines detrahit*).⁵³ Following the murder of Memphites, opposition was even more unified:

Quae res non reginae tantum, uerum etiam uniuersae ciuitati acerba et luctuosa fuit tantumque maerorem festiuissimo couuiuio intulit ut regia omnis repentino luctu incenderetur.

His deed occasioned grief and sorrow, not only to the queen, but also to the whole city, and threw such a gloom over a banquet intended to be most joyous, that the whole palace was suddenly filled with mourning.⁵⁴

Admittedly, it is difficult to identify with any real confidence the composition of crowds in events other than that of 203.⁵⁵ Yet, the assumption that the crowds of the second and first centuries were made up of mainly Egyptians and the lower classes surely misses the mark.⁵⁶ Indeed, the picture that emerges from the extant sources is that various social and ethnic groups, Greeks, Egyptians and other non-Egyptians, participated in these mobilisations.

Motivations of the Crowd: the Alexandrian Ideology

In the 293 years between 323–30, there are eighteen known incidents in which the Alexandrian crowd resorted to various forms of crowd action, often to remove or appoint a Ptolemaic king or queen.⁵⁷

How does this figure compare to other cities? Though recourse to other cities is generally suspect because of Alexandria's unique population size, Rome emerges as a possible

⁵⁰ Liv. *Per.* 59.14. Cf. Diod. Sic. 33.12.

⁵¹ Huss (2001) 610, n. 122.

⁵² Mittag (2003) 179.

⁵³ Just. *Epit.* 38.8.13.

⁵⁴ Just. *Epit.* 38.8.14 (trans. Watson). See also Diod. Sic. 34/35.14.

⁵⁵ Barry (1993b) 429.

⁵⁶ Barry (1993b) 429.

⁵⁷ Mittag (2003) 194–95.

point of comparison. Strikingly, as Aldrete has recently calculated, the average rate of ‘riots’ in Rome is far higher than in Alexandria in every period.⁵⁸ In fact, even accounting for the vagaries of the extant sources – in which our evidence on Rome is far more complete, there is simply no evidence that Alexandria was more violent than any other large Mediterranean city during the Hellenistic or early Roman period.⁵⁹

The relatively low frequency of crowd actions in Alexandria, I suggest, relates to the narrow motivations which underpinned the crowd’s mobilisation. For one thing, we ought to remember that the Alexandrians, for large portions of the Ptolemaic dynasty, enjoyed good, conflict-free, relations with the kings, and often had no reason to act against them.

Furthermore, whenever the Alexandrians resorted to crowd action, they always acted for, or against, particular members of the Ptolemaic family. There is no indication that the Alexandrians wished to remove the dynasty from power altogether. This is best demonstrated through the Alexandrians’ repeated decision to remove a particular Ptolemy and replace them with an alternative ruler – often a sibling or parent – from the *same* family (this phenomenon occurs in the years 169, 132/1, 107, 88, 80, and 58/7).⁶⁰

Once we recognise that the Alexandrians’ crowd action was not directed against the Ptolemies’ control of Egypt as a whole, the reasons underlying their mobilisation take on a different cast. Rather than view the Alexandrians as a generically mindless, “fickle”, and “revolutionary” people,⁶¹ we can instead observe the operation of an ideology of the Alexandrians which, above all, sought to preserve the royal family and well-being of the empire by influencing – through actual or potential mobilisation – the ways in which the Lagids ruled.⁶² In other words, when the integrity, majesty, and prosperity of the Ptolemaic empire was, in the eyes of the Alexandrians, threatened, the city responded with various forms of crowd action.⁶³ Conversely, the Alexandrians mobilised for, or supported, a particular Ptolemy when they considered that their interests were better safeguarded by the continued rule of that king or queen.

Mittag recently surveyed the episodes of Alexandrian crowd action during the Ptolemaic period and concluded that the Alexandrians mobilised in a very limited set of circumstances concerning the conduct of the king and the well-being of the empire.⁶⁴ Using his

⁵⁸ Aldrete (2013) 428–29. For a similar reconceptualisation of the Roman ‘mob’, see Brunt (1966) 3–27.

⁵⁹ Haas (1997) 11–12.

⁶⁰ Todd (1963) 6, 118; Mittag (2003); Veisse (2004) 108.

⁶¹ Todd (1963) 124; Fraser (1972) I 82, 123.

⁶² Cf. Todd (1963) 8, esp. n. 20; Mittag (2003) 207.

⁶³ Gehrke (2005) 116.

⁶⁴ Mittag (2003) 168–93.

analysis as a starting point, I aim to elucidate the conditions in which the interests of the Alexandrians could be threatened, and a response triggered.

There were three essential ways in which this could occur: first, when the safety of the ruler or a member of the family was threatened; second, when the conduct of the ruler did not conform to the expectations of the Alexandrians; and third, when the sovereignty of the empire was challenged.⁶⁵

Concern for the Safety of Members of the Ptolemaic Family

On at least four occasions, the Alexandrians acted when the safety of an individual member of the Ptolemaic family was, or had been, threatened. After the Sixth Syrian War, the Alexandrians mobilised when Petosarapis spread a rumour that Ptolemy VIII was in danger by Philometor.⁶⁶ In 164/3, Diodorus records that the Alexandrians forced Ptolemy VIII into exile because of his inappropriate behaviour towards Philometor.⁶⁷ The violent response of the Alexandrians, in which they tore down statues, to Euergetes II's murder of his son, Memphites, also belongs in this category.⁶⁸ In 107, Pausanias describes the Alexandrians' exile of Ptolemy IX on the basis of concern for Cleopatra, who displayed her wounded eunuchs whom the king had attacked, though it is conceivable that Cleopatra III spread the rumour of an impending attack on her life herself.⁶⁹

Non-Conforming Conduct of the Ruler

The Alexandrians likewise acted when they considered that the ruler's conduct was unsuitable or inappropriate.⁷⁰ In 203, the Alexandrians were moved by "moral outrage" over the rulers' conduct,⁷¹ as exemplified by Agathocles' profligate hedonism,⁷² the public humiliation of Tlepolemus' mother-in-law, Danae,⁷³ and Oenanthe's savage prayer and rebuke of the noblewomen.⁷⁴

In a similar vein, the Alexandrians' acted when the Ptolemy in power appeared to prefer the interests of groups other than the Alexandrians. In 145 and 88, the ostensibly pro-Jewish

⁶⁵ Mittag (2003) 193.

⁶⁶ Diod. 31.15a.1.

⁶⁷ Diod. Sic. 31.17c.1 (trans. Walton).

⁶⁸ Just. *Epit.* 38.8.14; Diod. Sic. 34/35.14.

⁶⁹ Paus. 1.9.2; Fraser (1972) I 123; Huss (2001) 652.

⁷⁰ Mittag (2003) 196.

⁷¹ Barry (1993b) 421.

⁷² Polyb. 15.25.22–24.

⁷³ Polyb. 15.27.2–3.

⁷⁴ Polyb. 15.29.8–14, 30.1.

policies of Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy X, respectively, informed the Alexandrians' subsequent mobilisation.⁷⁵

On two occasions, Ptolemy VIII's harsh treatment of the Alexandrians drove them to mobilise. In 132/1, Livy emphasises the king's cruelty (*ob nimiam crudelitatem*) which caused resentment.⁷⁶ Likewise, when Hegelochus, Ptolemy VIII's general, captured Maryas, the general of the Alexandrians, it is telling that Ptolemy VIII chose to pardon him rather than punish him by death.⁷⁷ Diodorus notes that Ptolemy VIII decided to act with leniency in a bid to win the Alexandrians' favour, who had previously resisted his rule by raising an army against him because he was harsh and cruel (μετενόει γὰρ ἤδη καὶ ταῖς φιλανθρωπίαις ἔσπευδε διορθώσασθαι τὴν τῶν ὄχλων πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀποθηρίωσιν).⁷⁸

Finally, in 116 the Alexandrians reacted swiftly to Cleopatra III's contravention of tradition when she sought to elevate Ptolemy X to the throne over her older son, Ptolemy IX.⁷⁹ Considering it inappropriate to exclude the eldest child from succession without reason, the Alexandrians mobilised and Cleopatra was forced to adhere to their demands.⁸⁰

Concern for the Sovereignty of the Kingdom

The third and, in the case of Auletes, most relevant reason was the Alexandrians' concern for the sovereignty of the kingdom, particularly in relation to external interference.⁸¹ Curiously, Julius Caesar gave this attitude of the Alexandrians a name: *maiestas regia*.⁸² The Roman used this term in his description of the fiery reaction of the Alexandrians to his arrival in the city after the Battle of Pharsalus:

Alexandriae de Pompei morte cognoscit atque ibi primum e naui egrediens clamorem militum audit quos rex in oppido praesidii causa reliquerat et concursum ad se fieri uidet quod fasces anteferrentur. In hoc omnis multitudo maiestatem regiam minui praedicabat. Hoc sedato tumultu crebrae continuis diebus ex

⁷⁵ Ptolemy VI: Fraser (1972) I 83–84, 121; Mittag (2003) 178, 197, n. 187. Ptolemy X: Porph. *FGrH* 260, fr. 2.9; Todd (1963) 86, 91; Hölbl (2001) 211; Mittag (2003) 182–83.

⁷⁶ Liv. *Per.* 59.14. Cf. Diod. Sic. 33.12, 33.23.

⁷⁷ Diod. Sic. 34/35.20.

⁷⁸ Diod. Sic. 34/35.20. Cf. Fraser (1972) I 122.

⁷⁹ Paus. 1.9.1–3. See also Just. *Epit.* 39.3.1–2; Porph. *FGrH* 260, fr. 2.8. Date: Fraser (1972) I 123; Veisse (2004) 106.

⁸⁰ Barry (1993b) 430; Mittag (2003) 181–82.

⁸¹ Mittag (2003) 197.

⁸² Welch (2006/7) 183.

concurso multitudinis concitationes fiebant conpluresque milites in uis urbis omnibus partibus interficiebantur.

At Alexandria he learns of the death of Pompeius, and there immediately on landing he hears the shouting of the soldiers whom the king had left in the town as a garrison and sees them hurrying to meet him because the *fasces* were being carried in front of him. Hereby the whole crowd clamoured that the royal *maiestas* was being infringed. Even when this disturbance had been calmed, there were frequent outbreaks on successive days from the gathering of crowds and a great many soldiers were killed in the streets in all parts of the city.⁸³

The passage describes the Alexandrians complaining that a foreigner, Caesar, offended the *maiestas regia* of the city by carrying the *fasces*, the bundle of wooden rods that symbolised Roman *imperium*. The Alexandrians' reaction with violent (killing soldiers) and non-violent (taking to the streets; gatherings) forms of crowd action is telling. As Welch puts it: "all was manageable as long as Caesar respected the sovereignty [of the city]."⁸⁴ The Alexandrians would not tolerate any infringements to their sovereignty, even if it came from a man as supremely powerful as Caesar, fresh from winning the civil war against Pompey.

This antipathy to parties who interfered with the sovereignty of Egypt was limited, with the exception of one case, to the last half century of the Ptolemaic period.⁸⁵ From 80, the mobilisation of the crowd was almost entirely directed against Roman interference, that is, the perceived failure of the Ptolemies to adequately safeguard Egypt's interests from Roman encroachment and interference, or the actual incursion of Rome on Egypt's sovereignty.⁸⁶

I will return to this attitude when I analyse the career of Auletes, particularly the circumstances relating to his accession, exile, and restoration. For now, I will analyse its manifestation in the murder of Ptolemy XI in 80, the first instance in which Rome allegedly interfered with Egypt's political independence, to which the Alexandrians reacted violently.⁸⁷

The ancient tradition offers two variants on this event: the first is that Ptolemy XI murdered Berenice III after 19 days of marriage and was subsequently killed by soldiers,⁸⁸ the

⁸³ Caes. *BCiv.* 3.107 (trans. Welch).

⁸⁴ Welch (2006/7) 184.

⁸⁵ In 169, the Alexandrians deposed Ptolemy VI on the basis of his inappropriate links, and submission, to Antiochus IV: Polyb. 29.23.4; Porph. *FGrH* 260, fr. 2.7. Cf. Todd (1963) 42–44; Mittag (2003) 173–74.

⁸⁶ Mittag (2003) 186.

⁸⁷ Bernand (1991) 146.

⁸⁸ Porph. *FGrH* 260, fr. 2.11; Will (1982) 519.

second is that the Alexandrians dragged Ptolemy XI from the palace to the gymnasium and put him to death on the nineteenth day of his reign.⁸⁹

In the second version, Appian suggests that Ptolemy XI was murdered because of the king's offensive behaviour towards the Alexandrians and the involvement of Sulla, a powerful Roman politician, in the joint rule between Ptolemy XI and Berenice III.⁹⁰ Curiously, in describing their murder of Ptolemy XI, Appian reflects on the attitude of the Alexandrians:

οὕτως ἐτι καὶ οἶδε διὰ τε μέγεθος ἀρχῆς ἰδίας καὶ τῶν ἐξωθεν κακῶν ἴτι δντες ἀπα&εῖς ἀφόβως εἶχον ἐτέρων.

For they too were still without fear of foreigners, either by reason of the magnitude of their own empire or their inexperience as yet of external dangers.⁹¹

The Alexandrians, in other words, would not tolerate the interference of foreigners in their political affairs. As a Roman puppet put on the throne by Sulla, Ptolemy XI's rule was unacceptable.

Thus, we can observe an internal logic to the Alexandrians in their decisions to mobilise. Their actions can be seen to be consistent, deliberate, considered, and, most of all, motivated by concern for the Ptolemaic kingdom. It is unsurprising that the crowd involved a cross-section of society: this was an ideology that brought various parts of the community, sometimes with their internal differences, together. As we will see in the case of Auletes, the entire population was willing to endure much in their dogged adherence to this ideology.

The Crowd's Conduct and Violence

How did this homogeneous group of Alexandrians, brought together by a shared ideology relating to kingship and the empire, realise its goals? Thus far, I have challenged the idea that the Alexandrian 'mob' was, in fact, a 'mob' by analysing its diverse composition and motivations in mobilising. One final element of this 'mob' thesis remains to be deconstructed – namely, the imputation that the Alexandrians were an innately violent people who committed violence for its own sake.

⁸⁹ App. *B Civ.* 1.102; Todd (1963) 92; Fraser (1972) I 124; Barry (1993b) 429; Hölbl (2001) 214.

⁹⁰ App. *B Civ.* 1.102; Mittag (2003) 184. Cf. Hölbl (2001) 213.

⁹¹ App. *B Civ.* 1.102 (trans. Welch).

The ancient sources are generally unanimous in ascribing violent intentions to the crowd. This attitude is typified in Ammianus Marcellinus' remark that Alexandria is a city "which on its own impulse, and without ground, is frequently roused to rebellion and rioting."⁹²

For the most part, modern scholarship has lacked critical distance and myopically echoed such negative judgments of the Alexandrians' conduct. Accordingly, the crowd has been variously described as "always violent, always unpredictable",⁹³ "notoriously volatile and violent",⁹⁴ "tumultuous",⁹⁵ and "seditious and revolutionary".⁹⁶

Nevertheless, we need to disabuse ourselves of the ancient and modern condemnation of the Alexandrians as "frenzied madmen who possess an inborn propensity" to commit profligate violence.⁹⁷ Though the Alexandrians did commit violence to realise their goals, a careful examination of these incidents paint a far more nuanced picture of the Alexandrians' conduct.

We must recognise, above all, that the Alexandrians engaged in both violent and non-violent forms of crowd action. The use of violence, in other words, was central, but by no means a *sine qua non*, to the Alexandrians' mobilisation. In 145, for instance, Ptolemy VIII acceded without any violence or struggle from the Alexandrians (*Ptolomeus [...] sine certamine fraternal regnum recepisset*).⁹⁸ Likewise, the Alexandrians did not commit violence at all in the Cleomenes episode of 221 or during the Great Revolt (206–186). They also exhibited restraint and level-headedness after Antiochus IV left two kings in Egypt in 169 as well as the affair of Petosarapis.⁹⁹

Moreover, in the action of 203, Polybius describes the crowd resorting to a series of non-violent means, including graffiti, shouting, carrying torches, and assemblies.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the crowd's mobilisation in the stadium indicates that violence was not a central aim, particularly because the target, Agathocles, was not accessible from this structure.¹⁰¹

In addition, the Alexandrians often used violence *only* once their actions were in some way legitimised. This legitimisation could be based on a symbolic location, such as the

⁹² Amm. Marc. 22.11.4 (trans. Rolfe). See also Cass. Dio 39.58.1.2; Joseph. *BJ*. 2.385–387, 498.

⁹³ Green (1990) 304. See also Green (1990) 81.

⁹⁴ Bowman (1986) 212.

⁹⁵ Rostovtzeff (1941) 1139.

⁹⁶ Fraser (1972) 82, 128. For a useful catalogue of scholarly opinions, see Barry (1993a) 83, n. 2; (1993b) 415, n. 1.

⁹⁷ Haas (1997) 12.

⁹⁸ Just. *Epit.* 38.8.3; Chauveau (1990) 160.

⁹⁹ Antiochus IV: Fraser (1972) I 119; Mittag (2003) 173.

¹⁰⁰ Polyb. 15.27.3, 30.2–4, 30.9.

¹⁰¹ Barry (1993b) 424, esp. n. 23.

stadium,¹⁰² or on the authority of powerful figures, like a king or queen, general, or member of the elite. Again, in 203, the crowd deliberately waited until the authorisation of the king and concomitantly followed the lead of the soldiers, particularly the *strategos* Tleopolemos, – all within the legitimating confines of the stadium – before acting against Agathocles and his co-conspirators.¹⁰³ Similarly, in 107, the Alexandrians only acted against Ptolemy IX once Cleopatra III encouraged them to do so.¹⁰⁴

This is not to say that the Alexandrian crowd did not commit violence. On the contrary, the Alexandrians resorted to violence against people and property on at least six occasions: in 203, they participated in the lynching of Agathocles and his clique,¹⁰⁵ in 132/1 they tore down statues and set fire to the royal palace,¹⁰⁶ in 127/6 they raised an army against Ptolemy VIII,¹⁰⁷ in 80 they likely murdered Ptolemy XI, and in 48 they killed some soldiers of Caesar and also waged a war against the Romans.¹⁰⁸ Occasionally, as in the case of Philammon's death, this violence was unrestrained.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, in most of these instances, the use of violence was not senseless or without purpose. Rather, it proved essential to the realisation of their goals, informed by their especial ideology related to kingship and empire.

As such, although the Alexandrians did commit violence, we must reject the assumption that the crowd itself was innately or irrationally violent. Instead, we must view violence as one of the means through which the crowd could realise its goals. In many cases, its use was considered and performed in legitimating contexts – and sometimes it was not used at all.

Accordingly, when we read comments in modern scholarship like Peter Green's that the Alexandrians were "always violent, always unpredictable", we should reject them outright, or take them with several handfuls of salt.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

The moments of crowd action which punctuate the second and first centuries, then, are points of rupture and misalignment between the expectations of the Alexandrians and the actions of individual members of the Ptolemaic family. On each occasion, a cross-section of

¹⁰² Barry (1993b) 424–25, esp. 25.

¹⁰³ Barry (1993b) 427; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 94.

¹⁰⁴ Paus. 1.9.2; Just. *Ept.* 39.4.1. Cf. Todd (1963) 86; Fraser (1972) I 123; Huss (2001) 652.

¹⁰⁵ Polyb. 15.33.6–10.

¹⁰⁶ Liv. *Per.* 59.14. Cf. Mittag (2003) 179.

¹⁰⁷ Diod. 34/35.20; Fraser (1972) I 122. Year 127–6: Todd (1963) 71, n. 55; Fraser (1972) I 122, n. 240. Cf. Huss (2001) 614; Mittag (2003) 180; *contra* Otto and Bengtson (1938) 169–71.

¹⁰⁸ Caes. *BCiv.* 3.106.4–6. On the Alexandrian War, see Fraser (1972) I 126–27; Mittag (2003) 191–93.

¹⁰⁹ Polyb. 15.33.11–12; Barry (1993b) 428.

¹¹⁰ Green (1990) 304, 81.

the population mobilises, often using violence, to effect, in their eyes, whatever changes necessary to ensure the well-being of Alexandria *and* the Ptolemaic empire.

In light of this analysis, how are we to imagine the Alexandrians in the Ptolemaic state? The Alexandrians, I suggest, had a particular view on how Egypt should be governed and how the Ptolemies ought to act. As demonstrated by the instances of crowd action, the Alexandrians were more than willing to mobilise in order to bring about their desired outcome if they deemed the conduct or decision of a particular Ptolemaic ruler unacceptable. The interests, power, and potentially adversarial status of the Alexandrians, then, figured as an influential factor for any Ptolemaic ruler to deal with and navigate.

Chapter 2

THE FIRST REIGN (80–58): AULETES' SUCCESS IN RULE

Modern scholarship has generally treated Ptolemy XII Auletes as a weak ruler, lacking the competence and skills of an effective king.¹ Typical of this perspective is Will, who indicts Auletes as a desperate and contemptible ruler: “This hapless monarch [...] was guarded by the henchmen of his protectors and abandoned his kingdom to the clutches of Roman wolves.”²

In this chapter, I attempt to break free of the Romanocentric vantagepoint of such interpretations by investigating the first reign of Auletes and analysing the often-overlooked ways in which he secured his hold on the throne and then remained in power for twenty-two years. I propose that the longevity of this first rule rested in large part on policies and practices that were entrenched in the Egyptian system. In Egypt, he successfully managed the interests of various stakeholders, including the Alexandrians, the priests and wider Egyptian population, through an extensive religious and cultural program. Externally, he dealt reasonably effectively with the threat of Rome by maintaining Egypt's independence through his cultivation of powerful individuals and his exploitation of Rome's own unstable political landscape.

Accession of Auletes

After murdering Ptolemy XI, the Alexandrians swiftly recalled Auletes and his brother, known as Ptolemy of Cyprus, from Syria.³ They appointed Auletes King of Egypt, while his

¹ For an overview of negative scholarly opinions on Auletes: Sullivan (1990) 247; Siani-Davies (2001) 1–2. See, for example, Bevan (1927) 342–58; Elgood (1938) 187; Olshausen (1963) 22–63; Fraser (1972) I 124–25; Will (1982) II 526; Green (1990) 136–40; Hazzard (2000) 145.

² Will (1982) II 526: “Ce monarque aux abois [...] se faisait garder par les sbires de ses protecteurs et abandonnait son royaume aux griffes des loups-cerviers romains” (my own translation).

³ On Auletes' early life and activity in Syria, see Bennett (1997) 46–52.

brother was made King of Cyprus, sometime between June and September 80.⁴ The Alexandrians' quickness of action reflects their desire to ward off any Roman involvement in Egypt, either in terms of the Romans attempting to impose their own choice of king or, more likely, the will of Ptolemy X coming into force.⁵

Traces of Auletes' deliberate policy to repay and keep the Alexandrians onside early in his reign possibly lie in an inscription dating to 79. BGU VIII 1730 (= Sel. Pap. II 209) is a royal order which prohibits the shipment of wheat or grain from Middle to Upper or Lower Egypt and stipulates that everything must be sent to Alexandria:

βασιλέως καὶ βασιλίσσης προσταξάντων.
μηδένα τῶν ὑπὲρ Μέμφιν νομῶν
ἀγοράζοντα πυρὸν ἢ ὄσπριον κατά-
γειν εἰς τὴν κάτω χώραν, ἀλλὰ μη-
δ' εἰς τὴν Θηβαίδα ἀνάγειν παρευ-
ρέσει μηδεμιᾷ, πάντας δ' ἀνυφοράτους
ὄντας εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν παρακο[μ]ίζειν,
ἢ ὁ φωραθεὶς θανάτῳ ἔνοχος ἔσται.

By decree of the king and queen [= Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra Tryphaena, if we accept 79/78]. No one purchasing wheat or pulse from the *nomes* above Memphis shall carry it down to the low country or yet carry it up to the Thebaid on any pretext – though all may transport it to Alexandria free of question – on pain of being liable to death if detected.⁶

Since its publication, the reign under which this document was produced has been a source of controversy. The date is given as 'year 3, Phaophi 23' (line 16) which could refer to 3 November 79 (Auletes and Tryphaena) or 27 October 50 (Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra VII).⁷ Though the later date has generally been accepted,⁸ Sarischouli's recent reinterpretation of the dates of some BGU VIII documents, first edited by Schubart and Schäfer, has cast fresh doubt

⁴ Harris (1979) 156, n. 5; Sullivan (1990) 91.

⁵ Bevan (1927) 344; Grant (1972) 31; Hölbl (2001) 222; Huss (2001) 672–74; Mittag (2003) 186; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 110.

⁶ BGU VIII 1730 (= Sel. Pap. II 209), lines 1–8 (trans. Hunt and Edgar).

⁷ Derda (2006) 25–26, n. 3.

⁸ See, for example, Todd (1963) 131, n. 149; Grant (1972) 49–51.

on the issue.⁹ As a case study, Sarischouli analyses BGU VIII 1730. She notes that the order of the nouns βασιλέως and βασιλίσσης in line one,¹⁰ which would have likely been reversed if it was drafted under Cleopatra VII and Ptolemy XIII,¹¹ in addition to the editors' uncertain reading of an earlier edict to 'Heliodoros',¹² indicates that the inscription was more likely drafted in 79 under Auletes and Tryphaena.¹³ In so doing, she reverts to the earlier view of several historians, including Kunkel, Elgood, and Bloedow.¹⁴

If this is the case, it is possible to adopt the following reconstruction of Auletes' early cultivation of the Alexandrians. Faced with a food crisis in 79, Auletes reacted swiftly to ensure the welfare of the capital. Looking back at both the historical relations between the Alexandrians and king, especially the tradition of prioritising the city over the *chora*,¹⁵ Auletes' response was strategic and shows a cogent awareness of his political context – if he had done otherwise, he might certainly have joined the ranks of Ptolemy XI as a short-lived ruler of Egypt.

Auletes' Marriage, Titles, and Coronation

Soon after his accession, Auletes acted quickly to restore stability to the Ptolemaic family and win support for his rule by conforming to normative and symbolic Ptolemaic practices, undoubtedly one of the most important foundations of his power.

By January 79, Auletes married his half-sister Cleopatra V Tryphaena.¹⁶ Intrafamilial breeding and incestuous marriage, particularly on the brother-sister model, was common practice in the Ptolemaic dynasty.¹⁷ This custom symbolised the Ptolemies' power and formed part of their philosophy of excess (*τροφή*) which appealed to Alexandrian and Egyptian sensibilities.¹⁸ Consequently, Auletes' marriage linked him with an important tradition of his predecessors and enabled him to integrate into the symbolic practices of an Egyptian king. This union with the daughter of Ptolemy IX, Auletes' father's lifelong rival, also signified an end to

⁹ Sarischouli (2000) 30.

¹⁰ A point first raised by Kunkel and confirmed by Wilcken: Kunkel (1927) 213, esp. n. 1.

¹¹ Cf. Derda (2006) 25–26, esp. n. 3.

¹² Allegedly found underneath the present writing. The editor's reading is, however, doubtful: Fraser (1972) II 231, n. 298.

¹³ Sarischouli (2000) 30–31, esp. n. 65; cf. Derda (2006) 29, n. 15.

¹⁴ Kunkel (1927) 212–15, esp. 213; Elgood (1938) 175; Bloedow (1963) 23, esp. n. 1. Cf. Fraser (1972) II 231, n. 298.

¹⁵ Todd (1963) 27, n. 7, 131–32.

¹⁶ Bennett (1997) 57–64; Siani-Davies (2001) 5; Ager (2006) 170.

¹⁷ For an overview of incestuous marriages in the Ptolemaic period, see Ager (2005) 3–8.

¹⁸ Ager (2006) 178–79. Cf. Heinen (1983) 116–30; Welch (2006/7) 186.

the internecine conflict which had begun 80 years earlier with the civil war between Philometor and Euergetes II.¹⁹

To assimilate further into the sociocultural and political framework of the Egyptian king, Auletes and Cleopatra Tryphaena joined the dynastic cult as Θεοὶ Φιλοπάτορες και Φιλιάδελφοί.²⁰ This title singularly commemorated their respective fathers and also associated Auletes with Ptolemy II Philadelphos, a third-century Egyptian king who bore the same title and who was widely revered in cult practice.

The most significant event of Auletes' early reign, however, was his coronation as Pharaoh in 76. In Egypt, priests of the major temples were a fundamental source of political legitimacy.²¹ They could potentially oppose any new king or queen because of their unique status as the repositories of “cultural memory, educational and bureaucratic power [... and] represented religious authority for a deeply religious people.”²² The priests of Ptah were particularly important for the Lagids because they served as “a focus of relations between king and cult, between cult Ptolemy and temple.”²³

To placate this powerful group and maintain the goodwill of the large Egyptian population, the Ptolemies carried out the vital cosmic function of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The Pharaoh was responsible for defending not only his people and his nation, “but even the very fabric of the world, subduing cosmic chaos and re-establishing cosmic order after the death of the previous Pharaoh.”²⁴ The correct fulfilment of Pharaonic rituals and rites by the king was crucial to ensuring Ma'at, world order and justice.²⁵ The Pharaonic coronation signified the ultimate priestly acceptance of the ruler and legitimised them, in the eyes of the native Egyptians, as the “earthly manifestation of Horus and as the ‘son of Re’.”²⁶ Crucially, not all of the Ptolemies were crowned Pharaoh. As Burstein notes, most of the Ptolemies received just the Pharaonic titulary which enabled them to perform the multiplicity of Egyptian rituals.²⁷ Auletes, alongside Ptolemy V, Ptolemy VIII, and (likely) Ptolemy I, was one of the few kings to accept the honour.²⁸

¹⁹ Bennett (1997) 64.

²⁰ O. Joach. 1; Hölbl (2001) 223.

²¹ Thompson (2012) 100.

²² Manning (2010) 96.

²³ Thompson (2012) 101. On the importance of the relationship between the High Priests of Ptah in Memphis and the Ptolemaic family, see Thompson (1990) 97–116; Gorre and Honigman (2013) 116–17; Manning (2019) 116.

²⁴ Ager (2006) 176.

²⁵ Bonhême and Forgeau (1988) 110–17.

²⁶ Hölbl (2001) 77.

²⁷ Burstein (1991) 140–41.

²⁸ Pfeiffer (2016). Cf. Hölbl (2001) 32, n. 47.

Accordingly, the Harris Stele, a funerary stele for the high priest Psenptais III,²⁹ demonstrates Auletes' successful management of the powerful priesthood early in his reign.³⁰ It describes, in part, Auletes' coronation by the high priest of Ptah, Psenptais III, who "placed the Uraeus upon the head of the king, on the day of Uniting the Two Lands, and who performed for him the rituals in the Sed Festival chapels."³¹

In fact, the Stele demonstrates Auletes' awareness of the power of pharaonic symbolism which he prodigiously made use of to maintain support for his rule as he is depicted as dutifully fulfilling his religious role and paying careful attention to the priests.³² For one thing, it records that Auletes made frequent trips to Memphis to fulfil his pharaonic duties and enjoyed friendly visiting terms when he stayed in the royal palace of the Serapeum district.³³ Moreover, as Pharaoh, he did not hesitate to endow Psenptais with the incomes of temples from Upper and Lower Egypt, even if it meant withdrawing them from other temples.³⁴ It is also significant that Psenptais is called the "first prophet of the lord of the two lands", a special title bestowed by Auletes as a mark of honour.³⁵ Auletes also had a full pharaonic throne name, 'The Heir of the god-who-rescues, chosen by Ptah, who has accomplished the Maat of Re, the living image of Amun', a key marker of the ruler as the embodiment of the sky god.³⁶ Such rigorous observations of the Pharaonic rites would have no doubt pleased the native Egyptian elite and priesthood.

The 'Illegitimacy' of Auletes

Before turning to the other extensive ways in which Auletes fulfilled this Pharaonic model of kingship to maintain support for his rule throughout Egypt, it is necessary to address the ancient charge that Auletes was 'illegitimate', especially in the light of the solemnity that the title of Pharaoh gave him.³⁷ Several scholars have taken this imputation and postulated that it was an impediment for Auletes' succession to the throne and for the legitimacy of his reign in general terms.³⁸

²⁹ *PP* 5376.

³⁰ BM 886. For the delay in coronation, see Sullivan (1990) 93–95; Whitehorne (1994) 179–80.

³¹ BM 886 (trans. Klotz (2013) 26).

³² Thompson (2012) 101.

³³ Hölbl (1996) 7.

³⁴ Hölbl (2001) 223.

³⁵ On the significance of the title, see Thompson (2012) 125.

³⁶ Leprohon (2013) 187. Cf. Welch and Halsted (2019) 11.

³⁷ Just. *prol.* 39; Paus. 1.9.3; Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.42, though his opinion changes to suit his rhetorical needs: cf. Cic. *Sest.* 57.

³⁸ See, for example, Grant (1972) 31; Green (1990) 136; Siani-Davies (2001) 4–5. Cf. Ogden (1999) 95.

It is mostly accepted that Auletes was the son of Ptolemy IX. The identity of his mother, however, cannot be determined with any certainty.³⁹ The most common theory is that she was one of Ptolemy IX's concubines or mistresses.⁴⁰ Others have imagined her as a woman whose social status was "acceptable as royalty in Egypt", perhaps an aristocratic Egyptian or native Egyptian princess.⁴¹ In contrast, Otto and Bengtson have theorised that Cleopatra Selene was his mother.⁴² Recently, Bennett dismissed the debate altogether, arguing that Auletes' mother was Cleopatra IV.⁴³

In any case, the notion that Auletes' status as a son of a woman of lesser status was a hindrance to his rule appears to be a modern invention. For one thing, there is no indication that the Alexandrians ever took issue with his parentage. The assertion that they gave Auletes the sobriquet *nothos*, for example, finds no reflection in the ancient sources.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it seems that the Ptolemaic court placed less importance on the exact status of a royal mother than later writers did. Certainly, Ptolemy Apion, the son of Ptolemy VIII by a concubine, was accepted as King of Cyrene without reported incident.⁴⁵ More importantly, Auletes' coronation as Pharaoh provided him with a far stronger basis of legitimacy in the Egyptian context.⁴⁶ It seems that parties outside Egypt took greater issue with his status and for their own ends. In 75, Cleopatra Selene journeyed to Rome to contest Auletes' rule on the basis that her two Seleucid sons by Antiochus X Eusebes had a stronger claim to the Egyptian throne.⁴⁷ If Auletes' position was more fragile, Rome might certainly have acted.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the issue was dismissed and Auletes' rule prevailed.⁴⁹

Staying on the Throne: Auletes' Pharaonic and Religious Program

In order to maintain popular support, Auletes made an ongoing effort to reinforce his legitimacy before the gods and population through an extensive religious program, modelled

³⁹ Ager (2006) 170.

⁴⁰ Bouché-Leclercq (1903–7) II 114; Bloedow (1963) 5–6; Whitehorne (1994) 179; Siani-Davies (2001) 4; Peek (2008) 113. Speculation is rife from this point. Bevan (1927) 344 imagines her as "an accomplished and beautiful woman from some city of the Greek world" or "a dancing girl of plebeian origin", while Grant (1972) 5 suggests she was "quite likely to have been Syrian".

⁴¹ Reymond and Barns (1977) 21–29, esp. 24 and 27; Sullivan (1990) 92–93.

⁴² Otto and Bengtson (1938) 177, n. 1; Sullivan (1990) 88, 91.

⁴³ Bennett (1997) 46–52; *contra* Huss (2001) 672–73, n. 3.

⁴⁴ As claimed by Green (1990) 136. Cf. Ogden (1999) 95.

⁴⁵ Just. *Epit.* 39.5; Strack (1897) 201, n. 33.

⁴⁶ Sullivan (1990) 229.

⁴⁷ Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.61.

⁴⁸ Welch (2006/7) 183, n. 17.

⁴⁹ On the outcome of the appeal, see Whitehorne (1994) 179.

largely on Pharaonic practices.⁵⁰ The construction, maintenance, and cultivation of temples fulfilled these duties and maintained the loyalty of the priests and native population.⁵¹

Auletes, in particular, proved to be a prolific cultivator and restorer of traditional Egyptian temples.⁵² In fact, the extent of his building activity is even more astonishing when we consider the financial, dynastic, domestic, and foreign political difficulties which he faced during his reign.⁵³ He erected three kiosks at the Temple of Monthu in Madâmûd; added a birth house to the Repyt temple; and constructed a monolithic granite naos in the Temple of Amun in Dabod.⁵⁴ He restored various temples and monuments, including at Karnak (Temple of Amon-Ra), Tentyra (Temple of Hathor), Athribis (Temple of Repit), Bigga (Temple of Isis and Osiris), and Deir el-Medina (Temple of Hathor and Maat).⁵⁵

Further still, Auletes' cartouche can be found on several monuments where he is depicted in reliefs as a traditional Pharaoh.⁵⁶ Perhaps the most famous of these is found at the Temple of Isis at Philae. On the first pylon he is depicted as holding the uraeus-sceptre and smiting his enemies in the presence of the goddess Hathor (see Introduction, Figure 1).⁵⁷ On the second pylon, he offers incense and sacrificial animals to an assembly of gods, including Horus and Hathor.⁵⁸ In the first crypt at Armant (Hermonthis), Auletes, wearing a blue crown that is commonly associated with New Kingdom pharaohs, makes an oblation to Montu Re-Harakhty, Isis, and Horus (see Figure 5).⁵⁹

⁵⁰ Siani-Davies (1997) 309.

⁵¹ Thompson (2012) 106–7.

⁵² Grant (1972) 79; Shipley (2000) 212. Cf. Bevan (1927) 357–58.

⁵³ Huss (2001) 701.

⁵⁴ Kiosks: Porter and Moss (1937) 139. Birth house: Arnold (1992) 177. Naos: Hölbl (2001) 271, esp. n. 64.

⁵⁵ For an extensive catalogue, see Huss (2001) 701. Cf. Grant (1972) 80.

⁵⁶ Sullivan (1990) 235.

⁵⁷ Porter and Moss (1939) 214; Hölbl (2001) 272.

⁵⁸ Hölbl (2001) 260.

⁵⁹ See Ashton (2008) 35–37 for a full list of examples.



Figure 5: Auletes wearing a blue crown. Crypts of Armant. Reproduced from *Ashton (2008) 36*.

Auletes paid particular attention to Upper Egypt in his building program.⁶⁰ This is unsurprising: for virtually the entire period, the Thebaid and its surrounding areas were a source of potential trouble for several rulers. In the decade before Auletes' accession, revolt had raged in the area, only for it to be put down in 85 by the violent response of Ptolemy IX in which the ancient city of Thebes was devastated.⁶¹

In discussing the success of Auletes' policy, Thompson has suggested that "in spite of a large-scale building program [by Soter II and Auletes] in the south, undertaken in an attempt to regain support in the area, Upper Egypt was now effectively lost to nomarchs."⁶² It is true that instances of unrest in the south continued into Auletes' reign.⁶³ Nevertheless, such a negative judgment on the effectiveness of his building program is unjustified. An inscription from Apollonipolis Magna (Edfu), dated 5 December 57, for instance, shows the continued support of the king by some priests from Upper Egypt, even *after* his exile.⁶⁴ It records the priests' recognition of Cleopatra V Tryphaena and Auletes as joint monarchs.⁶⁵ As Grant notes: "These priests of Upper Egypt, which had received great benefaction from Auletes, evidently

⁶⁰ On the geography of his building program, see Grant (1972) 79.

⁶¹ Paus. 1.9.3, 8.33.2. On the chronology of the event and particularly Ptolemy IX's harsh response, see Bevan (1927) 337; Ritner (2011) 97–114, esp. 102–4.

⁶² Thompson (2012) 143.

⁶³ See, for example, BGU VIII 1815. Cf. Sullivan (1990) 231, n. 6.

⁶⁴ Source: Huss (2001) 701, n. 47. See also Grant (1972) 37; Huss (2001) 702.

⁶⁵ Bevan (1927) 354.

did not like to think of him as deposed, even though he had, in fact, been chased out.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, after his restoration, Auletes continued to pursue a similar policy. On 16 July 54, he laid the first stone of the temple of Hathor at Dendera.⁶⁷ At a time when his rule was considerably weaker, it is telling that the king paid special attention to his religious duties, especially in the south. It is certainly noteworthy too that the region remained loyal to his heir, Cleopatra VII, who seems to have followed the policies for stability to which her father had laid out the groundwork.⁶⁸

Auletes also adopted a generous policy of bestowing *asylia* rights (inviolability) to temples, the occurrence of which multiplied during this period, in a bid to maintain support for his rule.⁶⁹ A *prostagma* from 11 December 63, for instance, shows him prohibiting unauthorised access to the sacred treasuries of a temple.⁷⁰ A relatively standard measure, the regulation demonstrates both the “continued smooth functioning of his bureaucracy” as well as Auletes’ deliberate preservation of the rights of temples throughout Egypt.⁷¹

In a Hellenistic setting, Auletes deliberately associated himself with Dionysus to cast himself as not only divine but also a provider of salvation for his people.⁷² This doctrine was played out in a number of ways throughout Auletes’ first reign.⁷³ First, the king officially styled himself as Νέος Διόνυσος (‘New Dionysus’) from, at least, 64/3.⁷⁴ This titulary features extensively in papyri and inscriptions.⁷⁵ Second, Auletes is frequently depicted as Dionysus. For instance, a bronze bust of him, with its crown of ivy and horns, portrays the king with the attributes of the deity (Figure 6, Left).⁷⁶ Likewise, a marble Greek-style statue of Auletes represents the king wearing the *mitra* of Dionysus (Figure 6, Right).⁷⁷ Moreover, on the Harris

⁶⁶ Grant (1972) 37. See also Bevan (1927) 354; Huss (2001) 701–2.

⁶⁷ Goudchaux (2001) 130.

⁶⁸ Burstein (2004) 15.

⁶⁹ Rostovtzeff (1941) II 899; Cauville and Devauchelle (1984) 46. For an overview of this munificent policy, see, *inter alia*, Maehler (1983) 2; Siani-Davies (1997) 309, n. 8; Siani-Davies (2001) 5, esp. n. 16. Cf. Fischer–Bovet (2014) 353–54, n. 112.

⁷⁰ Fraser (1970) 179–82.

⁷¹ Sullivan (1990) 234.

⁷² Hölbl (2001) 289; Le Guen (2016) 244–45.

⁷³ Quaegebeur (1980) 69, n. 27.

⁷⁴ P. Oxy. 2.236b. Though the title is used in reference to his coronation in 76 (Harris Stele), the stele was produced in 41, and cannot be read as an example of early contemporary use: *pace* Hölbl (2001) 223.

⁷⁵ For the numerous references to Ptolemy XII as ‘Neos Dionysos’ on inscriptions and papyri, see, *inter alia*, Tondriau (1948) 137–38; Fraser (1972) II 396, n. 438; Hazzard (2000) 145, n. 213; Litwa (2012) 81.

⁷⁶ Bronze bust: Seyrig (1968) 251–56, esp. 251–52. Volkmann (1958) 49 also notes that some of Auletes’ coinage includes the attributes of Dionysus, though I have been unable to identify any such coins.

⁷⁷ Walker and Higgs (2001) 157, no. 155. Cf. Ashton (2008) 33–34.

Stele, Auletes appears as the incarnation of the young Osiris-Dionysus.⁷⁸ There are also several hints of Dionysiac ritual at the court.⁷⁹



Figure 6: Left: Bronze bust of Ptolemy XII with features of Dionysus. Reproduced from *Seyrig (1968)* 252. Right: Marble portrait of Ptolemy XII with *mitra*. With thanks to Carol Raddato ©.

The king held and participated in numerous Dionysiac-Osirian religious feasts in Memphis.⁸⁰ In fact, his frequent musical performances that are thought to have earned him the nickname ‘Auletes’ should be read in light of his close identification with this deity.⁸¹ Finally, he renamed two cities in the Fayyum to be changed to ‘Bacchias’ and ‘Dionysias’ as a further indication of the place of Dionysus in his public identity.⁸²

Auletes thus demonstrates his awareness of how he was expected to behave in a religious setting. He treated his Pharaonic obligations seriously and fulfilled them with a marked vigour. In this way, he adhered to a model of kingship approved by the Egyptian and Greek populations of Egypt and especially by the all-important priesthood. Strikingly, he also innovated in the role and, in many respects, added to the religiosity of the ruler image. For instance, he was the first king to appear with the title ‘*Theos*’ in Greek inscriptions.⁸³ Such a

⁷⁸ Harris Stele: BM EA886; Hölbl (2001) 289. Cf. Walbank (1984) 86.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Tondriau (1946) 156–60.

⁸⁰ Derchain (1998) 1155.

⁸¹ Diod. Sic. 1.44.1; Strab. 17.1.11; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 32.70. Athen. 5.206d; Grant (1972) 45. Cf. Volkmann (1958) 48–49.

⁸² Bianchi (1988) 156.

⁸³ Goudchaux (2001) 132; Siani-Davies (2001) 5, n. 16.

policy no doubt helped him conciliate the powerful priesthood and temper the instability in the South, even in the face of unrest and instability.⁸⁴

Cultural Program

Finally, the rejuvenation of intellectual life and culture in Alexandria in the last half-century of Ptolemaic rule speaks to Auletes' careful cultivation of the city as a place of learning, art, and philosophy.⁸⁵ Under Euergetes II, Alexandria reached its intellectual and cultural low-point. Once famed as a hub of learning, Meneclous of Barca solemnly records the dearth of distinguished scholars in the city following their forced exile after 145.⁸⁶

In contrast, Auletes seems to have paid particular attention to the Alexandrians in a bid to reinvigorate the cultural life of the city and win their support as a generous patron. The particularly high quality of sculpture and art, exemplified through the heads of two sculptures, now in the Brooklyn and British Museum, points to an era of cultural rebirth under Auletes' leadership.⁸⁷ Auletes actively welcomed and offered protection to numerous academics and philosophers who became refugees during the Mithridatic War.⁸⁸ They and other individuals can be found in Alexandria during this period. Fraser, for instance, notes Apollonius of Citium's homage to the king in the introduction to his commentary on Hippocrates' *On Dislocations* which demonstrates Auletes' patronage of writers.⁸⁹ Even though he eventually became an opponent of the king, the prominence enjoyed by the philosopher Dion in Alexandria, indicated through his leadership of a one-hundred-person embassy to Rome in 57,⁹⁰ reveals his place in the strong intellectual context of Alexandria.⁹¹ Cicero's 'first' *Academia* from 45 reinforces the picture of Alexandria's dynamic philosophical ethos through its imagined discussion between Lucullus and Heraclitus of Tyre.⁹²

External Challenges: Managing the Threat of Rome

The most pressing challenge faced by Auletes during his first reign was the increasing involvement of the Romans in Egyptian politics.

⁸⁴ Siani-Davies (2001) 5.

⁸⁵ Fraser (1972) I 87, 311–12, 484; Machler (1983) 4; Bowman (1986) 228.

⁸⁶ *FGrH* 270, fr. 9 (=Athen. 4.184c) (trans. Gulick). Cf. Fraser (1972) I 86.

⁸⁷ Bothmer (1960) 171. Brooklyn 58.30; BM 55253. Cf. Machler (1983) 4.

⁸⁸ Fraser (1972) I 485–86.

⁸⁹ Fraser (1972) 312; Hölbl (2001) 230. But see the comments of Badian (1975) 452 on Fraser's method.

⁹⁰ Cass. Dio. 39.12–13.

⁹¹ Fraser (1972) I 490; Welch (2006/7) 186–87, n. 35.

⁹² *Acad. Pr.* 11 (fr. 4 Luck). Fraser (1972) I 487–88.

From the middle of the second century,⁹³ the Ptolemies frequently brought Rome into the fold to resolve their own dynastic affairs.⁹⁴ In fact, the ‘threat of Rome’ emerged as an important tool for warring members of the Ptolemaic family.⁹⁵ Wills, in particular, became an important ‘insurance policy’ for the king, and Rome, as an increasingly powerful – but distant – force in the Eastern Mediterranean, seemed a natural fit as the external guardian.⁹⁶ In 163, Ptolemy VI was restored to the throne, after turning to Rome for support.⁹⁷ In 155, Ptolemy VIII was the first of the Lagids to publish a will bequeathing his kingdom to Rome if he died without a son.⁹⁸ Though the kingdom passed to Ptolemy IX, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III, the wheels were set in motion: Ptolemy Apion left Cyrene to Rome on his death in 96,⁹⁹ and either Ptolemy XI Alexander II (in 80) or, more likely, Ptolemy X Alexander I (in 88) also allegedly left a will bequeathing Egypt to Rome.¹⁰⁰ Around this time, Sulla attempted to involve himself in the accession of Egypt’s next king through Ptolemy XI.

Nevertheless, Egypt, at the time of Auletes’ accession, was still independent – and would remain so for another half century. For one thing, the Egyptians continued to act principally in accordance with their own interests, even at the expense of Rome.¹⁰¹ For example, in 87/6 Egypt refused to lend official support to L. Licinius Lucullus. He was offered presents and conveyed to Cyprus instead of receiving ships to use in the fight against Mithridates.¹⁰² Furthermore, Sulla’s protégé Alexander XI was murdered by the Alexandrians after just nineteen days of rule, in part, because the king was too close to Rome. At the same time, the Romans equivocated in their stance toward Egypt. In relation to Apion’s bequest of

⁹³ On the early ‘friendly’ relations between Egypt and Rome, see Lampela (1998) 29–104; Siani-Davies (2001) 5–6; Hekster (2012) 192.

⁹⁴ For an overview of the dynastic struggles, see Sullivan (1990) 82–91. The Romans also undertook more visits to Egypt at this time (e.g., L. Minucius Thermus in 145, Scipio Aemilianus in 140/39, and L. Memmius in 112) and trade became more frequent: Hekster (2012) 193.

⁹⁵ Hekster (2012) 193.

⁹⁶ Braund (1984) 149–53. This was a phenomenon of the Hellenistic world and not limited to the Lagids. In 134, Attalus bequeathed Pergamum to the Romans, becoming the first kingdom the Romans actually received from a testament: Braund (1984) 131–33.

⁹⁷ Polyb. 31.10.1–4; Liv. *Per.* 46; Gruen (1984) 694–99; Siani-Davies (2001) 3.

⁹⁸ *SEG* IX 7; Bowman (1986) 32; Shipley (2000) 210; Meadows (2001) 20.

⁹⁹ On the will and its consequences, see Braund (1984) 133, esp. n. 14 (with references).

¹⁰⁰ The progenitor of the will, and indeed its existence, is a subject of great controversy. Since Badian (1967) 178–92, scholars have generally accepted it was Ptolemy X Alexander I: Grant (1972) 30; Harris (1979) 155–58; Gruen (1984) 716, n. 213; Green (1990) 553; Hazzard (2000) 146; Shipley (2000) 212; Meadows (2001) 21. Nevertheless, Braund (1983) 24–27; (1984) 134–35 argued that the testator was Alexander II. On this view, see also Maehler (1983) 12; Sullivan (1990) 89–91; Huss (2001) 659–60. For our purposes, the identity is of secondary importance to the existence of a will itself, a fact which is now generally accepted: cf. Maehler (1983) 12–13, n. 23; Braund (1984) 134.

¹⁰¹ Welch (2006/7) 183.

¹⁰² Plut. *Luc.* 2.5–3.1. On the Egyptians’ unwillingness to support Lucullus, see Sullivan (1990) 86–87.

96, for instance, the Romans did not annex Cyrene until 75.¹⁰³ Likewise, they did not take up the bequest of Egypt by Ptolemy X Alexander I in 88 (or later).¹⁰⁴

This is not to say that Rome was a non-issue: in the years following his succession, Auletes would have watched Rome's increasing involvement in the East with growing discomfort. In 75, the Roman Senate's judgment on Cleopatra Selene, though favourable to his cause, served as a reminder of their influence in the political affairs of Egypt. A year later, Cyrene became the first of the Ptolemaic possessions to fall into the hands of the Romans on the basis of Ptolemy Apion's will. At the same time, Nicomedes IV had bequeathed Bithynia to Rome who, in turn, transformed it into a new province.¹⁰⁵ Auletes must also have learned with trepidation about Crassus' bill to annex Egypt as a Roman province in 65.¹⁰⁶ The agrarian law proposed by P. Servilius Rullus two years later, which would have indirectly handed over the decision of whether Egypt belonged to Rome to a commission of *decemviri*, must have evoked a similar reaction.¹⁰⁷

Yet, Auletes had no reason for total despair; the very debate and controversy indicated that there was no certainty on what stance Rome would take towards Egypt. At the same time, he could also lobby individual Roman senators who leant away from annexation, following the precedent of other foreign kings and princes who used bribery to influence political decisions in Rome. At the trial against Verres in 70, Cicero implies that Quintus Hortensius called for official senatorial recognition of Auletes' reign.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Crassus' bill of 65 was vehemently opposed by, among others, his fellow censor, Q. Lutatius Catulus.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Rullus' proposal met similar opposition and was duly defeated.¹¹⁰

Moreover, the instability of Rome's internal politics would have been a huge advantage for Auletes in his bid to ward off agitations to annex Egypt. In this changed context, political

¹⁰³ On the date of annexation, see Harris (1979) 267. For the Romans' delay in executing Apion's will, see Braund (1983) 23–24; (1984) 133–34; Siani-Davies (2001) 5–6, esp. n. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Welch (2006/7) 183.

¹⁰⁵ Sullivan (1990) 95; Güney (2015) 31.

¹⁰⁶ On Crassus' motivations, see Marshall (1976) 65; Crawford (1994) 43–44; Tatum (2006) 194. Cf. Sherwin-White (1994) 271–73, n. 74.

¹⁰⁷ Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.16.43–17.44. Plut. *Crass.* 13.2. On the implications of Rullus' bill for Egypt, see Seager (1979) 68; Sullivan (1990) 233–34.

¹⁰⁸ Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.76 (*regem appelet Ptolomaeum*); Hekster (2012) 196. In fact, Shatzman (1971) 364 suggests that this comment shows Auletes was already trying to gain the favour of the senate in 70. If so, our impression of Auletes' awareness of his political context is further enhanced.

¹⁰⁹ Cic. *Leg. agr.* 2.17.44; Plut. *Crass.* 13.1. See also the fragments of Cicero's *De rege Alexandrino*, a speech delivered in 65 against the proposed annexation: Crawford (1994) 44–56, esp. Schol. Bob. 91.31St (fr. 1). On the strong opposition to the bill, more generally, see Harris (1979) 157.

¹¹⁰ Sullivan (1990) 10.

decisions, including what to do with respect to Egypt, were increasingly made by certain powerful individuals within Rome.¹¹¹

In light of these developments, the conduct of Auletes in relation to Rome deserves recognition.¹¹² On the one hand, his aim of securing the title ‘Friend and Ally of the Roman People’ (*socius et amicus populi Romani*), the policy on which he placed the greatest importance during his first reign, reflects a strategic understanding of Roman diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the East.¹¹³ Braund, affirming Badian’s earlier judgment, argues that *appellatio* (recognition) “was of the highest importance for the king within Rome’s orbit: all the more so where the king was especially insecure.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, under normal diplomatic protocols, gaining recognition as ‘Friend and Ally’ made Egypt far more secure, as the title and its status should have made it less likely for anyone in Rome to agitate for its annexation.¹¹⁵

Yet, Auletes also demonstrates a perceptive recognition that winning the title was not enough, given the changes to the political dynamic in Rome.¹¹⁶ In 58, Caesar attacked the German chieftain, Ariovistus, even though he had been named among Rome’s *amici et socii* in the previous year.¹¹⁷ Dio recognised the dubious legality of Caesar’s action in his description of the soldiers’ mutiny at Vesontio which took place because “all the soldiers were saying that they had no business with this war and that it had not been decreed, but was merely being fought because of Caesar’s private ambition” (καὶ ἐθρῦλουν ὅτι πόλεμον οὔτε προσήκοντα οὔτε ἐνηφισμένον διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν τοῦ Καίσαρος φιλοτιμίαν ἀναιροῦντο).¹¹⁸ This striking detail reflects the changed political landscape of Rome’s foreign relations: certain powerful individuals could act in seeming contravention of the senate and general assembly. These grants of friendship, in other words, could only be maintained through strong advocacy and patronage channels in Rome. Accordingly, Auletes’ prescient cultivation of the friendship and support of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar must be recognised for what it is: a strategic and necessary piece of diplomacy which, although lengthy and costly, helped preserve the sovereignty of the kingdom – at least until Publius Clodius, whom Auletes did not pursue, sponsored the annexation of Cyprus.

¹¹¹ Braund (1984) 185.

¹¹² Hekster (2012) 195, 199.

¹¹³ Cf. Burton (2011) 79–83.

¹¹⁴ Braund (1984) 23–26, here 24. Cf. Badian (1958) 107.

¹¹⁵ Sullivan (1990) 234; Keddie (2016) 200.

¹¹⁶ Hekster (2012) 195.

¹¹⁷ Caes. *BGall.* 1.31–54; Cass. Dio 38.34–47.

¹¹⁸ Cass. Dio 38.35.2 (trans. Burden–Strevens (2020) 102); Hagendahl (1944) 8–14, 26.

Auletes' Cultivation of Pompey and Caesar

Auletes, above all, sought the friendship and support of Pompey. Pompey's standing in the East in the late sixties, coupled with his political influence at Rome and friendship with other kings, made him a most attractive target.¹¹⁹

It is not clear whether Auletes actually met Pompey before he reached Rome in 58. Several historians have argued that their first encounter was much earlier, dating to autumn 67, on the basis of a passage of Lucan which describes the travels of Pompey during his campaigns, including to Egypt.¹²⁰ That Pompey met Auletes in Egypt at this time is also hinted in *Pro Caelio*, when Cicero describes Crassus' protest to Auletes' arrival in Rome.¹²¹ Seager has argued that Crassus' quotation of Ennius' *Medea Exsul* can be interpreted to suggest that Auletes' arrival in Rome presupposed a prior meeting in Egypt with Pompey: "if Jason [Pompey] had not sailed from Greece [Italy] to Colchis [Egypt], Medea [Auletes] would not have sailed from Colchis [Egypt] to Greece [Italy] smitten with love for Jason [Pompey]."¹²²

However, the evidence is slim, and a prior meeting was not essential given the standing and fame of both men. Even if they had not previously encountered each other, Auletes had at the very least sought Pompey's favour through generous overtures.¹²³ Pliny, following Varro, notes that during Pompey's Judaeian campaign in 63, Auletes financially supported 8,000 of his cavalrymen.¹²⁴ According to Josephus and Appian, Auletes also offered other lavish gifts to Pompey, including a crown worth 4000 gold pieces when he was in Damascus.¹²⁵ Moreover, Appian states that Pompey did not enter Egypt in 63/2 even though Auletes invited him to do so.¹²⁶ Pompey's rejection does not necessarily indicate that Auletes' strategy was misguided.¹²⁷ Pompey's friendship with several kings was well-known and it is not inconceivable that he might protect their interests at Rome.¹²⁸ Certainly, his subsequent care for Auletes when the king was in Rome speaks to the good relations the two enjoyed.

¹¹⁹ Hölbl (2001) 224–28.

¹²⁰ Luc. 2.586–87: *Calida medius mihi cognitus axis / Aegypto atque umbras nusquam flectente Syene* (trans. Braund (1992) 37). First suggested by Piganiol (1956) 133–38, affirmed by Seager (1980) 89; Sullivan (1990) 233, Hekster (2012) 195.

¹²¹ Cic. *Cael.* 18.

¹²² Seager (1980) 89.

¹²³ Sullivan (1990) 324.

¹²⁴ Plin. *HN* 33.47.136. It is more likely that Auletes financially supported, rather than sent, a corps of 8,000 cavalrymen: *pace* Bevan (1927) 351; Whitehorne (1994) 180; Meadows (2001) 22. Cf. Grant (1972) 33; Hölbl (2001) 224. On the limited capacity of Auletes' army at this time, see Fischer–Bovet (2014) 110, 114–15.

¹²⁵ Joseph. *BJ* 14.35; App. *Mith.* 114.557.

¹²⁶ App. *Mith.* 114.

¹²⁷ Hekster (2012) 196.

¹²⁸ E.g., App. *B. Civ.* 2.51.

After working towards recognition for nearly his whole reign, Auletes' cultivation of the leading men of Rome paid off in 59. For this to happen, he had had to pay close attention to the consul Caesar.¹²⁹ Caesar finally confirmed Auletes' status as 'Friend and Ally' by law and by decree of the senate.¹³⁰ But Auletes had to pay dearly for this support.¹³¹ This was not new. Since the second century, numerous kings had paid their way to recognition.¹³² Nevertheless, his bribe amounted to a hefty sum of six thousand talents, equivalent to Egypt's total annual revenue.¹³³

Raising Money and the Alexandrian Reaction

Rather than hard cash, Auletes' bribe seems to have largely been the promise to pay in the future.¹³⁴ Of the money which he immediately paid to the Romans, some was collected by an embassy sent to Alexandria, while the rest was borrowed from Roman speculators and financiers, including Gaius Rabirius Postumus, and collected forcibly from the Egyptians.¹³⁵

Securing Roman recognition through the creation of a huge debt was a bitter pill for the Egyptians and the Alexandrians to swallow and there seems to have been a mixed reaction to Auletes' efforts. On the one hand, there is evidence for unrest in the *chora* due to increased exactions and taxation.¹³⁶ On the other hand, there is some evidence that the Alexandrians could stomach the unpalatable political reality. A passage of Diodorus, who was present in Egypt just before Auletes secured the title, indicates their comprehension and acceptance.¹³⁷ Diodorus describes the tense atmosphere in Alexandria as well as the deference of the Alexandrians to win the favour of an Italian embassy and not cause offence or give any pretext for war.¹³⁸ The Alexandrians' careful conduct indicates their anxiety and awareness of the importance of Roman recognition. Auletes' securing of the *socius* title was certainly considered a cause for celebration. As much is indicated by the decrees issued by the king in the wake of Egypt's newly acquired status.¹³⁹ In 59 Auletes issued an amnesty decree to reassert power and

¹²⁹ Sullivan (1990) 234.

¹³⁰ Cic. *Att.* 2.16.2; Caes. *BCiv.* 3.107; Cic. *Rab. Post.* 4, 6; Cass. Dio 39.12.1. See also Hölbl (2001) 225–26.

¹³¹ It is likely that other senators also profited from the 6000 talents: Shatzman (1971) 365.

¹³² Taylor (1949) 136; Braund (1984) 26 (with examples); Facella (2010) 192–93.

¹³³ Suet. *Iul.* 54.3. Cf. Cass. Dio 39.12. Hölbl (2001) 225. On the continued prosperity and wealth of Egypt in the first century, see Sullivan (1990) 229; Monson (2015) 186. Estimates of the annual revenue range from 6000 to 14,800 talents p.a.: Hazzard (2000) 146, esp. n. 215.

¹³⁴ Plut. *Caes.* 48.4–5; Cass. Dio 39.12.1; Braund (1984) 54.

¹³⁵ See especially Siani-Davies (2001) 13, n. 44. Cass. Dio 39.12.1.

¹³⁶ Sullivan (1990) 235. Keddie (2016) 200 notes that the Alexandrians were exempt from this taxation.

¹³⁷ Diod. Sic. 1.83.8–9, 1.44.1.

¹³⁸ Diod. Sic. 1.83.8; Welch (2006/7) 187, n. 36.

¹³⁹ Sullivan (1990) 235.

signify a symbolic ‘new chapter’ in his reign.¹⁴⁰ In so doing, he guaranteed the hereditary nature of cleruchic land and cancelled all impending prosecutions.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

In light of the challenging internal social conditions of Egypt and external threat of Rome, Auletes showed remarkable resilience and awareness of his political context during his first reign. I suggest that Auletes managed the numerous, often conflicting, expectations of the Egyptians, Alexandrians, and priesthood well. In this regard, too, Auletes recognised and exploited the political circumstances of the late Roman Republic for his, and Egypt’s, own benefit. His vigorous adherence to the Pharaonic model, extensive religious program, and assiduous concern for the interests of the Alexandrians helped secure and maintain his hold on the throne for over twenty-two years, an often-overlooked fact that speaks to his careful management of the various stakeholders in the Ptolemaic state.

¹⁴⁰ BGU IV 1185; C.Ord.Ptol. 71. See also Bloedow (1963) 44–46; cf. Fraser (1972) II 222–23, n. 270.

¹⁴¹ Grant (1972) 34–35; Samuels (1989) 82; Hölbl (2001) 226; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 110–11, 231.

Chapter 3

AULETES' EXILE AND RESTORATION: THE 'ROMAN QUESTION'

In this chapter, I reinterpret the events relating to the so-called 'Egyptian question', a term scholars often use to describe the political debate in Rome about whether – and by whom – Auletes should be restored to the Egyptian throne following his exile in 58.¹ Interpretations of this three-year saga, after which Auletes was restored, generally cast the Alexandrians as little more than a backdrop and use Auletes as a springboard for broader discussions of the state of Roman politics in the late-first century.² However, I suggest that recourse to the unique dynamic between the Alexandrians and Auletes fundamentally explicates the king's exile, actions in Rome, and behaviour in Egypt after his restoration. The Alexandrians, on the one side, resolutely opposed the king for ostensibly failing to safeguard Egypt's sovereignty. Auletes, on the other side, recognised the Alexandrians' political potency, brutally resorting to violence, before adopting a series of conciliatory measures in an attempt to regain their favour. In this respect, Auletes was only partially successful, and his hold on power remained precarious but enough to pass the throne on to his children after his death in 51.

The Exile of Auletes

In their description of Auletes' departure in 58, the ancient sources are somewhat confused, suggesting that Auletes either left Egypt voluntarily or was expelled.³ The main evidence for the former view is Cassius Dio, who writes that Auletes left Egypt on his own accord, with the population not knowing or suspecting he was dead, only to claim later he was

¹ Morrell (2019) 151.

² See, for example, Green (1990) 554–55; Chauveau (2000) 18–22.

³ Bennett and Depauw (2007) 211–14 set the *terminus ante quem* for Auletes in Egypt to July 58: O. Theb. Gr. 14; BGU VIII 1757. Cf. 11 August 58 ('year 23, Mesore 10'): Gardiner et al. (1913) 79–80, no. 14; Sullivan (1990) 237.

expelled.⁴ Plutarch, following Timagenes, records that Auletes left without sufficient reason and under no necessity (οὔσης ἀνάγκης), though his account is contradictory, as he notes the falling out between the people of Alexandria and Auletes elsewhere.⁵

Nevertheless, the vast majority of the sources indicate that Auletes was forced out of Egypt, although the exact mechanics of expulsion or degree of coercion exerted on the king are rarely specified.⁶ Justin, relying on Pompeius Trogus, is the first historian to explicitly refer to expulsion by revolt.⁷ In any case, our sources almost unanimously ascribe responsibility to the Alexandrians for the King's exile.⁸

The Cause of Auletes' Exile

Significantly, the reasons underlying the Alexandrians' mobilisation against Auletes fit the very limited set of circumstances in which the crowd historically decided to act.

In 58, the tribune P. Clodius Pulcher introduced a law ordering the annexation of Cyprus which was then authorised by a decree of the senate.⁹ A second measure appointed M. Porcius Cato *pro quaestore pro praetore* to seize Cyprus and its royal estate.¹⁰ Cato tried to persuade Auletes' brother, Ptolemy of Cyprus, to hand over the island without fighting and offered him a priesthood in the temple of Aphrodite at Paphos.¹¹ The King chose to take his own life instead.¹² Over the next two years, Cato methodically seized and sold off the Cypriot king's estate, raising almost 7000 talents of silver.¹³

Loss of Cyprus: Auletes' insufficient response?

The Alexandrians were incensed at the loss of Cyprus to Rome. For one thing, the annexation effectively undermined their prerogative to appoint and remove their own kings,

⁴ Cass. Dio. 39.12.2–13.1.

⁵ Plut. *Pomp.* 49.7. But see Plut. *Pomp.* 49.6; *Cat. Min.* 35.2.

⁶ Siani-Davies (2001) 15.

⁷ Just. *Prol.* 40 (*seditione flagitatus Alexandriae*).

⁸ Cic. *Rab. Post.* 4 (*pulsus [...] regno Ptolomaeus*); App. *Syr.* 51.257 (βασιλεύς, ἐκπεσὼν καὶ ὄδε τῆς ἀρχῆς); Liv. *Per.* 104 (*Ptolemaeus [...] ob iniurias quas patiebatur a suis relicto regno Romam venit*); Strabo 17.1.11 [796] (οἱ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς ἐξέβαλον); Plut. *Cat. Min.* 35.2 (Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Αἰγύπτου βασιλεὺς ὑπ' ὀργῆς τινοῦ καὶ διαφορᾶς πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας ἀπολελοιπῶς μὲν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν). See also Suet. *Iul.* 11 (*Alexandrini regem suum socium atque amicum a senatu appellatum expulerant*). It is generally agreed that Suetonius incorrectly placed this event in 65, and the events in question are a retrojection of 58: Sullivan (1990) 237, n. 59.

⁹ Vell. Pat. 2.38.6; Cic. *Sest.* 57, 59; App. *B Civ.* 2.23; Cass. Dio 38.30.5.

¹⁰ Morrell (2017) 116. Cf. Badian (1967) 112–13, 116 who notes his task did not involve organising Cyprus as a province. On the significance of this title and the political implications of Cato's appointment, see Badian (1965) 111–12; Seager (1980) 103.

¹¹ Plut. *Cat. Min.* 35.1.

¹² Plut. *Cat. Min.* 36.1–2. Cass. Dio 39.22.2–3.

¹³ Plut. *Cat. Min.* 38.1; Vell. Pat. 2.45.5. See also Peek (2008) 116. For a recent treatment of Cato's activity in Cyprus as pragmatic and exemplary given the trying circumstances, see Morrell (2017) 116–22.

since they had placed Ptolemy of Cyprus on the throne in 80.¹⁴ Even more egregious to the Alexandrians, however, was Auletes' perceived failure to safeguard Egypt's sovereignty.¹⁵ Auletes had failed, in their eyes, to protect the integrity of the Ptolemaic empire and his response, or lack thereof, was interpreted as allowing *and* accepting the loss of the last Ptolemaic possession outside Egypt. Julius Caesar was clearly aware of how gravely this loss antagonised the Alexandrians. When faced with considerable hostility from various groups within Egypt and tension in the royal house a decade later, Caesar allegedly returned Cyprus to Egypt as a mark of deference.¹⁶ Next, the annexation aggravated the Alexandrians' grievances, which they had earlier put aside, concerning the onerous exactions which Auletes had carried out to fund his costly programme to purchase Roman recognition.¹⁷ Cassius Dio records that the people offered him an ultimatum: reclaim Cyprus from the Romans or repudiate his friendship with them. He was unwilling to do either and, less than a month later, was driven out of Egypt.¹⁸

Auletes' behaviour in relation to Cyprus is often cast as lackadaisical, complacent, and careless.¹⁹ Some historians have even suggested that Auletes had agreed to give possession of Cyprus to the Romans in exchange for his recognition.²⁰ Yet, it remains to be asked what Auletes could have realistically done to assuage the Alexandrians or avoid the annexation of Cyprus. As Oost notes, "to have offered any opposition to Rome might have involved the common ruin of his hapless subjects."²¹ Perhaps Auletes could have more stridently demanded the return of Cyprus from the Romans. Certainly, renouncing his friendship with Rome was out of the question. To do so would be an incredibly antagonistic move that might give certain individuals, long vying for Egypt's annexation, the necessary excuse to act.

At the moment of his recognition as *socius*, Auletes, I suggest, had no reason to think that Cyprus would be touched. The annexation of Cyprus, in other words, was unforeseeable, unjust, and certainly unexpected.

¹⁴ Just. *Prolog.* 40. Cf. Michaelidou–Nicolaou (1976) 20, 102–4.

¹⁵ Cic. *Sest.* 57; Liv. *Per.* 1004; Cass. Dio 39.12.1–2.

¹⁶ For the actual return in 47: see Badian (1965) 119; Hölbl (2001) 235. Bicknell (1979) 330–34 argues for the later date of 44. In any case, Cleopatra recognised its ideological value, associating Cyprus with her rule on its return in coinage: see, for example, Svoronos (1904) n. 1874.

¹⁷ Welch (2006/7) 187.

¹⁸ Cass. Dio 39.12.2.

¹⁹ Cf. Bevan (1927) 353; Maehler (1983) 3; Green (1990) 136; Morrell (2017) 126.

²⁰ Van't Dack (1988) 187, n. 4. The idea is also entertained, though not affirmed, in Braund (1984) 135; Peek (2008) 116. It is unlikely: there is no recorded enmity between the two brothers; Cyprus was a source of considerable prestige for the Ptolemies; and, in any case, a hostile Alexandrian reaction calling for Auletes' head – not unlike their actual response, in light of their tumultuous history – would certainly have not been out of the question.

²¹ Oost (1955) 101.

This idea is reflected in contemporary Roman responses to the annexation. Cicero, most of all, reacted to the act with incredulity and disgust. As he later stressed in his condemnation of Clodius, even though Ptolemy of Cyprus was not a *socius*, he was certainly not an enemy and deserved far better treatment. After all, Ptolemy of Cyprus was the brother of Auletes who *had* received that senatorial honour and was a descendant of a royal family long allied to Rome.²² Cato, too, seems to have disapproved of the act and certainly Cicero suggests that he was sent to Cyprus against his will.²³

Modern scholars have likewise noted the unexpectedness and dubious legality of the act, variously describing the annexation as “barefaced robbery”, “the most shameful act of Roman imperialism apart from the Gallic War”, and “bare-faced imperialism”.²⁴ The official justification was that Ptolemy of Cyprus had supported pirates, although there is a possibility that the will of Ptolemy Alexander helped authorise the act.²⁵ In practice, the main motivation was fiscal, that is, to finance Clodius’ grain law.²⁶ In any case, the unexpectedness of the annexation and its questionable legality point to the fact that very few Romans, far less Auletes, could have foreseen, let alone adequately planned against, its occurrence.²⁷

Composition of the Crowd

It is time to return to the identity of the participants in the Alexandrian crowd which reacted so savagely to Auletes’ situation.²⁸ In particular, we need to reassess the extent to which the political elites of the city played a role in galvanising the response. In his speech to the Alexandrians in the late first or second century AD,²⁹ Dio Chrysostom speaks of “general hostility” and “factional strife” (στασιαστικῶς διέκεισθε) against Auletes.³⁰ In particular, he describes the participation of political pluralities (ἐταιρεῖαι), such as the ‘Simaristoi’ (Σιμαρίστειοι) led by the eponymous Symaristos, a name which “echoes back into the third

²² Cic. *Sest.* 57, 59, 64; *Dom.* 20, 52; Oost (1955) 101; Peek (2008) 116.

²³ Cic. *Sest.* 60–63; Vell. Pat. 2.45.4; Plut. *Cat. Min.* 34.1–4; Morrell (2017) 118. See also Hölbl (2001) 224 who argues the Optimates as a whole were against the annexation.

²⁴ Oost (1955) 101; Badian (1968) 77; Morrell (2017) 116, respectively. See also Sullivan (1990) 237.

²⁵ Cass. Dio 38.30.5; Morrell (2017) 118, n. 111; Sullivan (1990) 236; Braund (1984) 134–35.

²⁶ Morrell (2017) 118. Cf. Oost (1955) 99–100; Badian (1965) 112, 117.

²⁷ Cic. *Sest.* 57; Oost (1955) 108: “That there was no justification for it, morally, or in the fetial law of Rome [...] is self-evident.” It is worth keeping in mind that Clodius is generally held to have achieved his designs through trickery and a masterful outmanoeuvring of his political opponents: Taylor (1949) 138; Seager (1980) 103, 179.

²⁸ Hölbl (2001) 226; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 111.

²⁹ Barry (1993a) 82. Estimates on the date of composition vary. See, for example, Jones (1973) 306–7, n. 5: AD 71–75. Cf. Sidebottom (1992) 407–19, esp. 418: the reign of Trajan (AD 98–117).

³⁰ Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 32.70.1.

century, and clearly derives from the Alexandrian aristocracy.”³¹ These *ἐταιρεῖαι* of Alexandria comprised citizens and elite members of the city.³² Moreover, members of the Ptolemaic court, such as Hephaestion who later held the position of *dioiketes*, or Paniskos, *strategos* of Herakleopolis, may have been involved in view of their rapid promotion under Berenice IV.³³

It is also likely that philosophers and intellectuals in the city took part in Auletes’ expulsion. This is implied through their leadership and participation in the hundred-person embassy of 57/6 which advocated against Auletes’ restoration.³⁴ Some members of the army may have also taken part. Bouché-Leclercq, Todd, and Fraser have inferred that some soldiers had switched to the side of the Alexandrians from a comment of Cassius Dio which notes that the king could not compel his subjects to be quiet “as he had no foreign troops” (ξενικὸν γὰρ οὐκ εἶχεν), even though we have evidence from a decade later of mercenaries in the Egyptian forces.³⁵

The involvement of lower classes and unprivileged Egyptians, Greeks, and foreigners not incorporated into the citizen body might also be presumed through the emphasis on the totality of the Alexandrians’ opposition to the king. Dio Chrysostom, for instance, addresses and lambasts the Alexandrians: “so he lost the city by piping and you [Alexandrians] by dancing” (καὶ τέλος ἐκεῖνος μὲν αὐλῶν, ὑμεῖς δὲ ὀρχούμενοι τὴν πόλιν ἀπωλέσατε).³⁶

In the exile of Auletes in 58, then, the phenomenon of a large, heterogeneous group of Alexandrians mobilising is repeated. The participation of people from all walks of life in Alexandria speaks to their total antipathy towards Auletes. This widespread opposition remained a significant obstacle that Auletes had to manage for the remainder of his life.

Business as Usual: Berenice IV in Egypt (58–55)

Following Auletes’ departure, the Alexandrians, in a testament to their loyalty to the Ptolemaic family as a whole, raised Berenice IV, a daughter of Auletes, to the throne.³⁷ Little is known about Berenice’s rule; the surviving evidence, however, indicates at the very least that she understood the expectations of her people and acted in accordance with their wishes.³⁸

³¹ Fraser (1972) I 90. On the aristocratic origins of Simaristos, see Zucker (1952) 338–42; (1957) 164–66.

³² Todd (1963) 98, n. 23.

³³ Siani-Davies (2001) 20, relying on Mooren (1975) 96, 111, 138–39, 242.

³⁴ Cic. *Cael.* 23–24, 51; Cass. Dio 39.13–14.

³⁵ Caes. *BCiv.* 3.110; Todd (1963) 107–110; Fraser (1972) II 223, n. 273. But see Siani-Davies (2001) 21, n. 67. On the diminished state of the army during Auletes’ reign, see Van’t Dack (1983) 77–86; Fischer–Bovet (2014) 114, 236–37.

³⁶ Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 32.70.1 (trans. Siani-Davies (2001) 53).

³⁷ Cass. Dio 39.13.1.

³⁸ Hazzard (2000) 147.

Berenice became sole ruler of Egypt by August 57,³⁹ following a brief period of joint rule with Cleopatra Tryphaena, who, despite no record of her activities between 69 and 57, was most likely Auletes' estranged wife, although the evidence is piecemeal and in places contradictory.⁴⁰ At this time, Berenice undertook a concerted effort to strengthen her rule by cooperating with the Alexandrians to find a suitable male consort.⁴¹ Following two unsuccessful attempts,⁴² she eventually married a certain Seleucus – an illegitimate son of a Seleucid king – and was nicknamed *Kybiosaktes* ('Salt-Fish Monger') by the Alexandrians.⁴³ After a few days, she had him strangled to death; his habits were unbecoming a Ptolemaic ruler.⁴⁴ Finally, the Queen and the Alexandrians jointly settled on Archelaus, a Pontic noble who was previously the High Priest at the Temple of Ma at Comana.⁴⁵

Auletes and the Embassy

Meanwhile, in the autumn of 58,⁴⁶ Auletes reached Rome, journeying via Cyprus and then Athens.⁴⁷ In the first instance, Auletes leveraged his relationship with Pompey in a bid to gain official support for his restoration, which he had long spent cultivating.⁴⁸ He resided in Pompey's villa in the Alban hills and received considerable support from the Roman, which included Pompey recommending Auletes' restoration to the Senate.⁴⁹

It is striking to observe the dynamic between the Alexandrians and the Ptolemaic king transgress the bounds of the Egyptian empire in the period between 58 to 55. Content with their new rulers in Egypt, the Alexandrians were determined to prevent Auletes from returning. Accordingly, in 57/6, an Alexandrian embassy, composed of one-hundred influential

³⁹ P. Oxy. LV 13777. Cf. Ricketts (1990) 49.

⁴⁰ Bennett (1997) 57–64. See also Green (1990) 137; Sullivan (1990) 240–1, esp. n. 82; Whitehorne (1994) 183; Hölbl (2001) 227–28.

⁴¹ Hazzard (2000) 147. It is noteworthy that the sources attribute agency to both the Alexandrians and Berenice IV in this search. Compare, for example, *FGrH* 260, fr. 32 (28); Cass. Dio 39.57.1–2; Strabo 17.1.11 [796].

⁴² *FGrH* 260, fr. 32 (28). The first died of illness: Green (1990) 137; the second was likely obstructed by A. Gabinius: Bouché-Leclercq (1903–7) II 160; affirmed by Huss (2001) 693. For a useful overview of the marriages, see Bloedow (1963) 68–71; Whitehorne (1994) 183–84.

⁴³ Bevan (1927) 356; Fraser (1972) I 125. On the identity of Seleucus, see Heinen (1968) 105–14.

⁴⁴ Strabo 17.1.11 [796]; Cass. Dio 39.57.1–2.

⁴⁵ Liv. *Per.* 105.4; Strabo 12.3.34 [558], 17.1.11 [796]; Cass. Dio 39.57.1–3. It is unclear whether Archelaus and Berenice IV ruled as coregents. Some historians hold that Archelaus was king on the basis of papyrological sources containing the dating formula “year two, which is also year one” (e.g., P. Grenf. 2.38), though this is inconclusive: for a full discussion, see Hölbl (2001) 252, n. 31 (with references).

⁴⁶ Olshausen (1963) 49.

⁴⁷ Goudchaux (2001) 131. It is possible, though unlikely, that Cleopatra VII accompanied him, see Volkmann (1958) 52–53; Grant (1972) 37–38.

⁴⁸ Christmann (2005) 118.

⁴⁹ Cass. Dio 39.14.3; Cic. *Rab. Post.* 6. Alban villa: Strabo 17.1.11 [796]; Morrell (2019) 154. Presentation to the senate, see Sullivan (1990) 238. Cf. Olshausen (1963) 49, n. 66 who queries whether Pompey, not in office at the time, personally presented Auletes to the senate on the basis of historical practice.

Alexandrians and led by the Academic philosopher Dion,⁵⁰ journeyed to Rome to oppose Auletes' restoration and argue for their right to choose their own ruler before the Senate.⁵¹

This Alexandrian legation represented a real and credible threat to Auletes' hopes of restoration. His fear of its potency – and, it should be added, ruthlessness as a king – is demonstrated through his brutal response. Some of the embassy's members were murdered by hired assassins in Puteoli, others were killed when they reached Rome, and the remaining ambassadors were silenced through intimidation and bribery. The leader of the embassy, Dion, was poisoned and died just before his hearing at the Senate.⁵² This shocking act represented the nadir of relations between Auletes and the Alexandrians: one can only imagine the fury and hostility toward Rome and Auletes when news of the embassy's murder reached the city.⁵³

Auletes sought to cover up the affair and to win senatorial support for his restoration through extensive bribery.⁵⁴ Cicero, writing to Lentulus Spinther on 13 January 56, despairs at the “outrageous bribery” of the king (*illius regiae largitionis invidia*) and notes Auletes' use of agents, such as Hammonius, to corrupt particular senators.⁵⁵ To finance this corruption, Auletes borrowed from various Roman lenders who, in turn, had an interest in seeing Auletes restored to the throne.⁵⁶

Auletes' shocking murder of the Alexandrian embassy was a fundamental misstep. Morrell has recently argued that this act plunged the debate regarding his restoration into a moral dimension.⁵⁷ On her reconstruction, the murder “prompted the ‘discovery’ of the oracle and the prohibition on the use of an army, and that *that* circumstance served to reopen the issue of who would restore Ptolemy.”⁵⁸ In response to this outrage, Auletes was forced to remove himself from Rome and took refuge at Ephesus in Asia Minor.⁵⁹ The earlier senatorial decree that Auletes would be restored by P. Lentulus Spinther was not cancelled,⁶⁰ but its operation was frustrated by several alternative proposals, as the Senate struggled to find an appropriate way to deal with the ‘Egyptian question’, in light of Auletes' transgression of the Romans' (and Alexandrians') moral framework.⁶¹ By the middle of 56, the aversion of many Romans

⁵⁰ Cass. Dio 39.13.1–14.4. Cf. Strabo 17.1.11 [796].

⁵¹ Fraser (1972) I 125; Sullivan (1990) 238; Morrell (2019) 154.

⁵² Cic. *Cael.* 23, 51, 54; *Har. resp.* 34; Strabo 17.1.11 [796]; Cass. Dio 39.13–14; Hölbl (2001) 228.

⁵³ Welch (2006/7) 187.

⁵⁴ Cass. Dio 39.15.1. Cic. *Rab. Post.* 4–7. See also Morrell (2019) 154, esp. n. 17.

⁵⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 1.1.1 SB 12. Cf. Cic. *Rab. Post.* 6; Braund (1984) 60; Christmann (2005) 115.

⁵⁶ Grant (1972) 39; Hekster (2012) 198.

⁵⁷ Morrell (2017) 127, (2019) 161–70.

⁵⁸ Morrell (2019) 167.

⁵⁹ Cass. Dio 39.16.3. Cf. Grant (1972) 38–39; Sullivan (1990) 238, esp. n. 75.

⁶⁰ Cic. *Fam.* 1.5b.1 SB 16, 1.7.4 SB18.

⁶¹ Morrell (2017) 128.

towards Auletes was palpable. In fact, the senate voted that Auletes should not be restored at all, a decree that resembled the earlier proposal of P. Servilius Isauricus.⁶²

Despite these significant impediments, Auletes still managed to manipulate his circumstances and bring about his return. To do so, he promised the eye-watering sum of 10,000 talents to A. Gabinius, the proconsul of Syria.⁶³ Though Gabinius later claimed that he was acting in the interests of the State (*rei publicae causa*), he almost certainly decided to act on the basis of Auletes' financial inducement, in addition to the influence of Pompey.⁶⁴

Gabinius led an army to Egypt to ensure Auletes' restoration. Significantly, both Cicero and Cassius Dio record that the Alexandrians resisted the army of Gabinius near Pelusium.⁶⁵ In the face of the overwhelming power of a Roman army, such defiance is telling.⁶⁶ It speaks to the Alexandrians' pride as a people, desirous of autonomy and freedom from Roman interference. In spite of their efforts, Gabinius overcame the Alexandrians and restored Auletes as King of Egypt in the early months of 55.⁶⁷

Auletes' Violent Return to Egypt and Second Reign: 55–51

On his return, Auletes sought to re-establish his control of Egypt in the first instance through violence. He swiftly executed the leaders of the group responsible for exiling him and preventing his restoration. These included a number of wealthy citizens as well as his daughter, Queen Berenice IV.⁶⁸

The presence of a garrison of troops in Alexandria, named the *Gabiniani* after Aulus Gabinius who had left them behind, also helped Auletes retain the throne and protect him from his people.⁶⁹ Auletes won the support of these soldiers quickly, offering them luxury and the Alexandrian lifestyle.⁷⁰ The *Gabiniani* proved a loyal and useful force both before and after Auletes' death.⁷¹ They were called upon on several occasions to suppress disorder in the *chora*

⁶² Cic. *Fam.* 1.7.4 SB 18, though it was vetoed. Servilius' proposal: Cic. *Fam.* 1.1.3 SB 12.

⁶³ Cic. *Rab. Post.* 21; Plut. *Ant.* 3.2.

⁶⁴ Cass. Dio 39.55.3, 39.56.3; Morrell (2019) 158, esp. n 42.

⁶⁵ Cic. *Pis.* 21.49; Cass. Dio 39.58.1–3.

⁶⁶ Cass. Dio 39.58.1–2. Cf. Val. Max. 9.1, ext 6.

⁶⁷ Sources in *MRR* 2.218. It is unlikely that Auletes was present in battle. For a full discussion of the army, its campaign and journey, see Siani-Davies (2001) 27–32. The earliest attestations of Auletes' return are dated to April (e.g. *SEG* 39.1705; BGU VIII 1820) and June (BGU III 1002) 55: Bennett and Depauw (2007) 214. Cf. Cic. *Att.* 4.10.1, writing on 22 April 55 (= *IX Kal. Mai. an.* 55), reports the rumour that Auletes had been restored, though we should account for some time for the news to travel.

⁶⁸ Cass. Dio 39.58.3. Cf. Plut. *Ant.* 3.4.

⁶⁹ Cass. Dio 42.5.4.

⁷⁰ Caes. *BCiv.* 110. On their close ties of loyalty, see Sullivan (1990) 244. It is sometimes suggested that the *Gabiniani* also functioned as a Roman check on the king, e.g., Maehler (1983) 3; Braund (1984) 94. If so, Auletes' conversion of the soldiers into a loyal Alexandrian force is even more impressive.

⁷¹ Grant (1972) 43.

during his second reign.⁷² They also played a central role in the army of Ptolemy XIII led by Achillas against Caesar in 48.⁷³

Yet, Auletes could hardly rule through force and fear alone. He required the active support, or – at the very least – the passive acceptance of his people, a good many of whom were against him. The Alexandrians, in particular, remained a potent force whom Auletes could scarcely ignore. He first attempted to reinforce his position with the priesthood and Egyptian population by extending his generosity toward the temples. The completion of the temple of Horus in Edfu during his second reign would have been a welcome opportunity to reinvigorate this relationship. In fact, less than a year after his return, Auletes undertook the last large-scale building project of the Ptolemaic dynasty, including the construction on the temple of Hathor at Dendera on 16 July 54, a task that took more than 30 years to complete.⁷⁴

Managing Roman Lenders and Rabirius Postumus

Despite these efforts, Auletes' hold on the throne during his second reign was never totally secure. This instability rested, in large part, on his struggle to juggle the interests of competing stakeholders. Most challenging of all were the Roman lenders to whom Auletes had earlier promised significant sums of money.⁷⁵ Cicero graphically describes their arrival in Alexandria waving promissory notes in their hands.⁷⁶

How greatly Auletes was compromised at this time is indicated through the effectively forced appointment of Rabirius Postumus as *dioiketes*. Though Cicero is later at great pains to emphasise Postumus' magnanimity and to stress his reluctance to accept, let alone perform, the role, such statements amount to little more than rhetorical whitewash.⁷⁷

A recently discovered papyrus contains a complaint against the extortionate conduct of a certain Πόστομος, most likely identifiable to our Rabirius Postumus, during his time as *dioiketes*:⁷⁸

⟨⟩ Πόστομος· λαβών γαρ

when Postumus was in charge

[τὴν ἀρχ]ῆν τοὺς μὲν ἐξ

he replaced the people who had

⁷² Caes. *BCiv.* 110; Grant (1972) 43. See also Hölbl (2001) 230.

⁷³ Caes. *BCiv.* 103–4, 110.

⁷⁴ Hölbl (2001) 278.

⁷⁵ Cf. Braund (1984) 60.

⁷⁶ Cic. *Fam.* 7.17.1.

⁷⁷ E.g., Cic. *Rab. Post.* 22, 28. Cf. Volkmann (1958) 58.

⁷⁸ P. Med. Inv. 68.53; Balconi (1993) 1–20, reproduced here from Siani-Davies (2001) 34.

ἀρχῆς χαθεσ-	usually been
[ταμέ]νους χαὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ	appointed and had traditionally
πατέρων	succeeded their
[χαὶ π]άππων διαδεδεγμένους	fathers and grandfathers in the
τάς	office.
[τάξ]εις μετέστησεν,	Instead, he appointed
χατέστησεν	
[δὲ ἀ]νεπιτηδείους χαὶ	unsuitable and boorish men
ἀπεγνωσμέ-	
[νου]ς, πωλήσας τὰ πάντα	after he had sold everything
τὸν χρό-	
νον [δια]π[ε]φυλαγμένα· ἐγ	saved over the years; and, among
δὲ τούτοις,	these measures,
συντά[ξας] τοὺς μὲν	he ordered that the most useful
χρησίμους χαὶ ὠφελι-	and efficient
μωτ[άτου]ς τῶν διοι[χη]τῶν	of <i>dioeketai</i> should be replaced,
μετασταθῆναι,	
ἐφ' ἀρπαγὴν ... [vacat]	with the intention of plunder ...

The papyrus outlines the devastating impact which Postumus had as *dioiketes*. In particular, it describes his appointment as a contravention of past practice because it violated the traditional inheritance of the role by bloodline. Moreover, it records how he sullied the office by appointing unsuitable individuals to administer the Egyptian bureaucracy and manage expenditure. In practice, this meant using the money-gathering powers of the office to plunder the country to raise as much money as possible to repay various Roman lenders.⁷⁹ This pillaging activity may be inferred from the reference in the fragment to the sale of objects which had been saved over the years as well as the desire to plunder.

Exactly how much money Postumus managed to recoup is uncertain. An image from Cicero's defence, which describes ships filled with paper, linen and glass returning to Puteoli,

⁷⁹ Cf. Bloedow (1963) 76–77; Shatzman (1971) 368–69; Green (1990) 138–39; Sullivan (1990) 245.

indicates that Postumus' methods were extreme, and he explored all methods to recoup his funds.⁸⁰ Certainly, the diminished silver-content of Ptolemaic tetradrachms in these years indicate the dire financial straits of the King and Egypt.⁸¹

Several months after his appointment, the Alexandrians could no longer tolerate his high-handed methods.⁸² Although there is no evidence that they, in line with their historically preferential financial treatment, were directly affected by his exactions or increased taxes, which would have mainly impacted the inhabitants of the *chora*,⁸³ they appear to have completely rejected the right of a foreigner (worse, a Roman), dressed in the traditional garb (*pallium*) of the *dioiketes*, to ruthlessly collect levies and pillage the countryside.⁸⁴

It says much about the Alexandrians' conception of their sovereignty and desire to be free from foreign interference that they forced Postumus to flee from Egypt, after they had thrown him into jail and put the Roman lenders in chains.⁸⁵ Although there is no record of Auletes' actions during Postumus' departure, there is a chance that Auletes welcomed the unrest: it offered him the perfect pretext to arrest Postumus and subsequently allow him to escape, thereby ridding Egypt of a destabilising and burdensome drain on its financial affairs and regaining some of his standing with the Alexandrians.⁸⁶

Leveraging His Children and Heirs: Managing the Instability

A bleak picture of the economic suffering, depopulation, and continued exploitation of the *chora* emerges from the papyri in the years when Auletes jointly ruled with his daughter Cleopatra VII.⁸⁷ In the late fifties poor flooding of the Nile contributed to several years of poor harvest.⁸⁸ At this time, there is a striking increase in the chronological distribution of complaints about taxation and even extortion.⁸⁹ If this is not just coincidence, such an increase indicates the ruthlessness with which tax collection was carried out and the difficult

⁸⁰ Cic. *Rab. Post.* 14.

⁸¹ From 54–53, the content dropped from ~85% to 64%: Weiser and Cotton (1996) 286. Cf. Walker and King (1976) I 139–59, esp. 150–51. Hazzard (1990) 89–107; Lorber (2012) 227 calculate its silver content was reduced to just 1/3.

⁸² Fraser (1972) I 126. The duration of Postumus' time in Egypt is uncertain. He must have arrived sometime after Auletes' restoration, the *terminus ante quem* of which is April 55, and been back in Rome to face his trial, dated to December 54–January 53: Siani-Davies (2001) 74–82.

⁸³ Keddie (2016) 200, esp. n. 35.

⁸⁴ Cic. *Rab. Post.* 25–28.

⁸⁵ Cic. *Rab. Post.* 39. Bevan (1927) 357.

⁸⁶ *RE* 23:2, 1754. See also Bloedow (1963) 74–79; Green (1990) 139; Sullivan (1990) 245; Hölbl (2001) 229.

⁸⁷ For a general overview, see Rostovtzeff (1941) II 897–911; Fraser (1972) I 128.

⁸⁸ Peek (2008) 130.

⁸⁹ See, for example, BGU VIII 1779 (Herakleopolite, 51–50), 1828 (Herakleopolite, 52–51); 1829 (Herakleopolite, 51); 1836 (Herakleopolite, 51–50). For the full list of examples, see Maehler (1983) 15, n. 53.

circumstances faced by peasants in the *chora*.⁹⁰ We can observe, for instance, the depopulation of villages as the inhabitants were forced to abandon their land as a result of their exploitative treatment. For instance, BGU VIII 1835 records a protest by the priests of Hiera Nesos to the *strategos* of the Herakleopolites about a theft which happened because most of the inhabitants had abandoned their village.

Given the instability both in Alexandria and the *chora*, it is notable that Auletes adopted a somewhat novel policy by increasingly bringing his children, Cleopatra VII and Ptolemy XIII – the future rulers of Egypt – into the public sphere. Though unpopular himself, it seems that Auletes sought to promote the next generation of the Ptolemaic family in a bid to temper the hostility of the Alexandrians and Egyptians by encouraging them to look beyond his own immediate rule.

Sullivan, for instance, has noted that Auletes is referred to as “the elder Ptolemy” in a papyrus from 55, thereby indicating that Auletes associated his young son, Ptolemy XIII, with himself.⁹¹ Likewise, Cleopatra VII, identified as “the daughter of the king”, is represented just behind Auletes in the first eastern crypt of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera in a symbolic display of continuity as his female heir.⁹² Moreover, an inscription dated to 31 May 52, which contains a dedication to Isis by an Egyptian named Nephros, son of Babaus, describes Auletes as the king (βασιλεύς) and a god (θεός), alongside his children who bore the official title θεοὶ Νέοι Φιλαδέλφοι:⁹³

ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου,
θεοῦ Νέου Διονύσου, καὶ τῶν
τέκνων αὐτοῦ, θεῶν Νέων Φιλ-
αδέλφων, Εἴσιδι θεᾶς μεγίστη
Νεφερῶς Βαβαῦτος ἐκομίσα-
τὸν ἱερὸν τόπον τοῖς κυρίοις θ-
εοῖς μεγίστοις.
(ἔτους) κθ´, Παχῶν {ι} κθ´.

⁹⁰ Maehler (1983) 6–7.

⁹¹ BGU III 1002; Sullivan (1990) 247.

⁹² Quaegebeur (1991) 49–50, 60. Cf. Hölbl (2001) 230; Peek (2008) 110, n. 28.

⁹³ OGIS II 741. See also Fraser (1972) II 428, n. 682.

On behalf of king Ptolemaios, the god Neos Dionysos, and his children, the gods Neoi Philadelphoi, for the very great goddess Isis, Nepherōs son of Babaus adorned this place to be sacred to the lords the Great Gods.

This emphasis on the continuity of the household is important. Auletes' revival of the historic title for his children, looking back to Ptolemy II and the 'golden age' of the Ptolemaic empire, demonstrates a concerted effort to publicly promote his children as unified and linked in solidarity, their future reigns full of harmony and glory.⁹⁴

A further indication of Auletes' 'heir-oriented' policy is the fact that he actually appointed his daughter, Cleopatra VII, co-regent before his death in 51. Several documents, assignable to this period, contain the dual dating formula 'year 30 which is also year 1', the latest of which dates to July 51.⁹⁵ This formula often indicates a transitional period to the next ruler and may be used to signal a co-regency.⁹⁶

On the basis of this chronological marker, several scholars have argued for a brief co-rule between father and daughter.⁹⁷ Most recently, Peek suggested that this co-regency had begun by March 51.⁹⁸ Notwithstanding the fact that there is no independent evidence for any kind of joint reign, in addition to the impression of a standard succession from the literary descriptions of Auletes' will,⁹⁹ Peek's assertion that Auletes was still alive by March 51 imaginatively circumvents the earlier trouble of Otto and Bengtson's argument.¹⁰⁰ As Skeat noted in his refutation of their hypothesis: "the only dating which could prove the existence of the co-regency would be a dating Year 30 = 1 *during the lifetime of Auletes.*"¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Cf. Volkmann (1958) 49; Grant (1972) 55–56; Sullivan (1990) 247; Hölbl (2001) 230; Huss (2001) 702.

⁹⁵ E.g., BGU VIII 1806, 1807, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1832. Peek (2008) identifies BGU VIII 1827 as the latest (λ τοῦ καὶ α' Ἐπειφ).

⁹⁶ Samuel (1962) 158 earlier asserted the formula is "used only when there are two people on the throne". Cf. Peek (2008) 106. However, its use is not absolute: Skeat (1962) 91–94, esp. 83, n. 1; Ricketts (1980) 12.

⁹⁷ Otto and Bengtson (1938) 25, n. 2; de Meulenaere (1967) 297–300; Grant (1972) 57; Hölbl (2001) 230; Ashton (2008) 34, 72. Yet other theories abound. Ricketts (1980) 12–20, argues the formula was a "feigned co-regency" and used as part of her power struggle against Ptolemy XIII. Cf. Ricketts (1990) 59. Grant (1972) 30 suggests Cleopatra used the formula to hide her father's death and wrest control of Egypt from her brother. Cf. Samuel (1965) 376, 391–95; Heinen (1966) 24, n.1, 46–48. *Contra* Sullivan (1990) 248 who doubts whether the Alexandrian court would have accepted such a scheme.

⁹⁸ Peek (2008) 108.

⁹⁹ Skeat (1960) 92; Fraser (1972) II 226–27, n. 282; Sullivan (1990) 238, n. 138.

¹⁰⁰ Peek (2008) 107–10. Otto and Bengtson (1938) 25, n. 2. The *terminus ante quem* for Auletes' death is generally accepted as March 51 on the basis of the Buceum *stèle*: O. Buch. 13; Mond and Myers (1934) II 11–13. Cf. Cic. *Fam.* 8.4.5, wherein Cicero states that Auletes' death was now certain, though we should account for time for the news to travel: Fraser (1972) II 226–7. n. 282: 1 June; Sullivan (1990) 248: 30 June. The last attested date of Auletes alone is O. Theb. Gr. 30 (= 4 March 51): Bennett and Depauw (2007) 212.

¹⁰¹ Skeat (1960) 93.

As such, if we accept a later date for Auletes' death (e.g., July–August 51) and do not assume that Ptolemy XIII succeeded to the throne before this date, we may infer Auletes' desperation to win the Alexandrians' favour by focusing their minds on the future. This policy involved actually elevating his daughter, Cleopatra VII, who was closer to adulthood than Ptolemy XIII, into the political life of Egypt as co-regent. In so doing, Auletes continued to abate any personal grievances which the people might have had against his rule and helped ensure a relatively smooth hand over of the empire to his heirs. The ailing king, in other words, relied on Cleopatra to secure the “transition of power” within the Ptolemaic family.¹⁰²

The Will of Auletes

The testament of Auletes, made some time before his death in 51,¹⁰³ illustrates his fundamental objectives in the final stages of his life. Unlike his predecessors in Egypt and Cyrene, or early contemporaries like Nicomedes IV of Bithynia, Auletes did not leave Egypt to the Romans.¹⁰⁴ Rather, he established, in line with his strident efforts to secure Egyptian independence, Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra VII as his heirs who were to rule jointly.¹⁰⁵ Yet Auletes understood his political context and was well aware of the need to deter the Romans from interfering with Egypt after his death, a not unlikely situation considering their earlier agitations and recent annexation of Cyprus.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, as Caesar records, Auletes exhorted the Roman people by the gods and treaties which he had made in Rome (*per omnes deos perque foedera, quae Romae fecisset*) to see his will executed.¹⁰⁷

To further safeguard his will, Auletes also ordered its duplication: one copy was kept in Alexandria; the other was meant to be deposited in the treasury at Rome, though it ended up in Pompey's possession for safekeeping on account of public troubles (*propter publicas occupationes*).¹⁰⁸ Though the ultimate influence of the will on the conduct of the Romans is difficult to determine, it is significant that the Ptolemaic empire, on the death of Auletes, passed into the hands of Auletes' children, rather than the Romans. In light of the challenging conditions of the first century, this was no mean feat – and Auletes deserves recognition for helping preserve the Ptolemaic empire for the next generation.

¹⁰² Peek (2008) 119.

¹⁰³ The date of composition most likely falls between 55–51: Braund (1984) 136; Siani-Davies (2001) 36, esp. n 128.

¹⁰⁴ Sullivan (1990) 246.

¹⁰⁵ Caes. *BCiv.* 3.108; Cass. Dio 42.35.4.

¹⁰⁶ Sullivan (1990) 246; Welch (2006/7) 187.

¹⁰⁷ Caes. *BCiv.* 3.108 (trans. Peskett).

¹⁰⁸ Caes. *BCiv.* 3.108.

Conclusion

En route to Rome, following his exile by the Alexandrians, Auletes visited Rhodes where he met with Cato. Plutarch preserves their encounter early in his narrative of Cato's Cyprus mission.¹

In the anecdote Plutarch emphasises the wisdom and authority of Cato who presciently warns Auletes against journeying to Rome where he would deal with the corruption (δωροδοκία) and greed (πλεονεξία) of Rome's leading men. His advice is oracular, "not the words of a good man, but the prophetic warnings of a god" (οὐκ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ λόγων, θεοῦ δὲ μαντείας), and especially poignant, bringing Auletes to his senses "as if after a fit of madness or delirium" (ἐκ μανίας τινὸς ἢ παρακοπῆς). Cato's stoic dress, sincerity (ἀλήθεια) and sagacity (σύνεσιν), is also noted.

In contrast, Plutarch draws attention to the feebleness of the Egyptian king. Auletes, who expects Cato to come to him, is forced to visit Cato, who humiliatingly greets him while on the latrine and directs the king to be seated (ὁ δὲ Κάτων ἐτύγχανε μὲν ὄν τότε περὶ κοιλίας κάθαρσιν). Auletes can only marvel at the wisdom of Cato and, after he acts against Cato's advice, despairs at his own naivety and "groans over his own evil resolve" (ἔστεινε τὴν αὐτοῦ κακοβουλίαν).

Plutarch, in essence, extols the wisdom and greatness of the Roman, while Auletes appears as a weak and hapless figure. At face value, the passage may be taken as evidence of his weak resolve and incapacity to rule. In light of the conclusions of this thesis, I propose that such a disparaging treatment is emblematic of traditional Romanocentric conceptions and, alongside other like anecdotes, should not be used to inform our understanding of his character

¹ Plut. *Cat. Min.* 35.2–5 (trans. Perrin).

or situation. One need only consider the scornful treatments of Bevan and Green, who have allowed the incident to speak for Auletes' general incompetence, to appreciate the dangers of such misleading approaches.²

My aim in this thesis has been to create an alternative framework through which we may understand and appreciate Ptolemy XII Auletes in his own context. Central to this approach has been a reconceptualisation of the relationship between the city of Alexandria and the Ptolemaic family. During the approximately three-hundred-year dynasty, the Alexandrians, I suggest, were a potent and decisive influence on the policies and behaviour of the Ptolemies who respected the energy and involvement of their principal audience. Far from an irrational and innately violent 'mob' composed of the dregs of society, this heterogeneous population remained loyal to the Lagids: their mobilisation was informed by and responded to the conduct of individual Ptolemies.

When viewed in this context, Auletes emerges as a far more complex figure than the typical image of a weak king from a crumbling empire who slipped into Roman history. He chose to navigate a political system based on centuries of Pharaonic tradition and Ptolemaic precedent. From the beginning of his reign, he paid particular attention to the key stakeholders within Egypt and won the support of the priests and native population through an extensive religious program which he pursued vigorously.

By far the most significant group which Auletes had to manage were the Alexandrians. At first, he won their favour by attentively responding to crises and reinvigorating the city with a lively intellectual life. This dynamic, however, was complicated by the fact of Roman hegemony in the Mediterranean region which posed a direct threat to the sovereignty of Egypt. In this regard, Auletes exhibited a dogged determination to fulfil the Alexandrians' expectations of securing Egypt's independence, while also carefully navigating the minefield of late Republican politics. Eventually, under the weight of geopolitics, the relationship between the Alexandrians and Auletes broke down and between 58–55 the king and the city were locked in opposition. Auletes never truly recovered. At first, he relied on violence and afterwards, once he had re-established himself on the throne with Roman help, with novel conciliatory methods that drew upon the long-standing affection of the Alexandrians for the Ptolemaic family, if not for himself.

In this light, the Alexandrians' steadfast desire for autonomy and their adherence to the idea of their city as the seat of a royal empire emerges as the defining element of their identity

² Bevan (1927) 353; Green (1990) 648.

and history in the late first century. It played a dominant role in the history of the late Ptolemaic empire and greatly impacted Roman politics in the sixties and fifties.

This re-telling of the career of Auletes in his own context has broader implications for our understanding of the Hellenistic Age. Historical studies of the Eastern Mediterranean in the late- or mid-first century are prone to take Roman imperialism for granted, so much so that they barely consider the experience of the people living in those areas or how they might have thought about themselves. Yet, if we wish to appreciate the full complexities and real-world impact of Roman imperialism, it is essential that we understand these areas in their own context in as much as our evidence will allow. To do otherwise is to obfuscate the experience of the vanquished, simplifying the unique dynamic which they shared with their rulers into an oversimplified tale of Roman triumph and victory.

This thesis has demonstrated the possibility for historians to better understand the nuances of power and rule in ancient kingdoms by considering the balance of power in one Hellenistic state for which there is in fact a vast amount of evidence if we look. None of this is intended to redeem the ruler: in the case of Auletes, it is important to accept that he was a product of a brutal system of politics and a dysfunctional dynasty. Nevertheless, putting him back into his own context allows a subtler, more complete figure to emerge and leads on into the next generation: Cleopatra should be seen first as a Ptolemaic queen, rather than simply Mark Antony's lover, just as Auletes should be seen as a ruthless, and frankly successful, Egyptian king, rather than a wretched Roman puppet.

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