

Alexander's House (Pausanias 8.32.1)

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Die Geschichte des Unwahren zu verfolgen
kann wol nicht ganz ohne Interesse sein.¹

AT ABOUT A.D. 175 Pausanias visited Megalopolis. Among other *Sehenswürdigkeiten* he recalls (8.32.1):

πλησίον δὲ οἰκία,² ιδιώτου κατ' ἐμὲ κτήμα ἀνδρός, ὃ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τῷ Φιλίππου τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐποίησαν· ἔστι δὲ ἄγαλμα Ἄμμωνος πρὸς τῇ οἰκίᾳ, τοῖς τετραγώνοις Ἑρμαῖς εἰκασμένον, κέρατα ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἔχον κριοῦ.

Nearby a house, in my time possession of a private citizen, which originally they constructed for Alexander son of Philip. There is an image of Ammon near the house, in the form of a four-sided Herm,³ with ram's horns on its head.

Christian Habicht queries merely whether the structure were a residence or a chapel, delivering the verdict “ungewiss.”⁴ Ernst Badian endorses Habicht.⁵ E. A. Fredricksmeyer argues of the building

¹ Karl Lehrs, “Ueber Wahrheit und Dichtung in der griechischen Litteraturgeschichte,” *Populäre Aufsätze aus dem Alterthum vorzugsweise zur Ethik und Religion der Griechen*² (Leipzig 1875) 407. Lehrs' views have recently and independently been expanded by Mary Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore 1982). My title reveals how much I owe to WILLIAM J. SLATER, “Simonides' House,” *Phoenix* 26 (1972) 232–40, and “Pindar's House,” *GRBS* 12 (1971) 141–52 (hereafter ‘Slater’).

² M. H. Rocha-Pereira, *Pausanias Graeciae Descriptio* II (Leipzig 1977) 290, reads οἰκίαν, followed by Fredricksmeyer (*infra* n.6). I prefer οἰκία (Fa) with its relative attracted to the gender of the appositive κτήμα. οἴκημα (Hitzig-Blümer with Pa) is the *lectio facillior*, a correction made to ease the gender of the relative, while οἰκία is confirmed by the following οἰκία. I cannot construe the accusative (Fredricksmeyer provides no translation), apparently a gloss on the neuter οἴκημα, misunderstood as an accusative. I may add that Rocha-Pereira's *apparatus* throughout is inadequate for close work on Pausanias.

³ After Ernst Meyer, *Pausanias Beschreibung Griechenlands Buch VIII bis X* (Munich 1979) 412: “ein Standbild des Ammon in der Form der viereckigen Hermen.”

⁴ *Gottmenschentum und Griechische Städte*² (Zetemata 14 [1970]) 29 n.3: “In Megalopolis sah Pausanias (8,32,1) ein ursprünglich für Alexander erbautes Haus. Es ist ungewiss, ob es ein Kultgebäude war . . .”

⁵ “The Deification of Alexander the Great,” *Ancient Macedonia, Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki 1981) 59 n.51: “the verdict, I think, remains: ‘ungewiss’ (Habicht).” Badian distinguishes, however, between a chapel and “a building

“that it was a shrine dedicated to Alexander as son of Ammon.”⁶ He dates its construction either to 331/0 B.C. or “more likely” to 324. In either case the aorist ἐποίησαν must apply to construction completed some 500 years before Pausanias’ visit to a land subject to depredation and earthquake. Fredricksmeier approaches the passage as an Alexander historian. The arguments with which he defends Pausanias are purely historical ones, founded on broad and long familiarity with Alexander cult. I should like to suggest that one might better examine the passage from the point of view of Pausanias rather than of Alexander. I should further suggest that, if one does, one will believe that Pausanias truthfully reports what he was told at the site.⁷ The question of veracity lies not with Pausanias but with his informant, the owner of the house.

Pausanias remarks again and again how one shrine after another at Megalopolis had fallen into disuse and ruin: 8.30.1 (Poseidon Epoptes), 30.4 (Mater Deorum), 30.6 (Hermes Akakesios), 31.9 (Athena Polias), 31.9 (Hera Teleia), 32.2 (the *sunnaoi* Muses, Apollo, and Hermes), 32.2 (Aphrodite), 32.3 (Ares), 32.3 (Dionysus), 32.3 (the *sunnaoi* Herakles and Hera). Earlier Strabo (8.8.1 [388]) dramatically attests the utter destruction of Megalopolis, citing a comic writer (*CAF* Adespota 211): “the great city is a great wasteland.” The view is confirmed by Polybius’ account of its sack by Kleomenes III in autumn 223.⁸ Kleomenes’ sack of Megalopolis (Plut. *Cleom.* 23ff after Phylarchus) was as much against Antigonos Doson (Plb. 2.54) as against an Achaean League betrayed by Aratus to the Macedonian king. I doubt that Kleomenes would have spared a shrine of Alexander, symbol of Macedonian *Herrschaft*, while destroying systematically shrines of the Olympians.

At the end of his visit Pausanias pauses for a homily, suggested by the desolation of the place, on how the mighty are fallen. He compares Megalopolis with Mycenae, Nineveh, both Thebes, Orchomenos, Delos, Babylon, and exalts, as often, the omnipotence of Tyche.⁹ Amidst such universal wreckage there is the miraculous survival

honouring Alexander as son of Ammon (which does not imply cult).” Habicht seems to mean a building erected for Alexander (to reside in when visiting Megalopolis?).

⁶ “Three Notes on Alexander’s Deification,” *AJAH* 4 (1979) 1–3.

⁷ Reading Pausanias has confirmed for me the famous evaluation of J. G. Frazer, “Intrinsic Evidence of Pausanias’s Truthfulness,” *Pausanias’s Description of Greece* I (London 1898) lxvi–vii.

⁸ 2.55.2–7. See Benedictus Niese, *Geschichte der griechischen und makedonischen Staaten* II (Gotha 1899) 338–40, and Thomas Lenschau, *RE* 11 (1921) 705–06 s.v. “Kleomenes” 6.

⁹ 8.33. The topos, known from Thuc. 1.10.1–2 (Mycenae), Xen. *An.* 3.4.10 (Nineveh), and later prose writers, is amply illustrated by Hermann Hitzig and Hugo Blüm-

of one private house and its herm. Pausanias' own context arouses skepticism. There are further grounds for distrust.

We have all visited homes where Napoleon, Lord Byron, Goethe, or George Washington have reputedly slept. Were houses touched by the great shown tourists in antiquity? Certainly.

1. Pausanias (9.25.3) records that, having crossed the river Dirke, he saw the ruins of Pindar's house. This would presumably have been the dwelling allegedly spared by Alexander in October 335. In an article of fundamental methodological importance William J. Slater demonstrated that the whole tale of Pindar's house with its neighboring shrine is a biographical fiction that began as naïve exegesis of *Pythian* 3.77ff and grew to infect handbooks and *vitae*.¹⁰ He concludes (149): "It becomes more than a possibility, then, that Pausanias was deceived not only by his handbooks and *vitae*, but also by local informants who were aware of these." Slater never suggests that Pausanias lied. He put down what he was told. He was shown Pindar's iron chair at Delphi and says so.¹¹ On the other hand there is no reason to believe that he saw the ruins of a house which some 650 years before the poet Pindar had inhabited. That the shrine of Dindymene is an anachronism makes the house a hoax.¹² Pausanias remarks that the shrine was open but one day a year and that he had luckily arrived on that day. Rather a clever custodian knew how to extract an extra tip from a gullible tourist.¹³

2. Strabo (17.1.29 [806]) was shown at Heliopolis in Egypt the 'haunts'¹⁴ of Plato and Eudoxus. There is no reason to doubt that

ner, *Des Pausanias Beschreibung von Griechenland* III.1 (Leipzig 1907) 233–35, and see Otto Regenbogen, *RE Suppl.* 8 (1956) 1041.55ff s.v. "Pausanias." For the importance of Tyche in Pausanias see Joyce Heer, *La personnalité de Pausanias* (Paris 1979) 307–11, esp. 308; this book is a splendid example of accepting Pausanias on his own terms.

¹⁰ Slater (1971); cf. my remarks at *GRBS* 15 (1974) 272, and Lefkowitz (*supra* n.1) 65. A. B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander* I (Oxford 1980) 91 (*ad* 1.10.1) simply does not understand Slater's argument (in the manner of Lehrs) or he would not dismiss his evidence as "very flimsy." Arrian was less gullible when shown the anchor of the Argo by the natives at Phasis (*Peripl. M. Eux.* 9.2) and because it was of iron questioned its antiquity.

¹¹ 10.24.4; Lefkowitz (*supra* n.1) 65, where correct the reference.

¹² See Slater 148: "Pindar himself could not have used the name Dindymene; it belongs to a later time. This is important, since it means that Pausanias learnt the name (and presumably the other details) from a local historian or guide, and not from a genuine inscription on the statue."

¹³ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 270 n.1: "Zu den eigenen Erlebnissen, mit denen Pausanias sich gern aufspielt, gehört, dass er zufällig in den Tempel kam, der nur an einem Tage im Jahre aufgemacht ward. Das mag der Küster den seltenen Fremden erzählt haben, um einen besonderen Bakschisch einzustreichen."

¹⁴ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* IV (Cambridge 1975) 15 n.2: "Strabo speaks of being shown . . . the *διατριβαί* of Plato and Eudoxus, which if earlier

Eudoxus observed the heavens in Egypt.¹⁵ Plato's Egyptian sojourn, by contrast, is best explained as imitation of Pythagoras and naïve exegesis from passages in the dialogues (e.g. *Phdr.* 274c–275c, *Ti.* 22B, *Phb.* 19B–D, *Leg.* 656D–657B, 799A–B, 819A–D) that reveal 'Egyptian influence'.¹⁶ Strabo reports a thirteen-year residence. If the text is not corrupt,¹⁷ the statement is absurd,¹⁸ and causes us to doubt the whole. I approve the skepticism of Wilamowitz, Shorey, and Leisegang.¹⁹ 'Plato's haunts' are comparable to 'Pindar's house'. A biographical fiction in handbooks and *vitae* influences local informants who impose to their advantage upon gullible tourists. Guthrie's allusion to "the ways of tourist guides" is apt.²⁰

3. Aulus Gellius (*NA* 15.20.5 Hosius) on a visit to Salamis saw the "grim and gloomy cavern"²¹ where Euripides wrote his tragedies: *Philochorus refert in insula Salamine speluncam esse taetram et horridam, quam nos vidimus, in qua Euripides tragoedias scriptitarit.* The learned Gellius knew a written source (*FGrHist* 328F219), traveled to Salamis, and after enquiry was shown the cave presumably by a knowledgeable local. Like Pausanias and Strabo, he put down what he was told, deceived by an informant.²² Although the tradition ascends to Philochorus, I do not for a moment believe that Gellius saw a cave where Euripides had composed tragedies. Neither did Wilamowitz²³

usage is a guide means not the houses where they lived but their customary places of resort." Therefore 'haunts': H. L. Jones' 'schools' (LCL), often repeated, is too specific.

¹⁵ George Huxley, *GRBS* 4 (1963) 85–88. The decisive evidence is Eudoxus' own.

¹⁶ See the excellent discussion of Alice Swift Riginos, "Platonica: the Anecdotes concerning the Life and Writings of Plato," *Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition* III (Leiden 1976) 64–65. Evidence for Egyptian travel is late and the *Index Herculanensis* attests only travel to Magna Graecia.

¹⁷ The variant *τρίς* in the Epitome suggests that it might be; numerals are notoriously unstable. But even three years are too long.

¹⁸ See Huxley (*supra* n.15) 84: thirteen is absurd but may refer to "the interval between the date of Plato's supposed visit and that of Eudoxus."

¹⁹ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon: Sein Leben und seine Werke* I⁵ (Berlin 1959) 187. If the priests showed the rooms where Plato is supposed to have lived, one need not believe them. Wilamowitz does, however, accept the historicity of Plato's Egyptian sojourn although admitting (188 n.1) that knowledge of Egyptian matters in the dialogues does not require autopsy; as does Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago 1968) 24–26; H. Leisegang, *RE* 20 (1950) 2350 s.v. "Platon" ("nicht zu erweisen"). Shakespeare never visited Italy, nor Winckelmann Greece, nor Prescott Mexico.

²⁰ Guthrie (*supra* n.14) 15.

²¹ So John C. Rolfe (LCL). Contrast the romantic version of Fritz Weiss, *Aulus Gellius Die Attischen Nächte* II² (Darmstadt 1965) 292: "eine versteckte und wildromantische Grotte"!

²² Lefkowitz (*supra* n.1) 102 remarks of ancient tourists: "When they visited Salamis, tourist guides could point out to them Euripides' cave."

²³ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides Herakles* I³ (Darmstadt 1959) 6 n.10: "Ob den Neugierigen zu Gellius' Zeit die echte Grotte gezeigt ward, ist um so

nor does Mary Lefkowitz,²⁴ who holds that references to the sea at *IT* 392–420 and *Hel.* 1451–64 gave rise to the tale. The cave by the sea is a beautiful metaphor. The artist withdraws from the world. Tacitus, *Dialogus* 12.1–3, provides the commentary:²⁵

Nemora vero et luci et secretum ipsum, quod Aper increpabat, tantam mihi adferunt voluptatem, ut inter praecipuos carminum fructus numerem, quod non in strepitu nec sedente ante ostium litigatore nec inter sordes ac lacrimas reorum componuntur, sed secedit animus in loca pura atque innocentia fruiturque sedibus sacris. haec eloquentiae primordia, haec penetralia.

Pythagoras likewise retreated to a cave.²⁶ Felix Jacoby's sober judgement deserves recall (*ad FGrHist* 328F219):

All we know about Euripides contradicts: distinguished families did not live in Salamis where kleruchs had been settled; when the poet was a boy the family took an active share in the cults of its own deme Phlya; Aristophanes *Ach.* 393 ff. makes the poet compose his plays in his town-house, although he jealously guards his quiet life; even in the *Thesmophoriazusae* Aristophanes knows nothing about Salamis . . . We should be pleased to know what Ph. really related of the cave, whether he actually believed the story of Euripides having composed his plays there.

4. One later example (not a dwelling) rewards notice. Some two hundred years after Pausanias, a Spanish abbess, Etheria, “a pilgrim of considerable intelligence and powers of observation,”²⁷ toured the Holy Land. She descended Mt Horeb:²⁸

zweifelhafter, als er sie greulich findet”; Wilamowitz did, however, accept Philochorus' cave: 6 and *Griechische Tragoedien* IV (Berlin 1928) 364. He doubted that in Gellius' time anyone knew where the cave was.

²⁴ “The Euripides *Vita*,” *GRBS* 20 (1979) 196 and (*supra* n.1) 90–91: she considers the cave a fiction from the start and so is far more skeptical than Wilamowitz. At viii she suggests a different reason for the origin of the tale that is closer to Lesky and to me: “The story seems to fit in with Aristophanes' characterisation of Euripides as an anti-social and abstracted philosopher who prays to his own gods (*Ran.* 892f.) . . .”

²⁵ The connection of Euripides' cave with Tacitus is made by Albin Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*³ (Göttingen 1972) 278 n.9, where, under Wilamowitzian influence, he observes: “Die Höhle des Euripides muss deshalb nicht Fabel sein.” In the first edition (1956) 151 n.1, he was more cautious: “Die Höhle des Euripides muss deshalb nicht unbedingt Fabel sein.”

²⁶ Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* 9, cited by Wilhelm Schmid and Otto Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* 1.3 (Munich 1940) 313 n.7. For the topos of the intellectual's cave see H. Gerstinger, *WS* 38 (1916) 65 n.3.

²⁷ F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London 1958) 466.

²⁸ I cite *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* 4.6–8 Pétré. The work will yield other examples. I have simply chosen an especially striking one.

ibi erant monasteria plurima sanctorum hominum et ecclesia in eo loco, ubi est rubus; qui rubus usque in hodie vivet et mittet virgultas. ac sic ergo perdescendo monte Dei pervenimus ad rubrum hora forsitan decima. hic est autem rubus, quem superius dixi, de quo locutus est Dominus Moysi in igne, qui est in eo loco, ubi monasteria sunt plurima et ecclesia in capite vallis ipsius. ante ipsam autem ecclesiam hortus est gratissimus, habens aquam optimam abundantem, in quo horto ipse rubus est. Locus etiam ostenditur ibi iuxta, ubi stetit sanctus Moyses, quando ei dixit Deus: solve corrigiam calciamenti tui et cetera.

If one dates Moses to *ca* 1400 B.C. and Etheria's pilgrimage *ca* 400 A.D., she saw a bush in the monastery garden that was a bit less than 2000 years old. One may compare the Menelais, a plane tree allegedly planted by Menelaus at Caphyae and dutifully recorded by Pausanias (8.23.4). In 1962 I was shown at Kos the plane tree under which Hippocrates taught.²⁹ The botanical irregularity did not disturb Etheria. She saw and believed. And she recorded, deceived by pious informants.

The Stoa of Philip in the agora of the Megalopolitans survived until Pausanias' day (8.30.6), not constructed by Philip, but flatteringly given his name by the locals. Bricks stamped Φιλιππίου confirm his report (*IG* V.2 469.6). As early as *ca* 200 B.C. the tradition is exploited. A Macedonian immigrant, Alexander, raised at Megalopolis, claimed descent, naming his children Philip, Alexander, and Apama (*Livy* 35.47.5–6; *App. Syr.* 13.50). He was clever enough to palm off his daughter on the kinglet of Athamania. Delians too were taken in (*Syll.*³ 576). Gortys nearby had seen better days. The temple of Asclepius contained a statuary group, the beardless god and his consort Hygeia. They were attributed to Scopas. There was another attraction. "The locals say that Alexander, son of Philip, dedicated his breastplate and spear to Asclepius. The breastplate and spear-tip were still there in my time" (Paus. 8.28.1).³⁰ I have no idea who put them there or when; or who first called them Alexander's. The hoax was natural. Arrows and spearheads, presumably votive, have been found in the small sanctuary there.³¹

Local talent for exploiting a bogus tradition of Alexander in Arcadia and the natural instinct to deceive gullible tourists more easily

²⁹ Like Aulus Gellius, I had been prepared: see W. H. S. Jones, *Hippocrates* IV (Cambridge/London 1953) lix with frontispiece.

³⁰ See A. D. Nock, *CP* 45 (1950) 49 n.31: "As for the breastplate and spear dedicated at Gortys in Arcadia, Pausanias (viii.28.1) relates that the natives said that Alexander was the giver; that may be legend."

³¹ See R. Martin and H. Metzger, *BCH* 64/5 (1940/41) 282.

explain 'Alexander's House' than to postulate miraculous survival since 331 or 324 B.C. The image of Ammon was decisive: "this makes a difference."³² The corroborative detail was ram's horns. The house's owner assured Pausanias that they proved Ammon. A weathered herm, allegedly 500 years old, carved by a provincial mason in local stone, bore visible bumps about the ears. Ammon cannot be conclusively ruled out. But Arcadia was the home of a more famous horned god. Pausanias saw a stone image of him in the agora of Megalopolis (8.30.2) and a relief at the temple of the Great Goddesses (8.31.3). Might not a herm of rustic Pan have survived before a private house of unknown date, possibly Roman?³³ To call Pan Ammon and the house therefore Alexander's would extract a tip from a gullible tourist.³⁴ Rather than evidence for Alexander's deification we have the third attested Alexander hoax in Arcadia; and Pausanias had been duped before.³⁵

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³² Fredricksmeier (*supra* n.6) 1.

³³ Pan herms are attested from the fourth century B.C. on: Fr. Brommer, *RE Suppl.* 8 (1956) 1002.60–62 *s.v.* "Pan," and E. B. Harrison, *The Athenian Agora* XI (Princeton 1965) 125. For the variety compare the Apollo herm at Megalopolis (Paus. 8.32.8).

³⁴ For Pausanias' indebtedness to local guides (*ἐξηγηταί*) see the valuable remarks of Frazer (*supra* n.7) and more generally see L. Preller, *Polemonis Periegetae Fragmenta* (Leipzig 1838) 161–62. They are not treated in *RE*.

³⁵ I recall how he tarried to hear the singing trout in the Arvanios (8.21.2). An earlier version of this paper has been substantially improved by E. A. Fredricksmeier, E. Christian Kopff, William J. Slater, and an anonymous critic. I am grateful. David A. Traill sent me to Etheria's burning bush. E. B. Harrison considers confusion of Pan and Ammon highly unlikely but adds that she expects no Ammon-Herm before "late Hellenistic, *ca* 100 B.C."