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Nearchus, Guides, and Place Names on Alexander's Expedition

Arrian's Indica 27.1 (FGrH 133 F 1 III)

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Abstract

The use of ὀνομαζόμενα at Arr. *Ind.* 27.1 continues to puzzle scholars. This article uses the textual debate as a jumping-off point to explore Nearchus' presentation of naval guides and their role on Alexander's expedition, something which previous interpretations of the passage have not adequately considered. Through examination of all Nearchan fragments, I argue that providing local place names was a key aspect of a guide's role and significant for navigation. It is also suggested that the use of this verb may additionally refer to the Macedonians' practice of giving places new names or altering indigenous names; in this section, comparative material from New World conquest is brought to bear on the ancient evidence. In light of this analysis, I conclude that the manuscript reading of ὀνομαζόμενα should be retained.

Keywords

Nearchus – Alexander – Hydraces – Arrian – *Indica* – guides – naming – toponyms

1 Introduction

ἐνθὲνδε κατηγεμῶν τοῦ πλόου λέγει Νέαρχος ὅτι συνέπλωσεν αὐτοῖσιν Ὑδράκης οὖνομα Γαδρώσιος· ὑπέστη δὲ Ὑδράκης καταστήσειν αὐτοὺς μέχρι

Καρμανίης. τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε οὐκέτι χαλεπὰ ἦν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τι ὀνομαζόμενα ἔστε ἐπὶ τὸν κόλπον τὸν Περσικόν.¹

Nearchus says that from there [Mosarna] a guide for the voyage sailed with them, a Gadrosian by the name of Hydraces; Hydraces undertook to take them as far as Carmania. From this point there were no longer difficulties but **places were named/identified to a somewhat greater extent** as far as the Persian Gulf.²

In this passage of Arrian's *Indica*, based on Nearchus' account of his voyage from India to Susa in 325-324 BCE, the use of *μᾶλλον τι ὀνομαζόμενα* continues to puzzle scholars. At best, it is somewhat awkward Greek; at worst, the text is corrupt, as Roos and Brunt argued.³ Eberhard and Hercher emended *ὀνομαζόμενα* to *εὖορμα* ('with good anchorages').⁴ Other suggestions have followed similar lines;⁵ however, as Brunt puts it, such emendations are "not palaeographically plausible".⁶ Translations that have retained the manuscript reading have often construed *μᾶλλον τι ὀνομαζόμενα* in the sense of the coast being 'better known'.⁷ Biffi's translation is typical: 'Il tratto da lì fino al Golfo Persico non presentò più difficoltà, perché era meglio conosciuto.'⁸ Similar renderings—but without the causal link between ease of navigation and knowledge of the coast implied

1 Arr. *Ind.* 27.1 = FGrH 133 F 1 III.

2 Translations of fragments of Nearchus and Aristobulus are adapted from *BNJ* entries; other *Indica* passages are adapted from Brunt's Loeb translation. The use of other translations is noted where relevant; all other translations are my own. The expression *κατηγεμών/ἡγεμών τοῦ πλόου*—translated throughout as 'guide for the voyage', which helps distinguish the role from that of *κυβερνήτης*, as both terms are often translated as 'pilot'—is relatively rare and seems to operate as the naval equivalent for the more common 'guide for the land journey' (*ἡγεμών τῆς ὁδοῦ*; e.g. Hdt. 7.197.1; 8.31; Thuc. 3.98.1; E. *Hec.* 281; Xen. *An.* 3.1.2; Arr. *An.* 6.26.4-5). Both terms seem generally to be used of local guides brought on temporarily because of their local knowledge. Other Nearchan references to 'guides for the voyage': F 1b (Str. 15.2.12); F 1 IV (Arr. *Ind.* 30.3); F 1 V (*Ind.* 31.3; cf. Str. 15.2.13); F 1 XIV (*Ind.* 40.11); F 28 (Str. 16.3.7); F 33 (Arr. *An.* 6.18.4); cf. Thuc. 7.50.2; A.R. 2.1194; Str. 4.1.4; Apollod. *Epit.* E. 3.19; Dion. Byz. 24, 49; Procl. *Chrest.* 7 (fr. Cypria). On the *ἡγεμών* in Greek seafaring, see Morton 2001, 244-252 (esp. 250-252); Medas 2004, 146; cf. 24-32 on the *κυβερνήτης*.

3 Roos-Wirth 1967 vol. 2 *ad loc.*; Brunt 1983 *ad loc.*, n. 2.

4 Hercher-Eberhard 1885 *ad loc.*

5 Jacoby's footnote in the FGrH: "ὀνομαζόμενα (vgl. Periopl. P. Eux. 20 ἔρημα καὶ ἀνώνυμα): εὐλιμενώτερα ο. συνοικεόμενα He εὖορμα Eb ὁρμίζεσθαι παρεχόμενα Cast ὄρμον παρεχόμενα Vitelli" (1929, 690).

6 Brunt 1983 *ad loc.*, n. 2.

7 Perhaps influenced by Strabo's comment that *topoi* along coastlines are typically 'more well-known' (γνωριμώτεροι) than inland locations (9.2.21); see Clarke 2017, 48-49.

8 Biffi 2000, 79; cf. Dognini 2000 *ad loc.*

by Biffi's *perché*—are found in Robson's Loeb translation ('from thence on the navigation was not difficult, but the districts were better known') and Chantraine's Budé ('plus loin la route n'était pas difficile, et le pays était un peu plus connu, jusqu'au golfe Persique').⁹

Such interpretations, however, do not necessarily link this relative ease of navigation to the presence of Hydraces. Schiwek, for example, considers the route 'already better known' before Hydraces comes on board, arguing for knowledge Alexander had obtained from Persian archives.¹⁰ Similarly, Rooke implies that the coastline between Mosarna and the Persian Gulf was already well-known: "All this shore, from hence to the gulph of Persia, is less difficult to be passed, though much more famous in story than those he had passed already".¹¹ Although such interpretations of the manuscript reading still endure (as Whitby's 2012 *BNJ* entry shows, discussed below), they are based on an inadequate understanding of the role of guides like Hydraces, for whom identifying place names was a key function. I would suggest that the route no longer presented difficulties *because* of the presence of Hydraces.¹² Translations of μάλλον τι ὀνομαζόμενα like 'better known', although perhaps a less awkward rendering in English, obscure the 'naming' aspect of ὀνομαζόμενα: the journey was 'named to a somewhat greater extent' because the guide could identify places by name and thus more successfully guide the journey.

Those who have retained the manuscript reading still express doubts about the sense. The chief complaint of Pearson and Whitby, for example, is that ὀνομαζόμενα is illogical when, in the *Indica* as we have it, the places passed prior to Mosarna had already possessed names: Pearson protests that "we are told that they acquired a good native guide and that thereafter there was no trouble about names of places; but there was no great difficulty before; every proper anchorage was given a name".¹³ Similarly, Whitby's recent judgment is that the sentence "makes poor sense", since "the places already passed by the

9 Robson 1966 *ad loc.*; Chantraine 1927 *ad loc.*; cf. also Vincent 1807, 244 n. 167: "I am not sure I render ὀνομαζόμενα right, but I apprehend it means, places better known, in opposition to those obscure coasts or villages where they had hitherto landed. *Names more familiar*; at least I have not written nonsense" (italics original).

10 Schiwek 1962, 52: "Das will besagen, dass zwar durch den 'Hauptpiloten' Hydrakes die Fahrt erleichtert wurde, andererseits aber eine gewisse Erleichterung auch schon dadurch eintrat, dass von Mosarna an die Fahrtstrecke ohnedies bereits besser bekannt war." This is based on his belief that such information had been obtained from the Persian 'Reichsarchiv' or 'Reichskanzlei', which Brunt rightly criticises (1983 *ad loc.*, n. 2). Biffi (2000, 202) seems to follow Schiwek.

11 Rooke 1813 *ad loc.*; cf. Wirth-Hinüber 1985 *ad loc.*

12 On Hydraces: Tomaschek 1890, 28; Berve 1926, vol. 2, 376 n. 760; Heckel 2006, 141.

13 Pearson 1960, 146 n. 117.

expedition had possessed names, and it is illogical to suggest that the existence of names would somehow have eased the expedition's problems".¹⁴ That is, why specifically mention that Hydraces' naming helped with—in their view—a non-existent problem?

This criticism is not tenable on historical or historiographical grounds. First, the *Indica* does occasionally mention unnamed places, not only prior to Hydraces' arrival but afterwards too.¹⁵ Moreover, Arrian may have omitted some places lacking names which were found in Nearchus' work, just as he is inconsistent in his inclusion of distances.¹⁶ The *Indica* is not, after all, a verbatim regurgitation of Nearchus; editorial decisions were made by Arrian.¹⁷ Second, such objections assume knowledge that we do not have: from Arrian's account at this point, we cannot determine the exact situation regarding earlier guides. Fragments of Nearchus in the *Anabasis* inform us of Alexander's own navigational difficulties on the Indus near Patala prior to the outset of Nearchus' voyage, which were eventually assuaged by the capture of Indian guides (Arr. *An.* 6.18–20 = F 33).¹⁸ It may be that the same guides who had identified places previously were not familiar with the territory beyond Mosarna; as far as we can tell from Nearchus' work elsewhere, local guides were picked up at various points and likely only knew their particular area.¹⁹ We can also see how difficult it could be to find guides at all, and the troubles that could occur in their absence.²⁰ In any case, our only evidence as to the situation regarding

14 Whitby 2012 *ad loc.*

15 E.g. 21.2 (unnamed starting point); 21.9 (island); 22.7 (island); 22.9 (lake); 22.10 (island); 26.4 (headland); 26.6 (village; cf. 26.8, named village); 26.10 (headland). After Hydraces' arrival: 27.7 (unnamed small city, which they attack); 29.2 (deserted shore). Cf. also Plin. *Nat.* 6.96 [F 13]: 'The travel account of Onesicritus and Nearchus does not have names of staging posts or distances' (*Onesicriti et Nearchi navigatio nec nomina habet mansionum nec spatia*); Whitby 2012 *ad loc.* is right to say that "this comment suggests that Pliny did not consult Nearchos directly since the account of Nearchos as preserved in Arrian's *Indika* ... contains information about the places passed en route, including their names, and the distances travelled"—just not every single name, as we have seen (*pace* Brown 1949, 108).

16 Cf. 21.9; 26.4; 28.9; 29.2; 32.2–5; 37.8; Pearson 1960, 144–146; Brunt 1983, 371 n. 1; Bucciantini 2013, 69; see also below for my suggestion that longer voyages are one result of Hydraces' embarkation.

17 Stadter 1980, 124–132; Brunt 1983, app. XXV, 4; cf. Bosworth 1995, 361–365. More generally on Arrian's additions to and interpretations of his sources, see Howe 2015.

18 This episode is discussed further below.

19 Cf. Mazenes, a guide from Oarakta to Susa (*Ind.* 37.2); Hydraces himself apparently only remained with the fleet until Carmania (27.1). Discussed further below.

20 As in F 26 and F 33, discussed below; cf. also *An.* 7.22.1.

guides at this point on the voyage is the addition of Hydraces, which Nearchus evidently deemed necessary.

If we examine Alexander's original aims for Nearchus' expedition, as expressed in the *Indica*, he 'wanted to inspect the coasts that were along the voyage, the anchorages and islands, and to sail around any bay that they came upon, and whatever cities were by the sea and if the land was fruitful or deserted' (*Ind.* 32.11: ἀλλὰ ἐθέλοντα αἰγιαλούς τε τοὺς κατὰ τὸν παράπλου κατασκέψασθαι καὶ ὄρμους καὶ νησιδας, καὶ ὅστις κόλπος ἐσέχοι ἐκπεριπλῶσαι τοῦτον, καὶ πόλιας ὅσαι ἐπιθαλάσσιαι, καὶ εἴ τις ἔγκαρπος γῆ, καὶ εἴ τις ἐρήμη).²¹ It is not unreasonable to infer that the knowledge of place names was considered part of this remit, and I will show that Nearchus' work elsewhere illustrates well how guides like Hydraces were essential to such knowledge. Whitby's claim that "it is illogical to suggest that the existence of names would somehow have eased the expedition's problems" misses the thrust of the passage: it is not the 'existence of names' with which Nearchus' statement is concerned, but rather the knowledge of the area's topography (including place names) and what that implies about Nearchus' conception of the role of guides. The 'difficulties' (χάλεπά), I would suggest, refer to navigational difficulties, assuaged by the addition of the guide, Hydraces. I will argue that the words μᾶλλον τι ὀνομαζόμενα concern the identification of a route based on the guide's knowledge of local topography.

To support this, I will first demonstrate that Nearchus shows elsewhere how guides are linked to naming. This will be my central argument and sufficient for retaining the text as it stands. This will include discussion of related phenomena: the probable additional role of guides as interpreters, their interaction with locals as sources of indigenous place names, and the relative difficulty of obtaining guides in the first place. I will also suggest that this passage may be further evidence of a related phenomenon: the naming and renaming of places encountered on Alexander's expedition, based on knowledge of indigenous place names.

2 Guides, Naming, and Local Informants

Extant ancient travel narratives, from Herodotus' *Histories* to the surviving *periploi*, take pride in providing place names throughout.²² Arrian's own

²¹ Cf. *Ind.* 20.1-2; *An.* 7.20.10.

²² On naming in Herodotus, see Hartog 1988, 247-248; Chamberlain 1999; Munson 2005, *passim*. As for the specific verb ὀνομάζω, Herodotus uses it several times for topographical

Periplus of the Black Sea, a literary account written for Hadrian, offers many identifications and occasionally etymologies.²³ There was evident general interest in place names from exotic locations, whether indigenous or imposed by Greeks. But there was also a practical purpose in learning them—in more recent times, the accounts of Christopher Columbus' expedition highlight the value of learning toponyms even in the absence of adequate interpreters, as Gužauskytė notes: "One part of speech served as a bridge for establishing a rudimentary kind of communication: nouns, and in particular, proper names and place names ... which were instrumental for asking questions about the local geography and for attempting to identify the places [Columbus] had reached".²⁴ Identifying landmarks was central to navigation.²⁵ To plan a safe route, one needed to have knowledge of the relevant area (including place names), and this is likely to what our Nearchan passage refers.

In order to obtain local place names, however, one needed to interact with the locals. Nearchus' work offers many instances of local toponymy provided by native informants.²⁶ For instance, at *Ind.* 31.2 (= F 1 V), we hear that 'the locals said that this island was sacred to Helios and was called Nosala' (ταύτην ἱρὴν Ἡλίου ἔλεγον εἶναι οἱ ἐπιχώριοι καὶ Νόσαλα καλεῖσθαι).²⁷ At *An.* 6.1.5 (= F 32), Alexander 'learns from the locals that the Hydaspes joins its water with the Akesines and the Akesines with the Indos, giving way to its name' (οὕτω δὴ μαθεῖν παρὰ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων τὸν μὲν Ὑδάσπην τῷ Ἀκεσίνῃ, τὸν Ἀκεσίνην δὲ τῷ Ἰνδῷ τό τε ὕδωρ ξυμβάλλοντας καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι ξυγχωροῦντας). Another passage includes a translation of a place name, clearly obtained from locals through interpreters (*Ind.* 22.5 = F 1 III): 'The harbour is large, circular, deep, and calm, but the entrance to it is narrow; in the local tongue this is called 'Women's Harbour', since the first ruler over this region was a woman' (ὁ δὲ λιμὴν μέγας καὶ εὐκυκλος καὶ βαθὺς καὶ ἀκλυστος, ὁ δὲ ἕσπλους ἐς αὐτὸν στενός. τοῦτον τῇ γλώσσῃ τῇ ἐπιχωρίῃ Γυναικῶν λιμένα ἐκάλεον ὅτι γυνὴ τοῦ χώρου τούτου πρώτη ἐπήρξεν). Finally, the headland Maketa is identified by 'those who knew these parts' (*Ind.* 32.7 = F 1

naming; e.g. 5.52.4; 7.129.2, 3. For Herodotean influence on Nearchus, see Pearson 1960, 118-131; Murray 1972, 205-207. In the *periploi*, *ὀνομάζω* is found at *Peripl.M.Erythr.* 40; Ps.-Scyl. 34; *Peripl.Hann.* 2; 8 (Arrian mentions Hanno's voyage at *Ind.* 43.11-12).

23 E.g. Arr. *Peripl.M.Eux.* 6.4; 11.1; 21.1; 24.1 (only those examples employing *ὀνομάζω*). Jacoby's footnote on *Ind.* 27.1 (see above, n. 5) compares Arrian's observation of an 'unnamed' place at *Peripl.M.Eux.* 20 (ἔρημα καὶ ἀνώνυμα); cf. also 5.3. Stadter 1980, 33 suggests Nearchus' work was a model for Arrian's own *periplus*.

24 Gužauskytė 2014, 71.

25 Morton 2001, 185-206.

26 On the use of local informants more generally, see Bucciantini 2015, 93-96; Bosworth 1996, chs. 3 and 4, esp. 72; 98; 124-125; 161-163.

27 Cf. *Ind.* 28.9

VIII: καὶ οἱ τῶν χώρων ἐκείνων δαήμονες τῆς Ἀραβίης ἔλεγον τὴν ἀνίσχουσιν ταύτην ἄκρην, καλέεσθαι (δὲ) Μάκετα), a term Arrian employs elsewhere for a local Indian guide (*An.* 4.29.4). In these examples, the acquisition of place names from locals is explicit, but undoubtedly similar processes would have been in operation for other toponyms.

Obtaining such information from local informants, of course, required the ability to speak with them. The role of interpreters in such interactions is not always clear. Hydraces himself, like others, probably functioned as an interpreter as well as a guide; the two roles often went hand in hand.²⁸ We only get one explicit reference to an interpreter (ἐρμηνεύς) in the *Indica*, the anonymous man who assists Nearchus in attacking a town near Cyiza.²⁹ While the *Anabasis* does mention the multilingual abilities of Pharnuches and Laomedon, Arrian generally omits reference to ἐρμηνεῖς.³⁰ This is in stark contrast to the other extant Alexander monograph by Q. Curtius Rufus, which refers to *interpretes* on many occasions.³¹ Even at certain points where other sources explicitly mention interpreters or bilingual guides, Arrian writes 'heralds' or 'prisoners'.³² At other times, he mentions figures who were evidently acting in an interpreting capacity, but reveals no awareness of multilingual communication.³³ In his own

28 Pace Brunt 1983, 375 n. 1: "Surely N[earchus] had no pilots before Mosarna (27, 1). His knowledge of place names etc. shows only that he had local interpreters". Cf. the bilingual Lycian guide at *D.S.* 17.68.5; *Curt.* 5.4.4-12; *Plu. Alex.* 37.1; cf. *Arr. An.* 3.18.4 (and see n. 32 below). Bosworth 1996, 72 suggests an interpreting role for Hydraces; at 72, n. 24 he also suggests that Hydraces was the ἐρμηνεύς at the town near Cyiza (*Ind.* 28.3). On interpreters and guides in Nearchus, see Bucciantini 2015, 93-96 (esp. 95).

29 *Ind.* 28.3, 5; also see previous note.

30 Pharnuches: *An.* 4.3.7 (τὸν ἐρμηνέα); Laomedon: *An.* 3.6.6 (διγλωσσος ἦν ἐς τὰ βαρβαρικά γράμματα); the sole reference to anonymous interpreters is at *An.* 7.1.5 (δι' ἐρμηνέων).

31 *Curt.* 3.12.6; 5.4.4-12; 5.11.1-7; 5.13.7; 6.5.19; 6.11.4; 7.10.4; 8.12.9; 10.3.6. I will be exploring Curtius' interest in interpreters in a separate study. For now, cf. James 2018, 443-445.

32 When other sources report the use of the bilingual Lycian prisoner at the Persian Gates, Arrian refers only to 'prisoners' (*An.* 3.18.4: αἰχμάλωτοι). Similarly, where in Curtius Alexander learns information about the Bessus saga from Darius' interpreter, Melon (5.13.7), Arrian's account only reports that Alexander 'learned' of this information (ἐπύθετο; *An.* 3.21.4; Bosworth 1980, 340). The theft of Bucephalus was proclaimed through a 'herald'; according to Plutarch and Arrian (*Plu. Alex.* 44.3-5; *An.* 5.19.6; cf. *Ind.* 28.5: ὁ δὲ ἐρμηνεύς ... ἐκήρυξε); Curtius and Diodorus, however, report that the proclamation was conveyed through interpreters: *D.S.* 17.76.5-8 (διὰ δὲ τῶν ὁμοφώνων); *Curt.* 6.5.18-21 (*per interpretem*). When Curtius reports an interpreter between Alexander and Taxiles (Omphis: *Curt.* 8.12.9), Arrian omits all conversation (*An.* 4.22.6).

33 Alexander sends Taxiles and Meroes to Porus, probably because they would have spoken the same tongue (*Arr. An.* 5.18.6-7; cf. *Curt.* 8.14.35, where Taxiles' brother is sent); see Bosworth 1995, 307. Cf. 5.24.6, when Eumenes is sent in a diplomatic capacity: "The primary task was to communicate with the Indians and persuade them to surrender, and

Periplus, Arrian mentions no interpreters (nor guides). This aspect of Arrian's style, then, means that we should not expect explicit reference to the linguistic faculties of figures like Hydraces.

Nevertheless, the examples of local informants given above suggest the use of interpreters (or interpreter-guides) for obtaining local place names, no matter how rudimentary the communication. Another text, the *Periplus of Hanno*—a Greek translation from Punic of a *periplus* dating to the sixth or fifth century BCE, and to which Arrian probably alludes at *Ind.* 43.11-12—, offers explicit references to interpreter-guides who provide place names: for example, after picking up some interpreters (ἐρμηνέες) from among the Lixites (*Peripl. Hann.* 8), Hanno's expedition 'reached a great bay, which the interpreters said was called the Horn of the West' (*Peripl. Hann.* 14: ὃν ἔφασαν οἱ ἐρμηνέες καλεῖσθαι Ἑσπέρου Κέρας).³⁴ This passage, from a travel work in a similar tradition to Nearchus', offers a clear example of the connection between guiding, interpreting, and obtaining local place names. As we have noted, however, Arrian's typical reticence on matters of multilingualism should not preclude this being an aspect of Hydraces' role.

In addition to Hydraces, there is another example in the *Indica* of a local naval guide, who evidently serves as a source of local place names:

καὶ ἡ μὲν ἐρήμη νήσος Ὀργάνα ἐκαλέετο, ἐς ἣν δὲ ὠρμήθησαν Ὀάρακτα· ἄμπελοι τε ἐν αὐτῇ ἐπεφύκεσαν καὶ φοῖνικες, καὶ σιτοφόρος (ἦν)· τὸ δὲ μήκος τῆς νήσου στάδιοι ὀκτακόσιοι. καὶ ὁ ὑπαρχος τῆς νήσου Μαζήνης συνέπλει αὐτοῖσι μέχρι Σούσων, ἐθελοντῆς ἡγεμῶν τοῦ πλόου. ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ νήσῳ ἔλεγον καὶ τοῦ πρώτου δυναστεύσαντος τῆς χώρας ταύτης δεῖκνυσθαι τὸν τάφον· ὄνομα δὲ αὐτῷ Ἐρύθρην εἶναι, ἀπ' οὗ καὶ τὴν ἐπωνυμίην τῇ θαλάσῃ ταύτῃ εἶναι Ἐρυθρὴν καλέεσθαι.³⁵

The deserted island was called **Organa**, while the one where they anchored **Oarakta**; vines and palms grew on it, and it produced grain. The length of the island was 800 stades. The hyparch of the island, Mazenes, sailed with them to Susa as a **volunteer guide for the voyage**. On this island they say that they were also shown the tomb of the first ruler of

Eumenes must have had significant experience with interpreters since Alexander's first contact in Sogdiana with the Indian rulers" (Bosworth 1995, 335).

34 Cf. also *Peripl. Hann.* 6; 7; 11; 18. On these interpreters, see Desanges 1983; Rebuffat 1988; Roller 2006, 120-121.

35 *Ind.* 37.2-3 = F 1 X.

this territory; **his name was Erythres**, from which too came the **name** for this sea so that it was **called Erythrean**.

Mazenes, like Hydraces, is a 'guide for the voyage' (ἡγεμὼν τοῦ πλόου).³⁶ It is likely that he was the source of the names of the islands Organa and Oarakta, if not the etymology of the Erythraean Sea.³⁷ It is not too difficult to imagine that Hydraces provided a similar function: guiding and providing onomastic insight.

Guides, however, could be hard to come by. A fragment of Nearchus in Strabo highlights the 'Catch 22' of the difficulties in locating good anchorages in order to land and obtain guides for the voyage:

ἡ δὲ παραλία τεναγώδης ἐστὶ καὶ ἀλίμενος· διὰ τοῦτο γοῦν καὶ φησιν ὁ Νέαρχος μηδὲ καθοδηγῶν ἐπιχωρίων τυγχάνειν, ἥνίκα τῷ στόλῳ παρέπλει πρὸς τὴν Βαβυλωνίαν ἐκ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς,† ὅτι προσόρμους οὐκ εἶχεν, οὐδ' ἀνθρώπων εὐπορεῖν οἷός τ' ἦν τῶν ἡγησομένων κατ' ἐμπειρίαν.³⁸

The coastline [of Susis] is shoaly and has no harbours. For this reason, indeed, Nearchus says that he did not encounter **local guides** when he was sailing from India to Babylonia with the fleet; that it does not have anchorages and it was not possible to find a supply of men to be **experienced guides**.

Many have taken this to mean that Nearchus never encountered local guides during the entirety of his voyage from India to Susa, which would conflict with what we have already seen in other fragments.³⁹ The context within Strabo, however, makes it clear that this lack of local guides refers only to the journey's leg along the coast of Susis. This is consistent with the presence of the guide Mazenes, who was no Susian—he had been picked up back at the island of Oaracta (*Ind.* 37.2), as we have seen, evidently serving as chief among several guides (*Ind.* 40.11: οἱ καθηγούμενοι τοῦ πλόου).⁴⁰ A Nearchan fragment from the

36 See n.2 above. Strabo also notes Mazenes' role (16.3.7 = F 28: καθηγούμενα τοῦ πλοῦ).

37 This probably came from Mithropastes, who met the Macedonians with Mazenes (Str. 16.3.7 = F 28; cf. also F 27). The tomb of Erythres, moreover, was on the more distant island of Ogyris (Str. 16.3.7 = F 28). On both issues, see Bosworth 1996, 66–70.

38 Str. 15.3.11 = F 26.

39 Roller 2018, 881 labels the comment 'peculiar'. Cf. Biffi 2005, 290, who notes Nearchus' use of Mazenes but not Hydraces.

40 Brunt 1983, 425 n. 11; Biffi 2000, *ad loc.* Similarly, Hydraces seems to have been chief among several; cf. *Ind.* 30.3 (τῶν κατηγεομένων τοῦ πλόου).

Indica confirms the inhospitable nature of the Susian coastline (*Ind.* 40.9-10): 'Nearchus says that it was no longer possible for him to describe this part with such accuracy, except for the anchorages and the length of the voyage. For the land has many shallows and sticks out to sea a long way with breakers, and is dangerous to anchor on; for the most part their transit was on the open sea' (καὶ ταῦτα οὐκέτι ὡσαύτως ἀτρεκέως λέγει Νέαρχος ὅτι ἔστιν οἱ ἐκφράσαι, πλὴν γε δὴ τοὺς ὅρμους τε καὶ τὸ μῆκος τοῦ πλοῦ· τὴν χώραν γὰρ τεναγώδεά τε εἶναι τὴν πολλὴν καὶ ῥηχίησιν ἐπὶ μέγα ἐς τὸν πόντον ἐσέχουσαν καὶ αὐτῇ σφαλερὴν ἐγκαθορμίζεσθαι· πελαγίοισιν ὦν σφίσι τὴν κομιδὴν τὸ πολὺ γίνεσθαι). Despite some interpretations of this sudden lack of ἀτρεκεία that explain Nearchus' reticence by virtue of the area's already being well known, the second clause seems clearly to corroborate the fragment from Strabo regarding the inaccessibility of the coast.⁴¹ Thus, the minimal detail may well be due to a lack of available guides, as the former fragment suggests. It is evidence of Nearchus' consciousness of the difficulties and importance of sourcing experienced guides for proper navigation; at Mosarna, the advent of Hydraces will have helped ease any such difficulties. Nearchus' fragments beyond the *Indica*, then, corroborate Nearchus' interest in the role of guides on this voyage, of which Arrian only provides glimpses.

Still, Arrian's account does contain implicit indications that the voyage went more smoothly after Hydraces' embarkation at Mosarna. Although we cannot be certain when he would have disembarked, since he promised to travel with Nearchus 'as far as Carmania' (μέχρι Καρμανίης) we can perhaps conjecture that he disembarked at Badis, since this was the first point in Carmania at which the fleet is said to moor (*Ind.* 32.5).⁴² Prior to Hydraces' arrival at Mosarna, the longest individual sailing leg had been 600 stades (*Ind.* 26.2; 26.6), with the median voyage length being 200 stades.⁴³ From Mosarna until Badis (*Ind.* 27.1-32.5), however, the longest leg was 1100 stades and median voyage length 500 stades. This is a significant increase, unremarked upon by Arrian, although Nearchus may have made more of it. Moreover, in addition to longer voyages, Hydraces' arrival appears to herald an upsurge in the weighing of anchor by night. Before Mosarna, only two nocturnal voyages are reported (*Ind.* 23.4; 26.2); between Mosarna and Badis, however, there are six voyages explicitly said to take place during the night, including two in which the fleet sails 'day and night' (*Ind.* 27.2; 27.4; 27.6; 29.1; 29.2; 29.7). I would suggest that

41 Cf. Pearson 1960, 147; Dognini 2000, *ad loc.*; Whitby 2012, *ad loc.*

42 The reference at *Ind.* 32.7 to the identification of a promontory by 'those who knew the area' (οἱ τῶν χώρων ἐκείνων δαίμονες) might also suggest a transition to a new guide or guides; cf. 30.3 after 27.1.

43 All calculations based on Table 1 in Bucciantini 2013, 67-68.

Hydraces' local knowledge provided greater confidence in route-plotting, allowing not only for nocturnal navigation but also for more ground to be covered in a single excursion.⁴⁴ That Arrian's narrative only hints at such aspects of Nearchus' expedition is not surprising—again, he is crafting his own narrative and has his own emphases. Nevertheless, we can observe certain Nearchan tendencies buried in Arrian's strata.

Returning to the difficulty of locating guides, another more extensive Nearchan fragment displays Alexander's troubles in this regard while more generally indicating the extent to which Nearchus' work emphasised their importance.⁴⁵ It also suggests a strong link between guides and the identification of place names. Arrian describes Alexander's efforts in the Indus delta, initially lacking guides (*An.* 6.18.4 = F 33): 'Without a guide for the voyage, since the Indians of these parts had fled, the descent was rather difficult' (οὐκ ἔχοντι δὲ αὐτῷ ἡγεμόνα τοῦ πλοῦ, ὅτι πεφεύγεσαν οἱ ταύτη Ἰνδοί, ἀπορώτερα τὰ τοῦ κατὰ πλοῦ ἦν).⁴⁶ The navigational problems that arise from lack of a 'guide for the voyage' here support my view that the 'difficulties' (*Ind.* 27.1: οὐκέτι χαλεπὰ ἦν) eased by Hydraces' arrival later at Mosarna were indeed navigational. Unfortunately for Alexander, however, the lack of guides and perilous winds resulted in several shipwrecks (*An.* 6.18.4). As new ships were being built, the Macedonian king captured some nearby Indians who subsequently served as guides: 'He sent off the nimblest of the light-armed to the land on the further bank and captured some Indians who sought out the route for him from there on' (καὶ τῶν ψιλῶν τοὺς κουφοτάτους ἐκπέμψας ἐς τὴν προσωτέρω τῆς ὄχθης χώραν ξυλλαμβάνει τινὰς τῶν Ἰνδῶν, καὶ οὗτοι τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦδε ἐξηγούντο αὐτῷ τὸν πόρον); when next the winds arose, the fleet was able to 'take refuge in a canal to which their guides directed them' (ξυμφεύουσιν αὖ ἐς διώρυχα, ἐς ἣντινα οἱ ἡγεμόνες αὐτῷ καθηγῆσαντο) (*An.* 6.18.5 = F 33).⁴⁷ Some ships were nevertheless damaged from the Great Sea's ebb tide. It is clear at least that the troubles Alexander encountered were alleviated by the presence of local guides.

We are then provided with a good example of the connection between such guides and knowledge of toponyms:

44 As suggested by Vincent 1807, 244-249 (and apparently not since). Cf. Brunt's passing comment that "speed must have been reduced when N[earchus] was negotiating the shoals of the Susian coast without local pilots" (1983, app. XXV, 8). On ancient night-time sailing, see Morton 2001, 206-228; 261-265; Davis 2002.

45 Cf. also the lack of guide and consequent naval difficulties at *An.* 7.22.1.

46 Cf. Curt. 9.8.30-9.9.3.

47 The guides are mentioned once more soon after (*An.* 6.20.3 = F 33): 'Accordingly, after anchoring at a place on the lake to which the guides directed ...' (προσορμισθεὶς οὖν κατὰ τὴν λίμνην ἵνα περ οἱ καθηγέμενες ἐξηγούντο ...).

ταύτας τε οὖν ἐπεσκεύασεν Ἀλέξανδρος ἐκ τῶν παρόντων καὶ ἐν κερκούροις
δυοῖν προπέμπει κατὰ τὸν ποταμὸν τοὺς κατασκευομένους τὴν νήσον, ἐς
ἣντινα οἱ ἐπιχώριοι ἔφασκον ὀρμιστέα εἶναι αὐτῷ κατὰ τὸν πλοῦν τὸν ἐς τὴν
θάλασσαν· Κίλλουτα δὲ τῇ νήσῳ τὸ ὄνομα ἔλεγον.⁴⁸

Alexander accordingly repaired these [ships] as best he could and sent men ahead down the river in two light galleys to investigate the island at which **the locals said** he would have to anchor on the voyage down to the sea; **they said the island's name was Killouta.**

It is not clear whether 'the locals' (οἱ ἐπιχώριοι) here are the ship's guides or native people with whom the guides conversed; interpreting and guiding went hand in hand, as we have seen.⁴⁹ In either case, however, it is evident that the guides' work providing directions included local place names, whether from their own knowledge or that of native informants. Nearchus' work shows this clearly, then, in examples beyond our central passage.

3 Official Naming and Renaming of Locations

Providing local place names, therefore, was part of a guide's job. But could there be more to this role on Nearchus' expedition? The verb *ὀνομάζω* from our central passage, in addition to meaning 'to name' in the sense of 'identify', can also have a more active sense closer to *ἐπονομάζω*, 'to give a name to': Arrian himself, early in the *Indica*, offers such an example when he says that Dionysus 'gave the name Nysaea to the country, based on the mountain Nysa, and to the city itself he gave the name Nysa' (*Ind.* 1.5: τὴν τε χώραν Νυσαίην ὀνόμασεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους τῆς Νύσης Διόνυσος καὶ τὴν πόλιν αὐτὴν Νύσαν).⁵⁰ Naming

⁴⁸ *An.* 6.19.3 = F 33.

⁴⁹ Another example from the *Indica* mentioned earlier is equally ambiguous: at *Ind.* 31.2, we hear that 'the locals' (οἱ ἐπιχώριοι) call an island Nosala, and that mortals who approach the island vanish. Nearchus, according to Arrian, goes on to say that when one of his ships was lost, the 'guides for the voyage' (ἡγεμόνες τοῦ πλόου) feared that the ship's crew must have so vanished (*Ind.* 31.3). It is not clear whether the guides have the same thoughts because they *are* the aforesaid 'locals', or whether they merely believed what they heard from them.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ὀνομάζω* in a different sense at *Ind.* 31.4. The foundation and naming of Nysa by Dionysus is also reported in *An.* 5.1.1-6, with *καλέω* instead; however, *ὀνομάζω* is then used to describe Dionysus' naming of the nearby mountain, Meros, based on the legend about himself (*An.* 5.1.6; cf. n. 72 below). On these passages, see Bosworth 1995, 197-207 (esp. 205-206).

and renaming were key aspects of modern European imperialistic and colonial activity, and so we might fairly expect to see similar processes at work on Alexander's expedition.⁵¹ Indeed, one naturally recalls the foundations of several cities called Alexandria during Alexander's expedition, and cities named after his horse and dog; this is a somewhat different process from naming or renaming an existing settlement or topographical feature, however, and we will not be concerned here with the naming of new cities.⁵²

There is some evidence that naming and, indeed, conscious renaming of places were among the Macedonians' activities. Strabo hints at this when referring to the testimony of another participant on Alexander's campaigns, Aristobulus:

τὸν δὲ διὰ τῆς Σογδιανῆς ῥέοντα ποταμὸν † καὶ Πολυτίμητον Ἀριστόβουλος, τῶν Μακεδόνων θεμένων—καθάπερ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τὰ μὲν καινὰ ἔθεσαν, τὰ δὲ παρωνόμασαν.⁵³

Aristobulus calls the river running through Sogdiana the Polytimetus, the Macedonians having given it this name—just as they gave new names to many other places, and altered the names of others.

There is no reason to suspect 'the Macedonians' here refers only to the Seleucids and excludes Alexander and his men.⁵⁴ Whether cities were founded or named by the Successors or Alexander himself could certainly be a matter of confusion: Appian, for example, implies that Alexandria Eschate was founded not by Alexander but Seleucus (Syr. 57).⁵⁵ The same Appian passage, however, refers to Seleucus' naming many cities after locations in mainland Greece and Macedonia, and this speaks to 'colonising' naming practices in common with Alexander.⁵⁶ The name Polytimetus ('highly honoured') is clearly Greek, and here applied to a Sogdian river. It is, as Strabo puts it, an example of a new

51 For (re)naming on Columbus' voyages (discussed further below), see above all Gužauskytė 2014; cf. also Elliott 2006, 32–34.

52 On these foundations, see Fraser 1996; Hammond 1998.

53 Str. 11.11.5 = *FGrH* 139 F 28a; cf. Arr. *An.* 4.5.6; 4.6.5–7.

54 Pace Fraser 1996, 87–88.

55 Probably refounded by Antiochus I; see Cohen 2013, 250–255; Kosmin 2014, 63. On the Appian passage, see Fraser 1996, 37–39; cf. Errington 1976, 162–168 on different city naming practices among the Successor kingdoms.

56 With key differences: see Kosmin 2014, 106–110, 208–211 on Seleucid naming ideology; cf. Tarn 1938, 7–20.

name (καινὰ ἔθεσαν) applied to a topographical feature (and whose indigenous name we do not learn).⁵⁷

We find other examples of Alexander's giving new names to cities or topographical features elsewhere. In a fragment of Charax of Pergamon, preserved by Stephanus of Byzantium (*Ethnica*, s.v. Φράδα = *FGrH* 103 F 20), we hear that '[Phrada is] a city in Drangiana, which Alexander renamed Prophthasia ['Anticipation'], as Charax writes in the sixth book of his *Chronicles*' (πόλις ἐν Δράγγαις, ἣν Ἀλέξανδρος Προφθασίαν μετωνόμασεν, ὡς Χάραξ ἐν ἔκτῳ Χρονικῶν).⁵⁸ Within the *Indica*, we see Nearchus name a harbour after Alexander (*Ind.* 21.10 = F 1 III): 'They anchored in a harbour with good anchorage; and as the harbour was fine and large Nearchus decided to call it Alexander's Harbour' (ὅτι δὲ μέγας τε καὶ καλὸς ὁ λιμὴν Νεάρχῳ ἔδοξεν ἐπονομάζειν αὐτὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου λιμένα). These are examples of what Strabo refers to as the Macedonians' giving 'new names' to places.

He also, however, refers to the Macedonians' 'altering the names of other places' (τὰ δὲ παρωνόμασαν), and this is where Hydraces may come in. What does it mean to alter names? What is the distinction between renaming and altering existing names? The LSJ definition for παρωνομάζω is 'calling with a slight change of name', or 'forming a derived name' (for which this Strabo passage is employed as an example); indeed, many of the instances of the verb in Greek literature involve translations or derivations from other languages which result in slightly different words or names.

For example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus argues that the Latin word *classes* is based on a slight alteration from Greek: 'There were six divisions which the Romans call *classes*, by a slight change of the Greek word *klêseis*; for the verb which we Greeks pronounce in the imperative mood *kalei*, the Romans call *cala*, and the *classes* they anciently called *caleses*' (ἐγένοντο δὴ συμμορίαι μὲν ἕξ, ἃς Ῥωμαῖοι καλοῦσι κλάσσεις, [κατὰ] τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς κλήσεις παρωνομάσαντες· ὁ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ῥήμα προστακτικῶς σχηματίσαντες ἐκφέρομεν, κάλει, τοῦτ' ἐκείνοι λέγουσι κάλα καὶ τὰς κλάσσεις (τὸ) ἀρχαῖον ἐκάλουν καλέσεις, D.H. 4.18.2). Similarly, Diodorus Siculus provides an etymology of Semiramis' name: 'Simmas, being childless, gave every care to the rearing of the girl, as his own daughter, and named her Semiramis, a name slightly altered from the word which, in the language of the Syrians, means doves' (ὄνομα θέμενον Σεμίραμιν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν

57 Bucciantini 2016, 107 n. 41 calls this "an example of a Greek translation of Iranian onomastics; in other words an *interpretatio graeca*"; however, we do not learn any details of the native name.

58 Cf. Str. 11.8.9; 15.2.8; Plu. *Mor.* 328F. Possibly renamed, as Heckel 2016, 55 puts it, "for the events which would unfold", i.e. the conspiracy of Dymnus and trial of Philotas; see further Fraser 1996, 123-130; Squillace 2010 (*BNJ* 103, F 20).

τῶν Σύρων διάλεκτον παρωνομασμένον ἀπὸ τῶν περιστερῶν, D.S. 2.4.6). Finally, in a discussion about the origins of the city of Metapontium, allegedly named after Sisyphus' son, Metapontos, Strabo adduces Antiochus of Syracuse: 'Antiochus considers the city Metapontion to have been first called Metabon and later its name was slightly altered' (δοκεῖ δ' Ἀντίοχος τὴν πόλιν Μεταπόντιον εἰρησθαι πρότερον Μέταβον, παρωνομάσθαι δ' ὕστερον, Str. 6.1.15 = *FGrH* 555 F 12). Greek place names often change over time, of course; in this case, however, both Stephanus and Eustathius suggest that Metabos was 'what the *barbaroi* called' Metapontos (οἱ βάρβαροι Μέταβον ἔλεγον).⁵⁹ The Greek name of Metapontos, then, allegedly derived from the non-Greek word Metabos, and was altered slightly by the Greeks.⁶⁰ Such examples of παρωνομασία show how names could change in small ways—at least according to the Greeks themselves—based on original indigenous words.

If we return, then, to Strabo's comment about Macedonian naming and renaming, then this 'altering of names' (παρωνομασία) may suggest a willingness to learn the actual native toponyms, in order to decide whether to give a new name or simply 'alter' the existing local name. This is a phenomenon known from New World imperialism: in 1494, Columbus' monarchs wrote to him, wishing to know "how many islands have been found up to now. Of those islands you have named, what name has been given to each, because in your letters you give the names of some but not all of these"; they also sought "the names that the Indians call them".⁶¹ Certainly Columbus' own writings evinced a strong interest in existing native toponymy, alongside his own novel appellations.⁶² This desire to learn native names sometimes resulted in the 'adoption and adaptation' of indigenous place names.⁶³ Columbus introduced many 'hybrid' names, incorporating parts of Castilian Spanish and native languages: notable examples include Isla de Goanin (Castilian *Isla*, native

59 Stephanus of Byzantium (*Ethnica*, s.v. Μεταπόντιον): 'An Italian city, which was formerly called Siris. It was named for Metabos, son of Sisyphos, son of Aeolos; for the *barbaroi* called Metapontos Metabos' (πόλις Ἰταλίας, ἣ πρότερον Σίρις, ἀπὸ Μετάβου τοῦ Σισύφου τοῦ Αἰόλου· τὸν γὰρ Μετάποντον οἱ βάρβαροι Μέταβον ἔλεγον). Eustathius claims that 'it is said to be called thus from Metapontos, son of Sisyphos, whom the *barbaroi* called Metabos' (*Comm. Dion. Perieg.* 368: Κληθῆναι δὲ οὕτω λέγεται ἀπὸ Μεταπόντου υἱοῦ Σισύφου, ὃν οἱ βάρβαροι Μέταβον ἔλεγον).

60 On this passage, see Mele 1996, 11–12.

61 Letter of 16 August 1494 (Nader 1996, 99).

62 Gužauskytė 2014, 12: "Columbus in his original ship logs granted significant importance to the names by which local inhabitants called islands and places in them." Gužauskytė provides a comprehensive appendix of Columbian place names, including those of Taino and other indigenous origin (2014, 169–195).

63 Gužauskytė 2014, 15.

Guanín), Monte Caribata (Castilian *Monte*, native *Caribata*), and San Telmo de Xamaná (Castilian *San Telmo*, native *Xamaná*).⁶⁴ In another context, the imperial naming practice of the Mexica Aztecs seems to have been somewhat similar: although they often gave places new names in their own language of Nahuatl, sometimes they simply transliterated the native Mexican names into Nahuatl.⁶⁵ The retention or adaptation of indigenous names was a part of toponymic practice in the conquest of the Americas, a process that involved learning local place names from native informants.

If there were a similar desire to learn native toponyms on Alexander's expedition, then local interpreter-guides such as Hydraces would have been needed.⁶⁶ In this respect, let us consider another interesting passage from Aristobulus on the names of the 'Sogdian Tanais' river, i.e. the Iaxartes (modern Syr Darya):

ἐνθεν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν Τάναιν ποταμὸν προήει. τῷ δὲ Τανάιδι τούτῳ, ὃν δὴ καὶ Ὀρξάντην ἄλλῳ ὀνόματι πρὸς τῶν ἐπιχωρίων βαρβάρων καλεῖσθαι λέγει Ἀριστόβουλος.⁶⁷

From there he [Alexander] proceeded to the Tanais River. As for this Tanais, Aristobulus says that it is also called a different name, the Orxantes,⁶⁸ by the local *barbaroi* ...

Huxley has shown that Tanais was not a Greek name but derived from an Iranian term for rivers.⁶⁹ Aristobulus, then, provides here a hint that the Macedonians learned of two native names, Tanais and Orxantes, from their guides and elected to call the river the Tanais over the other name.⁷⁰ Confusion,

64 Gužauskytė 2014, 106-107; 128-129. On the latter name, San Telmo de Xamaná, Gužauskytė (2014, 128-129) notes that "*Xamaná* was the name of a place in Taino and Columbus named it after a Christian saint, Saint Telmo, forming a hybrid Taino-Castilian toponym".

65 Mundy 1996, 144; Elliott 2006, 33.

66 "What recommended [Hydraces] would have been his linguistic expertise. Presumably he had some knowledge of Persian or even Aramaic ..." (Bosworth 1996, 72; cf. n. 28 above). Bosworth is referring only to potential communication between Hydraces and the non-Greek sailors with Nearchus, however, rather than local informants.

67 Arr. An. 3.30.7 = FGrH 139 F 25.

68 Called Orexartes at Plu. Alex. 45.6. Cf. also Arr. An. 7.16.3, where the manuscript has Oxyartes (i.e., the father of Alexander's Bactrian wife Roxane); most emend to Iaxartes, a name which seems to have come later, probably beginning with Eratosthenes (see Bosworth 1980, 378). Elsewhere, Arrian follows Aristobulus in labelling this river the 'Tanaïs' (Arr. An. 3.28.8, 10; 4.1.3; 4.3.6; 5.25.5; 7.10.6).

69 Huxley 1985; contra Bosworth 1980, 377-378.

70 It seems that this river is meant when the *Marmor Parium* refers to the foundation of a Greek city πρὸς Τανάι (presumably Alexandria Eschate: FGrH 239 B7; cf. Curt. 7.6.13, 25-7;

or deliberate distortion, seems to have occurred when interpreters gave the name as a word resembling 'Tanais', and Alexander's men linked it with the 'European' Scythian Tanais (the modern Don); Arrian makes the distinction between the two Tanais rivers at *An.* 3.30.8-9. While there is no 'altering' of the name here, in the sense of changing certain syllables *vel sim.*, there is some external evidence that suggests the Macedonians chose Tanais over Orxantes for 'propagandistic' reasons: identifying this river with the European Tanais in Scythia would thus enhance the perceived scale of Alexander's successes.

Strabo preserves fragments of Eratosthenes which suggest that Alexander and his men, in collaboration with local informants, 'adjusted' certain topographical features to magnify Alexander's conquests in connection with the Tanais:

Προσεδοξάσθη δὲ καὶ περὶ τῆς θαλάττης ταύτης πολλὰ ψευδῆ διὰ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου φιλοτιμίαν· ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὠμολόγητο ἐκ πάντων ὅτι διείργει τὴν Ἀσίαν ἀπὸ τῆς Εὐρώπης ὁ Τάναϊς ποταμός, τὸ δὲ μετὰ τῆς θαλάττης καὶ τοῦ Τανάϊδος πολὺ μέρος τῆς Ἀσίας ὃν οὐχ ὑπέπιπτε τοῖς Μακεδόσι, στρατηγεῖν δ' ἔγνωστο ὥστε τῇ φήμῃ γε κάκεινων δόξαι τῶν μερῶν κρατεῖν τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον, εἰς ἓν συνήγον τὴν τε Μαιώτιν λίμνην τὴν δεχομένην τὸν Τάναϊν καὶ τὴν Κασπίαν θάλατταν, λίμνην καὶ ταύτην καλοῦντες καὶ συντετρῆσθαι φάσκοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλας ἀμφοτέρως, ἐκατέραν δὲ εἶναι μέρος τῆς ἐτέρας. Πολύκλειτος δὲ καὶ πίστει προφέρεται περὶ τοῦ λίμνην εἶναι τὴν θάλατταν ταύτην, ὅφρις τε γὰρ ἐκτρέφειν καὶ ὑπόγλυκυ εἶναι τὸ ὕδωρ· ὅτι δὲ καὶ οὐχ ἑτέρα τῆς Μαιώτιδος ἐστὶ, τεκμαιρόμενος ἐκ τοῦ τὸν Τάναϊν εἰς αὐτὴν ἐμβάλλειν· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν αὐτῶν ὁρῶν τῶν Ἰνδικῶν ἐξ ὧν ὁ τε Ὠχος καὶ ὁ Ὠξος καὶ ἄλλοι πλείους φέρεται καὶ ὁ Ἰαξάρτης ἐκδίδωσί τε ὁμοίως ἐκείνοις εἰς τὸ Κάσπιον πέλαγος πάντων ἀρκτικώτατος. τοῦτον οὖν ὠνόμασαν Τάναϊν, καὶ προσέθεσάν γε τούτῳ πίστιν, ὥς εἴη Τάναϊς ὃν εἴρηκεν ὁ Πολύκλειτος· τὴν γὰρ περαίαν τοῦ ποταμοῦ τούτου φέρειν ἐλάτην καὶ οἰστοῖς ἐλατίνοις χρῆσθαι τοὺς ταύτῃ Σκύθας· τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τεκμήριον τοῦ τὴν χώραν τὴν πέραν τῆς Εὐρώπης εἶναι, μὴ τῆς Ἀσίας· τὴν γὰρ Ἀσίαν τὴν ἄνω καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἔω μὴ φύειν ἐλάτην.⁷¹

Many false things were further imagined about this sea [the Hyrkanian, i.e. Kaspian] because of the ambition of Alexander. Since it was agreed by all that the Tanais River separated Asia from Europe, the great part of Asia between the sea and the Tanais which had not fallen to the Makedonians was reported in such a way that it seemed that Alexander

Arr. *An.* 4.1.3-4; Just. 12.5.12). Demodamas, in the third century BCE, also noted that the Scythians called the river the 'Silis' (*FGH* 428 F 2 = Plin. *Nat.* 6.49; Solin. 49.5).

71 Str. 11.7.4 = F 24 Roller (translation adapted from Roller 2010).

had conquered that region: they made into one the Maiotic Lake (which receives the Tanais) and the Kaspian Sea, **calling it a lake**, and insisting that there was a passage from one to the other so that each was a part of the other. Polykleitos offers proofs that the sea is a lake (it produces serpents and the water is sweetish) and he judges that it is nothing other than the Maiotis because the Tanais empties into it. From the same Indian mountains that come the Ochos and Oxos and many others flows **the Iaxartes [Orxantes], the most northerly of all, which like the rest empties into the Kaspian Sea. This they named the Tanais**, and as an additional proof that it was the Tanais of which Polykleitos spoke, they note that across the river the fir tree exists and that the Skythians there use fir arrows. This is their proof that the territory across the river is part of Europe and not Asia, for upper and eastern Asia do not produce the fir tree.

Although Arrian, on the other hand, is ambivalent about similar claims of Eratosthenes elsewhere, in the *Indica* he labels Eratosthenes 'more trustworthy than any other' (*Ind.* 3.1: πιστότερος ἄλλου).⁷² It is possible that Alexander's men were not above renaming, or rather, carefully selecting a politically expedient local name (or interpretation thereof) for topographical features.⁷³ For the Macedonians, labelling the Tanais with the other native name, Orxantes, or renaming with a Greek term (as with the Polytimetus) would have meant losing the symbolic power of the greater conquest represented by the 'Tanaïs'.⁷⁴

European colonial exploration and settlement provide some interesting comparanda for such 'strategic' name choice, occasionally including retention of indigenous names. A Portuguese man captured by the English in 1586, Lopez Vaz, described the naming of the Solomon Islands thus: "The discoverer of these islands named them the Isles of Solomon, to the end that the Spaniards supposing them to be those Isles from whence Solomon fetched Gold to adorn the Temple at Jerusalem, might be the more desirous to goe

72 In the *Anabasis*, too, Arrian also calls Eratosthenes a 'man of repute' (*An.* 5.5.1). See *An.* 5.3.1-4 (F 23 Roller) for Arrian's doubts concerning Eratosthenes' account of the Macedonians' 'transference' of the Caucasus (with Roller's commentary, 139), though note his comments at 5.5.3; cf. *Ind.* 2.2-4; 5.10; *Str.* 15.1.11; see Bosworth 1995, 213-219; 239.

73 Pace Brunt 1976, app. XII, 4. For other examples, cf. *Str.* 11.5.5; 11.6.4; 15.1.8-10; 16.1.3. Compare also the competing traditions about the name of the mountain, Meros, which seem to have sprung up in Alexander's time: some have Dionysus naming it after his own myth (*Arr. An.* 5.1.6; *Ind.* 1.6; *Metz Epit.* 36), while others claim Meros was a native name to which stories attached based on its similarity to the Greek word *μηρός* (*D.S.* 2.38.4; *Curt.* 8.10.12; *Plin. Nat.* 6.79; *Mela* 3.56); see Bosworth 1995, 206.

74 On this passage, see Hamilton 1971, 108-110; Bosworth 1980, 378; Roller 2010, 139-140.

and inhabit the same.”⁷⁵ In a similar fashion, the official version of Columbus’ first contact with the Americas (the letter to Santángel) claimed that he named the first five places he encountered after Spanish royalty and Catholic figures: in Gužauskytė’s words, this missive “uses the rhetoric recorded in these five place names to project the message of a Christian, imperialistic ideology.”⁷⁶ Another document, however—the *Diario del primer viaje* (‘Diary of the first voyage’), a transcription of Columbus’ lost, private ship logs⁷⁷—, shows the more complex negotiation between native Taino toponymy and Castilian naming, which included hybrid names and even the preservation of many indigenous toponyms.⁷⁸

Perhaps most similar to the Macedonian choice of Tanais over Orxantes, however, are those instances when Columbus chose place names “based on words he heard in the New World but that reminded him of Asian names of places or people”; for Columbus was convinced until death that he had arrived at “a part of Asia.”⁷⁹ A good example concerns the similarity between the Castilian word for Japan, *Cipango*, and the indigenous Taino names, *Cuba* and *Cibao*. Gužauskytė discusses this phenomenon:

Due to this uncertainty about the place of his arrival in relation to the lands of the Great Khan, for Columbus there was also a lack of conceptual boundaries between the American and the Asian onomastics, which formed for him two overlapping categories. One example is the way Columbus used three toponyms: *Cipango*, *Cuba* (also spelled *Colba*), and *Cibao*. As Columbus vacillated among the three terms, the first of which was the Castilian word for Japan while the other two were Taino toponyms, **he was attempting to reconcile his current location with where he hoped to be based on theoretical conjectures.** *Cibao* sounded almost like *Cipango* and *Cuba* sounded almost like *Cibao*: “Çipango, al cual ellos llaman Çibao” (*Cipango*, which they called *Cibao*), and “después partir

75 Lopez Vaz (1586) in Purchas 1905, XII, 292.

76 Gužauskytė 2014, 63.

77 The *diarios* were “the versions of the original ship logs now lost and accessible to the reader as transcriptions that Bartolomé de Las Casas made for his own use” (Gužauskytė 2014, 4; see 3–19 on the source issues).

78 Gužauskytė 2014, 61–81; cf. n. 62 above.

79 Gužauskytė 2014, 73: “The key question was not whether or not Columbus had reached Asia: his references to the local inhabitants as Indians (*los indios*), to the great emperor the Great Khan (*Gran Can*), to cannibals (*caníbales*), and to the generic place name of the Indies (*las Indias*) throughout the *diarios* speak to his conviction that he had, indeed, arrived at *a part of Asia*, an idea he did not abandon until his death. The more pertinent question for him at that point was whether the island he had reached was directly under the Great Khan’s rule” (Gužauskytė’s emphasis).

para otra isla grande mucho, que creo que deve ser Çipango, según las señas que me dan estos indios que yo traigo, a la cual ellos llaman Colba” [and afterwards to depart for another much larger island which I believe must be Japan, according to the description of these Indians whom I carry, and which they call *Colba*] ... Columbus concluded he was very near Japan and the gold he was going to find there ... **The textual landscape was composed of toponyms recorded in the textual sources he had consulted prior to embarking on his voyages and those he was hearing pronounced by the local inhabitants.**⁸⁰

In both examples from the expeditions of Alexander and Columbus, there is an intersection of prior topographical knowledge and contemporary information from native informants. The similarity in pronunciation between the three place names played into Columbus’ pre-conceived notions about where he expected to find himself, and he continued to use ‘Cipango’ throughout his four voyages.⁸¹ (The indigenous name ‘Cuba’, of course, won out in the end.) While perhaps less intentionally ‘propagandistic’ than the Macedonians’ claims about the Tanais, this is nevertheless an example of a conqueror hearing an indigenous name, relating it to prior notions of geography, and persisting in the use of the name in similar form.

All of this is to say that the Macedonians, like Columbus, seem to have placed some value on the knowledge of native place names, and thus local guides like Hydraces may have also served a function beyond navigation: their knowledge of local languages and place names could be exploited for ‘strategic’ naming purposes.⁸² Even if there is little evidence for the ‘slight altering’ of native place names on Alexander’s expedition about which Strabo hints, it seems clear that there was still interest in learning them.

80 Gužauskytė 2014, 74–75 (her translation from page 214 included above).

81 Gužauskytė 2014, 74: “*Cipango* is the only place name referring to Asia that Columbus recalls consistently throughout his voyages (the variants of its name occur nineteen times in the *diarios*).”

82 It is also worth mentioning the city of Arbis allegedly founded by Nearchus, according to Onesicritus (*FGrH* 134 F 28 = Plin. *Nat.* 6.96), by the river Arbis (the Arabios of Arr. *Ind.* 21.8). If factual, then it is a Macedonian foundation that retained the native name; however, Arrian’s *Indica* mentions nothing at the same point (*Ind.* 21.8; cf. *An.* 6.21.3–4), and Pliny’s source of Juba seems unreliable in his reading of both Nearchus and Onesicritus (see the comments of Brunt 1983, app. XXV, 5; Whitby 2011, *BNJ* 134 F 28).

4 Conclusion

To return to our central passage: Hydraces embarks at Mosarna, and thereafter 'the journey was no longer difficult but places were named/identified to a somewhat greater extent as far as the Persian Gulf' (τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε οὐκέτι χαλεπὰ ἦν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τι ὀνομαζόμενα, ἔστε ἐπὶ τὸν κόλπον τὸν Περσικόν). On the understanding that naming and guiding go hand in hand in Nearchus' account, the manuscript reading should be retained and the word ὀνομαζόμενα understood in the sense of 'identified', shorthand for the positive results of a well-guided, and well-translated, excursion. Even if one is hesitant to accept this reading, one must at least accept that previous interpretations have failed to consider thoroughly the role of guides on Nearchus' expedition, and that it behoves us to exhaust all possibilities before calling for emendation. Nearchan fragments elsewhere show that guides were difficult to obtain, and the presence of Hydraces and his 'naming'—including a possible interpreting role—evidently reduced the navigational difficulties for that leg of the journey.

The knowledge of the place names of all these locations was presumably part of Alexander's aims for the expedition ('to inspect the coasts that were along the voyage, the anchorages and islands, and to sail around any bay that they came upon, and whatever cities were by the sea and if the land was fruitful or deserted', *Ind.* 32.11). Nearchus' work illustrates well elsewhere how guides like Hydraces were essential to such knowledge. As I have more tentatively suggested, too, the reference to naming in our central passage (*Ind.* 27.1) may also hint at the naming and renaming of local place names on Alexander's expedition; comparison with naming practices on Columbus' voyage allows us to shed some light on the more limited ancient evidence. The word ὀνομαζόμενα, then, refers to identifying local place names for navigational purposes, and perhaps also points to the practice of renaming with Greek names or the shrewd 'alteration' of local toponymy and topography.⁸³

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