"A Friendly Wall" (Arr.*Anab*.5.17.2):

Reassessing the Utility and Success of Elephants in the Diadoch Wars (322-281)

Elephants are iconic elements of early Hellenistic warfare, and for some time modern scholarship generally offered praise for the battlefield successes of these animals, falling in line with Scullard's (1974) definitive study of elephants in ancient combat, a text which has clearly influenced the recent work of Kistler (2006). However, this conclusion has also come under scrutiny. In passing comments or close assessments of particular battles, scholars like Sabin (2007), Waterfield (2011), Fischer-Bovet (2014), and Wrightson (2015) have noted the problematic aspects of war elephants in the context of Macedonian fights and questioned how truly effective these animals were in combat. Such an inquiry harkens back to the work of Glover (1944, 1948, 1950) who argued that elephants were essentially handicaps for an army in battle because Macedonian generals did not deploy them properly, preferring to line them across the front rather than clump them solely on the wings.

I argue that neither Scullard's nor Glover's perspective is entirely accurate. The accolades elephants receive in Scullard's text are based more on the extensive and frightening descriptions that ancient sources devote to war elephants than the animals' tactical effectiveness. Glover's notes on the risks of elephant deployment are accurate, but the problematic aspect of elephant use stems from more than inappropriate deployment. After all, the Macedonian Successors of Alexander deployed elephants the way they had learned to from the Indians, who had employed war elephants for centuries. Rather, the use of elephants in any formation was inherently at odds with the rigid Macedonian system of combat. Even in cases where Macedonians appear to be following Glover's advice, they suffer severe losses related to their

deployment of elephants.

In order to provide a thorough re-evaluation of elephant use, my paper investigates the major pitched battles and sieges of the Diadoch Wars and concludes that elephants were largely ineffective because of four key reasons. (1) Elephants did not directly turn the tide of battle or deal the decisive blow, as we see in at Orcynia, Gabiene, and to a degree, Ipsus. (2) Elephants were difficult to kill but could be disarmed easily by technological innovation and without the use of an opposing elephant corps, as seen at Gaza and Megalopolis. (3) Elephants had virtually no success record in siege warfare (witness the Fort of Camels and Megalopolis). (4) Elephants' response to injury often resulted in significant casualties on the side deploying them, which we see at Paraetacene, Gabiene, and the skirmish in between. Finally, the paper concludes that where elephants were used well, such as at Cyrrhestica, their success was due to psychological, not practical, factors.

The nature of elephant behavior alone precludes them from consideration as effective war animals, but this is all the more apparent when they enter the foreign context of western combat in the fourth century bce. And yet, elephants remain a mainstay of warfare among the Greek kings of the East (especially the Ptolemies and Seleucids) down through the middle third century. It cannot possibly be the case that over a century of military expertise failed to recognize the incompatibility of elephants and Greek warfare—something else was at work. I assert in my conclusion the results of a larger project—elephants were maintained for their psychological and propagandistic value. As members of Alexander's vast military menagerie, they had become potent emblems of kingship and legitimacy in the long span of the Diadoch Wars and represented one element among many in the arms race and power grab following the conqueror's death.

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