

Alexander's grave between
the two idioms of : σῆμα καὶ σῶμα

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It is widely recognized that king Σωτήρ had transferred the corpse of his citizen the Great Conqueror from Βαβυλών to be mammified and to be burried in Μέμφις (1) . King Φιλάδελφος in his turn had carried it from Memphis to Alexandria (2) ; he deposited it into χρυσή λάρναξ and consigned it to a graveyard which was perhaps situated within the Palaces area = τὰ βασιλεια (3) near the coast . King Φιλοπάτωρ by the end of the third century B. C. , and at the crossing point of the largest two roads : Κάνοπος καὶ Σάραπις (4) , had erected ἕνα μεγάλο μαυσωλεῖον wherein he once again gathered and put to rest the ashes of his four ancestors (5) : Alexander and the three dynastic θεοὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ βασίλισσες , οἱ Σωτήρες , Ἀδελφοί , Εὐεργέται . King Ptolemy X in 89 B. C. had daredevilily replaced by an alabaster one the mentioned golden sarcophagos (6) of his own ὁμώνυμος in order to pay the mercenaries with whom he could re-entered his Capital despite his rebellious troops .

This temple-tomb had been gotten, by Ptolemy the second (7) or his grandson the fourth (8) , a name which is controversial among the ancient scholars , ἔαν εἶναι τό σῶμα (9) ἢ τό σῆμα (10) .

The modern researchers too are still uncertain, since disagreements

arise between them (11) . They neither extend new theses, nor do they forward substantial relevant evidence .

In this paper I am presenting a modest argument to your Congress; and I hope to be a convincing .

The difference between the two idioms, is one letter, small in its form, big in its signification .

Concerning to τό σῶμα , it means " body " . Though some researchers explained it as " a living body " . However, let us confute such interpretation which is contrary to what has been brought in by Plutarchus and Homerus . On the one hand, the great literary man (12) purports that : τό σῶμα τοῦ ρήγα τοῦ Μακεδόνο^ς ἀπέμεινε νωπὸν καὶ δροσερόν σάν νά πέθανε μόλις πρὶν λίγο = the corpse of the Macedonian king remained clean and fresh as if he died recently . On the other hand, the sagacious poet uses it as a sense of τό νεκρόν (13) ; while τό ζωντανόν he indicates as τό δέμας (14) . The restricted " alive body " which could be called το σῶμα , was " the enslaved " either male or female ; where throughout the papyri a word of τά σώματα , namely οἱ δούλοι , is amply adduced, considering that the slaves were nothing else but moving material masses .

So, the utterance of τό σῶμα has meant no more than " a dead body " , that is to say ἕνα πτώμα . Such a word which was prompting ill-omen and gloominess to the Greeks, including the Macedonians who according to the myth of Ἡρακλείδαι (15), deemed themselves part and parcel of the Ἕλληνες . Such a race which is till now extremely

optimistic, in spite of the hard circumstances of its community, both in antiquity and in modern times .

Another logical motive, is that ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Μέγας , even before his death, was esteemed as ἕνας θεός καί υἱός ἑνός θεοῦ . And as we know, Gods never die inasmuch as they have no bodies, but they are spirits immortal and transparent , whose drink and food are τό νέκταρ καί ἡ ἄμβροσία , and whose residence is ὁ Οὐρανός upon the silver acme of mount Ὀλυμπος .

Thus, under these justifications, it was improbable for Ἕλληνες καί Μακεδόνες καί Πτολεμαῖοι to see about such τολμηρή καί δυνατή personality (16) , the deified Alexander (17) son of the deity Ammon (18) as " a mere body " or in similar sentence " τίποτα ἄλλο παρά σῶμα , δηλαδή παρά πτῶμα " .

As for τό σῆμα , it has few senses like : a mark, a signal, a token . I pretend that it was the proper idiom which had been preferred by Ptolemies monarchs to be a guide word for the sepulchre of our topic . Their philosophy behind that choice was to maintain the grave's name permanently linked with its magnificent host; in such manner that whenever and wherever τό σῆμα is mentioned it comes to be aimed only at the Grave of Alexander the third, the great man upon whose racialism they were proud .

To bring my point near to your mind, I would like to exemplify two certain paradeigmata :

- around the world there are many Ἀλεξάνδρειες , but it becomes

well-known that when is talled a city of Alexandria deprived from her own mother-land, everyone immediately realizes that she is the Ptolemaic Capital, the center of hellenistic civilization .

- in the cosmos too , there are three Θῆβαι , one at Egypt (19) , and two at Ἑλλάδα (20) , but as soon as is said an absolute Thebes without her πλησιέστατη πατρίδα , all the people understand that she signifies the kingdom of Cadmus and Oedipus, the glorius city of the seven gates .

Anyway, it can be added that, τό ὄνομα αὐτοῦ μνήματος , whether σῆμα ἢ σῶμα , is definitely out of comparison with its contents .

How simple such a name is, and how great such a content is indeed !

- (1) Paus. Att. vi. 1 : τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου νεκρὸν μὲν νόμῳ τῷ Μακεδόνων ἄθαπτεν ἐν Μέμφει .
- (2) Ibid. vii. 1 : οὗτος ὁ Πτολεμαῖος Ἀρσινόης ἀδελφῆς ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἔρασεῖς .. τὸν Ἀλεξάνδρου νεκρὸν καταγαγὼν ἐκ Μέμφιδος . Curt. X. x. 20. 25-27 : Alexandriam translatum est.
- (3) Strab. XVII. i. 8. 11, 19, 26
- (4) Presently they are : El-Horreya Avenue and El-Nabi Daniel Rue .
- (5) Zenob. Prov. III. 94. 17-18 : πάντας ἐκεῖ τοὺς προπάτορας σὺν αὐτῇ κατέθετο , καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Μακεδόνα .
- (6) Strab. op. cit. LL. 44-48 : οὐ μὲν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ πυέλῳ , ὑαλίνη γὰρ αὕτη , ἐκεῖνος δ' ἐν χρυσῇ κατέθηκεν , ἐσύλησε δ' αὐτὴν ὁ Κόκκης καὶ Παρεΐσακτος ἐπικληθεὶς Πτολεμαῖος .
- (7) Paus. loc. cit.
- (8) Zenob. op. cit. LL. 11-12 : ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Φιλοπάτορος .

(9) e.g. Call. Vit. Alex. III. 34. 4-7 : εὐθέως οὖν ὁ Πτολεμαῖος ἄγει αὐτόν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ καὶ ποιεῖ τάφον ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῷ καλουμένῳ Σῶμα Ἀλεξάνδρου , κακεῖ τό λείψανον αὐτοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου καί τό καθίδρυσεν . Ps. Call. Arm. III. 84. 18-19 : τότε οὖν ποιεῖ αὐτῷ τάφον Πτολεμαῖος ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ , ὅς μέχρι τοῦ νῦν καλεῖται Ἀλεξάνδρου Σῶμα , καί ἐκεῖ ἔθηκεν αὐτόν μεγαλοπρεπεί τιμῇ . Ps . Call. B. III . 34 . 4-6 : εὐθέως οὖν ὁ Πτολεμαῖος ἄγει αὐτόν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ καὶ ποιεῖ τάφον ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καλουμένῳ Σῶμα Ἀλεξάνδρου , καί ἐκεῖ τόν καθίδρυσεν . Ps. Call. Γ . III . 34 . 23-24 : καί ποιεῖ τάφον ἐν τῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ οἰκοδομηθέντι ἀστείῳ παρά τόν ἱερόν τό καλούμενον Σῶμα Ἀλεξάνδρου . Strab. Mss. XVII . a 1144. 8-10 : καί τό καλούμενον Σῶμα .

(10) e.g. Ps. Call. A. III . 34 . 6. 23-25 : τότε οὖν ποιεῖ αὐτῷ τάφον Πτολεμαῖος ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ , ὅς μέχρι τοῦ νῦν καλεῖται Ἀλεξάνδρου Σῆμα , καί ἐκεῖ ἔθαψεν αὐτόν μεγαλοπρεπῶς . Strab. XVII i. 8. 25-28 : μέρος δέ τῶν βασιλείων ἐστί καί τό καλούμενον Σῆμα , ὃ περίβολος ἦν , ἐν ᾧ αἱ τῶν βασιλέων ταθαί καί ἡ Ἀλεξάνδρου . Zenob. op. cit. LL. 6-7, 15-16 :

Εὐνους ὁ σφάκτης . αὐτὴ ἡ παροιμία προηρέθη ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὀρέστου ... διὰ τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ὀνείρων ταραχὰς ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλει μνήμα οἰκοδομήσας , ὃ νῦν Σῆμα καλεῖται .

(11) e.g. Bevan , Hist. Eg. Ptol. Dyn. pp. 19-20 ; Bouché - Leclercq. Hist. Lagid. II. pp. 124 , 142 , 214 ; Breccia, Alex. ad Aeg. pp. 82-86 ; Frazer, Ptol. Alex. I. pp. 15-16 ; L. Abdel-Wahab, Studies in history of Egypt, I. pp. 120-122 ; Mahaffy, Hist. Eg. Ptol. Dyn. p. 30 ; Ronciere, Hist. Nat. Eg. I. p. 114 . About this textual problem, professor Frazer says - op. cit. II. not. 79 - that it is not so complicated, because the most of sources refer not to σῆμα Ἀλεξάνδρου or to σῶμα Ἀλεξάνδρου , but only to μνημεῖον Ἀλεξάνδρου .

(12) Vit. Alex. 77.3 : .. ἀθεράπευτον τὸ σῶμα κείμενον ἐν τόποις θερμοῖς καὶ πνιγώδεσιν οὐδὲν ἔσχε τοιαύτης φθορᾶς σημείον , ἀλλ' ἔμεινε καθαρὸν καὶ πρόσφατον .

(13) II. III. 23 : ὥς τε λέων ἔχάρη μεγάλῳ ἐπὶ σώματι κύρσας . Id. XVIII. 161 : ὥς δ' ἀπὸ σώματος οὐ τι λέοντ' αἶθωνα δύνανται .

(14) Ibid. I. 115 : οὐ δέμας οὐδέ φυήν , οὐτ' ἄρ' φρένας οὐτε τι ἔργα . XI. 596 : ὥς οἱ μὲν μάρναντο δέμας πυρός αἰθομένοιο .

(15) In the 5th century B.C. at the time of Persian wars, it had been generally agreed by the greek authors the hellenic origin of the Macedonian kings, depending firstly in the legend of the descent them from Τήμενος a grandchild of Heracles ; and secondly on a verdict of the judges at olympic games when Alexander I (495-450) as a victor has claimed an acceptance to be ἕνας Ἕλληνας .

(16) Clit. Alex. fr. 35, apud Stob. Flor. IV . xii. 13 : πᾶσα τόλμη καὶ τὰ τῆς δυνάμεως ὑπερβαίνει μέτρα .

(17) Arr. IV. 10. 6-7 : ἄρξαι δὲ τοῦ λόγου Ἀνάξαρχον, ὡς πολὺ δικαιότερον ἂν θεὸν νομιζόμενον Ἀλέξανδρον Διονύσου τε καὶ Ἑρακλέους , καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνο εἶναι ἀμφίλογον ὅτι ἀπέλθοντα γε ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ὡς θεὸν τιμήσουσι . Diog. Laert. VI. 63 : ψηφισαμένων Ἀθηναίων Ἀλέξανδρον Διόνυσον , ἔφη " κάμει Σάραπιν ποιήσατε " . Polyb. XII. 12 b. 3 : Τίμαιος ἐπαινεῖ τὸν Δημοσθένην μὲν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ῥήτορας τοὺς καὶ ἐκείνον τὸν καιρὸν ἀκράσαντας καὶ φησι τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἀξίους γεγονέναι , διότι ταῖς Ἀλεξάνδρου τιμαῖς ταῖς ἰσοθείαις ἀντέλεγον .

(18) Diod. XVIII . 3.5 : Κομίζειν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ τετελευτηκότος βασιλέως εἰς Ἀμμῶνα . Just. Epit. XIII . 4.6-7 : rex corpus Alexandri in Ammonis templum deducere. Ps. Call. A. III. 33. 13. 8-9 : βασι-

λεύς Ἀλέξανδρος Ἄμμωνος καὶ Ὀλυμπιάδος υἱός ἀποδείκνυσ-
 τιν ἐπιμελητάς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείας πάσης Μακεδονίας . Ps.
 Call. Argm. III . 70. 4-7 : ἀποδείκνυσι βασιλεύς Ἀλέξανδρος
 υἱός Ἄμμωνος καὶ Ὀλυμπιάδος τὸν βασιλέα Μακεδονίας ἐπί-
 μὲν τοῦ παρόντος Ἀριδοῖον τὸν υἱὸν Φιλίππου³⁴ λήψασθε .

(19) Thebes of hundred gates = ἑκατόμυλοι , now it is Luxor =
 Le Louqsor .

(20) Θῆβαι = ὁ ἑπτάπυλος , εἶναι τῆς Βοιωτίας , ἐνὼ ἡ ἄλλη βρίσκ-
 εται στή Θεσσαλία .

Abbreviations

- Arr. Anab. = Ἀρριανός, Ἀνάβασις Ἀλεξάνδρου, LCL.
- Call. Vit. Alex. = Καλλιस्थένης, Βίος Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μακεδόνα καὶ πράξεις, ed. H. Van Thiel, Der Alexanderroman, Darmstadt 1974.
- Clit. Alex. = Κλείταρχος, Περί Ἀλέξανδρον Ἱστορίαι (= τὰ περί Ἀλέξανδρον).
- Curt. Alex. = Q. Curtii Rufi, Historiarum Alexandri Magni, ed. S. Dosson, Paris 1882.
- Diod. = Διόδωρος Σικελιώτης, Βιβλιοθήκη Ἱστορική, LCL.
- Diog. Laert. = Διογένης Λαέρτιος, Βίοι καὶ γνῶμαι, LCL.
- Hom. Il. = Ὅμηρος, Ἰλιάς, LCL.
- Just. Epit. = Iustinus, Torgi Pompei Historiarum Philippicarum Epitoma, ed. A. Forbiger, Stuttgart 1866.
- Paus. Att. = Πausανίας, Περιήγησις τῆς Ἑλλάδος, Ἀττική, LCL.
- Plut. Vit. Alex. = Πλούταρχος, Βίοι Παράλληλοι, De Alexandri Fortuna, LCL.
- Polyb. = Πολύβιος, Ἱστορίαι, LCL.
- Ps. Call. A = Pseudo-Callisthenes, Historia Alexandri Magni, recensio vetusta, ed. W. Kroll, Berlin 1926
- Arm. = Pseudo-Callisthenes, Historia Alexandri Magni, versio armeniaca, ed. R. Raabe, Ἱστορία Ἀλεξάνδρου, Leipzig 1896.

- B = Pseudo-Callisthenes , Historia Alexandri Magni ,
 rezensio β , ed. L. Bergson , Der griechische
 Alexanderroman , Stockholm 1965 .
- Γ = Pseudo-Callisthenes , Historia Alexandri Magni ,
 rezensio γ , ed. F. Parthe , Der griechische
 Alexanderroman , vol. 3 , Meisenheim 1969 .
- Stob. Flor. = Στοβεύς , Ἀνθολόγιον (= Ἐκλογαὶ ἀποφθέγματα) ,
 ed. O. Hense , Florilegium , vol.2 , Berlin 1958 .
- Strab. = Στράβων , Γεωγραφικά , LCL.
- Mss = Mss of Strabo , ed. G. kramer , Berlin 1852 .
- Zenob. Prov. = Ζηνόβιος , Παροιμίαι ἑλληνικαί , ed. E. Leutsch &
 F. Schneidewin , Proverbia graecorum , Paroemiogr-
 aphi graeci , vol. 1 , Goettingen 1839 .