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Exotic Animals as a Manifestation of Royal *luxuria*. Rulers and Their Menageris: From the Pompe of Ptolemy II Philadelphus to Aurelian*

The world which was left by Alexander the Great became the world of world of τροφή¹ and *luxuria*. Pomp and circumstance made their way to the everyday life of the royal courts. The commodities imported from the East certified the wealth of the monarchs and emperors and were their means of propaganda. Among the Hellenistic and Roman rulers and aristocrats a fashion for collecting animal curiosities appeared. In the following paragraphs I shall discuss in particular this feature of luxury, which refers to acquiring interesting and rare animal species.² The issue of exotic animals in Greco-Roman antiquity is vast; therefore this paper shall concentrate especially on the aspect of royal collections of the exotic animals, and their function as luxury commodities. The history recorded

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¹ τροφή is a term describing the lavish lifestyle introduced by the Ptolemaic dynasty into the Greek world. See Bugh, 2006, 160 ff. For the discussion on τροφή in the Hellenistic period and its political and social references see Harward, 1982.

² Sometimes, as in the case of elephants, the purpose of collecting was not only fashion for luxury but, in particular, it was dictated by military aims of the monarchs. Still, having elephant corps in the army was a luxury which was dependent on the wealth of the monarch and on his ability to acquire new specimen.

in particular Ptolemy II Philadelphos for his famous Pompe in the 3rd c. BC and many expeditions in the African hinterland. One of the aspects of his luxurious mode of life was his renowned collection of exotic species of animals displayed in the Pompe. What is crucial about the impact of the Great Procession on the contemporary world is that it caused a desire to copy the luxurious standards of life established by Philadelphos. The paper shall end with the reflections on the triumphal parade of the emperor Aurelian in the 3rd c. AD since it was the most extraordinary Roman triumph after his recapture of the East. Significantly, Ptolemy II Philadelphus over his lifetime was engaged in several wars with the Seleucids trying to gain control over the East while Aurelian was actually the one who managed to do this in 272 AD, in the battles of Immae and Emesa, and was named *Resistutor Orientis*.³

My point of departure in the reflections on exotic menageries as a fashion on possessing luxurious commodities will be an excerpt of the text describing the famous Pompe.⁴ The text transmitted to us by Athenaeus who is quoting Callixinus' of Rhodes *Peri Alexandreias* (Book IV) is in fact a selection that interested the author of *Deipnosophistae* the most, namely the luxuries. Thus, Athenaeus does not quote every animal mentioned by Callixinus but only the species that were most admired and fitted into his concept of *Deipnosophistae*.⁵

... there was a Dionysus measuring eighteen feet who reclined upon an elephant's back (...). Seated in front of him on the elephants neck was a Satyr (...). After them were sent forth twenty-four elephant chariots, sixty teams of he-goats, twelve of saiga antelopes, seven of beisa antelopes, fifteen of leucoryse, eight teams of ostriches, seven of Père David deer, four of wild asses, and four four-horse chariots. (...) Then came camels (...). Dogs were also led along, numbering two thousand four hundred, some Indian,⁶ the others Hyrcanian or Molossian or of other breeds. Next came one hundred and fifty men carrying trees on which were suspended all sorts of animals and birds. Then were brought, in cages, parrots,

³ Southern, 2001, 232; Watson, 1999, 195.

⁴ The date of the procession is a disputable issue. The common assumption is that it took place on the occasion of Ptolemaieia in 279/8 BC (e. g. Fraser, 1972, I, 513; II, 738 f. n. 152), or in 275/4 (see Foertmeyer, 1988), or as late as 262 (Hazzard, 2000).

⁵ "The pageant vividly expressed the aesthetic of luxury." Rajak, 2009, 69.

⁶ The Indian dogs were believed to have a tiger blood in their veins, Arist., *H. A.*, 607a; Pliny, *N. H.*, 8.61.148; Aelian, *N. A.*, 8.1.; Diod., 17.92.1 and mentioned already in Herodotus 1.192. The Indian dog was also considered as the only dog species capable of slaying a lion (Ctesias, F 45.10). For the subject of Indian dogs see Karttunen, 1989, 163 ff. and Keller, 1909, 108 f.

peacocks, guinea-fowls, and birds from the Phasis and others from Aethiopia, in great quantities.

After he has spoken of very many other things, and enumerated many droves of animals he adds: "One hundred and thirty Aethiopian sheep, three hundred Arabian, twenty Euboean; also twenty-six Indian zebus entirely white, eight Aethiopian, one large white she-bear, fourteen leopards, sixteen genets, four caracals, three bear-cubs, one giraffe, one Aethiopian rhinoceros.⁷

[Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, V. 201b–f, 202f–203e]

In this Pageant one can distinguish certain groups of animals: beginning with domestic species of remote countries (sheep, goats), wild but rather harmless (various kinds of antelopes, asses, monkeys), marvels (elephants, giraffe, rhinoceros, camel, ostriches), wild beasts (felines, bears) and many kinds of birds.

The presence of all these animals in the Procession was partially due to the fascination of Ptolemy II Philadelphus with the wild and unknown world of nature. He gathered the creatures from the conquered and subject lands as booty or political gifts. Some were brought as a result of great hunting expeditions. As Diodorus attests (3.36.3), Ptolemy's primary aim was to enhance the knowledge of Greeks on unusual animals. But the geographer also states that the king was spending a lot of money for this purpose, which he describes as Philadelphus' ἐπιθυμία. Ἐπιθυμία as a strong desire to possess something reflects the mode of life at the court of Ptolemies according to τρυφή and underlines the role of animals in this lavish lifestyle. For as Columella wrote:

Wild creatures (...) sometimes serve to enhance the splendour and pleasure of their owners...

[Columella, *On Agriculture*, IX.1.1]⁸

This sentence can be most certainly applied to Ptolemy and the influence his Pompe had on the Hellenistic and Roman culture. Significantly, the Pompe directly paralleled Indian processions during festivals recorded for the Greeks by Cleitarchus.⁹ Strabo quoting this description stressed the presence of exotic animals in the parade: tame felines and birds in the trees. However, at the time of Ptolemy's Pageant the Romans were quite distant from adopting *luxuria* into their world. In fact, when Scipio Aemilianus entered Alexandria in 139 BC and was greeted by

⁷ Gulick, 1928.

⁸ After Mucznik, 2010, 319.

⁹ Strabo, 15.1.69

Ptolemy VIII the Romans were disgusted by his lack of modesty.¹⁰ Yet, it is recorded that in 186 BC exotic animals slowly appeared in Roman public life, beginning with *venatio* of M. Fulvius Nobilior.¹¹

Τρυφή evolved in *luxuria* and entered the Roman world at the time of political changes from Republic into Roman Empire of Caesars and their court life. *Luxuria* appeared in Rome with the adoption of Greek art and with Dionysos known onwards as Bacchus or Liber who, in the Hellenistic world, was a symbol of the hedonistic values of τρυφή.¹² Not without significance is here the fact, that the crucial part of the Pompe was the Dionysian cortege. Dionysos was one of the pretexts for this luxurious Parade, and it was Dionysos who was accompanied in the procession by marvelous and exotic animal species which were all gathered by Ptolemy. Thus τρυφή and *luxuria* are integrally joined with Dionysos and royal menageries.

There is no doubt to the presence of exotic animals in Alexandria at the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, yet, there exists a huge question mark when it comes to discussing a place they were stored in. Most common among the scholars is an assumption about a zoological garden located within the Palace area in Alexandria.¹³ Whether the listed variety of animals came from a single collection of Philadelphus' such as the 'zoo' has been questioned by J. Dumont¹⁴ and J. Trinquier.¹⁵ Nonetheless, a fact is that such animals were brought to Alexandria and that one of the purposes for their display was to show the king's might and wealth, to boast the variety of exotic species he managed to gather. However, the apple of Ptolemy's eyes were the elephants¹⁶ (Figure 1). He used them mainly for war purposes and for that reason, being cut off from the Indian species by the Seleucids, he arranged hunting expedition for African elephants just before the outbreak of the Second Syrian War.¹⁷ And this influenced the Roman world significantly. The elephants in his Pageant became a symbol of the triumph and this message of the Dionysian

¹⁰ Chauveau, 2000, 44.

¹¹ Ostenberg, 2009, 169.

¹² Zanker, 1998, 17 f.

¹³ Rice, 1986, 86 f., Hubbell, 1935.

¹⁴ Dumont, 2001, 332.

¹⁵ Trinquier, 2002 provided a profound analysis functions and localization of the animals gathered by Ptolemy for the procession juxtaposing it with the definition of a 'zoo'. In the view of his research it is hardly probable that a 'zoo' existed but the scarcity of sources does not determine it.

¹⁶ As was the case for his father Ptolemy I Soter and also of his successors.

¹⁷ See Casson, 1993.

Triumph was adopted also by the Roman emperors.¹⁸ In the Imperial Rome elephants served, as in Ptolemaic Egypt, primary for military expeditions, but also belonged to the menageries of the Emperors. Claudius had a private collection of elephants in Laurentum, which he used as gifts.¹⁹

As the so called 'zoo' of Ptolemy II Philadelphus is quite mysterious, there are no doubts surrounding the menagerie gathered by Nero. Suetonius is here a reliable source. When the biographer describes Nero's palace, known as the Golden Palace he adds

There was a pond too, like a sea, surrounded with buildings to represent cities, besides tracts of country, varied by tilled fields, vineyards, pastures and woods, with great numbers of wild and domestic animals.²⁰

[Suetonius, *Nero*, 31.1]

The species of animals in the Nero's collection are not specified. Some were destined for his gardens in the Golden Palace, others were destined for the arena and some birds and tamed beasts served as gifts.²¹ An appreciable collection of exotic creatures belonged as well to Nero's prefect Tigellinus.

He had collected birds and wild beasts from the ends of the earth, and marine animals from the ocean itself.²²

[Tacitus, *Annales*, 15.37.2]

Again, the species are not specified. Peculiarly, Tigellinus' menagerie is the only recorded to have aquatic species included, but all of the collection was consumed on one of the banquets he made in Rome.²³ Lavishness and extravagance were the main point of Tigellinus' banquet.²⁴ Tacitus named it as the "most prodigal and notorious"²⁵ (*ne saepius eadem prodigentia narranda sit*). Tigellinus' idea to consume his exotic collection was not an exclusive occurrence in the history of Roman menageries. Elagabalus as well is recorded in the history of animal collections by his gourmet menu consisting

¹⁸ Pompey, Elagabalus, Aurelian, Tiberius, Tilburg entered Rome in a triumphal procession with elephants 2007, 79.

¹⁹ Juvenalis, 12.102-107; Tilburg, 2007, 79.

²⁰ Trans. Rolfe, 1951.

²¹ Suetonius, *Nero*, 11.2; see Jennison, 1936, 70.

²² Jackson, 1994.

²³ Allen et al. 1962, 99.

²⁴ Plass, 1995, 75.

²⁵ Futrell, 2006, 221.

of ostriches.²⁶ Except from ostriches Elagabalus possessed many tame beasts in his private collection in Rome and used them to manifest his wealth and to enjoy life. It is recorded in *Historia Augusta* (28.2) that the emperor played a joke on his guests by placing lions, leopards and bears into their rooms at night. No harm was done, since the animals were perfectly trained and tamed and were deprived of their claws and teeth.²⁷ Moreover,

He would harness four huge dogs to a chariot and drive about within the royal residence, and he did the same thing, before he was made emperor, on his country-estates. He even appeared in public driving four stags of vast size. Once he harnessed lions to his chariot and called himself the Great Mother, and on another occasion, tigers, and called himself Dionysus; and he always appeared in the particular garb in which the deity that he was representing was usually depicted. He kept at Rome tiny Egyptian snakes, called by the natives "good genii," besides hippopotami, a crocodile, and a rhinoceros, and, in fact, everything Egyptian which was of such a kind that it could be supplied. And sometimes at his banquets he served ostriches, saying that the Jews had been commanded to eat them.²⁸

[SHA Elagabalus, 28.3]

In Elagabalus' menagerie we can distinguish big cats such as lions and tigers and many other Egyptian species not mentioned by name. Significantly, Elagabalus imitated gods who by their nature are related to wild animals. Although his actions were rather an amusement and do not bare specific symbolism crucial to the Pompe of Ptolemy,²⁹ the association with Dionysos is relevant. Dionysos being himself surrounded by a retinue of drunken maenads, as the Greek god of wine became important in the Roman religious and lavish lifestyle. When his victorious cortege entered Alexandria, Dionysos became a symbol of the luxuries from the East. "The extravagance of this public display bore witness to the blessing

²⁶ Ostriches were also served in the court of Cyrus, as is recorded by Heracleides (*FGrH* 689 F 2 = Athen., 4.145): "For one thousand animals are slaughtered daily for the king; these comprise horses, camels, oxen, asses, deer, and most of the smaller animals; many birds are also consumed, including Arabian ostriches ... geese and cocks.", see Brosius, 2007.

²⁷ Jennison, 1937, 90.

²⁸ Trans. Magie, 1960.

²⁹ Ptolemy's self-advertisement was masked by the procession in honour of his deified parents and god Dionysos. Coleman (Coleman, 1996, 50) in his paper raises the question of the impact of the Great Procession on Roman *munera* and *venationes* and draws very interesting analogies. He distinguishes such parallel features as the use of mythology and deployment of technology and incorporating animals into the whole display, Coleman 1994, 49.

of τροφή that Dionysos bestowed on the Ptolemaic rulers.”³⁰ This was willingly adapted by the Roman emperors. Thus Dionysos is to be ‘blamed’ for all the pomp in the Hellenistic and Roman courts. Elagabalus’ masquerade and menagerie point to the main source of Roman luxury which was Egypt, and actually, the fashion for Egypt that overwhelmed the Romans.

Egypt’s impact on Roman taste in luxury is illustrated by various works of art. It is attested by the Palestrina mosaic.³¹ The mosaic shows the whole variety of African³² fauna beginning with the Nubia and Upper Egypt up to the Delta of the Nile.³³ Many of the species presented by Ptolemy occur in it, but there is also a variety of water creatures which possibly could not take part in the pageant. The inspiration for this mosaic must have been the famous hunts of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. It depicts Negro hunters hunting some exotic birds accompanied by a dog and a monkey inscribed *sphingia*.³⁴ Both, monkeys³⁵ and birds were present in the procession hanging from trees carried by men. Since they were preceded by hunters they are the spoil of their hunting expedition.³⁶ Also giant snakes recall the events which, although, occurred after the Procession, are bound, with an image of Ptolemy as the precursor of the Hellenistic τροφή and lavish lifestyle. Agatarchides of Cnidus³⁷ recorded:

³⁰ Kondoleon, 1994, 105 f.

³¹ Named from Palestrina, ancient Praeneste, known also as Barberini Mosaic for it has been removed to a Barberini Palace in the 17th c. Meyboom (1995) has prepared detailed and comprehensive study on the mosaic and the influence of Egyptian religion in Italy it depicts. The mosaic was probably executed in the Augustan or Hadrianic periods, i. e. 1st c. BC/1st-2nd c. AD, Meyboom, 1995, 1n.1, but Meyboom dates it to the end of the second half of the 2nd c. BC, Meyboom, 1995, 19.

³² Although some animals appearing in the mosaic are not African (a Syrian bear, an onager, an Arabian dromedary and a peacock), they do appear in the description of Pompe. There was a common confusion in antiquity between Aethiopia and India. In fact, even Alexander believed to have found the sources of the Nile in India: Strabo 15.1.25 = Nearchus, FGrH 133 F 20; Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.1.1-6 = FGrH 133 F 32, Vasunia, 2001, 280.

³³ The Palestrina Mosaic is the most comprehensive ancient *tableaux* of the Aethiopian fauna described in geographical treatises of antiquity, especially by Agatarchides of Cnidus with Diodorus and Strabo following him, Meyboom 1995, 47.

³⁴ Agatarchides and Pliny (*N. H.*, 6.173) mentioned it as one of the species of Aethiopian monkeys.

³⁵ For they were probably meant by the expression θηρία παντοδαρά (5.201b) on the trees.

³⁶ Rice, 1983, 94.

³⁷ Cited by Diodorus, 3.36.4.

Consequently certain of the hunters, observing the princely generosity of the king in the matter of the rewards he gave, rounding up a considerable number decided to hazard their lives and to capture one of the huge snakes and bring it alive to Ptolemy at Alexandria. Great and astonishing as was the undertaking, fortune aided their designs and crowned their attempt with the success which it deserved. For they spied one of the snakes, thirty cubits long, as it loitered near the pools in which the water collects; here it maintained for most of the time its coiled body motionless, but at the appearance of an animal which came down to the spot to quench its thirst it would suddenly uncoil itself, seize the animal in its jaws, and so entwine in its coil the body of the creature which had come into view that it could in no wise escape its doom.³⁸

[Diodorus, *Library*, 3.36.4.]

One of the snakes, placed in the upper left corner of the mosaic (Figure 2), is hidden in a rocky ambush on the Nile bank and is depicted consuming a bird he caught. The situation is parallel to the words of Agatarchides in Diodorus' citation. Burstein saw this tableau in the Palestrina Mosaic as a "probable depiction" of the snake described by the ancient geographer and eventually presented to the king.³⁹ The likeness of the mosaic scene with the literary description indeed allows such assumptions.

Another painted menagerie, which is supposed to be influenced by Ptolemy's Pompe, was found in a necropolis near Marisa⁴⁰ in Palestine. Tomb I is adorned with an elaborate frieze of animals which are named to be Aethiopian⁴¹ (Figure 3). Of the animals named in the procession there figure: a bovine, a wild ass, a dog, a boar, an elephant, a giraffe, a rhinoceros, a caracal, *pardalis* and *panther*.⁴² Moreover, the symbolic value of the

³⁸ Trans. Oldfather, 1933-1967.

³⁹ Burstein, 1989, 125, n. 2, after Bodson, 2003, 182. Bodson in her article discusses in detail the credibility of this account and its reception. She also identifies the giant snake as *Python sebae* (Gmelin, 1789).

⁴⁰ Marisa (sometimes Marissa, hebr. Mareshah) was under Ptolemaic control from 274 to 175 BC.

⁴¹ Its decoration may be dated before 196 BC and was constructed for a certain Apollophanes, Meyboom, 1995, 44 n. 5. The paintings were discovered in 1904 by Thiersch and Peters and the only remnants of the frieze are the watercolours made at the time, for the decoration has almost entirely faded. Thiersch and Peters (1905) provided the first analysis of the decoration. Most recent study is made by Jacobson (2007) who agrees with the estimated date for the fresco as the turn of the 3rd and the 2nd c. BC, Jacobson, 2007, 48.

⁴² Some of the animals in the frieze are inscribed with Greek. However, a feline inscribed ΠΑΝΘΗΡΟΣ appears to be a lion. *Pardalis* and *panther* were distinguished by name in the Greek text of Callixinus. Certainly these were two different species of felines which paraded in the procession. However, the feline nomenclature caused

composition relates to Dionysos.⁴³ Although the style of the frieze painting is provincial, the theme is undoubtedly Alexandrine.⁴⁴ P. G. P. Meyboom is convinced that the Marisa frieze is a visual representation of the Ptolemaic expeditions to Eritrea.⁴⁵ This might be supported by certain theses that the owner of the tomb in question might have been a merchant, who traded in wild animals, or, even a supplier of African fauna to the king, or even he was himself a collector of wild animals and thus this would be his menagerie he gathered during his lifetime.⁴⁶

These two iconographic examples visualise to even greater extent the impact of the Pompe on the consumption of goods in the ancient Mediterranean. Such a variety of animals as presented in the Pompe, all exhibited at one time, and had never before been experienced by the Greeks.⁴⁷ This amazement people had with the exotic animals displayed had a huge impact on art. Not everyone could afford, as the king, to acquire foreign animals. But adorning a house with a mosaics or murals with the exotic animals was a luxury much more affordable by the society. The fashion for τρωφή and for exotic animals functioning as luxurious commodities reserved only for the reach was established by the Great Procession continued throughout the Roman Period. But exotic land and water animals were not exclusive objects of desire for royal collections. Exotic species of birds were also priced. Again, Ptolemy II Philadelphus was an owner of a renowned aviary. His collection is mentioned by Athenaeus in the *Deipnosophistae* during a discussion of pheasants.

And Callixeinus of Rhodes, in the fourth book of his *Alexandria*, when describing the parade that occurred in Alexandria under King Ptolemy, called Philadelphus, writes the following of these birds, which he evidently regarded as a great marvel. 'Then were brought, in cages, parrots, peacocks,⁴⁸ guinea-fowls, birds from the Phasis and from Aethiopia in great quantities.'⁴⁹

[Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, IX 387C-D]

difficulties in antiquity, and actually it does so until today, although both are often translated into English as 'panther'.

⁴³ Jacobson, 2007, 46 ff.

⁴⁴ Oren, Rappaport, 1984, 115.

⁴⁵ Meyboom, 1995, 49. In the opinion of Jacobson, 2007, 48 it is a "Dionysiac vision, offering the promise of the afterlife to the interred."

⁴⁶ Mucznik, 2012, 323 n. 22; Peters, Thiersch, 1905, 92, 94-95.

⁴⁷ Meyboom, 1995, ch. IV n. 46.

⁴⁸ Peacocks and parrots were of Indian origin, see note 12; see also Meyboom, 1995, 23, who recognized a peacock in one of the birds in the upper part of the Palestrina mosaic.

⁴⁹ Trans. Gulick, 1927-1941.

Another fragment concerning the exotic birds of Philadelphus implies that they were bred within the Palace of the king⁵⁰ and formed sort of an aviary. This fashion again passed onto the rich and can be traced through the Pompeian frescos. In the House of the Golden Bracelet⁵¹ a room was made as to imitate a garden (Figure 4). The effect is achieved by the illusionistic technique of the fresco. Walls are adorned with trees and flowers amidst which appear various birds.⁵² Those birds did not require feeding and care and were longer lasting compared with their alive equivalents. However, the emperor Severus followed in Philadelphus' footsteps by construing an aviary on the Palatine.⁵³

He did have one kind of amusement in the Palace which gave him the greatest pleasure and afforded him relief from the cares of state; for he arranged aviaries of pea-fowl, pheasants, hens, ducks, and partridges, and from these he derived great amusement, but most of all from his doves, of which he had, it is said, as many as twenty thousand. And in order that the food for these might not become a burden to the grain-supply, he had slaves to provide the necessary income, who maintained the doves on the proceeds of the eggs and the squabs and the young birds.⁵⁴

[SHA *Alex. Sev.*, 41.6-7]

Severus' collection to a great extent recalls the one of Ptolemy but having such an amount of birds the emperor was aware of the costs of the upkeep of his collection. Also Philadelphus must have experienced such problems when bringing so many animals to Alexandria at one time. This again shows the degree of luxury that characterized owning the animal menageries and which was available mainly for the rulers. Others had to be content with substitutes, such as owning a single exotic specimen or ordering a mosaic or fresco for their homes.

⁵⁰ To the bird collection of the Ptolemies refer also Timon, fr. 60 W (12 Diels) and Euergetes in *Hypomnemata* (FGrH 234 F2). Fraser, 1972, 15, 515 is convinced that the fragment of *Hypomnemata* alludes to a zoo of Ptolemy but in fact the only mentioned species are pheasants – the existence of other animals is only indicated by the plural genitive of the expression *περὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ζῴων τρεφομένων*.

⁵¹ Known also as the House of Alexander's Wedding, Bowe, 2004, 9. The painted decoration is dated to the AD 25-50 for its mature Third Style appearance, Pappalardo, Mazzoleni, 2009, 136.

⁵² Every species of bird painted bears a symbolic meaning, Pappalardo, Mazzoleni, 2009, 136.

⁵³ Severus was not the first in Italy to establish an aviary. First aviary on the Italian grounds belonged to a certain M. Laenius Strabo from Brundisium (*N. H.*, 10.141), at the beginning of the 1st c. BC, Jennison, 1936, 101. Rutledge, 2002, 208. However the most famous one (mainly due to its architecture) belonged to Varro at Casinum, Jennison, 1936, 122.

⁵⁴ Trans. Magie, 1960.

Before Severus also Nero had an immense bird collection for Suetonius writes when describing the celebration of *Ludi Maximi*

Every day all kinds of presents were thrown to the people; these included a thousand birds of every kind each day, various kinds of food, tickets for grain, clothing, gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, paintings, slaves, beasts of burden, and even trained wild animals; finally, ships, blocks of houses, and farms.

[Suetonius, *Nero*, 11.2]⁵⁵

Via such gifts Nero attempted to gain the favours of the crowds. Bird releasing into the crowds of spectators as king's gifts to his subjects was also the case of Ptolemy's Pompe (V 200 C).

Parallel to the Dionysian Pompe of Ptolemy was the triumph of the emperor Aurelian. As Ptolemy through the Procession claimed closer associations with Dionysus and his legitimate succession of Alexander's conquered lands, so did Aurelian. In his triumphal procession he made a sacrificial offering to Jupiter on the Capitol of four stags that were yoked to his chariot, following the tradition of Caesar, who offered to Jupiter four white horses harnessed to his triumphal chariot.⁵⁶

It is not without advantage to know what manner of triumph Aurelian had, for it was a most brilliant spectacle. (...) There was also another chariot, drawn by four stags and said to have once belonged to the king of the Goths. In this – so many have handed down to memory – Aurelian rode up to the Capitol, purposing there to slay the stags, which he had captured along with this chariot and then vowed, it was said, to Jupiter Best and Greatest. There advanced, moreover, twenty elephants, and two hundred tamed beasts of divers kinds from Libya and Palestine, which Aurelian at once presented to private citizens, that the privy-purse might not be burdened with the cost of their food; furthermore, there were led along in order four tigers and also giraffes and elks and other such animals...⁵⁷

[SHA *Aurel.*, 33.4]

Although, by the 3rd century AD the animals displayed were not such a novelty for the eyes of the spectators, still, they amazed and terrified. Significantly, they exotic animals (tigers, lions, elks, giraffe, elephants) marched arranged in rows according to species – as *Historia Augusta* states it, *per ordinem*. The symbolism of this scene was the same as in the case of

⁵⁵ Trans. Rolfe, 1951; Jennison, 1937, 70.

⁵⁶ Although the symbolism of four white stags bears further connotations since they are by definition devoted to Jupiter or Sol, Beard, 2007, 234, 321.

⁵⁷ Trans. Magie, 1960.

Pompe – the emperor’s control over the world.⁵⁸ After the procession Aurielian gave the animals to the citizens.⁵⁹

The collection of Ptolemy II Philadelphus is traditionally believed to be the prototype of later menageries and present zoos. Although throughout this paper the significance of the Pompe has been underlined several times his pageant of exotic animals was not the first in the ancient history of the Mediterranean and Egypt in particular. The menagerie of the Egyptian Pharaoh Hatshepsut and the garden of her co-regent and successor Tuthmose III are as famous as Ptolemy’s ‘zoo’.⁶⁰ The middle colonnade of Hathsepsut’s funerary temple in Deir-el Bahri⁶¹ depicts her expedition to the land of Punt. It shows her success for among her trophies is the exotic fauna she introduced to Egypt.⁶² The temple of Amun-Re in Karnak is a reminiscent of Tuthmose’s collection. As the representations on the temple testify, Tuthmose owned a botanical garden with a magnificent collection of birds. There were also other curiosities but the aviary was the most important unit.⁶³ Naturally, these early instances of animal parades could not have influenced neither Ptolemy II, nor the Roman emperors thus they are mentioned here only to provide a general overview for the discussed subject. Nonetheless, Egypt reveals itself as a medley of exoticism. It was as such a curiosity first for the Greeks and next for the Romans, but it also imported even bigger specimen of exoticism. It was also Egypt, from which the fashion for τρυφή spread out onto the ruling class of antiquity and Byzantium.

Exotic animals were inherent part of the ancient trade of luxuries. Greeks and Romans easily adapted from the Near East and Egypt the custom of collecting faunal *thaumata* and keeping exotic animals for pleasure (mainly aviaria), show (felines and other beasts of prey), usefulness (elephants, dogs) and consumption (ostriches). This taste in exoticism was characteristic for the Hellenistic period and to even greater extent in the terms of consumption, for the Roman. The more money one had, the more exotic species, and the bigger amount could he gain and convey from the distant countries. Beginning with the procession of Ptolemy exotic animals for several hundred years continued to be the most

⁵⁸ Ostenberg, 2009, 168.

⁵⁹ Stoneman, 1992, 181.

⁶⁰ An important factor for the theme of ancient menageries were Near-Eastern *paradeisoi*. *Paradeisoi* are inherently related to the aspect of hunting of τρυφή.

⁶¹ Built ca. 1450, Foster, 1998, 327.

⁶² Foster, 1998, 328.

⁶³ Beaux, 1990, 47-51.

pompous and fashionable entertainment. As opposed to Ptolemy II whose interest in exotic animals was not only manifesting luxuries he could afford but, perhaps even first of all, a desire of knowledge, the Roman emperors and the Roman elite aimed in exhibiting lavishness. Exotic animals were part of the Roman hedonism and consumption of all sorts of goods, what is visible most in the spectacles where thousands of captured animals of Africa and Asia were killed. However a significant difference needs to be marked between the Hellenistic and Roman usage of exotic animals. Even when exotic animals were brought to Rome and were at first exhibited as *mirabilia* they were then engaged in spectacles to be slaughtered. Roman taste in killing and eating exotic species had its consequences in the ancient environment. A need for such amounts of animals that were consumed (literary and metaphorically) resulted in the extinction in the region of North Africa (the Roman supply center) of such species as dwarf elephant, rhinoceros, zebra and hippopotamus.⁶⁴

What is common for all those collections of exotic animals, whether gathered by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, whether owned by the Emperors and officials of Rome is the hidden message of the royal power. Capturing wild and exotic beasts and putting them under the human control in menageries and further slaying them in the arena was for the people of Ptolemaic Egypt and Imperial Rome an obvious symbol of humbling people of the subdued lands.⁶⁵ Especially in Rome, where when the more vicious beast was captured, the more powerful Rome seemed to be.⁶⁶ This message could not be sent without unbelievable means of money. This message of power could only be sent with the means of *luxuria*.

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⁶⁴ See Hughes, 2003.

⁶⁵ Crowther, 2007, 114.

⁶⁶ Crowther, 2007, 114.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

Fig. 1. Ptolemy I Soter's Elephant's Quadriga.

Source: British Museum

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3312500&partId=1&searchText=ptolemy+gold&page=1, accessed on 26.08.2013.

Fig. 2. Dal Pozzo Copy of the Palestrina Mosaic. Fragment with a Python Catching a Bird.

Source: Whitehouse H., *The Dal Pozzo Copies of the Palestrina Mosaic*, Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, 1976, Fig. 1a.

Fig. 3. Fragment of Marisa Tomb Decoration. Elephant and Rhinoceros.

Source: Peters, Thiersh 1905.

Fig. 4. Fresco from the House of the Golden Bracelet. A Fragment.

Source: Destruction and Re-Discovery

<<https://sites.google.com/site/ad79eruption/pompeii/regio-vi/reg-vi-ins-17/house-of-the-golden-bracelet>>, accessed on 29/04/2013



Fig. 1

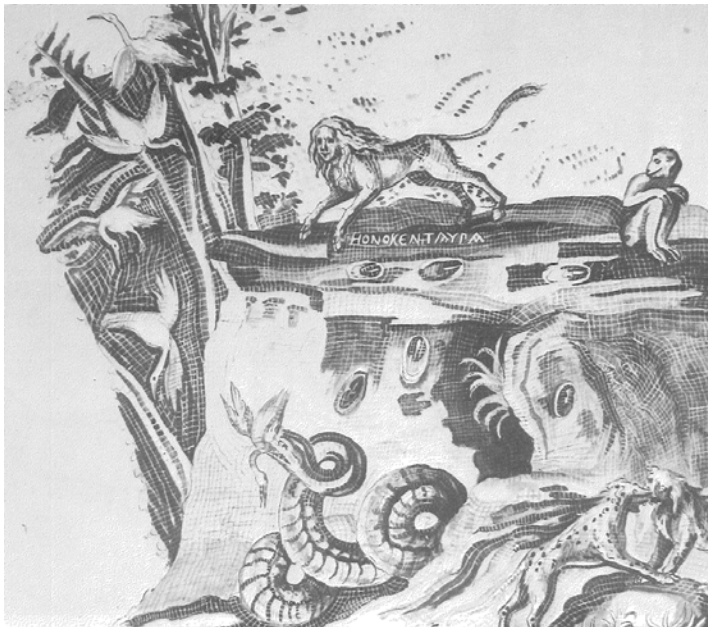


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4