

## Anachronism and Characterization in Arrian's *Anabasis*

Arrian's depiction of Alexander in the *Anabasis* takes full advantage of characterization, one of the mechanisms with which historiographers can shape narratives that are otherwise restrictive (Pitcher 2007). Recent scholarship, however, has tended to ignore questions about Arrian's reasons for writing and any biases that might have influenced the content of his history, preferring instead to address concerns of *Quellenforschung* and biography. Yet if we wish to maintain the *Anabasis* as our primary source for the life and deeds of Alexander, we should also study how he shaped the historical tradition that he received. To this end, I will discuss two scenes from the *Anabasis*, which, through their anachronistic references to Rome, can safely be identified as Arrian's own insertions and which are emblematic of his desire to characterize Alexander as the paradigmatic world conqueror.

At *Anabasis* 3.5.7, Arrian asserts that the Romans learned from Alexander's example to keep Egypt under guard and to govern it through an *eques*, rather than a member of the senate. Two key problems frustrate the simple acceptance of this claim. First, there is no logical connection between this statement and the previous material, which described how Alexander divided the command of Egypt among a group of lieutenants. Secondly, Arrian is unique in his attribution of Rome's method of provincial rule to Alexander. Other sources give Augustus credit for this system (Strabo 17.12; Tac. *Ann.* 2.59.3; *Hist.* 1.11.1; Dio 51.17.1-3) and attempts to make sense of this claim have not achieved consensus (Koenen (1970); Gray (1970); Bosworth (1980)). While little can be said to remedy Arrian's logical gap, its effect on his characterization of Alexander is clear and can be explained most simply by a desire to attribute Rome's successful method of governance to Alexander, an anachronism aimed at enhancing Alexander's reputation as an effective and unsurpassed conqueror.

Arrian again introduces Rome to the narrative when Alexander is about to cross the Indus (5.7.1-3), an incident he uses as a springboard to describe Roman bridge-building methods at length. This is not, as Arrian admits, because Alexander used Roman technology, but because Alexander seems to have crossed the Indus quickly and the Roman method was the fastest that Arrian knew. This description is only tangentially relevant and does nothing to advance the narrative of Alexander's exploits, but, as in the discussion of Egypt, Arrian uses it to characterize Alexander as the originator of an effective Roman skill. This insinuation is eased by the earlier description of the Indus as larger and stronger than the rivers of Europe and Asia (5.4.2), that is, greater than the rivers that the Romans had crossed. Arrian thus depicts Alexander's Indus crossing - by whatever method it actually happened - as a technological feat equal to or greater than those of Rome. More tellingly, the anachronism suggests Alexander's primacy in this realm and - perhaps - posits it as the precedent for the Roman technology.

These two instances reveal that Arrian had a keen interest in presenting Alexander as an originator of, and model for, Rome's successes. His use of anachronism allows him to expand the scope of his judgment of Alexander: rather than solely looking backwards from the king's death in 323 BC, Arrian suggests that Alexander's greatness should be considered in light of the whole span of human history. Recognizing that Arrian uses anachronism to shape his characterization of Alexander, one must also ask why he does this and how it influences our appreciation of the *Anabasis* as a historical source. It would seem that this mechanism supports the view of Bowie (1970) that the Second Sophistic was a time when Greeks, politically impotent under Roman rule, tried to restore a sense of pride in their past successes. During a period in which emperors became increasingly Hellenized and Greeks were absorbed more

readily into the Roman elite, Greek intellectuals used literature to delineate and reassert the glories of the Classical period.

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