

## From West to East: The Progression of Wise Advice in Arrian's *Anabasis*

The wise adviser is a familiar and frequent character in Greek literature. The older, prudent adviser contrasted against a younger, headstrong king or general is a stock theme found throughout Homer, tragedy, and history (Gray, 1986). In Herodotus the character of the wise adviser is a particular recurring motif. Richmond Lattimore has argued that there are two kinds of wise adviser found in Herodotus: the tragic warner and the practical adviser (Lattimore, 1939). The tragic warner is characterized as the elder who gives negative, unheeded, and right advice to the young and rash leader. The practical adviser is harder to define but is generally someone who offers an alternative plan for coping with a given situation. In Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*, there are few instances where advice is given or accepted. When these advice scenes do occur they are marked by both their similarities and dissimilarities to the advice motif in Herodotus' *Histories*. In my paper I will show that the progression of advice in Arrian's *Anabasis* moves from an inversion of the Herodotean "practical advice" to an increasingly Herodotean concept of a "tragic", or gnomic, warning. This progression of advice serves to highlight Alexander's transformation from a strong Macedonian/Greek general to an increasingly Eastern tyrant, one that could be found within the pages of Herodotus.

In Arrian's *Anabasis* advice is hard to categorize as wholly tragic or practical. Until his death, Parmenio is the only person who offers Alexander solicited or unsolicited advice concerning battle tactics and strategies. His position as Alexander's wise adviser, however, is different than the typical adviser found in the pages of Herodotus. In two advice scenes (1.13.4-7, 2.25.2), he counsels Alexander to take actions that are not dangerous while Alexander is eager to take risks in order to achieve glory. Unlike in Herodotus, the elder's advice is not the right choice, but Alexander's risky, headstrong action turns out to be the correct decision. There are also two advice scenes (1.18.6, 1.18.8) where Parmenio does not offer the cautious strategy, but advises risky and impetuous actions. It appears that Arrian has inverted Herodotus' paradigm of the wise adviser and the young leader in these interactions between Parmenio and Alexander. The young general/leader has suddenly become the wise adviser while the experienced older general has become the impetuous figure in these exchanges. Other scholarship has concluded that the goal of these episodes is to illuminate Alexander's good qualities by presenting Parmenio as a foil (Carney, 2000). I agree with this analysis, but the question still remains: Why has Arrian inverted Herodotus' paradigm in these interactions between Parmenio and Alexander, but followed the paradigm exactly in other advice scenes?

The remaining advice scenes throughout the work (2.6.6, 3.18.11, 7.1.6, and 7.2.3-4) all contain the same sort of gnomic advice that occurs in Herodotus when Eastern kings and tyrants are cautioned by advisers about their mortality and want of possessions. One of these scenes, the sacking of Persepolis (3.18.11), even includes advice that is strikingly similar to the advice Croesus gives Cyrus during the sacking of Sardis in Herodotus' *Histories* (1.88). No longer is there an inversion of the Herodotean concept of the wise adviser. This inversion has disappeared because Alexander is not the same leader as he was while Parmenio, his foil, was still alive. Alexander is now an Eastern ruler, thus subject to the tragic warnings that are part of Herodotus' conception of an Eastern tyrant.

Arrian's manipulation of the role of the wise adviser within a Herodotean setting does not have much effect on the historicity of the narrative, but it does reveal certain influences on Arrian's construction of his narrative. In his selection and presentation of the advice scenes in the *Anabasis*, Arrian portrays Parmenio and Alexander as character types found in other Greek

literature, particularly in Herodotus. By engaging directly with a Herodotean motif, Arrian is able to present his history of Alexander in a suitable context where both he as the author and Alexander as his subject can be compared and contrasted with Herodotus and his subjects, the great Persian kings.

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