

NOTES ON ARISTOBULUS OF CASSANDRIA¹

IN the preface to the *Anabasis* Arrian explains his reliance on Aristobulus (as well as Ptolemy) because he took part in Alexander's campaigns and yet wrote after Alexander's death, when he was under no constraint or hope of gain that might lead him to distort the truth. It is in fact clear from 7. 18. 5 that Aristobulus was still writing his history after the battle of Ipsus in 301. According to Ps.-Lucian, *Macrobioi* 22, he stated at the beginning of his work that he was already in his eighty-fourth year; since numbers are easily subject to copying errors, it may be that the author of the *Macrobioi* was himself deceived by a manuscript corruption, and in any case, as the date of Aristobulus' birth is unknown, this testimony casts little light on the date of the history. I abstain from conjectures on the exact time when Aristobulus wrote, or on the relation of his work to Ptolemy's, but there can be no doubt that in its final and published form it was composed long after the events recounted, and that Aristobulus must have depended on his personal and perhaps dim recollections, or on notes he had made at the time, or on the writings of others, or on a combination of these sources.

The historians of Alexander had a bad reputation with some ancient critics for flattering the king.² Arrian clearly absolved Aristobulus and Ptolemy from this imputation by pointing out that they had no motive for flattery. It did not occur to him that both might have been biased in his favour by genuine admiration or friendship, and at least in Ptolemy's case by more complex political reasons, and that they may have chosen both to veil or excuse actions that others justly condemned and to magnify the glory of his achievements. Ptolemy does not concern me here; as for Aristobulus it may be enough here to point out that he implausibly denied that Alexander was an addict of wine (Arrian 7. 29. 4, cf. 4. 13. 5) and therefore concealed the fact that the murder of Clitus arose from a drunken party (4. 8. 9) and suggested that the deep potations of his final illness were due to a high fever and consequential thirst (Plutarch, *Alex.* 75); and that like all other writers on the visit to Siwah he made out that Alexander was assisted by miraculous guides (Arrian 3. 3. 6). His history was certainly apologetic, and though the term 'flattery' is misleading,³ it might conceivably have been applied to his work by a writer who was unaware that it was composed long after Alexander's death.

In fact it was so applied, if we accept the text of a *testimonium* printed without comment by Jacoby.⁴ This comes from an anonymous epitome of the art of rhetoric preserved in a Venetian codex written between the 11th and 13th centuries by one whom Rabe labels Rhetor Marcianus.⁵ The epitomator distinguishes five genres of rhetoric, of which the last two are *συκοφαντική* and *κολακευτική*. This division is also found in other late works on rhetoric, though

¹ Cf. Jacoby, *F.Gr.H.* no. 139, with commentary; L. Pearson, *Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*, ch. vi; E. Badian, *Classical World* (1971), 37 ff., for critical review of other works since 1948.

² Eratosthenes *ap.* Arrian, *Anab.* 5. 3, and Strabo C 505 f., 508, 688, 813.

³ Lucian, *How to write history*, 12 and 40, applies the term to historians whose aim is to please someone living.

⁴ Walz, *Rhetores Gr.* iii. 610 (Jacoby T. 5).

⁵ In his edition, *Prolegomenon Sylloge*, pp. xix, cxvi; henceforth Rabe.

the last two are sometimes viewed as species of the same genus, *συκοφαντική* belonging to speeches in the courts and *κολακευτική* to speeches in assemblies.¹ Rabe seems to have shown that all depend on the philosopher and rhetorician of the late third century A.D., Evagoras.² In the Venetian epitome Aristogiton and Hegemon are said to have introduced the 'sycophantic' genre, and Demades and Aristobulus the 'kolakeutic'. The same names recur in one manuscript of an introduction to rhetoric, a much more substantial work, which Rabe shows to be that of a Christian writing in the late fourth or early fifth century, and from which the Venetian epitome would seem to be drawn (if it does not go back directly to the same source); to a large extent the account of the genres is verbally identical.³ This Vatican manuscript has other affinities with the codex of Rhetor Marcius.⁴ But other manuscripts of equal or better authority read not 'Aristobulus' but 'Aristodemus', and they are preferred by Rabe. Certainly a historian of Alexander has no place *dans cette galère*. Apart from the masters of 'philosophic' rhetoric, the first genre (Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato), all the persons named are Athenian politicians or orators; of these Hegemon⁵ in particular is relatively obscure, and in a text of Syrianus⁶ which seems also to come from Evagoras, Pytheas is mentioned along with Demades, Hegemon, and Aristogiton as a sycophantic orator; here the 'sycophantic' and 'kolakeutic' varieties are assimilated. The author of the division was plainly acquainted with the names of minor figures in fourth-century Athenian politics. The actor, Aristodemus, who took part in the negotiations that led to the Peace of Philocrates and certainly addressed the assembly at that time, and who may have been more important than we know (Cicero thought that he often represented Athens as ambassador), is thus a far more likely person to have been named than Aristobulus.⁷ There is perhaps another possibility, that by dittography the name of Aristogiton was substituted for that of Pytheas, and then arbitrarily altered to Aristodemus or Aristobulus by a scribe who saw that as he had been classed as one of the authors of 'sycophantic' oratory, someone else must be intended as author of 'kolakeutic'.⁸ In any event, there is no reason to think that our historian originally appeared in a list of orators.

A writer on epideictic rhetoric, Menander, probably of the late third century A.D., praised Aristobulus' description of Tyre along with Aelius Aristides' description of Cyzicus (*Orat.* 27. 6 ff.). Now Aristobulus may well have had material about Tyre, as about Miletus (F. 6) and Susa (F. 18), which Arrian chose to omit, just as he omits much geographical material in Aristobulus which Strabo used. But it is hardly credible that stylistically his account matched the florid rhetoric of Aristides. Indeed that need not be inferred from what Menander says. He goes on (the words are not transcribed by Jacoby) to add as a third instance of an exemplary description of a city, that of Athens in

¹ e.g. Walz vii. 14 f. = Rabe 199, where only Aristogiton and Demades are named as masters of the two species. Cf. below, n. 6.

² *Rh. Mus.* lxii (1907), 260 f. Evagoras: *R.E.* iii. 829 f. (no. 13).

³ Rabe, no. 4 at p. 38. The same work is printed by Walz in vol. vi and ascribed to John Doxapatres; see p. 25 for the relevant text. (Walz did not apparently know that one manuscript read 'Aristobulus' here, and

prints 'Aristodemus'.)

⁴ Rabe, p. xxxiv.

⁵ Kirchner, *P.A.* 6290, omitted in *R.E.*

⁶ Ed. Rabe, ii. 3. For Pytheas cf. *R.E.* xxiv. 366 ff.

⁷ *R.E.* ii. 923; Cic. *de rep.* 4. 13.

⁸ It may be significant that in Walz v. 214 (Maximus Planudes) and vii. 14 (n. 1 above) only the names of Aristogiton and Demades survive.

Xenophon's *Poroi*.¹ Since he himself was a Syrian, what Aristobulus wrote of Tyre was no doubt of special interest to him. His allusion is thus no support for a theory that Aristobulus was a master of any kind of rhetoric.

The evidence of Arrian ought in any event to exclude any notion that Aristobulus' history was either rhetorical or in any natural sense adulatory. In Arrian's view Alexander had never been worthily commemorated in verse or prose, and it was his claim that his own work would make good this gap in Greek literature and would be the long-wanted masterpiece (1. 12. 2-5). This implies that for all their merits as sources both Ptolemy and Aristobulus had no literary excellence, and there is no evidence that they were ever admired, as some admired Clitarchus, on that score. Moreover, even though Arrian patently failed to detect their bias, it is hard to believe that he could have failed to be conscious of a deliberately rhetorical writing-up of Alexander's deeds, nor do any of the fragments, which admittedly may never give Aristobulus' *ipsissima verba*, suggest such a manner. His bias too, where we can detect it, is discreet, and would not properly justify the use of the term 'flattery', even if the object of his praise had not been long dead.

Athenaeus 434D (F. 32) names Aristobulus, along with Lynceus of Samos (the brother of Duris)² and Chares, as an authority for the following story.³ At a drinking party of Alexander's the cup of unmixed wine came round to Callisthenes; he pushed it aside and when asked why he was not drinking replied: 'I do not want to drink Alexander's cup and then to want the cup of Asclepius'. Pearson says that Aristobulus was following Chares for the tale of Callisthenes refusing to drink Alexander's health, but this tale (Plutarch, *Alex.* 54 = Arrian 4. 12. 3-5) is quite different, and it is clear that Arrian did not find it in Aristobulus at all: he is drawing on a *logos*, not one of his main authorities. (There is no proof that he read it for himself in Chares.) Pearson has indeed actually mistranslated the text in Athenaeus, which does not speak of a toast to Alexander. The story is evidently one of those which were told of Callisthenes' tactless conduct at the court; other such anecdotes are found in Plutarch 53 f. But as Arrian relies on the 'vulgate' entirely for the estrangement of Alexander from Callisthenes (4. 10-12), it would seem that Aristobulus had nothing on this subject and was content merely to tell that Callisthenes joined in the pages' conspiracy and was punished (4. 13 f.). There is, however, a stronger reason for impugning the authenticity of this 'fragment'. It plainly shows Alexander encouraging unmixed potations, which the sober Greek rejects as injurious to

¹ . . . ἃ τε περὶ Τύρου Ἀριστόβουλος ἱστορήσῃ καὶ περὶ Κυζίκου Ἀριστείδης καὶ Ξενοφῶν ἐν τοῖς Πόροις περὶ τῆς Ἀττικῆς (F. 12 Jacoby). For Menander *R.E.* xv. 762 ff. (Radermacher).

² *R.E.* xiii. 2472 f.; Lynceus was much used by Athenaeus, who also cites Chares nine times, sometimes verbatim and at length; he has four other citations from Aristobulus, perhaps at second hand; of these one other (F. 47) seems to me dubious: see below.

³ ἐν τῷ συμποσίῳ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου τῆς τοῦ ἀκράτου κύλικος εἰς αὐτόν (sc. Callisthenes) ἐλθούσης ὡς διωθείτο, εἰπόντος τέ τινος αὐτῷ "διὰ τί οὐ πίνεις;" "οὐδὲν δέομαι" ἔφη "Ἀλέξ-

άνδρου πῶν τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ δεῖσθαι." Cf. Plut. 454 E τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ὁ Καλλισθένης εἰπὼν, τῆς μεγάλης κύλικος περιφερομένης, "οὐ βούλομαι πῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου Ἀσκληπιοῦ δεῖσθαι"; 623 F ἐπεὶ καὶ κύλικα λεγομένην Ἀλεξάνδρου μεγάλην, ἐλθοῦσαν ἐπ' αὐτόν, ἀπέωσατο φήσας οὐκ ἐθέλειν Ἀλεξάνδρου πῶν Ἀσκληπιοῦ δεῖσθαι. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν περὶ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου πολυποσίας. Clearly in each passage κύλικα must be understood before Ἀλεξάνδρου. Plutarch twice gives the story without naming a source; it was presumably well known, and the huge cup seems to have been famous and an illustration of Alexander's hard drinking practice (πολυποσία).

health. But (as we have seen) Aristobulus denied that Alexander was given to wine-bibbing. And it would have been clean contrary to his bias to represent Callisthenes in a favourable light as part of the prelude to his fall. (In the general estimation Callisthenes was innocent of plotting, and Aristobulus characteristically tried to mitigate the blame that attached to Alexander for condemning him by pretending that he was at least not put to death.)

Athenaeus 251A (F. 47) also ascribes to Aristobulus the story that Dioxippus the Athenian pancratiast (Berve, *Alexanderreich*, no. 284) once said, on seeing Alexander wounded, *ἰχώρ οἴόσπερ τε ῥέει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι*. Elsewhere the quotation is put into the mouth of Alexander himself (Plut. *Alex.* 28, cf. 341B; 180E) or Callisthenes (Seneca, *Suas.* 1. 5) or Anaxarchus (Diog. Laert. 9. 60). Those who ascribed it to Alexander were making him disclaim pretensions to divinity and ridicule his flatterers; on the lips of Callisthenes or Anaxarchus it is represented as a rebuke to his claims; so too it must be interpreted, when ascribed to Dioxippus (no favourite of the king in other tales told of him). Now it seems that Aristobulus did, rightly or wrongly, suggest that Alexander laid claims to divinity (Strabo 16. 1. 11, cf. Arrian 7. 20. 1 = F. 55 f.); given his apologetic tendency, we can surely not believe that he also quoted a gibe directed at these claims. Like the citation in 434D, this reveals that Athenaeus had not verified his reference, and that he or some earlier writer fastened stories on Aristobulus that were not his, perhaps because Arrian had made his name familiar.

Now in his work *How to write history* (§ 12) Lucian tells that Aristobulus described a personal combat between Alexander and Porus and read this part of his work to Alexander himself in the belief that the invention would gratify the king; at the time they were crossing the Hydaspes and Alexander took the book and threw it into the river, remarking that Aristobulus deserved the same treatment for fighting such duels on his behalf and killing elephants with one throw of a javelin. Jacoby, while expressing some reserve about this story, gives it a place not only in the *Testimonia* to Aristobulus' work (T. 4) but also in the *Fragments* (F. 44). Even if the story is true, this is surely absurd. Unless we suppose that Aristobulus had made a copy, his narrative was lost in the river! Of course it may be said that the anecdote was based on the appearance of such an account in Aristobulus' published history, just as the rather similar story of Lysimachus ridiculing Onesicritus because he made Alexander consort with the queen of the Amazons had some foundation in that Onesicritus did actually invent such a meeting (Plut. *Alex.* 46). But the silence of Arrian is surely decisive against this hypothesis, especially as he takes the trouble to cite and refute part of Aristobulus' account of the battle with Porus (5. 14. 3), and would scarcely have disregarded what one of his main authorities had to tell about Alexander's *aristeia*. None the less, it is likely that Lucian did think that the tale was in Aristobulus' history: Aristobulus, he says, 'read to Alexander this particular passage in his writing',¹ and that surely means 'this particular passage in the extant history'. I infer, therefore, that Lucian had never read the history, and was not aware that it was composed long after Alexander's death; he might perhaps have read the *Anabasis*, given his admiration for Arrian (*Peregrinus* 14), but could easily have forgotten what Arrian testified to the date of Aristobulus' work.

On any view Aristobulus himself would not have told of the contempt with

¹ τοῦτο μάλιστα τὸ χωρίον τῆς γραφῆς.

which Alexander heard his supposed narrative. That story could only have begun to circulate when Aristobulus himself had become known as one of Alexander's historians. It is therefore late, and obviously incredible in itself: Alexander had better things to do when crossing one of the great Indian rivers than to listen to a history. It cannot then be taken as evidence that years later Aristobulus was able to draw on earlier accounts that he had written of the events to be recounted in his history. Perhaps, like the anecdote about Onesicritus, it belongs to a collection of stories intended to discredit the flattering historians of Alexander. Pearson reasonably compares it to yet another tale about Onesicritus found in the same work by Lucian (§ 40), in which Alexander himself is made to say that flattering contemporary accounts will be discredited later. Nor can we exclude the possibility that it was wrongly fastened on Aristobulus in later transmission: it may be significant that it was Chares who actually did invent another tale of Alexander fighting a duel—with Darius (Plutarch 341C). Critics who rightly found Aristobulus' history too partial to Alexander might then ascribe his partiality, falsely, to a desire to curry favour with the king.

My general conclusion is that in Jacoby's collection of the *Testimonia* and *Fragments* of Aristobulus certain texts (T 3–5, F. 12, 32, 44, and 47) should be ignored in assessing the date and character of his history.

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