

ARRIAN OF NICOMEDIA:
GRECO-ROMAN PHILOSOPHER,
SOLDIER, STATESMAN, AND HISTORIAN

Jason Freewalt
4358488
Historiography – HIST501 C001 Fall 12
American Military University
March 24, 2013

Arrian of Nicomedia (mid-80s to late-160s AD)¹ was a philosopher, soldier, statesman, and historian whose writings connected the Greek past to his life in the Roman Empire. Arrian was born in Roman controlled, yet Greek influenced, territory in what is now Turkey. His study of philosophy, his time as a soldier and politician, and his writings, connect his life in the Roman Empire with his Greek upbringing and heritage. This blend of Greek and Roman culture is clearly evident in Arrian's writings, particularly the works for which he is most widely known today, his account of the Greek conqueror Alexander "the Great" of Macedon in the *Anabasis Alexandri* (*The Campaigns of Alexander*) and an addendum to the *Anabasis*, known as the *Indica* (*Indike*), which describes the return of Alexander's general Nearchus from India. Although he gathered most of his information for this work from historians who wrote hundreds of years earlier, Arrian's experiences and personality provide a Roman perspective to his retelling of a Greek conqueror's story. After all, it was because of Alexander the Great that the region in which Arrian lived was so heavily influenced by Greek culture. Arrian was Greek because of Alexander, but he was Roman because the Romans were the new dominant superpower in the region. The overlapping layers of historical dominance by Greece and Rome had a great influence on Arrian's thinking and, consequently, his writing.

Historians continue to debate Arrian's life, particularly the years of his birth and death, the extent of his military career, his fame as a philosopher, the public offices he held, and the timing of his writings. Most of what is known about Arrian comes from clues located in Arrian's own writings; however, a small amount of additional evidence exists in other writings, allowing historians to build a historical profile. While it is uncertain when Arrian was born, A. B. Bosworth and other historians estimate his birth in the mid- to late-80s AD. He likely lived until

¹ A. B. Bosworth, "Arrian's Literary Development," *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 22, no. 1 (May 1972): 181. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/637903> (accessed January 5, 2013).

the late-160s, but no specific evidence conclusively identifies more specific dating, and scholars continue to debate these dates.² Arrian was likely born in Nicomedia (now İzmit), a province of Bithynia in modern-day Turkey.³ He belonged to an aristocratic family, was a member of the priesthood of Demeter and Kore, was well educated, and learned to hunt.⁴ At the time, Bithynia was a Roman province, and Arrian was likely a Roman citizen from birth.⁵ Despite his citizenship, the culture of the region was more Greek than Roman, making him a truly “Greco-Roman” man.

Paul Cartledge, in his Introduction to *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander*, identifies Arrian’s full name as Lucius (or Aulus) Flavius Arrianus. Arrian often referred to himself, however, as Xenophon, after his Greek role model, Xenophon of Athens.⁶ Arrian’s use of the name Xenophon was evident during his time as legate (governor) of Cappadocia, which is generally dated from 131-137.⁷ Arrian saw himself as the “New Xenophon” or the “elder Xenophon,”⁸ and this may in part be because of the similarity in backgrounds between them. Xenophon, who lived nearly 500 years before Arrian, spent time with Socrates and then served as a soldier for Cyrus of Persia.⁹ Like Xenophon, Arrian also spent time with a philosopher, Epictetus, and developed a fascination with the Persians, as evident in his descriptions of Persia and Persian customs in the *Anabasis*. In his essay on hunting with

² Ronald Syme, “The Career of Arrian,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982): 210. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311194> (accessed January 5, 2013).

³ A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Syme, “The Career of Arrian,” 184.

⁶ Pamela Mensch, and James S. Romm, eds., *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander, a New Translation* (New York: Anchor Books, 2010), xiii.

⁷ Syme, “The Career of Arrian,” 206.

⁸ A. B. Bosworth, “Arrian and the Alani,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 81 (1977): 248. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311121> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁹ Philip A. Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 5.

hounds, known as the *Cynegeticus*, Arrian compared himself to Xenophon and attempted to complete the gaps in Xenophon's work. According to Arrian, he did this "being his namesake and fellow citizen, of similar pursuits with himself, as a sportsman, a general, and a philosopher—writing under the same feeling that actuated him... from a conviction that his labours would be useful to mankind."¹⁰ In addition to his reference to Xenophon in the *Cynegeticus*, Arrian pointed to Xenophon's writings occasionally in the *Anabasis* as well. On one occasion, Arrian refuted the notion that a Median satrap presented Alexander with one hundred Amazon women by stating that neither Aristoboulos nor Ptolemy recorded such a presentation. Arrian continued by stating that Xenophon would surely have mentioned the Amazons had they still been in existence at the time of Alexander.¹¹ Arrian, the Roman, certainly held Xenophon, the Greek, in high regard.

As with Xenophon, philosophy was a major component of Arrian's life.¹² In fact, Bosworth contends, "It is as a philosopher that Arrian is celebrated in late antiquity."¹³ When in his twenties (c. 108), Arrian left Nicomedia to become a disciple of Epictetus, a stoic philosopher in Nicopolis, Greece.¹⁴ This tutelage no doubt had a profound impact on Arrian's thinking and writing. Arrian recorded the philosopher's lectures in a collection often referred to as the *Discourses*¹⁵ as well as a manual of Epictetian thought known as the *Enchiridion*. According to historian Ronald Syme, Arrian wrote his *Cynegeticus* and his *Discourses of Epictetus* after his 131-137 governorship in Cappadocia,¹⁶ but the date of the *Enchiridion* is uncertain. In addition to the philosophical education Arrian received from Epictetus, he also gained an important

¹⁰ Arrian *Cynegeticus* 1.3.

¹¹ Arrian *Anabasis* 7.13.3-5.

¹² Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia*, 165.

¹³ Bosworth, "Arrian's Literary Development," 164.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁵ Syme, "The Career of Arrian," 184.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

political connection. Hadrian, who would later become emperor, was also taught by Epictetus, though not necessarily at that same time as Arrian. This common philosophical background led to what Syme calls a “close and congenial” friendship¹⁷ between Hadrian and Arrian, and a long-term political alliance.¹⁸

Historians continue to debate the dates of Arrian’s military service, but he likely left Epictetus to serve under Trajan, and later served under Hadrian. Under Trajan, Arrian led forces in the area of the Caspian Gates, the exact location of which is the subject of debate, where he wrote a topographical description of the region.¹⁹ Under Hadrian, Arrian’s purpose was reconnaissance. He wrote the *Periplus of the Euxine Sea (Sailing around the Black Sea)* to inform Hadrian of conditions in the Black Sea region to prepare for a possible expedition to the Crimea.²⁰ In the *Periplus*, Arrian described that Xenophon had once traveled the area, once again connecting himself with Xenophon. Arrian also identified his connection with Hadrian by describing the statue of Hadrian as it stood at that time and requesting another statue of the emperor as well as statues of various gods.²¹ Arrian described everything from the color of the water of local rivers, to the cities and their buildings. At one point, he noted Aeschylus’ reference in his tragedy of Prometheus to the Phasis River as the boundary between Europe and Asia.²² Arrian described useful ports, and he wrote to Hadrian, “there is a road for ships,”²³ indicating the presence of some of the necessary infrastructure to facilitate an expedition.

¹⁷ Ibid., 190.

¹⁸ Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation*, 17.

¹⁹ A. B. Bosworth, “Arrian at the Caspian Gates: A Study in Methodology,” *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 33, no. 1 (1983): 266. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638663> (accessed January 5, 2013).

²⁰ Bosworth, “Arrian and the Alani,” 219.

²¹ Arrian, *Arrianus's Voyage Round the Euxine Sea: Translated and Accompanied With a Geographical Dissertation and Maps: To Which Are Added 3 Discourses* (Oxford: Cooke, 1805), 1-2.

²² Ibid., 15.

²³ Ibid., 19.

Arrian's focus on geography extends beyond his *Periplus* into other works, such as the *Cynegeticus*, the *Anabasis*, and the *Indica*. In the *Cynegeticus*, he provided a description of the lands and tribes of the surrounding regions. He mentioned, for example, that Mysia, Dacia, Scythia, and Illyricum had plains that are "adapted for riding."²⁴ In a digression from the numerous battles and marches in the *Anabasis*, Arrian related Aristoboulos's description of the tall myrrh trees and the fragrant spikenard root in the deserts near the Indus.²⁵ While this may appear insignificant to some readers, it is important to remember that Alexander was tutored by Aristotle, who was very much interested in science and nature. If Arrian thought this detail was important enough to relate in his account of Alexander, he may have been interested in such topics as well. As a Roman soldier, he traveled over a large area and likely saw a wide variety of different plants and animals; and, as a Hellenistic Greek from Bithynia, he likely possessed a scholarly curiosity similar to Alexander.

The historian Cassius Dio of Nicaea accredited Arrian with frightening off the Alani²⁶ (also known as the Alans). This battle, Arrian's most well documented military accomplishment, is the subject of Arrian's *Ectaxis contra Alanos* (*Order of Battle against the Alans*). This essay provides "a unique picture ... of a Roman army in action during the second century A.D."²⁷ Uniting Arrian's Greek background with his position as a Roman general, the *Ectaxis* describes an army that is Roman, yet bears "the stamp of Macedon." The *Ectaxis*, according to Bosworth, is the work of Arrian that expresses most fully his dual role as Greek author and Roman warrior.²⁸ One aspect of Greco-Roman military strategy that Arrian exhibited in his essay is the

²⁴ Arrian *Cynegeticus* 23.2.

²⁵ Arrian *Anabasis* 6.22.4-8.

²⁶ Bosworth, "Arrian and the Alani," 220.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.

phalanx. While the Macedonian phalanx and the Roman phalanx are different, Arrian drew parallels between them. “Arrian shows in the *Ectaxis*, phalanx fighting was no longer a thing of the remote past but a feature of contemporary military technique.”²⁹ Bosworth does explain, however, that there are problems with the *Ectaxis*, and with other works by Arrian, which historians have questioned. Regarding the positioning of the cavalry and archers, Bosworth states, “Either Arrian is writing fiction, and incompetent fiction, or the text is corrupt. Corruption is certainly the more plausible alternative... a lacuna is the most probable type of error”.³⁰ Unfortunately, unless another complete copy of the *Ectaxis* is found, these errors may never be understood. Despite the errors, the *Ectaxis* offers a direct connection between his experience in the Roman army and his knowledge of the Greek army.

In addition to the *Ectaxis*, Arrian also wrote about military maneuvers and strategy in the *Ars Tactica (The Tactical Arts)*. In this essay, Arrian discussed cavalry tactics and praised military innovations.³¹ At the time he wrote the *Tactica*, according to Philip Stadter, Arrian commanded two Roman legions and other auxiliary troops as legate of Cappadocia.³² As in the *Ectaxis*, Arrian mixed his life as a Roman general with his knowledge of Greek military strategy. Stadter explains that the first half of the *Tactica* is a manual of Greek military strategy derived from the methods used by Alexander. Arrian blended this with the Roman military strategy used by Hadrian.³³ Truly, the *Tactica* represents a fusion of Greek and Roman military maneuvers and theory. The historiography of the *Tactica* is somewhat questionable, however. Stadter points out that Arrian’s *Tactica* is quite similar to a work by Aelian, although some historians believe that

²⁹ Ibid., 242.

³⁰ Ibid., 239.

³¹ Syme, “The Career of Arrian,” 203.

³² Philip A. Stadter, “The *Ars Tactica* of Arrian: Tradition and Originality.” *Classical Philology* 73, no. 2 (April 1978): 118. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/268990> (accessed January 5, 2013).

³³ Ibid., 127.

Aelian and Arrian used a common source rather than Arrian simply copying Aelian.³⁴ Stadter provides examples showing that Arrian added his own observations and information to the essay, which shows differences with Aelian's work.³⁵ Much like several episodes in Arrian's *Anabasis*, this provides an example of Arrian exerting his own voice in the retelling of a previous work.

As with his military career, Arrian's political career is only partially documented. Bosworth dates Arrian's adlection (appointment) to the senate by Hadrian to about 120, and his term as consul (probably suffect, or interim) to about 130.³⁶ From there, Arrian served six or more years in Cappadocia as legate,³⁷ probably from 131-137.³⁸ There is little other than speculation to account for the years between Arrian's governorship in Cappadocia and his archonship in Athens, which is dated from 145-146.³⁹ However, Syme contends that Arrian may have been promoted from governorship in Cappadocia to governorship in Syria from approximately 138-141.⁴⁰ While evidence to support this is not conclusive, Historian G. A. Harrer similarly explores the probability that Arrian was governor of Syria, stating that it does not seem probable that Hadrian would have allowed Arrian's career to end with his legateship at Cappadocia, especially in light of Arrian's success against the Alani. Harrer continues, "The advance from governorship of Cappadocia to that of Syria was quite often made in the second century."⁴¹ Harrer cites four examples during the sixty years covering Arrian's public career in which governors of Cappadocia then became governors of Syria. Arrian's own successor in

³⁴ Ibid., 120.

³⁵ Ibid., 123.

³⁶ Bosworth, "Arrian's Literary Development," 185.

³⁷ Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation*, 30.

³⁸ Bosworth, "Arrian's Literary Development," 185.

³⁹ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁰ Syme, "The Career of Arrian," 203-204.

⁴¹ G. A. Harrer, "Was Arrian Governor of Syria?," *Classical Philology* 11, no. 3 (July 1916): 338-339. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261859> (accessed January 5, 2013).

Cappadocia is one such example. Whether or not Arrian served in Syria, it is generally believed that he retired to Athens, where he served as archon, a largely ceremonial post at the time.⁴² It is there, in retirement, that Syme and other historians believe Arrian did the bulk of his writing,⁴³ but the chronology of Arrian's writings remains disputed by historians. According to Bosworth, in contrast with Syme's conclusions, Arrian did not wait until retirement to write, but began writing before he started his senatorial career.⁴⁴ Bosworth cites passages in the *Anabasis*, as well as in the *Cynegeticus*, in which Arrian states that his literary activities had been continuous since his youth."⁴⁵

Whether he began writing early or later in his life, Arrian found time to write several essays and books. In addition to the extant and largely complete works already named in this essay, Arrian also wrote several other works, many of which are fragmentary or lost. Among these are the *Lives* of Dion, Timoleon, and Tillorobus (biographies), the *Bithyniaca* (a multi-volume work about Arrian's home province), the *Parthica* (a history of the Partians), the *Historia Alanica* (a history of the Alans), *On Infantry Exercises* (a lost essay on maneuvers), *On Nature, Composition, and Appearances of Comets* (another lost essay about astronomy), and the *History of the Successors* (a lost volume about events after Alexander's death). Some of these sources remain, although fragmentary, but others are lost and are known only through the mention of other historians. There may indeed be other works by Arrian as well which are completely lost. The rather substantial list of works attributed to Arrian indicates that he was a prolific writer. While he was also a philosopher, soldier, and statesman, he was, as his reputation

⁴² Syme, "The Career of Arrian," 208.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁴ Bosworth, "Arrian's Literary Development," 178.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

in antiquity attests, “primarily...a man of letters”.⁴⁶ Furthermore, as Bosworth continues, Arrian’s success as a writer helped him gain favor with Hadrian and may have helped him attain adlection to the senate. Arrian’s literary reputation spread throughout the region and he influenced later writers, attesting to the fact that he was an accomplished writer in his own right. Appian, for example, may have used Arrian’s *Anabasis* as a source for his own work. According to Bosworth, “Arrian’s work must have been the authoritative history of Alexander at the time [Appian] wrote.”⁴⁷

It is Arrian’s account of Alexander, the *Anabasis*, that historians today consider his greatest work. This is primarily due to Arrian’s subject, Alexander the Great. Historians generally agree that the seven-book *Anabasis* and its addendum, the *Indica*, provide a complete and detailed account of Alexander’s reign and conquests. At the same time, Arrian also provided insight into his sources, specifically his two primary sources⁴⁸ Ptolemy son of Lagus (one of Alexander’s generals and close companions) and Aristoboulos son of Aristoboulos (often spelled Aristobulus; one of Alexander’s companions). Arrian also relied on the writings of Eratosthenes (librarian at the Library of Alexandria), Megasthenes (one of Arrian’s principal sources on India), and Nearchus (admiral of Alexander’s fleet on its return from India; principal figure in the *Indica*).⁴⁹ Arrian stated that he chose Megasthenes and Nearchus as his primary sources for the *Indica* because he believed them to be “men of credit.”⁵⁰ Ptolemy and possibly Aristoboulos likely used information about Alexander as written in the *Royal Journal* of Macedon to compose

⁴⁶ Ibid., 185.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁸ Arrian *Anabasis* 5.7.1.

⁴⁹ Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation*, 13-14.

⁵⁰ Arrian. *Anabasis Alexandri: Book VIII (Indica)*. Translated by E. Iiff Robson (1933): 17.
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/arrian-bookVIII-India.asp> (accessed February 25, 2013).

their histories,⁵¹ so Arrian's account was influenced by it as well. In fact, Arrian mentioned the *Royal Journals* by name as the source for some of Alexander's last hours preceding his death.⁵² Arrian may also have consulted the writings of Plutarch⁵³ and Cleitarchus, whose history of Alexander Arrian may have attempted to replace.⁵⁴ While Arrian may not have cited all of his sources by name, his discussion of the sources he did cite, many of whose writings are lost, preserved their work when they may not otherwise have been. For example, Arrian's use of Ptolemy's writings, his principal source,⁵⁵ preserved all that remains of Ptolemy's account of Alexander.⁵⁶ Therefore, in a sense, Arrian's history of Alexander serves not merely as a history of Alexander, but also as a historiography of Alexander's historians.

There are some examples in the *Anabasis* that show Arrian's strict adherence and loyalty to his principal sources. An example is an event in which some of Arrian's sources commented on Alexander's imitation of Dionysus. Arrian rejected the views of the other sources, stating that neither Ptolemy nor Aristoboulos recorded any such imitation. Therefore, Arrian wrote that he did not believe the other sources to be credible.⁵⁷ In another example, Arrian criticized Alexander's historians for what he called a "serious lapse" regarding Alexander's near-fatal wounding while fighting the Malloi. While some sources claimed that Ptolemy climbed a ladder to save Alexander, Ptolemy himself wrote that he was not at all present during the event. Arrian

⁵¹ N. G. L. Hammond, "The Speeches in Arrian's *Indica* and *Anabasis*," *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series 49, no. 1 (1999): 245. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/639500> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁵² Arrian *Anabasis* 7.25.1.

⁵³ Arrian, Mensch, and Romm, *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander, a New Translation*, xvi-xx.

⁵⁴ R. B. Steele, "The Method of Arrian in the *Anabasis*," *Classical Philology* 14, no. 2 (April 1919): 152. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/263079> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁵⁵ Arrian *Anabasis* 6.2.4.

⁵⁶ Steele, "The Method of Arrian in the *Anabasis*," 147.

⁵⁷ Arrian *Anabasis* 6.28.2.

discussed this historiographical dispute for the record, “so that those in the future may not be careless in their narration of exploits and calamities so momentous.”⁵⁸

This is not to say, however, that Arrian always agreed with and therefore faithfully related what his principal sources wrote. On the contrary, Arrian often pitted the accounts from his sources against each other, providing the reader with the competing historical interpretations, rarely choosing sides.⁵⁹ In a conflict between his primary sources, Aristobulus and Ptolemy, over Alexander’s journey to and from the shrine of Ammon in Egypt, Arrian decided to relate both accounts rather than choose among them. According to Arrian, “Ptolemy says that two snakes...advanced in front of the army... But Aristoboulos says...that two ravens flew ahead of the army.” In this instance, Arrian’s only position concerning the event was, as he stated, “I can confidently declare that divinity aided him in some way.”⁶⁰ This aligns with R. B. Steele’s contention that the *Anabasis* is “comparative rather than critical.” Arrian collected the accounts of Aristobulus, Ptolemy, and others and put them side by side to tell the story of Alexander. According to Steele, Arrian “cannot decide which [source] is correct.”⁶¹ Bosworth considers Arrian’s method of combining two sources to be prone to error.⁶² In contrast, N. G. L. Hammond contends that Arrian, in the *Anabasis*, “would record as ‘completely true’ what was affirmed by both [Ptolemy and Aristoboulos]; he would select, when they differed, what he himself judged to be more credible and worthwhile.”⁶³ Therefore, according to Hammond, Arrian was able to choose between the sources when he saw fit to do so. For example, Arrian refused, unlike his

⁵⁸ Arrian *Anabasis* 6.11.8.

⁵⁹ Steele, “The Method of Arrian in the *Anabasis*,” 149.

⁶⁰ Arrian *Anabasis* 3.5.5-6.

⁶¹ Steele, “The Method of Arrian in the *Anabasis*,” 157.

⁶² A. B. Bosworth, “Errors in Arrian,” *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 26, no. 1 (1976): 137-138. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638409> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁶³ Hammond, “The Speeches in Arrian’s *Indica* and *Anabasis*,” 240-241.

sources, to venture any speculation as to Alexander's plans after his major military campaign. Arrian stated, "For my part, I cannot ascertain with any accuracy what plans Alexander was pondering, nor is it my concern to guess".⁶⁴

At times, Arrian chose to ignore his sources altogether. For example, Arrian tried to make sense of the different versions of Herakles (Heracles), the Argive and the Tyrian, pitting one source against another.⁶⁵ Also regarding Herakles, Arrian decisively chose that the wording of an inscription on a Tyrian ship sacred to Herakles was "not worth recording."⁶⁶ Arrian later revisited the discussion of Herakles, specifically the Theban, Tyrian, and Egyptian versions of Herakles. In this example, Arrian discussed the story of Alexander's conquest of the Aornos Rock, which, it was believed, Herakles was unable to conquer. Arrian expressed his doubt whether Herakles ever reached India at all, stating, "I rather think he did not, but when men want to exaggerate their difficulties, they say that not even Herakles could have overcome them. I believe that it was just so in the case of this rock; Herakles' name became associated with it as a boast."⁶⁷ Living in the Roman Empire with role models such as Julius Caesar and Augustus, Arrian was likely used to hearing and reading such propagandistic boasts. Concerning the Romans, Arrian decisively broke with his sources regarding the account of a Roman delegation that visited Alexander and received a prophecy from the king about the future greatness of Rome. Arrian summarily refuted the accuracy of this story, stating, "I have recorded this report as neither accurate nor wholly implausible." Arrian noted that no Roman historians recorded such a meeting. Furthermore, it made no sense to Arrian that the Romans, who were from a place

⁶⁴ Arrian *Anabasis* 7.1.4.

⁶⁵ Arrian *Anabasis* 2.15.7-2.16.7.

⁶⁶ Arrian *Anabasis* 2.24.6.

⁶⁷ Arrian *Anabasis* 4.28.1-2.

so far away and had a complete disdain of tyranny, would send an embassy all the way to Babylon to meet with a tyrant, Alexander.⁶⁸

A life-long Roman citizen, Arrian compared his own experiences in the Roman Empire Alexander's exploits with on multiple occasions in the *Anabasis*. According to Steele, Arrian's most important comments in the *Anabasis* concern the judgment he passes on Alexander's character. Steele cites Arrian's criticism of Alexander's love of glory and excessive ambition.⁶⁹ Although Arrian lived in post-Republic Rome, Julius Caesar's assassination for excessive ambition probably influenced Arrian's opinion on the matter. This is again evident in Arrian's description of Darius and his flattering courtiers at the Battle of Issus. Arrian criticized political yes-men whose "only goal was to please—the same sort who always have consorted and always will consort with kings, to their detriment."⁷⁰ In addition to commentary on behavior not fit for a Roman, Arrian also compared Roman methodology and tactics to the Greek tactics of Alexander. Regarding appointments of regional governors, Arrian commented, "it seems to me that the Romans have learned from Alexander how to keep watch over Egypt."⁷¹ Later, Arrian admitted that his sources failed to explain the methodology Alexander used to bridge the Indus River. What Arrian provided, in lieu of definitive knowledge of Alexander's method, was the typical Roman method of bridging rivers since it was "the quickest method I know" and "it is worthy of notice."⁷² Certainly, Arrian's description offers some insight into his military service experience and the impact Alexander the Great had on him. According to Bosworth, Arrian used Hellenistic

⁶⁸ Arrian *Anabasis* 7.15.6.

⁶⁹ Steele, "The Method of Arrian in the *Anabasis*," 155.

⁷⁰ Arrian *Anabasis* 2.6.4.

⁷¹ Arrian *Anabasis* 3.5.7.

⁷² Arrian *Anabasis* 5.7.2-3.

technical terms to describe the maneuvers of his infantry phalanx.”⁷³ Bosworth further contends that Arrian may have attempted to outdo Alexander on the battlefield.⁷⁴

This leads to the question of why Arrian may have chosen to write about Alexander. Certainly Arrian’s study of Alexander the Great had an impact on his military strategy. Perhaps Arrian saw Alexander as a role model; a person who achieved military greatness of the highest order, yet made mistakes and showed human frailties nonetheless. To illustrate Alexander’s humane nature, Arrian described Alexander’s compassion toward wounded soldiers and the families of the soldiers who were killed in battle.⁷⁵ Arrian was inspired to write a history of Alexander the Great because he believed Alexander was like Achilles, and therefore deserved to have his history preserved for future generations.⁷⁶ Arrian spent considerable time summarizing Alexander’s accomplishments by relating a long speech by Alexander, a speech used to convince his army to keep campaigning.⁷⁷ Arrian lamented the fact that Achilles had Homer to recount his deeds, while Alexander’s deeds had not yet been worthily celebrated. Arrian further believed that he was worthy to record Alexander’s deeds because of his reputation.⁷⁸ It is clear that Arrian wanted to laud Alexander’s military genius, but the *Anabasis* is certainly not exclusively a laudatory work.⁷⁹ Stadter points out that the *Anabasis* is “a moral as well as a military history, written by one aware of the insidious snares that enslave the powerful”⁸⁰ This is evident in the story of Persian custom of prostration. Arrian spent considerable time discussing Kallisthenes (Callisthenes), Alexander’s historian, and his refusal to prostrate himself before the would-be

⁷³ Bosworth, “Arrian and the Alani,” 240.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁷⁵ Arrian *Anabasis* 1.16.5.

⁷⁶ Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation*, 32.

⁷⁷ Arrian *Anabasis* 7.9.1-7.10.7.

⁷⁸ Arrian *Anabasis* 1.12.2-5.

⁷⁹ Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia*, 165.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

god, Alexander. Arrian states, “For my part, I commend none of these actions, which reveal Alexander’s arrogance.”⁸¹ In discussing both Alexander’s brilliance and ugliness, Arrian seems to have wanted to strike a balance between Alexander the wise and just king, and Alexander the mighty conqueror.⁸² Perhaps, as Stadter speculates, Arrian wrote about Alexander in this way because he believed Alexander to be a contemporary of Roman emperors.⁸³

Clearly, as this essay has shown, there is little separation between Arrian’s two sides, Greek and Roman. Arrian lived in a Roman territory with a Greek culture, he was taught Greek philosophy, he held the Greek historian Xenophon as a role model, and his most well-known works focused on the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great. Meanwhile, Arrian was a Roman citizen, he served as a soldier and general under powerful emperors, he defended Roman territory from invasion, and as a politician he served as governor. More importantly, at least to us today, was that Arrian was a prolific writer, whose works connected Greco-Roman culture. As Stadter rightly states, “Arrian was a man of contrasts...He stands firmly astride two worlds, Greek and Roman, and must be seen as part of each.”⁸⁴ This dual role of Arrian as a Roman in a Greek world, or perhaps the other way around, makes him an important Greco-Roman figure, worthy of study.

⁸¹ Arrian *Anabasis* 4.10.4-6.

⁸² Arrian, Mensch, and Romm, *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander, a New Translation*, xxv.

⁸³ Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia*, 114.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

Bibliography

- Arrian, and William Dansey. *Arrian on Coursing. The Cynegeticus of the Younger Xenophon, Translated from the Greek, with Classical and Practical Annotations, and a Brief Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Author. To Which Is Added an Appendix, Containing Some Account of the Canes Venatici of Classical Antiquity*. London: J. Bohn, 1831.
- Arrian. *Anabasis Alexandri: Book VIII (Indica)*. Translated by E. Iliff Robson (1933). <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/arrian-bookVIII-India.asp> (accessed January 22, 2013).
- _____. *Formation against the Alans*. Translated by Sander van Dorst (2000). http://s_van_dorst.tripod.com/Ancient_Warfare/Rome/Sources/ektaxis.html (accessed February 28, 2013).
- _____. *Arrianus's Voyage Round the Euxine Sea: Translated and Accompanied With a Geographical Dissertation and Maps: To Which Are Added 3 Discourses*. Oxford: Cooke, 1805. Reprint. (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2011).
- Bosworth, A. B. "Arrian and the Alani." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 81 (1977): 217-255. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311121> (accessed January 5, 2013).
- _____. "Arrian at the Caspian Gates: A Study in Methodology." *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 33, no. 1 (1983): 265-276. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638663> (accessed January 5, 2013).
- _____. "Arrian's Literary Development." *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 22, no. 1 (May 1972): 163-185. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/637903> (accessed January 5, 2013).
- _____. "Errors in Arrian." *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 26, no. 1 (1976): 117-139. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/638409> (accessed January 5, 2013).
- _____. *From Arrian to Alexander: Studies in Historical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Hammond, N. G. L. "The Speeches in Arrian's *Indica* and *Anabasis*." *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 49, no. 1 (1999): 238-253. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/639500> (accessed January 5, 2013).
- Harrer, G. A. "Was Arrian Governor of Syria?." *Classical Philology* 11, no. 3 (July 1916): 338-339. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261859> (accessed January 5, 2013).
- Mensch, Pamela and James S. Romm, eds. *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander, a New Translation*. New York: Anchor Books, 2010.

Stadter, Philip A. *Arrian of Nicomedia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

_____. "The *Ars Technica* of Arrian: Tradition and Originality." *Classical Philology* 73, no. 2 (April 1978): 117–128. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/268990> (accessed January 5, 2013).

Steele, R. B. "The Method of Arrian in the *Anabasis*." *Classical Philology* 14, no. 2 (April 1919): 147-157. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/263079> (accessed January 5, 2013).

Syme, Ronald. "The Career of Arrian." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982): 171–211. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/311194> (accessed January 5, 2013).