



## AELIANUS, CLAUDIUS

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**AELIANUS, CLAUDIUS**, a sophist of the first third of the 3rd century A.D., from Praenest near Rome. Although he was a pure Roman, he spoke and wrote Greek fluently. Of his compositions in Greek, two are preserved: a treatise “On the Nature of Animals” and a collection entitled “Various Histories” (see M. Wellmann, *Pauly-Wissowa I*, 1893, pp. 486-88). His chief service to Iranian history was the preservation of some data from the works of Ctesias of Cnidus, the Greek physician of Artaxerxes II.

Aelianus was little interested in the Parthians, his contemporaries, and he rarely alludes to the Euphrates frontier (*Nat. anim.* 9.29). His knowledge of Persia and the Persians is purely literary and is borrowed from sources dealing with the Achaemenid period. In his description of the habits of animals are found occasional references to Achaemenid Persia: the gardens of Cyrus the Young in Lydia (1.54), the cows of the Great King in Susa (3.13, 6.39, 7.1), Achaemenes fostered by an eagle (12.10, 28.12, 21), and scorpions on the road from Susa to Media (13.20, 15.26). He often explicitly refers to Ctesias; he used Ctesias’ *History of the Persians* and to a lesser extent his book on India (cf. F. Jacoby, *Pauly-Wissowa II/2*, 1922, col. 2037-58, 2073). But the source of Aelianus’ unique information concerning a temple of Anaitis in Elymais, where two trained lions were kept (*Nat. anim.* 12.23) remains unknown. The allusion to a caravan road from the Caspian shore to Ecbatana (*ibid.*, 17.32) relates to the Hellenistic or Parthian period.

The “Various Histories” are anecdotes with a moralizing tendency concerned with the Achaemenid rulers; but they contain no indication of their source.



Certain aspects of the text (e.g., chronology) lead us away from Ctesias. But some anecdotes (1.21, 22, 32, 34; 12.1) relate to Artaxerxes II and introduce several figures with Persian names, such as Tithraustes, Omises, Sincutes, and Rhacoces, thus evoking the testimony of one familiar with the court of Mnemon (cf. F. Rudolph in *Leipziger Studien* 7, 1888, pp. 84-85). A number of anecdotes concern Xerxes (2.14, 12.40, 13.4). One story (2.17), whatever its origin, expresses the confusion which originated with the occidental authors between the Persian mages and the Chaldean soothsayers.

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See also A. and M. Croiset, *Histoire de la littérature grecque* V, Paris, 1899, p. 773ff.

W. M. Edwards, "Aelianus," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1970, p. 13.