



CHARES OF MITYLENE

CHARES OF MITYLENE (or Mytilene, as in [Athenaeus](#), 7.4; 10.49, and Pliny, *Natural History* 1.12), Greek historiographer, who participated in Alexander's expedition and wrote "Stories about Alexander" (*Peri Aléxandron historíai*) in ten (or perhaps eleven) books of which only nineteen fragments are now extant in citations and excerpts, mainly in Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistai* and Plutarch's *Alexandros*. These fragments, which are generally of little historical interest, have been edited with a commentary by F. Jacoby (*Fragmente* II B, pp. 657-65, no. 125; II D, pp. 432-37) and translated into English by Charles A. Robinson, Jr. (I, pp. 77-86). In addition, several details quoted without a source by Plutarch may have been taken from Chares, for example, the descriptions of the tent captured from Darius at Issus (20.11ff.) and the treasures found at Susa (36.1-3).

Plutarch (46 = T 2 = F 12) calls Chares *eisaggeleús* "usher," which suggests that he held the office of royal usher (officer in charge of audiences) after Alexander had introduced Persian court ceremonial at his own court in about 330 B.C. If Chares did indeed hold this position it would explain why he was less concerned with military and political events than with the study of Alexander's character and the activities at court; he must himself have been an unassuming man without influence on major events and absorbed in court ceremonies and banquets. Although his descriptions of court life are neither comprehensive nor rigorous, they do contain informative details presented with rare directness. Sometimes he quotes dialogues and statements with a striking immediacy suggesting that he may actually have been an eyewitness



to the events he is describing or, at least, that he had access to official accounts of them. Some of his anecdotes, however, are embellished with fiction and gossip in the style of Ctesias and his successors Heracleides Cymaeus, and Dinon of Colophon.

It is difficult to judge the reliability of facts related by Chares from the fragments of his work. On one hand, his description of events at the court itself, like the marriage ceremonies at Susa (F 4, the special marriage “tent” [oîkos] described here being the ordinary audience tent, however), Callisthenes’ refusal to drink the king’s health in unmixed wine (F 13), and the *proskynesis* affair (F 14a; but cf. Jacoby’s comment), have a flavor of authenticity. On the other hand, there are dramatic embellishments for which all historical documentation is lacking; for example, the report that Alexander was wounded at Issus in personal combat with Darius himself (F 6) and such Oriental tales as that about Zariadres and Princess Odatis (F 5), a romantic story of real “love at first sight” reminiscent of Ctesias’ story about Stryangaius and Zarinaia (F 5 par. 34.3; F 7; F 8a, b J.). Chares’s stories seem not to have been organized chronologically; rather, they are merely assembled anecdotes. The fragmentary descriptions that remain often lack details that would be of interest; for example, in his description of the luxury (*tryphē*) of the Persian court (F 2) Chares does not refer to the court at Susa, which elsewhere he calls the City of Lilies (F 11: “since *soûson* is in the Greek language the lily”).

The “Stories” of Chares were read and used by later authors writing about Alexander, not only Plutarch and [Athenaeus](#) but also Aristobulus, Duris, and probably Cleitarchus. On the whole, however, Chares does not seem to have exercised a strong influence on traditions about Alexander.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. See also H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* II, Munich, 1926, pp. 405f. no. 820.



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