Published: December 15, 1993
Last Updated: November 18, 2016

CURTIUS RUFUS, QUINTUS

CURTIUS RUFUS, QUINTUS (probably fl. 1st century CE), author of the only extant Latin monograph on Alexander the Great, usually called *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, in many respects the most complete and liveliest account of Alexander's exploits in Asia. Although virtually nothing of Curtius Rufus' life is known, literary parallels, as well as linguistic, stylistic, and other internal evidence, suggest that he lived in the 1st century CE and that this work may have been written in the early Claudian period (for the most thorough discussion of the problem of dating and additional literature, see Atkinson, pp. 19-57; Bosworth, pp. 151-54; Rutz, pp. 647-49).

The work was composed in ten books, of which books 1 and 2, the beginnings of books 3 and 6, the end of book 5, and some parts of book 10 have been lost. The first two books may have contained autobiographical references, as well as a general methodological statement (now limited to the author's confession that he has reported more than he actually believed, 9.1.34). Curtius Rufus took great care in the composition of his work: It was divided into two parallel pentads, culminating respectively at the (lost) end of book 5 in the death of Darius III (336-31 BCE) and probably a short sketch of his character and at the end of book 10 with the death of Alexander, a brief appreciation, the beginning of the struggles over the succession, and the disposal of his body. Furthermore, each single book also ends as dramatically as possible (e.g. bk. 4 with Darius' defeat at Gaugamela, bk. 6 with the execution of Philotas; on Curtius Rufus' techniques of composition and narration, see Rutz, 1986).

The question of Curtius Rufus' sources (cf. 9.5.21, 9.8.15) is difficult, as source

criticism often remains necessarily speculative, but the obvious parallels with book 17 in the work of Diodorus Siculus seem most likely to have been derived from the writings of Clitarchus (see cleitarchus; for a list of parallels, see Schwartz, cols. 1873-74; but cf. Egge; Atkinson, pp. 58-67; Bosworth, pp. 154-57). Both the theory of a "peripatetic tradition," implying a hostile attitude toward Alexander as a man yielding to anger, allegedly promoted uniformly among Aristotle's pupils and traceable in a single line to Curtius Rufus, and the notion that the author relied on oral reports by Greek mercenary soldiers in Persian service have proved untenable (see, respectively, Badian; Brunt).

For a long time the appreciation of both the literary and historiographical qualities of Curtius Rufus' work has been quite negative, under the influence of authoritative studies by Eduard Schwartz and William W. Tarn, who originated the idea of a poor, "vulgate" tradition of sources on Alexander (Curtius Rufus, Diodorus Siculus, and Justin), as opposed to a supposedly sound tradition reported by Arrian and based upon the lost primary sources of Ptolemy and Aristobulus. Recent scholarship, however, has been somewhat more sympathetic: Behind the rhetorical and romanticizing features of his work Curtius Rufus adhered rather closely to the historical facts, though subordinating them to his educational goal (cf. Rutz, 1984). The theme that runs throughout his work is the idea that naturally intelligent and good men tend to become depraved through favorable fortune; the psychological portraits of Darius and Alexander are developed in strikingly similar ways (cf. 3.2.17. 10.5.26).

Although it should be borne in mind that Curtius Rufus wrote as a Roman for a Roman public and therefore exhibited the common Roman weakness of looking down on foreign peoples (cf. 5.1.36-38, 6.2.2, 7.8.10, 8.4.23, 8.13.7), he was one of the few Latin authors to take a genuine interest in the customs and civilization of the peoples he was describing. Examples include his remarks on Persian customs (3.3.8, 3.8.12, 4.10.23, 4.6.5-6, 4.14.26), his extensive description of the Persian army on the move (3.3.8-25), and his impressive and lively picture of the "Parapanisadae" in the Hindu Kush (7.3.5-11) and the Indi (8.9.20-37). He also provided independent information, including Persian words (e.g., *gaza* "treasure" in 3.12.27, 3.13.5; *tigris* "arrow" in 4.9.16), and his work is one of the major Latin sources for Iranian names (Werba, pp. 398-403). The value of Curtius Rufus' work to the historian of Persia during the conquest of Alexander lies in two features: On one hand, he provided a different point of view on events reported by Arrian, and, on the other, he included details to

be found in no other source.

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