

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Historiography

ANCIENT SOURCES FOR ALEXANDER THE GREAT

- ⦿ There were many accounts written by contemporaries.
- ⦿ These are all lost today.
- ⦿ Five books based on the ‘lost works’, written centuries later, survive.
- ⦿ These books do name their sources and quote them.

PRIMARY SOURCES - HISTORIANS

- ◎ Callisthenes [Καλλισθηνης]
 - Alexander's official historian (also his nephew).
 - Employed by Alexander to record events as they happened.
- ◎ Cleitarchus [Κλειταρχυς]
 - Did not accompany Alexander yet produced the most popular account.
 - Sensationalized the events.

PRIMARY SOURCES - LITERARY WRITERS

◎ Ptolemy [Πτολεμυ]

- Macedonian friend of Alexander and General
- Wrote an account of military campaigns
- Shows bias in his writing - favours himself over others

◎ Nearchus [Νεαρχυς]

- Greek close friend of Alexander
- Became admiral
- Accompanied the expedition and sailed the coast of Persia.

◎ Onesicritus [Ονισκριτυς]

- Greek sailor on the expedition
- Wrote a historical romance
- Unreliable

PRIMARY SOURCES - LITERARY WRITERS

⊙ Aristobulus [Αριστοβυλυσ]

- Macedonian soldier and engineer who accompanied Alexander.
- Wrote when an old man
- Work invaluable for geographical information
- Detailed account of last year

⊙ Chares [Χαρεις]

- Alexander's chief chamberlain (in charge of household)
- Wrote brief account of Alexander's progress
- Eye witness to some important incidents
 - E.g. efforts to introduce *proskynesis*

SECONDARY SOURCES

- The writers whose work remains are referred to as the 'extant' historians
- They did not just reproduce the previous authors but introduced their own opinions and prejudices.

Author	Nationality	Era	Writings based on:
Curtius Rufus	Roman	1 st Cent AD	Cleitarchus, Ptolemy
Diodorus	Roman	1 st Cent AD	Cleitarchus, Ptolemy
Arrian	Roman	2 nd Cent AD	Aristobulus, Ptolemy
Plutarch	Greek	2 nd Cent AD	Aristobulus, Chares, Callisthenes
Justin	Roman	2 nd Cent AD	Ptolemy, Cleitarchus