

Introduction

Nature and Date of Cleitarchus

Cleitarchus was a Greek scholar and historian, who lived in the same era as Alexander and eventually settled in Alexandria in Egypt. He wrote a work Concerning Alexander (*Peri Alexandrou* or *Ta Peri Alexandrou*), which became the most influential of all the first generation accounts of Alexander's campaigns, but is now lost, except for fragments. He may have accompanied Alexander's expedition, but the greater likelihood is that he did not; at least not for a great distance. He seems to have used the slightly earlier histories of Onesicritus and Nearchus for some passages, so he probably did not publish before ~310BC. Pliny stated that Cleitarchus wrote before Theophrastus, who in turn wrote before ~300BC. Ptolemy seems implicitly to have contradicted Cleitarchus by stating that he was not present at the Mallian siege. These facts above all have persuaded the majority scholars that Cleitarchus wrote before Ptolemy and probably published his work some time between 310 – 300BC. Conversely, there are some indications that Cleitarchus used material published by Megasthenes (especially in his story of the Mandi of Pandaea in the southern Indus valley). Megasthenes probably did not publish his work until the first decade of the 3rd century BC. It therefore remains feasible that Cleitarchus also belongs to the early third century, but, whatever his precise date, it is highly probable that he wrote within living memory of Alexander's conquests.

The suggestion of a 4th century BC date for Cleitarchus perturbed WW Tarn, because he envisaged Alexander as the paragon of an English country gentlemen, yet it is clear that Cleitarchus' portrait of the king is very much at odds with that view. Tarn therefore embarked upon a project to discredit Cleitarchus as a source. The main thrust of his attack was to try to show that the date of Cleitarchus was as late as possible. Cleitarchus could therefore be labelled a sensationalist secondary source and might safely be ignored. Tarn particularly argued that Cleitarchus used passages from Aristobulus. On internal evidence, it is known that Aristobulus wrote after 301BC. However, Hamilton has shown in *Historia 10* that Tarn's case for Cleitarchus having written after Aristobulus is not tenable in the evidence. Conversely, it is difficult to see how Pliny could be wrong when he states that Cleitarchus wrote before Theophrastus, who in turn wrote before 300BC. Pliny was extremely knowledgeable about these sources and had direct access to their original works. Unfortunately, Tarn's arguments have a kind of eristic allure and were taken up by some other respected historians, such as Pearson, in the mid-twentieth century, so they are still widely repeated in modern literature on the subject.

We know that Book 12 of Cleitarchus' work dealt with the gymnosophists and it has been believed that Cleitarchus opened with Alexander's accession and closed with his death. Since Alexander encountered the gymnosophists in India, it has been estimated that the total length of the work may have been about 15 books (i.e. scrolls). However, it is also possible that the subject of the gymnosophists was discussed at the death of Calanus, which occurred

after Alexander got back to Persia. In this case the work may have been 12 or 13 books in length. Hammond has also argued that Cleitarchus may have included an account of Philip's last summer. It is also known that Cleitarchus was fond of fitting things in with the number of days of the year (e.g. Alexander's 365 concubines; wall of Babylon 365 stades long). This lends credibility to the idea that he might have written a Book for each year of Alexander's reign. I also find that this view reduces the need to suppose from the fragments that Cleitarchus wrote much more detail on the later parts of Alexander's reign. Consequently, I currently favour a total of 13 books, usually starting and ending at the boundary of the Attic year in mid-summer.

It may be added that Jacoby Fragment 5 of Cleitarchus, which refers to the Persian tiara being worn upright and which is attributed to the tenth book of Cleitarchus could fit a report of the revolt of Baryaxes, if the work comprised 13 books. Conversely, it is a stretch to accommodate it within even a 15 book length, if it referred to the revolt of Bessus.

Feasibility of the Project

Despite the fact that Cleitarchus original account is lost (probably irretrievably), there is a huge amount of material buried in the extant sources, which can be identified as coming from Cleitarchus with reasonable confidence. We already have a lot of pieces of the puzzle. Strangely, nobody seems to have tried to put them all together, so we don't yet know quite how much we have. Obviously it is necessary to attempt a reconstruction, even just to get a proper indication of how much is missing. As more fragments of the puzzle come together, it should become clearer how the gaps must have been filled, just as with an ordinary jigsaw puzzle. It is likely to provide more insights into the nature, length and date of Cleitarchus work, but quite what cannot be known in advance.

Diodorus Siculus Book 17 is largely an epitome of Cleitarchus (possibly with an admixture of Diyllus, as argued by Hammond). However, Diodorus is probably only 15%-30% the length of the original. Then we have Jacoby's fragments, which include hints of the basic book structure of Cleitarchus. Furthermore, Hammond has systematically combed through the major surviving sources (Diodorus, Justin, Curtius, Plutarch, Arrian) and identified the parts, which probably come from Cleitarchus. Curtius is the most prolific source for Cleitarchan material for most of Alexander's career, but he also made extensive use of other sources, so Diodorus is helpful as a control. Wherever Curtius and Diodorus patently have a common source, it is highly likely that that source is Cleitarchus (ultimately at least). There is a long lacuna in Diodorus, but fortunately the Metz Epitome provides an alternative means of discriminating Cleitarchan material in Curtius across this gap. Finally, there are many essays, book chapters and articles, which provide numerous additional clues (see Ancillary Modern Sources).

The reconstruction should be in English for accessibility and each book would require a parallel commentary explaining the source material for each reconstructed passage and assigning a confidence level for its attribution to

Cleitarchus. A Greek reconstruction is pointless, since there is no significant chance of being able to reconstruct Cleitarchus' exact words: only the gist of what he reported. However, in some instances similarities in the phraseology of the Greek or Latin in passages preserved in more than one ancient source may be helpful in establishing Cleitarchus' style and so improving the confidence and fidelity of the reconstruction.