THE REPUTATION OF THE ‘MANTIS’ ARISTANDER*

Alex Nice
Reed College, USA/University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Modern studies on the seer Aristander of Telmessus have rarely considered more widely the significance of ancient testimonies relevant to his reputation. This paper reviews the testimonia relevant to the seer’s eminence. The ancient evidence indicates not only a diviner with expertise in many fields (extispicy, augury, the interpretation of prodigies, oneiromancy, and spontaneous prophecy), but one who was also a warrior, author, and possible Platonist. I argue that it was not Callisthenes or another historical source who was responsible for Aristander’s emergence from obscurity. Rather, as a close confidant of the King and published author, Aristander was already a suitable subject for inclusion in the histories of Alexander. His enduring reputation in the testimonia indicates that it was through his own merit that Aristander bequeathed his name to posterity.

Modern studies on the seer Aristander of Telmessus have rarely considered more widely the significance of ancient testimonies relevant to his reputation. Even when they have, as in King’s recent thesis and presentation, they have been used to determine whether a single source for his actions can be identified in the Alexander historians. This paper reviews the testimonia relevant to the seer’s reputation and argues that Aristander’s

* It is with great pleasure that I offer this contribution in honour of Professor John Atkinson, who provided much needed support to the Department of Classics at the University of the Witwatersrand during its final years. I am grateful for the suggestions of Professor Nigel Nicholson in response to an earlier draft of this paper.


enduring reputation in antiquity was due more to his own intellectual accomplishments than the preservation of his actions through the work of Callisthenes, Ptolemy, or another Alexander historian.3

In the sources for the history of Alexander the Great, the name Aristander occurs some 41 times connected with 20 different divinatory episodes relevant to Alexander or one of his generals.4 The evidence from the histories of Alexander reveals a diviner skilled in various arts of divination: extispicy, augury, the interpretation of prodigies, oneiromancy, and in one (possibly spurious) example, spontaneous prophecy. Indeed, the overall portrayal of Aristander is, as Pritchett suggested of the Greek military 'mantis', one who was a 'jack-of-all-trades in the field of divination'.5

The ancient sources are flattering in their praise. Curtius states unambiguously that Aristander is 'peritissimus vatum',6 Arrian less unequivocally that the seer made many correct prophecies for Alexander.7 Artemidorus names him ὁ ἀριστος ἀνθρωπορήτης.8 In later sources Aristander is frequently listed alongside famous mythological seers, certain of whom, according to Clemens of Alexandria, were awarded godlike status.9 Here Aristander appears in the same context as Teiresias, Amphiaras or Orpheus,10 else-

---

3 Berve (note 1) postulated a Priestehomn; C. A. Robinson Jr., 'The seer Aristander', *APF* 50 (1929) 195-97, Callisthenes; N. G. L. Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1983) 125, Callisthenes and the Epheberides (Royal Diaries); Gattinoni (note 1), Callisthenes; but adding the proviso that it is not necessary to assume Aristander's death was contemporaneous with the death of the court historian; King (note 2), that the representation owes much to Ptolemy and Aristobulus, although she argues against the notion of one common source.

4 Arrian 14 times: Arr. 1.11.3; 1.23.6 (twice); 2.18.1; 2.26.4; 2.27.2 (twice); 3.2.2; 3.7.6; 3.15.2; 4.4.3 (twice); 4.4.9; 4.15.8; Plutarch 8 times: Plut. *Alex* 2.5.3; 14.9.2; 25.14; 25.5; 31.9; 33.2; 50.5; 52.2; Curtius: 9 times: 4.2.14; 4.6.12; 4.13.15; 4.15.27; 5.4.2; 7.7.89 (cf. 7.7.22-29); 7.7.22; 7.7.23; 7.7.29; In other sources: twice in Zonaras (*Zon.* 4.8 (Pl.183D); *Zon.* 4.12 (Pl.192D): the *Itinerarium Alexandrinum* (*Itiner.* 85; *Itiner.* 97); Adrian (*Varia Historia* 12.64, twice); once at Artem. *Onir.* 4.24.18; *FGH* 151 = Frag. *Sab.* 11; Ephorus, *FGH* 70.217 (= *Tert.* *De Anima* 46); Eustath. *Comm. in Dionys.* 747.17; Appian, *Syria* 64. Two more references to his name may be added if we accept that Melampus at Ps.-Callisthenes 142 substitutes one famous seer for another and that the reference to Alexander at Diód. *Sic.* 17.17.67 is simply an error for Aristander. The Appendix outlines the instances by chronological date.


6 Curt. 4.2.14.

7 Arr. 3.2.2.


where with Megistias and Silanus.\textsuperscript{11} The confusion between the man and his mythological status is most evident in the \textit{Greek Alexander Romance} when the legendary seer Melampus is named instead of Aristander.\textsuperscript{12} Other testimonia fill out a more comprehensive picture: that Aristander was a warrior, man of letters, and possibly a Platonist.

The renown of Aristander is evident shortly after the death of Alexander. The Alexander Mosaic (c. 200 BC) depicts a unique figure behind Alexander. The horseman wears a white helmet with a visor and cheek coverings, embellished with a gold wreath. According to Plutarch prior to the battle at Gaugamela, Aristander rode along the ranks wearing a white cloak and a gold crown ('stephanon') on his head.\textsuperscript{13} His reference to the seer comes after acknowledging Callisthenes as the source for the image of Alexander appealing to the gods, his right hand held aloft. Curtius (perhaps inspired by the mosaic) has Darius in his chariot and Alexander on horseback defended by their elite troops while Aristander, wearing white and bearing a laurel wreath, points out an augural sign.\textsuperscript{14} Although the Alexander historians never explicitly refer to the part Aristander played during the course of a battle, since the time of Homer literary sources often depict diviners in warrior roles too.\textsuperscript{15} It seems that the artist of the Alexander Mosaic has extrapolated from

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{11} Philostrat. \textit{Vita Apollonii} 8.7.670.
\item\textsuperscript{12} Ps.-Callisthenes 1.42.
\item\textsuperscript{13} Plut. \textit{Alex. Apollonii} 8.7.670.\textit{Vita Apollonii} 8.7.670.
\item\textsuperscript{14} Curt. 4.15.23-27; Plut. \textit{Alex.} 33.1-4; cf. Arr. 3.14.1-3.
\item\textsuperscript{15} See Hom. \textit{Il.} 13.3975 where Poseidon urges on the Aiantes in the guise of the seer Calchas, which suggests a similar role could be ascribed to the legendary prophet; also \textit{Od.} 11.281-97 (Melampus); 15.223-81 (Theoclymenus). See also Pind. \textit{Pyth.} 4.191; Ov. \textit{Met.} 8.316 (Mopsus the seer of the Argonauts); Aesch. \textit{Sept.} 568-69 and Pind \textit{Ol.} 6.17 (Amphiaras); Hdt. 7.228.3-4 (Megistias, the Spartan seer and descendant of Melampus); Xen. \textit{Hell.} 2.4.18-19 (an anonymous seer at Munychia). For modern discussions on the seer in battle, see Pritchett (note 5) 3.56-57. For a more recent discussion, see J. Dillery, 'Chresmologues and \textit{manteia}: independent diviners and the problem of authority', in S. Iles Johnson & P. Struck (ed.), \textit{Manthr. Studies in Ancient Divination} (Leiden 2005) 20009. He points to the historical examples from the casualty list of the Erechtheid tribe (\textit{IG} 1\textsuperscript{1} 1147 = M1.33, lines 128-29) and an Argive casualty list (\textit{SEG} 29.361). In addition, there is the tombstone from Menidi (\textit{SEG} 16.193) to one Kleoboulos, the uncle of Aeschines, and another to
\end{itemize}
an Alexander account (probably Callisthenes) to give the seer an active role in the battle portrayed (whether it is meant to represent a specific battle or not), an image perhaps later appropriated by Curtius and Plutarch in their descriptions of the encounter at Gaugamela.

Aristander was not just famous for his association with Alexander but also his literary output. During a discussion on the imperfections (vitia) of trees, Pliny suggests there is a space for prodigia. There follow two chapters of examples: trees bearing fruit in unusual fashion, miraculous tree revivals, changes of colour (which are not always to be regarded as portentous), finally a list of prodigies associated with unnatural alterations to the natural state of a fruit or tree (sweet to sour; wild to cultivated; white grape or fig to black and vice versa). At the end of the section Pliny reveals that the work of Aristander overflowed (satet) with such ostenta. The index to book seventeen suggests a title De Portenax.

A terminus ante quem for this work is established by Theophrastus, HP 2.3.1-3:

1. Φυσις δ' οὖν αὐτοκράτην τινά γίνεσθαι τῶν τοιούτων μεταβολῆς, ὡστε μὲν τῶν κυρτῶν ὡστε δὲ καὶ ὅλως αὐτῶν τῶν δεύρων, ὡς καὶ στημέα τομίζουσιν οἱ μάντεις. Οἷον ῥόαν οξεῖαν γλυκείαν ἐξειδεικνύει καὶ γλυκείαν ἐξειδεικνύει καὶ πάλιν ἀπλως αὐτὰ τὰ δεύρο τοιούτων μεταβολῆς, ὡστε ἐξ οξειας γλυκείας γίνεσθαι καὶ ἐκ γλυκείας οξεῖαν χείρος δὲ τὸ εἰς γλυκείαν μεταβαλλεῖν. καὶ ἐξ ἐρυτοῦ σικόν καὶ ἐκ σικῆς ἐρυτοῦ χείρος δὲ τὸ ἐκ σικῆς. καὶ ἐξ ἑλλας κύστους καὶ ἐκ κοῦτου ἔλατον ἡμάτα δὲ τοῦτο. πάλιν δὲ σικῆν ἐκ λευκῆς μελαναν καὶ ἐκ μελανῆς λευκῆν. ὑμένας δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ ἀμπέλου.

2. Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὡς τέρατα καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ὑπολαμβάνουσιν, ὡστε δὲ συμβή τῶν τοιούτων οὐδὲ θαυμάζουσιν ὅλως· οἷον τῷ τὴν κάπηλον ἀμπέλου καλομένην καὶ ἐκ μελανῆς βάτρως λευκὸν καὶ ἐκ λευκοῦ μέλαινας δέσπειρον οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ μάντεις τὰ τοιαύτα κρίνουσιν ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνα, παρὰ οἷς πέφυκεν ἡ χώρα

STORIES OF THASOS (IG 2 17 with SEG 15.84 and 16.42), who perhaps fought at Cnidus. Both scholars note, too, the strategic role often played by manteis. Pritchett cites in particular the eve of the battle at Gaugamela when Alexander spent the night in front of his tent with Aristander (Plut. Alex. 31.9 Curt. 413.15). Earlier (p. 55) he points to examples of athletes-manteis, demonstrating that these men could be much more than mere diviners. Similarly priests also took part in battle: e.g. Hom. Il. 5.43; 16.569.

16 Plin. NH 17.241.
17 Plin. NH 17.243.
18 Plin. NH 1.17c. 22.
1. They say therefore there is some spontaneous change of these kinds; sometimes of the fruit, sometimes even of the whole tree, which the seers think are portents. For instance, an acid pomegranate may produce sweet fruit, and a sweet one acid fruit; and again, generally, the tree itself changes, so that from acid it becomes sweet, and from sweet acid. And it is worse to change to sweet. Also a cultivated fig may arise from a wild one, and a wild fig from a cultivated one. From the cultivated one is worse. And a cultivated olive may arise from a wild one, and a wild olive from a cultivated one. But this is rare. And again a black fig may arise from a white fig, and white from a black one. This is the same in the vine.

2. And these they understand as prodigies and contrary to nature. But they are not at all surprised at natural changes of those types. Such as when the ‘smoky’ vine, as it is called, bears a white instead of black grape and a black instead of white grape. For the seers do not consider such changes. Nor those instances when the soil produces a natural change as was said concerning the pomegranate in Egypt. But it is a marvel here, because there are only one or two instances and these separated through the whole of time. Nonetheless, if such changes happen, it is better the change occurs in the fruit than in the tree as a whole.
3. Indeed such an irregularity also occurs in fruits. Such as once before already a fig tree bore its figs from behind the leaves; and the pomegranate and vine from the stems, while the vine has borne fruit without leaves. The olive again has lost its leaves and yet produced fruit; which is said to have happened to Thet alas, son of Pisistratos. This may happen because of wintry weather; and because of other reasons, some think that they are abnormal but they are not. For example, there was an olive that, when it had been utterly burnt down, sprang up again whole, the tree itself and all its branches. And in Boeotia an olive, after its shoots had been eaten off by locusts, grew back again. But, in this example, the shoots had only been shed. Perhaps such phenomena are least strange, since the causes in each case are manifest, but rather it is strange that trees should bear fruit from unnatural places, or fruit that is not indigenous. And especially if there is a change in the entire character of the tree, as has been said. Such are some of the changes which occur in trees.

The same elements as in Pliny's account are evident, albeit in the reverse order: spontaneous changes to the fruit or tree which are regarded as portents (σημεία); natural changes of colour or metamorphoses due to the soil ignored by the 'manteis'; more surprising changes if they occur in Greece; irregularities in fruits and some abnormal changes. Here are examples also found in Pliny: an olive that revived after being completely burnt, and, from Boeotia the revival of the shoots of a young tree which had been completely eaten by locusts. Theophrastus' tightly ordered account, replete with balanced, chiasmic phrases, is punctuated with terse observations on the importance of a particular change (χείρων δὲ τὸ εἴς γλυκέων μεταφάσεως χέιραν δὲ τὸ ἐκ συκῆς ἢμιστὰ δὲ τοῖσοι), perhaps a reflection of the concise formulaic structure one might expect of a diviner's handbook.²⁹ Pliny's narrative, on the other hand, is

²⁹ The observation of omens in ancient texts was often framed as a conditional sentence with the protasis describing the ominous event, and the apodosis, what is signified ('if x is observed, the y is indicated'). This casualistic structure has similarities in the codification of ancient legal narratives. Potential models for these divinatory 'narratives' and for Aristander's work can be seen in the prophetic and divinatory texts of Mesopotamia, Assyria, and the ancient Near East, works which continued to have an influence on the development of Greek and Roman divinatory practices. For example, see S.M. Freeden, If a City is Set on a Height. The Akkadian Omen Series Šammu Aššu ira Mašš ρšak (Philadelphia 1998), vol. 1: Tablets 1-21; U. Koch-Westenholz, Babylonian Liver Omens. The Chapters Manzātu, Paddi, and Pān ākilti of the Babylonian Exūpiry Series mainly from Asšurbanipal's Library (Copenhagen 2000); J. Bottéro, 'Symptômes, signes, écritures en Mésopotamie ancienne', in J.-P. Vernant (ed.), Divination et Rationalité (Paris 1974) 70-196; U. Koch-Westenholz, Mesopotamian
more prosaic. He varies his constructions: the simple *aut contra* is effective in its simplicity, as is the change from active to passive in the middle of the sentence; he takes care to offer a synonym (*ostentum* for *prodigium*) there is no unnecessary repetition; there is a preponderance of polysyndeton, but varying conjunctions add to the rhythm of his lines. Nonetheless the distinct linguistic similarities in the two versions make it obvious that both authors are using the same source.

Further dissimilarities might help us to understand the nature of the original source. Use of the judicious *feci ... ἀ καὶ σημεῖα νομίζοντων ὁ μάντες* close to the beginning both distances Theophrastus from the prodigious material and reveals an unspecified and contemporary mantic source or sources, a point that is reiterated at the beginning of the next chapter: *καὶ ταύτα μὲν ὡς τέρατα καὶ παρὰ φίλων ὑπολειμμάτων*. His account is far more rational than that of Pliny. Later Theophrastus informs the reader that there are certain types of phenomena which the *μάντες* do not take into account. Presumably Aristander’s *De Portentis* had been specific about the kinds of sign regarded as portentous and those that were not. Pliny alludes to the sentiment in the phrase *non semper prodigia*, a softer and less blunt appraisal. Subsequently he says much less about the significance of natural colour changes or geographic locale. In the final section of Theophrastus’ narrative (2.3.3) there are references to irregularities in fruits. The examples include a fig-tree producing figs from behind the leaves, a pomegranate and a vine growing on the same stem, and vines and olives bearing fruit without leaves are the same as Pliny - although he lacks the detail of Thetis’ son of Peisistratos. Theophrastus then remarks *καὶ ἄλλως ἄτυχου ἔτι τῶν διάκομισσιν εἶναι παρὰ λόγων οὐκ ἔτη ἔτην δέ* and produces the examples we have mentioned above of trees that have miraculously revived. In contrast, Pliny reverses the Theophrastian account and after his direct opening *inter vi vitia arborum est et prodigii locus*, he proceeds immediately to the discussion of phenomena that Theophrastus does not seem to think of as prodigious. Even the amazing revitalisation of trees is described by Pliny as *miracula fortuita*. The Latin writer then remains closer to the language of divination and miracles and, in so doing, extenuates the rationalisation of the Theophrastian account.

---

*Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Astrology* (Copenhagen 1995) 81-86 and Appendix A: 'Reports written on March 15th (Adellar 16th) 669 BC', 180-85. See too G. Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, transl. by C. Richardson (Bloomington & Indianapolis 1993) 1-13 (esp. 9-11) on Mesopotamian divination. In the Etruscan and Roman worlds similar syntactical structures are observed in divinatory texts: e.g. Lydus (*De Ost. 27-38*) preserves a brontoscopic calendar attributed to Nigidius Figulus, probably derived from an Etruscan source.
Both natural historians are clear that they have a mantic source and there
seem to be no good grounds for disputing the evidence of Pliny that that
source was Aristander. Theophrastus would have been well-placed to utilise
Aristander's work. Although it seems likely that the opening sentences of
Theophrastus' narrative contain language closer and more appropriate for
inclusion in a practical handbook De Portentis, the lack of rationalisation by
the Elder Pliny would suit the divinatory object of such a work. The
conservation by Pliny of a detail not found in Theophrastus - the meta-
morphosis of a plane tree on the arrival of Xerxes at Laodicea - makes it
likely that Aristander's De Portentis was supplemented with evidence gathered
from, or relevant to, his Persian travels.

Further evidence for the literary reputation of Aristander comes from
Artemidorus, who spared no effort in collecting material for his Oneiron-
criticum.20 Early in Artemidorus' work we learn that Aristander was an expert
on the subject of tooth dreams, a topic, we are told, that he treated better
than the majority.21 Later, at 4.23.1, the seer is specified as the best dream
interpreter (ἀριστος ὁ ὄνομαρχιτης), a superlative unused of any other
diviner in the Oneironiticron. Artemidorus then refers to the prooimion
of Aristander (and other writers) in which he taught (didaskoun) anagram-
matical transposition (the principle of transposing syllables or adding and
omitting letters), but made no use of it in the succeeding treatise. Artemi-
dorus argues that the use of this principle will enhance the reliability of
the dream interpreter. Artemidorus, of course, did employ anagrammatical trans-
position, so his comments are intended to increase his own credibility and
prestige at the expense of Aristander. It supports the importance attached to
both men in the Byzantine text once attributed to Lucian, the Philopatris,
where the author claims to speak after the manner of Aristander and
Artemidorus when he interprets a dream for Chleuocharmus.22 In short,
Artemidorus saw Aristander as one of his closest rivals, if not the closest, on
the subject of dream interpretation.

The references in Artemidorus make it possible to assume that Aristander
published a dream book. Artemidorus' reference to anagrammatical trans-
position indicates that the work had a certain didactic and theoretical appli-
cation. Artemidorus' observations on tooth dreams offer a hierarchical system
of semiotics. For example, the upper teeth represent the more important and
excellent members of the dreamer's household; the lower those who are less

---
21 Artem. Oenir. 1.31.3.
22 Ps.-Lucian, Philopatris 21-22.1.
important; the right side men, the left women, incisors the young, canines the middle-aged, molars old people. Similarly the teeth can represent possessions, in addition to the functions of life. For the remainder of chapter 31 Artemidorus gives examples of specific tooth dreams which he presumably drew from Aristander. A smorgasbord of interpretations is presented based on the status of a dreamer, the number of teeth that fall out, the condition of the teeth. Indeed, the inherent complexities of Aristander's system of interpreting tooth dreams have some resonance in the carefully coded, yet nuanced systems of other ancient divinatory schemes. The seer's treatise would thus have had a serious practical as well as theoretical application.

Other sources, too, support the notion of a highly literate and educated seer. Origen states that Aristander wrote (διεγραμμεν) that Plato was not the son of Ariston, but of a phantom, which approached Amphictione in the guise of Apollo. Origen goes on to remark that many other followers of Plato have made similar statements in their lives of Plato (κατ' ἄλλους δὲ πλείων ἡν Πλάτων καὶ ἐν τῷ Πλάτωνος βαπτισάμενος ἐξήρεθεν). It is possible that such a vision could have featured in a dream book written by the seer - it would correspond to the class of dream known as ἐνυπάλω described by Artemidorus (Bd) - but the implication of Origen's words is that

---

23 See above n. 19. The texts in S.M. Freedman (note 19) suggest the dramatic importance attached to omens which afflicted the household. Notions of binary oppositions (e.g. left-right; above-below) are apparent in Babylonian and Assyrian texts: see A.K. Guinan, 'left/right symbolism in Mesopotamian divination', State Archives of Assyria Bulletin 10.1 (1996) 5-10; Koch-Westenholz (note 19, 1995) 97-99. Koch-Westenholz's work on Babylonian and Assyrian astrology also indicates quite how complex the divinatory schemes of ancient societies might be. It was also customary in the Near East for different forms of divination to be bundled together. The diviners, like Aristander, were apparently expected to be conversant with a wide variety of divinatory schemes: see M. Nissinen, 'The socioreligious role of the Neo-Assyrian prophets', in M. Nissinen (ed.), Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical and Arabian Perspectives (Atlanta 2000) 107. The potential complexities of Greek divination are outlined in Manetti (note 19) 14-35 (Greek Divination).

24 Origen, Contra Celsum 6.8.10.

Aristander was a Platonist and may have written a life of Plato. If this was the case, it might explain a reference found in Proclus' Commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*. Here the diviner is paired with Numenius, the second-century AD gnostic, a Platonist and Pythagorean, as one whose followers considered the soul a unity and indivisible, whereas the indefinite is twofold and divisible. As a philosopher-adviser-diviner, Aristander would have been little different from later and better documented individuals such as Cicero's friend and partner in philosophical matters, Nigidius Figulus, whom St. Jerome called *pythagoricius et magus,* or the astrologer and Platonist,
Thrasyllos, whose ability to make accurate predictions for the Emperor Tiberius made him a reliable confidant for the aspiring 
prinapi.

The philosophical and intellectual works of Nigidius and Thrasyllos are unmentioned in the later second-century AD historical accounts which focus solely on the predictions that they are reputed to have made. It seems less surprising then that Arrian or Quintus Curtius omit to mention the lesser known works of Aristander from their accounts, preferring to concentrate on his divinatory ability and its dramatic possibilities for their historical narratives.

For example, Curtius does not cite Aristander’s name in connection with a single instance of dream interpretation, preferring to depict him as a sacrificer and expert in the interpretation of prodigies, using vocabulary that is reminiscent of the practices of Roman priests or Etruscan haruspiices, a style that is appropriate for his Romanisation of Alexander.

Nonetheless the historical accounts and testimonia suggest strongly that the historical Aristander had a responsibility for overseeing sacrifices (Cicero attributes a

---

Nigidius had been aedile in 60 (supported by Della Casa 27), T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (New York 1951-52) 2.356, that he was tribune of the people in 59 (using Cic. *Att.* 2.2.3). He was praetor in 58 BC. His standing as a politician may have been quite high since Caesar never granted him clemency and he died in exile in 45 BC.


See King (note 2) 233.

Aristander appears at Gaugamela (4.13.15) *capite velato* and bearing a *verbena*, the symbol of the feral priest. Prior to the battle at the River Tanais (7.7.8) his expertise is explicitly referred to as haruspiical. Furthermore, the vocabulary (*portendo, exta, spectare, explorare, fibris peandum*) has strong overtones of haruspiical practice at 4.2.14; 7.7.8. See C.O. Thulin, *Die Etruskische Disciplin* (Göteborgs 1905) 1.11; (1906) 2.12; (1909) 3.5.

thorough knowledge of extispicy to the Telmessians), interpreting prodigies, and for analysing dreams.

Aristander would have had much in common with Alexander and the educated companions of Alexander's army. Some, like the bematists Baeton or Diogenetus, Alexander's courier and surveyor Philonides of Crete, his admiral Nearchus, the Cynic and pilot Onesicritus, the triarch Medius of Larisa, managed to balance their military careers with their literary endeavours. Some were associated with the expedition specifically to write histories or epic poems in honour of Alexander, as Cicero reminds the reader (Pro Archia 24: Quam multis scriptores renem suarum magnam ille Alexander secum habuisset dicitur! Atque is tamen, quem in Sigo ad Achillis tranuis armatis: 'O fortunae, inquit, 'adolescent, quia tuae virtutis Homeri praecum inteneris'). Others, in particular Callisthenes and Anaxarchus, seem to have been enlisted precisely because their intellectual capability made them suitable advisers to the King. They also reflected the King's own personal interests in philosophy that had been fostered by Aristotle.

32 Cic. De Diét. 1.90; 94.
33 Baeton: C.A. Robinson, The History of Alexander the Great (Providence 1953) 1.35-39, no. 119; Berve (note 1) 2.99-100, no. 198; Diogenetus: Robinson 1.39-40, no. 120; Berve 2.143, no. 271; Philonides: Robinson 1.40, no. 121; Berve 2.392, no. 800; Nearchus: Robinson 1.100-49, no. 133; Berve 2.269-72, no. 544; Onesicritus: Robinson 1.149-66, no. 134; Berve 2.288-90, no. 583; Medius: Robinson 1.92-95, no. 129; Berve 2.261-62, no. 521.
34 Incorrectly translated by Watts (a translation retained in Robinson's collection, p. 269) as 'we read that Alexander the Great carried in his train numbers of historians and epic poets ...'
37 See especially Plut. Alex. 7.3-4. For the general importance of Aristotle in the education of Alexander, see Plut. Alex. 7.2; Quint. Inst. 1.1.23; see also Plin. NH 8.44. Other philosophers attended Alexander: Pyrrho; cf. E. Flintoff, 'Pyrrho and India', Phronesis 25 (1980) 88-108; Pammon and Leon; the Cynic Diogenes; the 'gymnosophists'; cf. Stoneman (note 34) 328-29; 329-30; 334-35; also R. Stoneman, 'Naked philosophers: the Brahmins in the Alexander historians and the Alexander Romance', JHS 115 (1995) 99-114. Alexander even went out of his way to place a wreath on the statue of the philosopher Theodectes, whose works he had read (Plut.
The most recent publication on Alexander the Great’s personal seer, Aristander of Telmesas, suggests: ‘sappiamo, però che soltanto grazie a Callistene Aristandro, unico tra gli indovini al seguito di Alessandro, esce dall’ anonimato ed entra nella luce della storia.’ Gattinoni’s sentiment is rooted in the *Quellenforschung* that has plagued Alexander studies: that the execution of Callisthenes in 328/327 BC and the subsequent disappearance from the historical record of Aristander are connected; that what we know of Aristander is derived from the history of Callisthenes. The evidence from the *testimonia*, however, makes it clear that the seer had his own reputation in antiquity. It seems likely that Alexander placed his faith in Aristander in part because of a shared intellectual bond as much as the personal and public service that a good diviner could offer. It was not Callisthenes who was responsible for Aristander’s emergence from obscurity. Rather, as a close confidant of the King and published author, Aristander was already a suitable subject for inclusion in the histories of Alexander. His enduring reputation in the *testimonia* indicates that it was through his own merit that Aristander bequeathed his name to posterity.

---

*Alex.* 17). Theodectes had been a pupil of Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle. His son, according to Suda Q138 had written an *enkomion* for Alexander the Epirote. There is thus a strong connection with his family and the Macedonian court in the time of Alexander.

38 Gattinoni (note 1) 133.

39 See, for example, C. Robinson jr., ‘The seer Aristander’, *AJP* 50 (1929) 195-97; see also A. Fraenkel, *Die Quellen der Alexanderhistoriker* (Breslau 1883; repr. 1969, ed. Aalen) 171-95. Later, Hammond (note 3) 125, argued that differences between Arrian and Curtius at Gaza specifically could be accounted for if the Royal Diaries and Callisthenes were sources for Aristander’s role during the campaigns.
### Appendix: References to Aristander in Historical Accounts of Alexander ‘The Great’ III of Macedon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Historic Event</th>
<th>Divination Type</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Aristander Mentioned by Name</th>
<th>Cross References (Aristander not cited)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>357/356 BC</td>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>Seal with figure of lion on womb of Olympias</td>
<td>Interpretation Seal implies pregnancy, and lion implies character of Alexander</td>
<td>Plut., Alex. 2.25; Zos., 48; (Pl. 183D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335/334 BC</td>
<td>Prodigy</td>
<td>Swallowing statue of Orpheus</td>
<td>Prediction Beriath celebration of Alexander’s fame by Poets</td>
<td>Am. 1.113; Plut., Alex. 14.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 334 BC | Prodigy | Fallen statue of Arieabarzanes | Prediction Victory at Grannus | | Eddic S. 17.176.7 [Alexander-Aristander?]
| 334 BC | Prodigy | Augury/Prodigy Swallow flies around Alexander’s head | Prediction Reveals a plot by one of Alexander’s friends | Am. 1.256.8 | |
| 332 BC | Prodigy | Blood from Bread | Prediction Portended an end for the city | Curt., 4.2.14; Eddic S. 17.41.7 | |
| 332 BC | Dream | Alexander sees Hercules | Prediction Tyre would be taken but with an effort | Am. 2.18.1; Curt., 4.2.17; Plut., Alex. 24.5 | |
| 332 BC | Dream | SATYR dancing on shield | Prediction from ormen that Tyre meaning Tyre is yours | Arern., Onur., 4.24.18; Plut., Alex. 24.89; Ps. Call., 135.78; Cf. Bus., DP 911 | |
| 332 BC | Sacrifice | Swallow flies about Tyre | Prediction Tyre will fall within the month | Plut., Alex. 25.1 | |
| 332 BC | Augustum | Raven drops a cloud | Prediction Portended destruction of the city | Curt., 4.6.12; Am. 2.26.4; 2.27.8; Plut., Alex. 25.4.5 | Itiner. 96 |
| 332/331 BC | Portent? | Marking of circuit of city with meal of soldiers (portent?) | Prediction City would be successful | Am. 3.1.53.22; FGrH 151 – Frag. Sab. 11; Curt., 4.8a; Plut., Alex. 26.8.40; Strabo 17.1.6; Val. Max. 1.11.1; PaCall., 1.32.7; Itiner. 99 | |

---

*The event occurs in Hipperia. The interpretation also stresses the connection between Orpheus’ conquest by music and song and Alexander’s conquest by force of arms.*
| 331 BC | River Tigris prior to Cambyses | Interpretation of eclipse and sacrifice to Moon, Sun and Earth | Reasonable to Macedonians, that the battle would take place that month, and sacrifices indicated victory for Alexander | Arr. 3.157) | see Plist. Alex. 31.8, Cl. Cir. De Div. 1.121, Plin. NH 2.180, App. 8.3, Diod. 55.6 |
| 331 BC | Prior to Cambyses | Sacrifice to Jupiter and Minerva Victoria | Gods duly propitiated | Curt. 4.13.15 | Plist. Alex. 31.9 [prayers to Parth FG H 148–Pap. Oxyrh. 1798] |
| 331 BC | Prior to Cambyses | Auspiciation (auspicium) | Prediction: A clear auspice of victory | Curt. 4.15.27 | Plist. Alex. 33.1–2 |
| 331 BC | Persian Gates | Comment: Alex. rejects sacrifices assuming Aristander could do nothing | N/A | Curt. 5.4.2 | |
| 328 B.C. | Cleitus affair | a) Sacrifice Cleitus is followed by three of the sheep he had been preparing to sacrifice. | Interpretation is unfavorable to Cleitus | Plist. Alex. 50.2–4 [plus the seer Kleomantidh, with Plist. Alex. 5.2.1] | See Arrian 4.9.5 neglect of sacrifice to Dionysus |
| 329 BC | River Tanais v. the Scythians | Sacrifice | Danger portended to Alexander. Further sacrifices in Curtius result in a reversal of opinion. In Arrian Alexander falls ill so the prediction comes true | Curt. 7.7.29 with 7.7.22, 23, 29 | Arr. 4.4.3 I iber. 85 |
| 328 BC | River Oasis | Prodigy | A glorious expedition but difficult and toilsome | Arr. 4.15.78 | Plist. Alex. 57.5.9, Strabo 9.7.3, Athen. 42 f., Curtius 7.10.4 |

<p>| 331 BC | River Tigris prior to Cambyses | Interpretation of eclipse and sacrifice to Moon, Sun and Earth | Reasonable to Macedonians, that the battle would take place that month, and sacrifices indicated victory for Alexander | Arr. 3.157) | see Plist. Alex. 31.8, Cl. Cir. De Div. 1.121, Plin. NH 2.180, App. 8.3, Diod. 55.6 |
| 331 BC | Prior to Cambyses | Sacrifice to Jupiter and Minerva Victoria | Gods duly propitiated | Curt. 4.13.15 | Plist. Alex. 31.9 [prayers to Parth FG H 148–Pap. Oxyrh. 1798] |
| 331 BC | Prior to Cambyses | Auspiciation (auspicium) | Prediction: A clear auspice of victory | Curt. 4.15.27 | Plist. Alex. 33.1–2 |
| 331 BC | Persian Gates | Comment: Alex. rejects sacrifices assuming Aristander could do nothing | N/A | Curt. 5.4.2 | |
| 328 B.C. | Cleitus affair | a) Sacrifice Cleitus is followed by three of the sheep he had been preparing to sacrifice. | Interpretation is unfavorable to Cleitus | Plist. Alex. 50.2–4 [plus the seer Kleomantidh, with Plist. Alex. 5.2.1] | See Arrian 4.9.5 neglect of sacrifice to Dionysus |
| 329 BC | River Tanais v. the Scythians | Sacrifice | Danger portended to Alexander. Further sacrifices in Curtius result in a reversal of opinion. In Arrian Alexander falls ill so the prediction comes true | Curt. 7.7.29 with 7.7.22, 23, 29 | Arr. 4.4.3 I iber. 85 |
| 328 BC | River Oasis | Prodigy | A glorious expedition but difficult and toilsome | Arr. 4.15.78 | Plist. Alex. 57.5.9, Strabo 9.7.3, Athen. 42 f., Curtius 7.10.4 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Prodigy</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not known but probably prior to 323 BC</td>
<td>Prodigy (Auspicium in Justin)</td>
<td>Prediction that Lydiamachus would one day be king</td>
<td>Appian, Syriaca 64</td>
<td>Justin 15.3.11-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>323 BC</td>
<td>Divine Inspiration</td>
<td>Arrian suggested that land which had Alexander's body would be most favoured</td>
<td>Aelian, Vari Histiae 12.5.6 (twice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

For further information go to: