

Public Abstract

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Title:NOT ONE, BUT THREE (ROMAN) ALEXANDERS: THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROMAN ACCOUNTS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The narrative accounts of Alexander the Great that exist today are the products of the Roman world, the earliest of which was written close to three hundred years after Alexander's death. Between the first century BCE and the middle of the second century CE, Diodorus, Pompeius Trogus (by way of Justin's *Epitome*), Quintus Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, and Arrian each wrote one or more account of the Macedonian king. During this same time period the Roman world underwent significant political upheaval and change as the Roman Republic gave way to monarchy and that monarchy evolved. The accounts of Alexander, particularly in how the authors portrayed Alexander's kingship, evolved parallel to these changes in the Roman world.

I conducted a close reading of the accounts of Alexander's reign and teased out anecdotes, stories and other portions of the narrative in which the authors presented Alexander in a particular way. I then connected each portrayal of Alexander with authorial bias and the contemporary political world in which that account came. The result is that there is an evolution from Diodorus writing during the late Roman Republic when Roman autocracy did not actually exist, to Trogus and Curtius during the early Principate when Romans had to grapple with the newly established monarchy, and Plutarch and Arrian writing during the early second century CE when emperors were expected.

There are two implications for these findings. First, I demonstrate the extent to which the Roman world shaped and co-opted the Alexander myth. The authors who wrote these works were presentist and thus their own opinions (both personal and cultural) about ideas of monarchy and orientalism and decadence came into play. The second implication is that I point out pitfalls in ancient history simply based on the available sources. It is entirely possible that these Roman sources that I analyzed, which, in turn, were based on earlier sources that we cannot similarly scrutinize because they are only fragmentary, are as close to the historical Alexander as we can actually get.