

Munding, Márta

Alexander and the Amazon queen

Graeco-Latina Brunensia. 2011, vol. 16, iss. 2, pp. [125]-142

ISSN 1803-7402 (print); ISSN 2336-4424 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/118192>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

MÁRTA MUNDING (UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED)

ALEXANDER AND THE AMAZON QUEEN¹

The story of Alexander's encounter with the Amazon queen called Thalestris, Talestria or Minythyia appears in all our main Alexander sources except the Metz Epitome. Certain authors represent this story without comment on the historicity, whereas others, adopting a sceptical view, list the earliest Alexander historians who accept or doubt the authenticity of this tale. Moreover, Arrian, who is doubtful about the existence of Amazons tries to explain the legend of Alexander's meeting with the warrior women. The above-mentioned tale has been examined from many points of view: first of all scholars have examined from which sources the story could have been taken; how it can be interpreted; or why this mythological story appears in a historical context. My paper naturally cannot avoid commenting on the earlier and recent results. However, the aim of the lecture is to examine if any differences could be found between the descriptions given by Alexander historians, to be more precise, whether the extant sources follow the earlier literary and mythological tradition about the Amazons or in certain cases use modification and insertion due to their authorial intention.

Key words: Alexander; Amazon queen; Thalestris; Thallestris; Talestria; Minythyia; Atropates; Pharasmanes; Diodorus; Justin; Strabo; Curtius Rufus; Plutarch; Arrian; literary *topos*; *mythopoiesis*; historicity; moral intention; criticism of Alexander's orientalism; clemency; moderation; self-restraint.

In the distant past of the mythological tradition many heroes, among them Heracles, Theseus, Bellerophon and Achilles came face to face with the Amazons. The result of these battles was without exception the defeat of the warrior women and the death of their queen. These marvellous women, who were equal to men by the reason of their deeds and strength appeared in the mythological past, as well as in historical times, namely in Alexander's age, since all major Alexander sources, except the *Metz Epitome*² mention the story of the king's encounter with the Amazons or his

¹ This article was written and the research behind it carried out with the help of the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA) Grant NK 81502.

² On the reason of the omission, cf. BAYNHAM, ELIZABETH. 2001. "Alexander and

supposed liaison with their queen. However, as there are many divergences in the narration, the location and the date of this encounter in the surviving descriptions, it is impossible to determine the primary sources followed by the extant historians and to show the authors' characteristic modifications and alterations due to their authorial intentions. Scholars soon observed these contradictions, so after research on the problem of the extant authors' adaptation of their source material they tried to answer the following questions: Why does this mythological story appear in a historical context? Can we trace the description of the meeting between Alexander and the Amazon queen back to real historical facts or events?

The credibility of the Amazon queen's visit was doubted even in Antiquity. This is supported by the fact that some authors criticized the historicity of the details of this story. However, it is important to highlight that despite their scepticism, all of the surviving authors accepted the existence of the Amazons. The criticism of the writers concerned only the appearance of the warrior women in Alexander's time. For this reason, they suggested that the story of Alexander's liaison with their queen was nonsense, incredible or fictitious.

Diodorus³, Curtius Rufus⁴ and Justin⁵ describe the queen's visit similarly, stating that in 330/329 BC an Amazon ruler⁶ called Thalestris,⁷ Thallestris,⁸ Minythyia⁹ with her three hundred fully armed women visited Alexander in Hyrcania with the aim of having a child by him. The Macedonian king fulfilled her request and spent 13 days with her, then he went on his way. In the works of Diodorus and Curtius Rufus there is no mention of what happened to Thalestris; Justin mentions that the queen died with her Amazonian race shortly after the arrival in her kingdom.¹⁰ On the grounds of the similarity of these descriptions, the general agreement is that all three authors can most likely be traced back to a common source,

the Amazons." *Classical Quarterly*, 51, 115: '...here (*Metz Epitome*) we cannot be completely sure that they were not in the original text, but were mentioned just before the point where our extant text begins, or were edited out in some stage of the *epitome's* compilation.'

3 Diod. 17.77.1–3.

4 Curt. 6.5.24–32.

5 Just. 12.3.5–7. Cf. Just. 2.4.33, 42.3.7.

6 Curt. 6.5.25, Just. 12.3.5 called her 'regina', Diod. 17.77.1 'βασιλισσα'.

7 Curt. 6.5.25, 6.5.29.

8 Diod. 17.77.1.

9 Just. 12.3.5: 'Ibi ei occurrit Thalestris sive Minythyia...'

10 Just. 2.4.33.

probably Cleitarchus.¹¹ The proof of this thesis is the sameness of the queen's name, the location and the figures (300 armed women, 13 days). It is probable in view of Justin's description, that Trogus had taken the variant of the queen's name, Minythyia¹² and the duration of the Amazons' travel, 35 days from another source or sources.¹³ Moreover, due to the chronological sequence between the primary sources, Cleitarchus is thought to have made use of either Onesicritus¹⁴ or Polycleitus¹⁵ for the description of the Amazon visit, so we can believe that he modified and supplemented the original story because of his intention. For this reason, the surviving episode in the works of Diodorus, Curtius and Justin could be the result of modification by Cleitarchus.

-
- ¹¹ RÜEGG, AUGUST. 1906. *Beiträge zur Erforschung der Quellenverhältnisse in der Alexandergeschichte des Curtius*. Basel: E. Birkhäuser, 84; HAMMOND, NICHOLAS G. L. 1983. *Three Historians of Alexander the Great. The so-called Vulgate authors, Diodorus, Justin and Curtius*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 59, 102, 104, 135, 137; HAMMOND, NICHOLAS G. L. 1993. *Sources for Alexander the Great: An Analysis of Plutarch's Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 294; STEWART, ANDREW. 1993. *Faces of power. Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 16. n. 30; E. BAYNHAM (2001: 116).
- ¹² Cf. TARN, WILLIAM W. 1948. *Alexander the Great*. Vol. II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 125; N. G. L. HAMMOND (1983: 102); HECKEL, WALDEMAR – YARDLEY, JOHN C. 1997. *Justin. Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus Books 11–12: Alexander the Great*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 200–201: 'Trogus appears to have added the variant Minythyia from another source (cf. Justin 2.4.33, where Minythyia appears with Thalestris as the variant; Oros. 3. 18. 5 has 'Halestris and Minothea'; cf. Tarn ii.125); E. BAYNHAM (2001: 116. n. 10).
- ¹³ ATKINSON, JOHN E. 1994. *A commentary on Q. Curtius Rufus' Historiae Alexandri Magni Books 5 to 7,2*. Vol. II. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 197–198. Cf. also: E. BAYNHAM (2001: 116. n. 10).
- ¹⁴ PÉDECH, PAUL 1984. *Historiens Compagnons d'Alexandre. Callisthène, Onésicrite, Néarque, Ptolémée, Aristobule*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 87–89. Cf. J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 198); BOSWORTH, ALBERT B. 1995. *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander*. Vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 103: 'Onesicritus (FGrH 134 F 1) was probably the first to identify them with the Amazons of the Thermodon, and Cleitarchus followed the tradition, as did numerous later writers.' Cf. E. BAYNHAM (2001: 119).
- ¹⁵ In Mederer and Tarn's view the source would be either Polycleitos or Onesicritus. Cf. MEDERER, ERWIN. 1936. *Die Alexanderlegenden bei den ältesten Alexanderhistorikern*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 84; W. W. TARN (1948: 328); PEARSON, LIONEL. 1960. *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*. Philadelphia: American Philological Association, 93. n. 40: 'Tarn, Alex. II 328, thinks that either Polycleitus or Onesicritus actually originated the Amazon story; it comes most appropriately in a writer who stressed the resemblance of Alexander to Heracles.'

Unlike the three authors, Strabo doubts the historicity of the Amazon myth. He found it unbelievable that an army, city or tribe of women could ever be organized without men, and not only be organized but even attack other peoples.¹⁶ Strabo, in his own version of the Amazon tale, says that the most reliable historians had not mentioned the encounter between Alexander and Talestria, and there were many differences in the accounts of those who had.¹⁷ He refers to Cleitarchus in order to stress his erroneous geography, because, according to this primary source, the distance from the Caspian Gate to Thermodon was less than six thousand stadia.¹⁸ By pointing out Cleitarchus' geographical error Strabo intended to refute the historicity of the Amazon story.¹⁹ The general agreement is that Strabo's description is based on Eratosthenes due to the comment on the geographical data.²⁰

Like Strabo, Plutarch discusses the credibility of the episode,²¹ for this reason he names five authors, Cleitarchus, Polycleitus, Onesicritus, Antigenes and Ister who mentioned the story and then he lists those who asserted it to be a *plasma* or a fiction: Aristobulus, Chares, Hecataeus the Eretrian, Ptolemy, Anticlidus, Philo the Theban, Philip of Theangelia, Philip the Chalcidian and Duris the Samian. However, we must be cautious about Plutarch's list including 9 authors, because it is not clear whether these writers he mentioned had rejected this tale as fiction or whether they had simply omitted it. Baynham states that certain evidence supports the latter possibility. In this case, the expression *plasma* would be merely the opinion of Plutarch,²² who attests disbelief in the Amazon tale by referring

¹⁶ Str. *Geo.* 11. 5. 3. (C 504).

¹⁷ Str. *Geo.* 11. 5. 4. (C 505).

¹⁸ Jacoby tried to rationalise the error in the passage, saying: JACOBY, FELIX. 1921. "Kleitarchos" In PAULY, AUGUST F. – WISSOWA, GEORG – KROLL, WILHELM [HRSG.]. *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart: Metlerscher, J. B. XI. Bd.1. 649: 'Der Kritiker scheint vielmehr den Ausgang des Amazonenzuges, das Land zwischen Phasis und Thermodon, mit der Stelle ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρων τῆς Ὑρκανίας zu verwechseln, wo Thalestris die Masse ihres Heeres zurückläßt (D 77)'. However, Tarn rejects Jacoby's attempt, cf. W. W. TARN (1948: 329). See, L. PEARSON (1960: 214–215. n. 14); J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 197).

¹⁹ E. BAYNHAM (2001: 117).

²⁰ E. BAYNHAM (2001: 118): 'The parallel between Plutarch and Strabo is quite striking... We do not know the authors whom Strabo considered trustworthy, but since he followed Eratosthenes in considering that Cleitarchus was unreliable, it is possible that Eratosthenes himself may have originally given a similar compilation to Plutarch's list.'

²¹ Plut. *Alex.* 46.1–5.

²² Her suggestion is based on the passage of Arr. *An.* 7. 13. 3. Baynham suggests that if

to a letter of Alexander to Antipater. In this letter Alexander declares that the Scythian king offered him his daughter in marriage, but he does not mention the Amazon's visit. In addition, Plutarch makes reference to the amused reaction of Lysimachus to Onesicritus' reading about the Amazons. In modern times there is a general debate about Plutarch's adaption of his source material, because scholars have suggested that he did not use or know all the authors he mentioned. Powell argues that the source of the list in Plutarch's description is 'an encyclopaedic work',²³ but according to others he took the names of writers from a monograph on the Amazons²⁴ and he could have supplemented it, of course, with the authors he had read.²⁵ In addition, Atkinson believes that Plutarch's account comes from Onesicritus – either directly or indirectly – since the author finishes the section with a reference to the primary historian's reading.²⁶ However, according to Bosworth Plutarch's list may be traced back to Eratosthenes due to the disbelief in the Amazon tale.²⁷ We can see that on the ground of Plutarch's description it is impossible to identify unambiguously the original source

Aristobulus or Ptolemy had written in their works that the Amazon tale was nonsense or fiction, Arrian would have stated so, cf. E. BAYNHAM (2001: 118).

- 23 In Powell's opinion Plutarch's account here is taken from two sources: one of them is the collection of the letters attributed to Alexandros and the other is a '*variorum source book*'. Powell defines this source book: '*an encyclopaedic work in which the divergent versions of each successive event in a large number of historians of Alexander were collected and registered...*', cf. POWELL, JOHN E. 1939. "The sources of Plutarch's Alexander." *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 59, 229–240.
- 24 See, W. W. TARN (1948: 308–309). Baynham rejected Powell's as well as Tarn's thesis, and she remarks on Plutarch's adaptation of his source material: E. BAYNHAM (2001: 118): '*Since we know virtually nothing about the last four authors whom Plutarch cites, we cannot be certain that they all pre-dated Eratosthenes; it is possible that Plutarch may have also known the latter's work and supplemented it with some additional esoteric names.*'
- 25 HAMILTON, J. R. 1969. *Plutarch Alexander: A commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 124. Hamilton in his same work followed the suggestion of Gutschmid, who states that Plutarch's source could be Ister. See also GUTSCHMID, ALFRED VON. 1894. "Die beiden ersten Bücher des Pompejus Trogus." In RÜHL, FRANTZ [HRSG.]. *Kleine Schriften von Alfred von Gutschmid*. Bd. 5 Leipzig: Teubner, 155–157.
- 26 J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 198). According to Atkinson in consequence of the Orexartes' form it is possible that the mediatory authority for Plutarch's description was Aristobulus, cf. 198: '*...(possibly Aristobulus, since Plut. uses his spelling for the Jaxartes, Orexartes at 45,6, with Hamilton's commentary.)*'
- 27 A. B. BOSWORTH (1995: 103) and BOSWORTH, ALBERT B. 1996. *Alexander and the East. The Tragedy of Triumph*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 81. n. 1: '*This famous story was denounced in antiquity as a fiction (Plut. Al. 46. 1–2; Strabo n. 5. 4. (505), both probably derived from Eratosthenes.)*'

or sources followed by the biographer, so all of the above-mentioned possibilities could be acceptable and more and less reliable.

Moreover, the location of this episode seems to be problematic, because it is unclear whether the ‘here’ (ἐνταῦθα) at the beginning of the Amazon episode refers back to the country beyond Oresartes/Jaxartes²⁸ at the end of the preceding chapter or to the place at the beginning of chapter 44.²⁹ According to the latter suggestion Plutarch, like the source followed by Diodorus, Curtius and Justin could have placed the encounter in Hyrcania. In addition, the chronology of this tale is dubious,³⁰ since Plutarch mentions three events, the Amazon queen’s visit, the Scythian marriage proposal and Lysimachus’ reaction, events which happened at three different times. However, the biographer’s intention is clear, since omitting chronological sequence, he mentions three various events placed in different places, in order to demonstrate that the Amazon story was nonsense and non-historical. For this reason he wanted to show that the visit of Thalestris did not happen at all.³¹

Arrian wrote two episodes concerning Amazons.³² We know from the first episode³³ located in Bactra that in 329/8 Scythian envoys came to Alexander saying that the Scythian King wished to give Alexander his daughter in marriage. At the same time Pharasmanes, the ruler of Chorasmia also came to Alexander and declared that his territory neighboured that of the Colchian peoples and the Amazons and he offered his services to the Macedonian king in a campaign against these tribes. Alexander courteously refused the Scythian bride and he replied to Pharasmanes that the time was not convenient for him to make an expedition to the Black Sea.³⁴ In the

²⁸ Plut. *Alex.* 45.6, cf. JACOBY, FELIX. 1929. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin: Weidmannsche, 746. F15; W. W. TARN (1948: 328–329); L. PEARSON (1960: 77); J. R. HAMILTON (1969: 123).

²⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 44.1, cf. GISINGER, F. “Polykleitos.” In PAULY, AUGUST F. – WISSOWA, GEORG – KROLL, WILHELM [HRSG.]: *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart: Metzlerscher, J. B. XXI. Bd. II., 1905; WELLES, CHARLES B. 1963. *Diodorus of Sicily*. Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 338. n. 2; W. HECKEL – J. C. YARDLEY (1997: 200); E. BAYNHAM (2001: 119–120).

³⁰ See, E. BAYNHAM (2001: 119).

³¹ W. HECKEL – J. C. YARDLEY (1997: 200); E. BAYNHAM (2001: 119–120).

³² Arr. *Peripl.* 15.3, Arr. *Bithyn.* F. 48–51. See E. BAYNHAM (2001: 119): ‘In some of his other works he merely refers to the regions where the Amazons were supposed to have lived.’

³³ Arr. *An.* 4.15.1–6.

³⁴ On the plans of Pharasmanes and Alexander, see GREEN, PETER 1974. *Alexander*

second episode³⁵ Atropates, the satrap of the Medes in Ecbatana in 324 BC, presented Alexander with a hundred female warriors dressed as Amazons. However, the Macedonian king sent the women away from the army and sent a message to their queen, saying that he would visit her to impregnate her. At the end of the passage, Arrian mentions that in his view these Amazons were some foreign women thought to ride and dress like Amazons with the traditional equipment.³⁶ Tarn believes that Alexander sent the women away from the army, since he did not consider them either real Amazons or true soldiers.³⁷ Baynham, accepting Tarn's point of view, suggests another possibility. According to her Alexander's alleged liaison with the Amazon queen would be well known at the time of Atropates' episode. For this reason, Alexander sent away the women because he could not have wanted his marshals and troops to share in a privilege with him.³⁸ Moreover, Baynham tried to clarify the question, why were a hundred women intentionally dressed as Amazons. According to her it is possible that Atropates with a group of the female warriors wanted to divert Alexander's attention from his omission in his satrapy³⁹ or to entertain him, since as she says '*the presentation of the Amazons may have been part of the festive atmosphere*'.⁴⁰

of Macedon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 359; BOSWORTH, ALBERT B. 1988a. *Conquest and Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (in Hungarian translation: Nagy Sándor. *A hódító és birodalma*. Budapest, 2002, 165–166); A. B. BOSWORTH (1995: 106–107); A. B. BOSWORTH (1996: 81–83), particularly 81: '*He (Pharmanes) was envisaging Macedonian subjugation of his neighbours, a process from which he, the conqueror's ally, could only benefit. To that end he provided information which would attract Alexander's interest, and tailored his report to Greek interests.*'

35 Arr. An. 7.13.2–6.

36 Arr. An. 7.13. 6.

37 W. W. TARN (1948: 329–330).

38 E. BAYNHAM (2001: 121).

39 Baynham argues that Atropates could not have taken care of the Persian royal horse herds, see E. BAYNHAM (2001:121): '*Arrian's preceding context provides us with some plausible reasons for Atropates' elaborate presentation of a group of attractive women warriors. While Alexander was en route from Opis to Ecbatana, he passed through the Nesaeian plain, where the Persian royal horse herds, formerly consisting of 150,000 pure-bred mares, had been so seriously depleted by brigandage during the king's absence that they were now down to about a third of the original number. Since they were pastured in Atropates' satrapy, they would have been his responsibility.*'

40 Cf. E. BAYNHAM (2001:121): '*The Amazon charade could well have been a ploy to distract Alexander's attention or to amuse him: on his return to Carmania, the king had been ruthless in executing satraps and subordinates whom he had decided had abused their power when he was away. But it is also possible that the display was calculated merely for entertainment. Alexander himself held lavish games, theatrical*

It is important to analyze the two stories of Arrian separately, since neither of them contains a reference to the other.⁴¹ Curtius Rufus⁴² as well as Arrian mentions the Scythian marriage offer in a different version and context, since he places the events in Maracanda, and names Phrataphernes as the ruler and omits any references to the Amazons. The reason for the divergences is clear, so it seems probable that Arrian and Curtius worked up the story from different authors.⁴³ Arrian's source regarding the Pharasmanes tale is usually said to be Aristobulus,⁴⁴ but Bosworth's opinion seems to be reliable, so the story could be derived from either of his major sources.⁴⁵ Similarly, it is impossible to determine with complete certainty the sources of the Atropates episode. Arrian states that neither Aristobulus nor Ptolemy nor any other reliable authors recorded this story,⁴⁶ so we can merely say the same as him about the identification of the sources. There is

shows, and parties at Ecbatana and the presentation of the make-believe Amazons may have been part of the festive atmosphere.'

41 BOSWORTH, ALBERT B. 1988b. *From Arrian to Alexander. Studies in Historical Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 66. n. 28.

42 Curt. 8.1.7–10.

43 A. B. BOSWORTH (1995: 102): *'There is no obvious reason for the transference of location, and it is more plausible that Cleitarchus gave two separate reports, one of the visit of the Amazon queen in Hyrcania and the other the marriage proposal of 328.'*

44 SCHWARTZ, EDUARD. 1895. "Aristobulos." In PAULY, AUGUST F. – WISSOWA, GEORG – KROLL, WILHELM [HRSG.]. *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart: Metzlerscher, II Bd. 1, 913; F. JACOBY (1929: 777 F28); STRASBURGER, HERMANN. 1934. "Ptolemaios und Alexander." In SCHMITTHENNER, W. [HRSG.] *Studien zur Alten Geschichte*. Bd. I. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1982, 127, L. PEARSON (1960: 164–165). Cf. J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 198): *'Pearson (1) 164–5 attributes the Pharasmanes story in A. iv, 15.4 to Aristobulus, who, in rejecting the story of a meeting between Alexander and Thalestris, worked up his own theory about the lines of communication between the Black Sea and the Oxus, while leaving the Amazons in their traditional territory.'*

45 A. B. BOSWORTH (1988b: 66. n. 25); A. B. BOSWORTH (1995: 101).

46 BRUNT, PETER A. 1983. *Arrian. History of Alexander and Indica*. Vol. 2. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, App. 21, 493–495, particularly 494–495: *'Curiously, he never alludes to the more famous story (P. 46) of the visit paid to Al. by the queen of the Amazons. It was denied by Pt. and Ar. expressly (P. 46, which need not be doubted, contra Hamilton ad loc.). By contrast, they merely ignored the story he alone purveys. This is not surprising. It was evidently of late origin. The Amazons are brought by the satrap of Media: they cannot then come from the Thermodon region, but perhaps from near the S. E. angle of the Caspian, in his satrapy, rather than Daghestan. The story must have been invented after they had been transposed from the region where Clitarchus' generation still placed them. Once again A. is using a late version of the vulgate.'*

an important difference between the two passages, because Arrian records the Pharasmanes story without comments, however, within the context of the Atropates episode, he states that these were foreign, barbarian women, not true Amazons and they were intentionally dressed as female warriors. The historian uses the latter tale as a background for the digression on the historicity of the Amazons.⁴⁷ He thinks that the race of warrior women did not survive to the age of Alexander, otherwise Xenophon could have made reference to them in his work.⁴⁸ However, Arrian did not deny the existence of the Amazons, he merely doubts that they could have appeared in Alexander's time.

Having illustrated the various descriptions and the problem of source adaptation of the extant authors, we must address the following questions: Why does this mythological story doubted even in antiquity come into a historical context or can we trace the Amazon episode back to a real historical background? Naturally, there were numerous attempts to explain the reasons and the motivations of the presentation. Some believe that the basis of this tale is a real historical fact, so it is possible that it was inspired by the Atropates⁴⁹ or the Pharasmanes story and the Scythian marriage offer.⁵⁰ Others think that the story may have arisen from the visit of a native

⁴⁷ A. B. BOSWORTH (1988b: 65): '*This subject-matter was probably selected to provide a peg for the digression, which was hardly Arrian's own conception. There was a general debate about the historicity of the Amazons, most trenchantly expressed by Strabo, who ridiculed the whole concept of a community exclusively composed of females.*'; and 67. Contra BAYNHAM, ELIZABETH. 1998. *Alexander the Great: The Unique History of Quintus Curtius*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 170: '*The description of the display suggests the decorative rather than the authentic, and the display was likely deliberately calculated for sexual titillation, as well as flattery.*'

⁴⁸ Xen. *An.* 4.4.16. Cf. E. BAYNHAM (2001: 121–122).

⁴⁹ BERVE, HELMUT. 1926. *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage*. 2 vols. Munich: Beck, 419. n. 26; E. MEDERER (1936: 90–91); BADIAN, ERNST. 1985. "Alexander in Iran." In GERSHEVITCH, I. [ED.]. *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 484. n. 2; J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 198–199); E. BAYNHAM (2001: 122); HECKEL, WALDEMAR. 2006. *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great. Prosopography of Alexander's Empire*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 61. See, OGDEN, DANIEL. 2009. "Alexander's Sex Life." In HECKEL, WALDEMAR – TRITLE, LAWRENCE A. [EDS.]. *Alexander the Great. A New History*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, 210: '*So, for all that Alexander had progressed far beyond the Amazons' traditional homeland of Themiscyra, adjacent to the Thermodon, the generation of the notion that he came to encounter Amazons themselves, whatever its historical starting point (Atropates?) was in striking defiance of a great weight of established tradition.*'

⁵⁰ W. W. TARN (1948: 327–328); E. MEDERER (1936: 92); TYRELL, WILLIAM, BL. 1984.

princess, who came with her female warriors to Alexander in Hyrcania.⁵¹ One of the primary sources, probably Onesicritus, was the first to identify these women with the Amazons. Numerous authors later followed and developed the description of Onesicritus, so the result of their modification is the Thalestris visit known from the version of Diodorus, Curtius and Justin. The possibility that the background of the episode is a real historical fact cannot be excluded, so all of the previous solutions seemed to be reliable and acceptable. Beside these suggestions most scholars say that the Thalestris story could be the result of a contemporary *mythopoiesis*. In this case Alexander had to have a meeting with the Amazons, as his mythical predecessors, both Heracles and Achilles had had one.⁵² It is right that the two Greek heroes and apart from them Theseus and Bellerophon had encounters with the Amazons. The end of these clashes was the defeat of this female warriors and the death of their queen. In the Thalestris tale there is no reference to the battle between Alexander and the Amazons, instead to the meeting of the greatest of all men and the best of all women.⁵³ Moreover, the queen returned unharmed to her own kingdom with her entourage. Baynham suggests, on the basis of the peaceful encounter between Alexander and the queen, that this story is a symbol of the reconciliation between the vanquished and the victors, in other words she thinks that this tale may be a part of the so-called “*Verschmelzungspolitik*” or “*policy of fusion*”.⁵⁴ However, this opinion is uncertain in consequence of the context and the terminology of Curtius’ description. According to Daumas, Alexander accomplished a glorious act by defeating the Amazon queen identified with his Asian conquest. However, the conqueror was defeated since Alexander

Amazons. A Study in Athenian Mythmaking. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 24; E. BAYNHAM (2001: 122).

- ⁵¹ H. BERVE (1926: 419. n. 26); L. PEARSON (1960: 13); A. B. BOSWORTH (1996: 81. n. 56 and 81. n. 58): ‘Again we may have a superimposition of ‘Amazon theory’ by Greeks predisposed to view all female warriors as Amazons. Something very similar took place in Pompey’s much later Albanian campaign (App. Mithr. 103. 482–483; Plut. Pomp. 35. 5–6; cf. Theophanes, FGrH 188 F 4).’
- ⁵² E. MEDERER (1936: 91–92); DOWDEN, KEN. 1997. “The Amazons: development and functions.” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 140, 114; E. BAYNHAM (2001: 122); DEMANDT, ALEXANDER. 2009. *Alexander der Grosse: Leben und Legende*. München: C. H. Beck, 233.
- ⁵³ Cf. E. BAYNHAM (2001: 123).
- ⁵⁴ E. BAYNHAM (2001: 124–126) particularly 126: ‘On the contrary, by dint of her very identity as a powerful icon to the Greeks, she became an early romantic expression of an aspiration, namely reconciliation between the conquerors and the barbarians (or rather, those who were deemed worthy) that was to prove equally fleeting and illusory.’

comes under the influence of Thalestris, who is the symbol of barbarism, so the Macedonian king's behaviour becomes increasingly barbarian and oriental.⁵⁵ In other words, the aim of the story is a warning to the Greeks about the oriental dangers. However, his opinion is based merely on the three authors who followed Cleitarchus (or Onesicritus) as source with reservations, for it is not in harmony with the accounts of Diodorus and Justin which omit negative expressions and comment. All the above-mentioned possibilities are acceptable and applicable to some degree, but they are not applicable to all our sources' description and do not explain why the Amazons appeared in the historical tradition on Alexander. It seems to me that we have to consider a simpler and general possibility to answer the question on the insertion of the Amazon tale into a historical context. In the Greek concept the Amazons symbolized the others, foreigners, later the barbarians and the Persians, for this reason it is possible to imagine that this motif could be merely a literary *topos*. Moreover, the appearance of the Amazons is not surprising in historical works about an expedition against the Persians. If we examine the narration of the Alexander historians in more detail, we can see that the motifs of the Amazon or Thalestris story may be based on the earlier literary works or on the mythological traditions. I would like to illustrate this with the Alexander historians' description of the traditional localization, the social customs, the physical appearance and the equipment of the Amazons. According to Tarn the purpose of the Amazon queen's visit was the same as the motivation of the queen of Sheba, when she decided to visit Solomon.⁵⁶ Baynham compares the motif to the act of Epyaxa of Cilicia in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.⁵⁷ Tarn's opinion seems to be reliable, while Baynham's view is more applicable to another episode in the historical traditions on Alexander, namely the accounts of an alleged liaison between Alexander and Cleophis.⁵⁸ The reference to the amorous liaison

⁵⁵ DAUMAS, MICHÈLE. 1992. "Alexandre et la reine des Amazones." *Revue des Etudes Anciennes*, 94, 352–354. Contra E. BAYNHAM (2001: 126).

⁵⁶ W. W. TARN (1948: 323): 'Even in antiquity no responsible writer believed that a mythical Queen of the Amazons (see App. 19) visited him for the same purpose for which the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon...'

⁵⁷ E. BAYNHAM (2001: 117. n. 14): 'See Tarn (n. 2), 2.323. According to Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.2.12, another queen, Epyaxa of Cilicia, was rumoured to have had sexual intercourse with Cyrus the Younger in order to keep his favour, while her husband cultivated Cyrus' opponent, his brother Artaxerxes.'

⁵⁸ Cf. Curt. 8.10.35–36: 'Ipsa genibus regis parvo filio admoto non veniam modo, sed etiam pristinae fortunae inpetravit decus: quippe appellata regina est. Et credere quidam plus formae quam miserationi datum: puero quoque certe postea ex ea utcumque genito Alexandro fuit nomen.', Iust. 12.7. 9–11: 'Quae cum se dedidisset

between the king and the Amazon queen is justified by the other, charming and dangerously delightful aspect of the warrior women. The representation of the relationship may be taken from the description of Achilles' love for dead Penthesileia⁵⁹ or even more of Theseus and Antiope/Hippolyte/Melanippe's marriage⁶⁰ and of their son, Hippolytos. The appearance of the Amazons could be a compulsory literary *topos* which would be inspired by Alexander's emulation of his mythical ancestors or the warrior women's identification with the Persians or the place of the historical events close to the Amazons' traditional localization.

As we have mentioned above, Diodorus, Curtius and Justin shared a source, but, in spite of similarities, there are many differences between their accounts. Modern scholars have concentrated on these discrepancies only partially or not at all. The quite pictorial description given by Curtius reflects the classical Amazon image⁶¹ regarding the dress, then in accordance with the folk etymology he, like Diodorus and Justin mentions that these warrior women cauterised their right breast so that it would not be a hindrance when drawing a bow or throwing a spear.⁶² Curtius describes some extra details in his account so we shall examine the reason for his insertion

ei, concubitu redemptum regnum ab Alexandro recepit, inlecebris consecuta, quod armis non poterat; filiumque ab eo genitum Alexandrum nominavit, qui postea regno Indorum potitus est.'

- ⁵⁹ Apoll. *Epit.* 5. 1, Quin. Smyr. *Posthom.* 1. 659–674, Ark. *Aeth.* F1=Prok. *Chrest.* 2. See in similar sense BREMER, JAN M. 2000. "The Amazons in the imagination of the Greeks." *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 40, 54: 'It is in the context of Achilles and Penthesileia that for the first time something erotic is introduced...'. In the footnote, see 'In this context it is not surprising that half a millennium later, when Alexander of Macedonia had become greater than all Greek heroes before him, a story developed according to which Alexander, when he came into contact with an army of 100 well-trained Amazons commanded by a queen Thalestris, suggested to the queen that the two of them would get together and procreate an excellent progeny...'
- ⁶⁰ Apoll. *Epit.* 1.16–17, Diod. 4.28.3, Plut. *Thes.* 27, Paus. *Descr. Grae.* 1.2.1, Iust. 2.4.23–24.
- ⁶¹ Curt. 6.5.27–28, cf. J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 200): 'Curtius' description of Amazon dress reflects the classical image established c. 440 BC, when Pheidias created his Amazon leaning on a spear (*Lucian imagines* 4). For a comprehensive analysis of the Amazon iconography: BOTHMER, DIETRICH VON. 1957. *Amazons in Greek Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; DEVAMBEZ, P. – KAUFFMANN-SAMARAS, A. 1981. "Amazones." In BALTY, J. CH. [ED.] *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zürich: Artemis, Vol. 1., 1981, 586–668; J. M. BREMER (2000: 51–59).
- ⁶² Curt. 6.5.28, cf. W. HECKEL – J. C. YARDLEY (1997: 201): 'Trogus (*Justin* 2.4.11) accepted the fanciful etymology of 'Amazon' from Greek word *mazos* (=mastos: 'breast')... For the story that the right breast was cauterized see also Diod. 2. 45. 3; 3. 53. 3; Apollodorus 2. 5. 9; Curt. 6.5. 28; Strabo 11. 5. 1 C504 (*Arr.* 7. 13. 2 says

since there is no trace of it in Diodorus and Justin. Alexander asked Thalestris to undertake military service with him, but she rejected the suggestion saying that she left her kingdom unprotected.⁶³ So far scholars have taken no notice of the significance of this information, however it is worth examining the reason for the insertion. It is possible that this detail may be taken from either of Curtius' primary sources, probably from Cleitarchus. In this case we have to ask why Diodorus and Justin omitted it. The reason for the omission could be their authorial methods and intentions or their brief and more selective narration. However, it is possible that Curtius here omitted Cleitarchus as source and followed another author without naming him. Moreover, it may have been Curtius himself who inserted this account in the appropriate part of his narrative.

If the latter supposition is true we have to ask why Curtius would have fabricated the motif of the alliance with the Amazons. We can suppose on the basis of Thalestris' refusal, that Curtius or his source here wanted to emphasize the queen's royal virtues. This is supported by the fact that Curtius stresses the recognition of Thalestris' royal rank, as she announced her visit through her ambassadors. But there is also another way to interpret the insertion of the alliance motif. It may have been taken from the story of unity between the Trojans and Penthesileia⁶⁴ or between Theseus and Antiope⁶⁵ in the Greek mythological tradition. Let me now turn back to examine in more detail the differences regarding the context and the terminology of the three authors' descriptions. In the representation of Diodorus the best of all men encountered Thalletris who excelled other women in strength, beauty and manly courage.⁶⁶ Alexander was impressed by the arrival and the dignity of the women,⁶⁷ so he granted the queen's request with delight (*ἡσθεῖς*). Justin mentions three references to Alexander's encounter with the Amazon queen.⁶⁸ In his account Thalestris' appearance and the purpose

that the right breast is smaller and exposed in battle).' On the removal, cauterization, atrophying of the right breast see, Hipp. *Aer.* 17, Hell. *FGrH* 3B, 45. Fr. 16.b.

63 Curt. 6. 5. 31.

64 Cf. The list of sources is not intended to be exhaustive: Apoll. *Epit.* 5.1, Prop. 3.11.13–16, Quin. Smyr. *Posthom.* 1.

65 Cf. Diod. 4.28.4, Paus. *Descr. Grae.* 1.2.1, Plut. *The.* 27.

66 Diod. 17.77.3. and Diod. 17.77.1: 'ἦν δὲ τῷ τε κάλλει καὶ τῇ τοῦ σώματος ῥώμῃ διαφέρουσα καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ὁμοθέσει θαυματομένη κατ' ἀνδρείαν, καὶ τὸ μὲν πλῆθος τῆς στρατιᾶς ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρων τῆς Ὑρκανίας ἀπολελοιπυῖα, μετὰ δὲ τριακοσίων Ἀμαζονίδων κεκοσμημένων πολεμικοῖς ὅπλοις παραγενομένη.'

67 Diod. 17.77.2.

68 Just. 2.4.33, 12.3.4–7, 42.3.7.

of her request aroused general surprise, too.⁶⁹ We can interpret in the context only the expression *concupitus* in a negative sense which appeared in all the three references to the Amazons, moreover, in his first book concerning Semiramis.⁷⁰ In spite of this, it is impossible to interpret the noun derogatively since Justin joins it with another expression *admirationi*⁷¹ *omnibus fuit* so he emphasizes Alexander's real admiration. It is justified by the fact that both the Amazons and Semiramis⁷² are represented in a positive way by Justin as admirable and beautiful beings who can perform deeds equivalent to men.

In my view Curtius changes this tradition: Thalestris is a barbarian to him.⁷³ In his description Alexander did not admire the queen, on the contrary Thalestris looked down at him.⁷⁴ The Amazon queen's answer formulated in *oratio obliqua* to the question containing the reason for her coming (*Ceterum interrogata, num aliquid petere vellet, haud dubitavit fateri ad communicandos cum rege liberos*⁷⁵ *se venisse, dignam, ex qua ipse regni generaret heredes: feminini sexus se retenturam, marem reddituram patri*.)⁷⁶ can be compared with the more detailed accounts of Diodorus (τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως θαυμάζοντος τό τε παράδοξον τῆς παρουσίας καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τὴν Θάλληστριν ἐρομένου τίνα χρεῖαν ἔχουσα ἀρεστὴν, ἀπεφαίνετο παιδοποιίας ἕνεκεν ἤκειν. ἐκείνων μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἀπάντων ἀνδρῶν διὰ τὰς πράξεις ἄριστον ὑπάρχειν, αὐτὴν δὲ τῶν γυναικῶν ἀλκῇ τε καὶ ἀνδρεία διαφέρειν· εἰκὸς οὖν

⁶⁹ Just. 12. 3. 6: '*...cuius conspectus adventusque admirationi omnibus fuit et propter insolitum feminis habitum et propter expetitum concubitum.*'

⁷⁰ Just. 1.2.10: '*Ad postremum cum concubitum filii petisset, ab eodem interfecta est, duos et XXX annos post Ninum regno petita.*'

⁷¹ Cf. GLARE, P. G. W. [ED.] *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, 47.

⁷² Just. 1. 2: '*Nec hoc illi dignitatem regni ademit, sed auxit, quod mulier non feminas modo virtute, sed etiam viros anteiret.*'

⁷³ Curt. 6.5.29: '*...quippe omnibus barbaris in corporum maiestate veneratio est...*'

⁷⁴ Curt. 6.5.29: '*Interrito vultu regem Thalestris intuebatur habitum eius haudquaquam rerum famae parem oculis perlustrans...*' On the interpretation of the episode, see E. BAYNHAM (2001: 117. n. 15).

⁷⁵ For the translation of the expression, see CURRIE, HARRY MACL. 1990. "Quintus Curtius Rufus: The Historian as Novelist?" In HOFMANN, HEINZ [ED.]. *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*. Vol. 3. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1990, 72.n.17: '*Curtius makes Thalestris say she had come ad communicandos cum rege liberos ('to share children with the king'), a mild form of expression. In Diodorus (17,77,2) she frankly states: παιδοποιίας ἕνεκεν ('I have come to get pregnant').*'

⁷⁶ Curt. 6.5.30.

τὸ γεννηθῆν ἐκ δυεῖν γονέων πρωτεόντων ὑπερέξειν ἀρετῇ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων.). On the ground of the parallel and similar description of the two authors it seems probable that the queen's reply is taken from the common source. However, with the insertion of one clause (*haud dubitavit fateri*) which is in harmony with the queen's barbarian background Curtius changes the positive and more or less epic message of the description given by Diodorus and perhaps by the original source. This suggestion is supported by the author's other alteration. In his passage, the queen's enthusiasm for the liaison was keener than Alexander's⁷⁷ and she pressed him persistently⁷⁸ to grant her request. The closing of the episode is modified by the historian. We are not able to interpret the *tredecim dies in obsequium desiderii eius absumpti sunt* sentence in a positive way partly on the ground of the meaning of the expression *obsequium*⁷⁹ *desiderii* and the use of the verb *absumo*⁸⁰, partly because of the preceding expressions and the context of the clause. There is no trace of such intentionally selected negative terminology in the descriptions of Diodorus and Justin. The reason for Curtius' modification could be criticism of the moral behaviour of the barbarian women and of Alexander, since this author alone stresses the Amazon queen's barbarian background. As the terminology is not enough to explain the modification, in this case, we have to analyse the context and the structure of the episode. A digression on the deterioration of Alexander's character follows the visit of Thalestris in Curtius' text, which is where Justin⁸¹ and Diodorus⁸² too, comment on the king's orientalism.⁸³ Curtius

77 Curt. 6.5.32. On the interpretation of '*acrior ad venerem feminae cupido*': W. W. TARN (1948: 92–93); J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 200): '*Tarn ii, 92–93 takes this comment as a sign of Curtius' cynical sense of humour, which nearly upsets his purpose in retelling the story, which was to 'put Alexander in a bad light'. But it is not obvious that this anecdote has a pejorative intent. The transition is clearly made at the beginning of the next chapter.*'

78 Curt. 6.5.31: '*...petere perseverabat, ne se inritam spei abire pateretur.*', Curt. 6.5.32: '*Acrior ad venerem feminae cupido quam regis, ut paucos dies subsisteret, perpulit.*'

79 OLD (1968: 1221).

80 OLD (1968: 14); *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Leipzig, Stuttgart: Teubner. 1900, Vol. 1., 220.

81 Just. 12.3.8–4.12. cf. W. HECKEL – J. C. YARDLEY (1997: 203–208).

82 Diod. 17.77.4–17.78.1. Sources regarding the adoption of the Persian dress and practices and the comment on the degeneration of Alexander's behaviour see Plut. *Alex.* 45.1–4, 47.5–6, a more positive version Plut. *Mor.* 329 F sq., Arr. 4.7.4, 4.9.9, ME 1–2.

83 Curt. 6.6.1–12. On the interpretation of the episode, see J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 200–204); E. BAYNHAM (1998: 171): '*Alexander's former continentia and moderatio,*

modifies the account of his source so he introduces innovation: he inserts the presentation of the eunuch called Bagoas before the Amazon tale.⁸⁴ The historian declares that Alexander through the agency of Bagoas pardoned Nabarzanes, one of the murderers of Darius III. The context of this episode and the word (*assuesco*)⁸⁵ refer to the relationship between Alexander and the eunuch which suggests Bagoas' later importance in Curtius' work.⁸⁶ The king's reaction to Bagoas' presentation and Thalestris' appearance contrast with the portrait of Alexander presented by Curtius in his first *pentad*. On the basis of the examination we can state that Curtius' modification may be deliberate. He represents Thalestris as a barbarian woman, so we are not surprised by the negative attitude towards her and by the change of female and male roles in the episode. Since he inserts the introduction of Bagoas

which were outstanding virtues in the highest fortuna, change to superbia and lascivia. By using key words, such as continentia and fortuna, Curtius deliberately reminds us of and reverses the Alexander of 3.12.18–22. Yet his portrait is far more complex than a simple change from king to tyrant: as stated earlier, the inconsistencies of regnum form a major theme of the second pentad.'

- 84 Curt. 6.5.22–23. On the interpretation and the message of the episode, see W. W. TARN (1948: 319–322); BADIAN, ERNST. 1958. "The Eunuch Bagoas. A Study in Method." *Classical Quarterly*, 52, 144–147; GUNDERSON, LLYOLD L. 1982. "Quintus Curtius Rufus: On His Historical Methods in the *Historiae Alexandri*." In ADAMS, WINTHROP L. – BORZA, EUGENE N. [EDS.] *Philip II, Alexander the Great, and the Macedonian Heritage*. Washington: University Press of America, 1982, 177–196, particularly 196: 'Not that the names and events have no reality; there is no need to deny the reality of a Bagoas in Alexander's court. But an examination of the details prove their lack of coherence and that Curtius has constructed a tale with a mere tissue of plausibility... The moralist position (as Badian's), that a general degeneration took place in Alexander, and that an atmosphere of terror prevailed in the last days of his reign, draws on Curtius' fabrication that Bagoas' influence through Alexander's erotic tendencies could secure the deliverance or destruction of important individuals. Curtius' elaboration of the Bagoas episode is the veneer of rhetoric... He is, in fact, the personality necessary to maintain the dramatic interest and tension with which Curtius imbues his history.' On the two episodes regarding Bagoas in Curtius' work (6.5.22–23; 10.1.42), cf. HAMMOND, NICHOLAS G. L. 1980. *Alexander the Great. King, Commander and Statesman*. Park Ridge, New Jersey: Noyes Press, 322. n. 114: 'All this has a sexual and rhetorical colour calculated to suit the taste of Romans who knew their Nero!'. On Hammond's view J. E. ATKINSON (1994: 197): 'But Hammond's immediate concern was to question whether Bagoas really was able to influence Alexander in the way Curtius makes out.'
- 85 OLD (1968: 190): '(w. dat.) To become intimate (with)...sexually ...6.5.23.'; *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Leipzig, Stuttgart: Teubner. 1906, Vol 2: 'mansueferi...scorto: Curt. 6,5,23.'
- 86 Cf. Curt. 10. 1. 22–38. On the interpretation of the description, see YARDLEY, JOHN C. – ATKINSON, JOHN A. 2009. *Curtius Rufus' Histories of Alexander the Great Book 10*. New York: Oxford University Press, 93–99.

and a reference to the eunuch's later importance in front of the Amazon tale we have good reason to suppose that the structure of the episodes and the phraseology, terminology suggest the moral intention of the historian. The representation of the eunuch and the modification of the Amazon tale are an appropriate background to the criticism of Alexander's orientalism.⁸⁷ The two accounts question Alexander's outstanding virtues emphasised both in the first *pentad* and in other sources of the Alexander tradition, and ignore his former *clementia* (clemency) and *continentia* (self-restraint), *moderatio* (moderation) and *iustitia* (justice). Curtius also doubts Alexander's moderation and self-control by reason of the fulfilment of the queen's request and the pardoning of Nabarzanes through Bagoas' agency and he questions Alexander's justice and clemency because the ruler did not avenge Darius' death on Nabarzanes.

To conclude, we can state that the Amazon story appears in almost all our main Alexander sources in various versions. There are many differences regarding the place, the date and the narration of the meeting. The reason for these divergences is first of all the use of sources of the extant historians. Diodorus, Curtius and Justin mention Alexander's encounter with the Amazon queen without comment, but Strabo, Plutarch and Arrian represent a more sceptical point of view. The latter three authors try to rationalize the story or criticize it on the ground of logical argumentation or of a geographical error. The scholars have noted the divergences between the extant sources and the appearance of the Amazon tale in the historical works about Alexander so they first of all intended to answer the question of why and for what reason this mythological episode would have been placed in Alexander's age. Some think that this tale can be traced back to real historical facts or events. In this case the Amazon story may be inspired by the Atropates or by the Pharasmanes story and the Scythian marriage offer or by a native princess's visit with her female warriors. It is also conceivable that this episode is the result of *mythopoiesis*. The background of this thesis is Alexan-

⁸⁷ Cf. E. BAYNHAM (1998: 170): 'However, *Thalestris*, like *Bagoas*, is a barbarian to Curtius; hence an account of Alexander's sexual activities with unusual foreign queens and Persian catamites, although sparingly treated by Curtius, nevertheless provides an appropriate background for the elaboration on Alexander's adoption of Persian customs and its effect on his followers.' For another view in her article about Alexander and the Amazons, see E. BAYNHAM (2001: 126): 'Yet she was not intended as a warning to Alexander about the dangers of unity with orientals, nor as a sign of his moral degeneration.' See, A. DEMANDT (2009:234): 'Der Besuch der Amazone wird in der *Vulgata* mit Alexanders Orientalisierung, seinem Sittenwandel vom griechischen Helden zum orientalischen Despoten verbunden.'

der's constant emulation of his mythical ancestors like Heracles and Achilles. In addition, others interpret the episode symbolically, as a romantic expression of the reconciliation between the conquerors and the barbarians, or on the contrary, as a warning to the Greeks about unity with the orientals. All the above-mentioned possibilities appear more or less justified, however we have to take into consideration a simpler and more general solution in order to be applicable to all our extant sources' description. In my view, the representation of the warrior women is merely a compulsory literary *topos*, which is not possible to omit from a historical work about the Persian campaign because of the identification of the Amazons with the Persians or of the proximity of their traditional regions. Moreover, it seems to be feasible that the reason for their appearance could be Alexander's emulation of his mythical ancestors. It is justified by the fact that every detail of the Amazon tale (the alliance or the amorous motif between Alexander and Thalestris, the purpose of the queen's visit, the warrior women's description or the representation of their social customs and their equipment can be found in earlier literary or mythological traditions. Diodorus, Curtius Rufus and Justin give similar descriptions of Alexander and the Amazon queen's alleged liaison which may be traced back to their common source Cleitarchus (or Onesicritus). However, Curtius Rufus modifies the phraseology and the message of the original source's account. We are not able to explain these modifications and insertions merely by the different use of sources or the more selective and brief descriptions of Diodorus and Justin. Curtius' modification may be deliberate, since the Thalestris and the Bagoas episodes are an appropriate setting for him to criticise Alexander for his adoption of Persian customs principally to cancel the king's former outstanding virtues.