

ZOSIMUS AND ASINIUS QUADRATUS

At 5. 27. 1 of his *New History*, Zosimus affects to weigh up the discrepant views of Olympiodorus of Thebes and Asinius Quadratus on the origins of Ravenna, pronouncing for the latter's opinion. Those few scholars who have studied the matter assert, without demonstration, that this is largely a charade: Zosimus only knew of Quadratus because Olympiodorus himself had adduced him.¹

To the extent that Zosimus does not actually claim to have looked up Quadratus in so many words, the implication is unfair. Given that Olympiodorus set out the views of Quadratus with his customary precision and detail, there need be no issue. Zosimus read both versions in his prime post-Eunapiian source, and awarded the palm to Quadratus. He may have honestly preferred the latter. Or to be cynical (which is usually pardonable in the case of Zosimus), the author of the *New History* wished to obnubilate his dependence upon Olympiodorus by seeming to desert him on a point of objective scholarship.

However, the point deserves investigation for a number of reasons. Analysis of the sources and methods of Zosimus is far from exhausted; Asinius Quadratus is a figure of wider importance vis-à-vis later writers; and there is an outside chance that Zosimus did look him up. Finally, if the traditional view is to be maintained (as I think it should), it requires a firmer foundation than mere assertion.

Asinius Quadratus was a natural source of information for an Olympiodorus. The latter is markedly interested in geographical matters.² It is for such items that Quadratus is almost invariably cited.³ The signal exception is the *Historia Augusta*, where the egregious biographer twice⁴ adduces him as a source for the Parthian campaigns of Verus and Avidius Cassius. This is the earliest extant reference to Quadratus.⁵ It is just possible that it reflects a vogue for his work. Since the *HA* does not so much create fashions as follow them, and since the geographical expertise of Quadratus is not invoked until the fifth and sixth centuries, this may constitute a small argument in favor of the dating of the *HA* to the last decade of the fourth century or later.

The historical span of Quadratus' writings is mentioned by Evagrius (*HE* 5. 24). More pertinent to Zosimus is the case of Agathias of Myrina, who cites Quadratus once (1. 6. 3) on the name of the Alamanni. Agathias' claim to scholarly research, too, is open to doubt.⁶ It serves, however, to reinforce the reputation of Quadratus as a name worth dropping.

Agathias was no polymath. But he could have looked up the odd authority on a matter of particular interest to himself,⁷ if only to lend his work an occasional patina of erudition. Honest work is not automatically precluded by suspect motives.

1. See L. Mendelssohn's Teubner (Leipzig, 1887), ad loc.; F. Jacoby, *FGrHist*, 2C, p. 303; E. A. Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes," *CQ* 38 (1944): 45; J. F. Matthews, "Olympiodorus of Thebes and the History of the West," *JRS* 60 (1970): 88.

2. The point is fully illustrated by Thompson, "Olympiodorus," p. 45.

3. See Jacoby's collection, *FGrHist* 97: the fragments are mostly from Stephanus.

4. *Verus* 8. 1; *Avid. Cass.* 1. 1.

5. Cf. R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (Oxford, 1971), p. 59.

6. The limitations of Agathias are exposed by Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), p. 112.

7. That is the view of Cameron, loc. cit.

Quadratus was to hand, with the added attraction of fashion. All of these points obtain in the case of Zosimus: he too *could* have consulted a source outside Olympiodorus.

But the traditional suspicions are probably well founded. A little after the Ravenna sequence, Zosimus offers (5. 29. 3) one of the very few testimonies to the third-century poet Pisander. In point of fact, it is one of the earliest.⁸ The same material is exploited by Sozomen (*HE* 1. 6. 4), who drew on Olympiodorus for his ninth book in particular.

Olympiodorus would appear to be the common source here. The quick appearance of the Quadratus and Pisander references, one shortly after the other, in that part of Zosimus which is flagrantly derived from Olympiodorus, is suggestive, especially when we consider the rarity of named authorities in the *New History*. Apart from the ones under review, they boil down to: Homer, Herodotus, Polybius, the emperor Julian, and Syrianos the philosopher.⁹ These are more widely dispersed: there is no agglomeration comparable to the one in question. The allusions to Quadratus and Pisander come in the first paragraphs after that point in Book 5 where Zosimus switches from Eunapius to Olympiodorus. The conclusion is obvious and tempting.

And there is one further reinforcement. At 1. 47, Zosimus commences his notorious dependence upon Eunapius. In this very paragraph, he vaguely adduces "certain historians" on the matter of Claudius' brother, Quintillus. In the opening sentence of the *New History*, where one or more elusive¹⁰ sources are being exploited, there is a sloppy evocation of Polybius. A pattern is discernible. Wherever Zosimus begins to use a particular source, there is prompt adducing of authorities followed by long stretches without any such allusions. As a historiographical technique, it is a non-starter. But the assumption that Zosimus begins each major segment with a short-lived reproduction of his sources' sources, with equally swift abandonment thereof, is all too plausible, since it requires nothing more subtle than the plain evidence of his narrative as a whole. The odds against the outside chance lengthen: Olympiodorus remains a firm favorite as the source of Zosimus' knowledge of Asinius Quadratus.

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8. See the *testimonia* assembled (with bibliography) in E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Göttingen, 1964), 2:44–46.

9. Consult the register in the introduction to F. Paschoud's Budé (Paris, 1971), p. xxxvi.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv–lxiii; Dexippus will surely have been a major (if not the sole) source, given his popularity in later times and the fact that Eunapius both admired and continued him.

PROPERTIUS 1. 1 AND CONSTANTINE THE SICILIAN

In the concluding section of an article that has cast much new light on Propertius 1. 1 (*CQ*, n.s. 24 [1974]: 94–110), Francis Cairns has recently compared that poem with a long anacreontic poem by a writer of the early tenth (rather than late ninth) century, Constantine the Sicilian. The first sixty lines describe how the