



ARSITES

ARSITES, Greek rendering of an Old Persian name *Arsita (Babylonian Ar-ri-šit-tu), possibly a diminutive in *-ita* of *Aršan- “man, hero” (Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 31; W. Eilers, *Iranische Beamtennamen in der keilschriftlichen Überlieferung*, Leipzig, 1940, p. 65 n. 3; W. Hinz, *Altiranisches Sprachgut der Nebenüberlieferungen*, Wiesbaden, 1975, pp. 206f. with further references).

1. A son of Artaxerxes I and a Babylonian concubine, Cosmartidene. Arsites contested the sovereignty of his full brother, Darius II, not long after the latter's accession in 423 B.C., and was supported by Prince Artyphius, son of Megabyzus. By hiring Greek (Particularly Milesian) mercenaries, he evidently established a precedent for their interference in Persian dynastic feuds. The rebels probably started in Syria; they won two major battles but lost the third, and when their mercenaries were bribed to desert, they surrendered and were executed (Ctesias, *Persica*, frags. 50-51; D. M. Lewis, *Sparta and Persia*, Leiden, 1977, pp. 79-80). Babylonian documents speak of a prince Arrišittu, and testify that he was still alive in 417 (see Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 24 n. 132 for references). The gap between this date and the revolt of Arsites has led to the denial that they were identical (Eilers, *loc. cit.*), but since two namesake contemporary princes of a single family are unlikely, and since the date of Arsites' death is not certain (Ctesias says that Darius was forced to kill him after resisting Parysatis for a while), the identification is not improbable.

2. A satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia under Darius III. He and other satraps of Asia Minor decided to withstand Alexander on the bank of the river Granicus. In the war council, Memnon of Rhodes, a leading general of the Persian



empire, is said to have proposed a “scorched earth” tactic to deprive the Macedonians of provisions, since “the latter were far superior in infantry, while Alexander was present and Darius was absent on their side.” Arsites reportedly opposed this plan and stated “that he would not suffer one house to be burned belonging to his subjects.” The other Persian commanders supported Arsites (Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.12.8, 10), and indeed, any such strategy “was surely doomed to fail, especially in view of Alexander’s strength in cavalry, unless they (i.e., the Persians) had had enough soldiers to carry it out without local cooperation” (P. A. Brunt, ed., *Arrian*, Loeb Classical Series, Cambridge, Mass., 1976, p. lxxvii.) The battle was won by Alexander, and many Persian leaders lost their lives. Arsites retired into Phrygia, and there took his own life, because, it is said, the Persians blamed him for their failure (Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.16.3; see further Diodorus 17.19.4; Strabo, *Geography* 766; Pausanias 1.29.10; H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage*, Munich, 1926, II).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.

(A. SH. Shahbazi)