



## ARTAXERXES III

---

**ARTAXERXES III**, throne name of Ochus (Gk. Ôchos, Babylonian Ú-ma-kuš, son of Artaxerxes II and Stateira), Achaemenid king (r. 359-58 to 338-37 B.C.). About 361 he took part in a campaign against Egypt, then in rebellion under her king Tachos, and obtained that king's surrender (Georgius Syncellus 1.486.20ff. D.). The fact that the Satraps' Revolt, which he helped put down, was not quite ended may account for the lack of uniformity regarding the date of Artaxerxes' accession. That event is dated to year 390 of the Babylonian Nabonassar era (beginning in November, 359 B.C.), but Polyaeus (7.17) states that he concealed his father's death for 10 months, so that his official reign may only have begun in 358-57. On becoming king, he did away with his brothers, sisters, and other possible rivals (Justin 10.3.1; cf. Curtius Rufus 10.5.23, claiming that 80 brothers were murdered in one day).

Artaxerxes III's objective was to consolidate royal authority and to terminate the revolts which threatened to break up the empire. He seems to have first made war on the rebel Cadusii in Media Atropatene (Justin 10.3.2); in the hard and successful fighting, Codomannus, the later Darius III, distinguished himself (Diodorus 17.6.1; Justin 10.3.3-4). Then a major campaign (ca. 356-52) was directed against such western satraps as Artabazus and Orontes who had rebelled against his father; these were now commanded to dismiss their Greek mercenaries (scholium to Demosthenes 4.19). The reconquest of Egypt was also to be carried through. Details of the campaign are unclear, but some success was achieved. Orontes was subdued, while Artabazus, banished, sought refuge with Philip of Macedonia (Diodorus 16.22.1-2, 34.1-2;



Demosthenes 14.31). With the Satraps' Revolt ended, Persian rule over Asia Minor and Phoenicia was again consolidated. Artaxerxes had acted resolutely; he obtained by threat of war the compliance of Athens, whose general, Chares, had first supported Artabazus (Diodorus 16.34.1). Actual restoration of order was accomplished by the king's generals, especially Mentor of Rhodes, while Artaxerxes was preoccupied with Egypt (Ps.-Aristoteles, *Oeconomica* 2.2.28; Diodorus 16.52.1-8). For the generals' campaign against Egypt had failed; and before the king's massive new preparations were completed, a new revolt broke out in Syria, Phoenicia, and Cyprus in 351 which was aided by the Egyptian King Nectanebus. The rebels, led by Tennes of Sidon, were fought with indifferent success (Diodorus 16.40.5-42.9) by Idrieus (satrap of Caria), Mazaesus (of Cilicia), and Belesys (of Syria). Artaxerxes then led a large force from Babylon to Syria and soon restored matters. The rich Phoenician town of Sidon, the revolt's center, was betrayed by King Tennes, and then destroyed by a fire set by the besieged Sidonians themselves (Diodorus 16.43.1-45.6; Pompeius Trogus, *Prologus* 10; Orosius 3.7.8; Georgius Syncellus 1.486.16 D.). Other towns of Phoenicia and Palestine then submitted. The expeditions of the generals Bagoas and Orophernes and the deportations of Jews ordered by Artaxerxes (Syncellus 1.486.10ff. D.) may be combined with the events recorded in the Book of Judith.

About 346-45 B.C. the king marched on Egypt. The citadels of Pelusium and Bubastis in the Nile delta were taken and by 343 the reconquest had been achieved, ending 65 years of Egyptian independence. (A seal has been interpreted as depicting this event; see J. Junge, *Saka-Studien*, Leipzig, 1939, pp. 63-64 n. 4.) One Pherendates was appointed satrap (Diodorus 16.46.4-51.3), while Nectanebus fled south to Nubia to maintain an independent kingdom. The Persians plundered and sacked extensively (Diodorus 16.51.2; Aelian, *Varia historia* 4.8, 6.8), and Egyptians were reportedly carried off to Persia. Consequently the king was vehemently hated by the Egyptians; they identified him with the ass to which he had sacrificed the Apis Bull (Aelian, 4.8).

Artaxerxes' relations with the Greeks and Macedonians varied. Although there were occasional clashes (especially during the Satraps' Revolt), the king sought the friendship of Athens, Sparta, and Macedonia, and he was the object of both fear and esteem (for Athens, see Demosthenes 14.7, 25, 31). In about 351 B.C. the king invited Athens and Sparta to join in a campaign he planned against Egypt; both declined but assured him of their friendship (Diodorus 16.44.1); Thebes and the Argives, however, sent him auxiliary troops (*ibid.*, 44.2, 46.4).



The first contact noted between Artaxerxes and Macedonia is a treaty of friendship with Philip II (Arrian, *Anabasis* 2.14.2); its details are not known. The Persian king seems to have observed it, for an Athenian legation seeking help against Philip returned empty handed (Demosthenes 9.71 ). Eventually, when Philip attacked the town of Perinthus, which dominated the Sea of Marmora, Artaxerxes perceived Philip's real intention and intervened by sending troops into Thrace (Diodorus 16.75.1; Arrian, *Anabasis* 2.14.5). Alexander later pointed to this as a motive for his campaign of revenge.

By his own efforts and with the aid of such Greek generals as Mentor and Phocio of Athens, Artaxerxes thus revived the old empire of Darius. The order of the state was restored, its apparatus reorganized, the central power strengthened. Artaxerxes was energetic and restless, crafty and strong-minded. He is called cruel and violent (Diodorus 17.5.3; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 26.1) but also a fair judge (Diodorus 16.49.6). A token of his revival was the renewed building activity at Persepolis. The king erected a palace on the southwest part of the terrace, as is attested by his inscription A<sup>3</sup>Pa on a stairway (Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 156; F. H. Weissbach, *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, Leipzig, 1911, pp. 128-29). An Akkadian tablet inscription has been found at Susa ("A<sup>3</sup>Sa," ed. V. Scheil in *MMAP* XXI, 1929, pp. 99-100 no. 30).

Artaxerxes was married to a daughter of his sister (her name is read conjecturally in Valerius Maximus 9.2., ext. 7; see Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 341 b) and to a daughter of Oxathres, brother of the later Darius III (Curtius Rufus 3.13.13). The latter, with three of Artaxerxes' daughters, was captured by Alexander after the battle of Issus. The youngest of these, Parysatis, was later married to Alexander (Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.4.4). Also captured in the course of events was a granddaughter of Artaxerxes, who had been the wife of Hystaspes (Curtius Rufus 6.2.7-8). Of the king's sons, only two are known by name. Arses, the youngest, succeeded his father but survived only for about two years. Bisthanes came to meet Alexander in 330 (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.19.4). All the others are said to have been murdered by the Egyptian-born chiliarch, Bagoas, after poisoning the king himself in his palace intrigues (Diodorus 17.5.4; cf. Aelian 6.8 and Syncellus 1.486.14f. D.). Bagoas undoubtedly sought to be a kingmaker, but the premature death of Artaxerxes was a serious misfortune for the Persian kingdom.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

See also, for Artaxerxes III's coinage, the works listed under Artaxerxes I:  
Babelon, pl. II.12-15.

*British Museum Catalogue*, pl. XXVII.22-26.

(R. Schmitt)