



## BAGŌAS

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**BAGŌAS**, the Greek name of two eunuchs from the Achaemenid period.

1. The chief eunuch and general under Artaxerxes III. He played a prominent role in court affairs, being the most trusted friend of Artaxerxes III (Diodorus Siculus, 16.47.4). During the reconquest of the rebellious Egypt in 343 B.C. Bagōas and Mentor of Rhodes commanded the main body of the Persian army and Greek mercenaries who took the border fortress Pelusium and then occupied the country. At the sack of the Egyptian city Bubastis the Greek mercenaries imprisoned Bagōas who was soon rescued by Mentor (Diodorus, 16.50.1-6). Then Artaxerxes III sent Bagōas to put the upper satrapies in order, giving him supreme power over them (Diodorus, 15.50.8).

At the end of 338 B.C. Bagōas poisoned Artaxerxes III and murdered all his sons, except the youngest, Arses (Diodorus, 17.5.3-4; cf. also Aelianus, *Varia Historia* 6.8). Though Bagōas attained supreme power, he could not ascend the throne himself and instead made Arses a puppet king. In the summer of 336 B.C. Arses and all his children were murdered by Bagōas, who presented the throne to Darius III, a distant member of the Achaemenid family Codomannus (Strabo, 15.3.24; Curtius, 6.3.12). When Bagōas attempted to poison Darius III himself, the king compelled him to drink a cup of deadly poison.

Bagōas possessed famous gardens near Babylon (Theophrastus, *Plant-researches* 2.6.7) and a palace in Susa which Alexander the Great gave to Parmenion for residence (Plutarch, *Alexander* 39). See also F. Cauer, "Bagoas," in Pauly-Wissowa II, cols. 277f.; A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*,



Chicago, 1948, pp. 437 and 489f.; J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, London, 1983, pp. 224f.

2. A Persian eunuch who was a favorite of Darius III and Alexander the Great (Curtius, 6.5.23 and 10.1.25-27; Plutarch, *Alexander* 67). His life was fictionalized by M. Renault in *The Persian Boy* (1972).