



## CHORIENES

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**CHORIENES**, Sogdian nobleman and opponent of Alexander. According to Arrian (*Anabasis* 4), when Alexander reached Nautaca in Sogdiana on his way to India, early in 327 b.c.e., he found the whole region well prepared for defense and the road ahead protected by strong fortresses. His first task was to make himself master of the “Rock of the Sogdians,” where a chief named Ariamazes was in command and the family of Oxyartes, one of the great nobles of the country, had taken shelter. Eventually Ariamazes surrendered. Among those taken captive was Oxyartes’s daughter Roxana, whom Alexander afterward married. The Macedonian army next moved into the country of the Pareitakai (Parcitacene; see below), where the local nobles led by Chorienes had entrenched themselves in a fortress that Arrian called the “Rock of Chorienes” and described as a veritable “eagle’s nest,” surrounded by cliffs and well-nigh inaccessible; he gave its measurements as 20 stadia (ca. 3,550 m) in height and 60 stadia (ca. 10.7 km) in circumference (*Anabasis* 4.21.1-2). For his account of the assault on this fortress Arrian undoubtedly used the lost *History* of Alexander’s general Ptolemy, who personally took part in the siege operations (Pédech, pp. 291-92, 293, 304, 322). It was first necessary to fill the ravine surrounding the fortress. Alexander himself supervised the work during the day and his three principal generals, Perdikkas, Leonatus, and Ptolemy, in shifts at night. The task took a long time to complete and was made more difficult by harsh winter weather and heavy snow, but when the ground level in the ravine had been raised to within bowshot of the occupants of the fortress, Chorienes took fright and began to negotiate with Oxyartes, who acted on behalf of Alexander. Following Oxyartes’s advice, Chorienes went to



Alexander to offer his submission. Alexander received him amicably and went to take possession of the fortress in person. He subsequently reinstated Chorienes as governor of the fortress and the surrounding territory that had formerly been his, and Chorienes undertook to supply the conquering army with food and forage for two months (Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.21.2-10). The account in *Itinerarium Alexandri* (par. 102, ed. Müller, p. 165) follows Arrian's description of the "Rock of Chorienes" and the narrative of Oxyartes's intervention and Chorienes's surrender.

Quintus Curtius Rufus, Strabo, and Plutarch, on the other hand, called Alexander's opponent in this siege Sisimithres; he was, according to the *Historiae* of Quintus Curtius, satrap of the Nautaca region of Sogdiana and had worked hard to fortify the passes in his country and to make them impassable. He had taken refuge, with his mother and children, in a natural fortress protected by a deep ravine, through which a torrential river flowed. Alexander, however, is supposed to have caused a dam to be built, and his troops then began to shoot missiles at the fortress. Alexander sent Oxyartes to urge Sisimithres to surrender, and, after much hesitation and against the advice of his mother, he finally decided to do so. Alexander reinstated him as governor and held out the prospect of a more important province for him (Quintus Curtius, 8.2.19-33). Sisimithres delivered to Alexander a large number of pack animals and 2,000 camels, which the conqueror subsequently offered to repay with 30,000 pack animals taken as booty from the Sacae (Quintus Curtius, 8.4.19-20).

It is doubtful that the word *cohortandus* in some manuscripts of the *Historiae* (8.4.21) should be interpreted as an error for *Chorienes*, as some scholars have suggested. In the Metz *Epitome* of the text Sisimithres is also identified as Lord of Nautaca (par. 19, Thomas, p. 6), but the author of the epitome also mentioned a Chorienes as having surrendered to Alexander and then allied himself with him (pars. 28-29, Thomas, p. 9); it was supposedly in his house that Alexander met Roxana, the beautiful daughter of Oxyartes.

According to a story related by Plutarch (*Vita Alexandri* 58.3-4), Alexander obtained the surrender of the "precipitous and unreachable" rock by shrewdly playing on the cowardice of Sisimithres. Strabo (11.11.4) incorrectly located the rock of Sisimithres in Bactria, confusing it with the rock of Ariamazes, and



he compounded the confusion by identifying it as the refuge of Roxana (an error not noted in F. Lasserre's edition, pp. 167-68). Citing historians of Alexander, he described the fortress as 15 stadia high, with a circumference of 80 stadia, figures that do not match those given by Arrian and probably refer to the "Rock of Ariamazes."

It is clear from these various reports that Sisimithres was the same person whom Arrian called Chorienes (on the name Sisimithres see Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 303, s.v. no. 2, and Berve, p. 354 no. 708; on Chorienes see Justi, p. 94, s.v. Farruxan no. 1, and *Pauly-Wissowa* III/2, cols. 2423-24), despite the opinion of A. B. Bosworth (p. 32) that the two names belonged to two distinct individuals. Most probably Sisimithres was the correct name. Wilhelm Geiger (p. 37) suggested that Chorienes was an epithet referring to Sisimithres's origin, whereas P. Faure (p. 233) has argued that it was a title signifying "chief" and interpreted Arrian's phrase as "the Rock of the chief Sisimithres." The existence of the Armenian name Xorīan, Xorēam, or Xorēan, which Heinrich Hübschmann connected with Chorienes, Middle Persian \*Farruxān, \*Xorrehān (*Armenische Grammatik*, pp. 42-43; see also Justi, *Namenbuch*, pp. 94-95), does not seem to support the interpretation as a title, however. It seems more probable that Chorienes was the name of a place or referred to a place and that the historians of Alexander on whom Arrian relied had mistaken it for the name of the owner of the place; they thus understood "Rock of (i.e. at) Chorienes" to mean "Rock belonging to Chorienes." W. Heckel has recently offered a similar interpretation (p. 226), though his suggestion of a connection between the name Chorienes and Kūh-e Nūr is probably incorrect.

The province of Pareitacene (*Pauly-Wissowa*, Supp. X, cols. 378-482; Daffinà, pp. 17-18), in which the fortress of Chorienes stood, was part of Sogdia, corresponding approximately to the present district of ҲеҶс̄ар (Hissar) in the Tadzhik S.S.R. The "rock" is quite likely the mountain now called Kūh-e Nūr and the adjacent torrent the Vakhsh (Vakš) river, a tributary of the Oxus (Schwarz, pp. 83-84; *Pauly-Wissowa* III/2, col. 2424; Glotz, p. 129; Tarn, 1, p. 76; Faure, pp. 233-34; Heckel, p. 226; Holt, p. 66 n. 64).



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