



MARDONIUS

MARDONIUS, name of several Persians in Achaemenid times, as OPers. *M-r-d^u-u-n-i-y-* /Mr̥duniya-/ (DB 4.84) is rendered in Greek (*Mardónios*) and Latin (*Mardonius*); further reflexes of the Old Persian form are El. *Mar-du-nu-ia* (DB El. 3.91 and Persepolis tablets), Bab. *Mar-du-ni-ia* (DB Bab. 111; see also Dandamayev, 1992, 98, no. 187) and Aram. *mrd[wn]y* (DB Aram. 76). The two last-mentioned forms are decisive for the etymology, because they point to Med. **-d-* (not **-z-*) and consequently to Proto-Ir. **-d-*; therefore one can best take Ir. **mr̥du-* “mild, soft, tender” as the starting point, and *Mr̥du-n-ia-* may be interpreted as a hypocoristic form in **-iya-* based on an enlarged **mr̥du-na-* “mild, etc.” (see Schmitt, 1971, 14–16; Mayrhofer, 1979, II/24, no. 40; Schmitt, 2006, 105 f.; 2011, 257 ff., no. 193).

The most important bearers of this name (which later occurs also in purely Greek contexts) are the following:

1. (OPers.) *Mr̥duniya-*, the father of the Persian (thus expressly said in DB 4.84) *Gaub(a)ruva*, who had conspired with Darius and five other Persian noblemen against *Gaumāta* the magus; Mardonius by confusion of father and son is listed himself as one of Darius I’s fellow-conspirators in the notoriously unreliable list of Ctesias (frag. 13 § 16; cf. Schmitt, 2006, pp. 63 f.).
2. (Gk.) *Mardónios*, son of *Gobryas* (no. 3) = *Gaub(a)ruva* (see no. 1, above) and a daughter of Hystaspes, that is, a sister of Darius I (Herodotus 6.43.1, 7.5.1, 7.82); evidently he was named in the well-known hereditary manner after his grandfather (no. 1, above); he was married to Darius’s daughter Artozōstrē



(Herodotus 6.43.1; this piece of information is confirmed, at least in general, by an Elamite tablet that characterizes his wife as “the king’s daughter” [PFa 5:1 f.; see Hallock, 1978, 110, 118]. Still at an early age, the young married nephew and son-in-law of the king in 492 B.C.E. participated in the first exploratory operations and preparations for Darius’s Greek expedition (Herodotus 6.43.1-2). When passing along the coast of Asia Minor, he replaced all the tyrants of the Ionian cities and set up democratic governments (6.43.3). He went on to the Hellespont and to Thracia and subjugated Macedonia and the island of Thasos (6.44.1, 6.45.1). But the expedition failed miserably, because the major part of his ships fell victim to a huge storm when sailing round Mount Athos (6.44.2-3), particularly since at the same time the land forces were attacked by the Thracian tribe of the Bryges. Despite the arduous victory over them, Mardonius, who had been wounded himself, ordered the retreat (6.45.1-2). Owing to the failure of this expedition (cf. Instinsky, pp. 471 ff., also as regards the credibility of Herodotus’s account) the king removed Mardonius from his command and appointed other leaders in his place (6.94.2).

In Herodotus’s report, which is our main source for the Persian Wars, Mardonius appears again only after the accession of Xerxes, on whom Mardonius, his cousin and brother-in-law, had more influence than any other Persian (7.5.1; cf. Ctesias, frag. 13 § 24). He advised the Great King to march against Greece, especially against Athens, and to take revenge for the former misdeeds (Herodotus 7.5.2, 8.100.1); and Herodotus even gives as his motive that “he himself wished to become satrap of Greece” (7.6.1). Mardonius then was one of the six commanders (*stratēgoí*: 7.82) of Xerxes’ army in the expedition to Greece in 480 BCE and apparently the one who had planned the military actions, the well-organized common operations of both army and fleet (for Mardonius’s strategy see Obst, 1930, and in addition, the general accounts of the expedition by Obst, 1913, and Hignett, 1963).

After the defeat in the battle at Salamis and the retreat of Xerxes himself, Mardonius took the supreme command of the army, remaining in Greece (8.107.1), and spent the winter 480/79 in Thessaly (8.113.1-115.1, 8.126.2, 8.133). Mardonius negotiated with the Athenians in order to win them over and to drive a wedge into the pan-Greek coalition (8.136.2-3), but without success, so that finally he marched against Athens (9.1) and took the city for a second time (9.3.1-2). Some months later, after he had withdrawn to Boeotia in order to do battle on ground fit for cavalry (9.13.3) and the Spartans had approached, near the city of Plataia the decisive final battle with the united Greek troops under

Pausanias took place (Herodotus 9.31–89; cf. Demosthenes 59.96; Nepos 3.2.1; 4.1.2). Although Mardonius had proceeded rather prudently and operated in a tactically clever way, the heavily armed Greek hoplites were victorious, and Mardonius himself died at the hand of the Spartan Aeimnestos (9.64.2; Plutarch, *Aristeides* 19.1). His body was buried, and Mardonius's son Artontes is said to have given presents to the people who performed that service (Herodotus, 9.84.1); the alleged place of Mardonius's tomb on the way from Plataia to Eleutherai is given in Pausanias 9.2.2. On the other hand the account found in Photius's excerpts of Ctesias' *Persika* (frag. 13 §§ 28 f.) is full of inconsistencies and anachronisms.

A marble statue of Mardonius on a column of the so-called Persian hall in the agora of Sparta (which had been built from the spoils of the Persian Wars) is mentioned by Pausanias 3.11.3. Mardonius's sword, weighing 300 **darics**, at one time was kept at the Athenian Acropolis (Demosthenes 24.129); perhaps it was one of the captured gilt weapons mentioned in Athenian inscriptions.

3. (Gk.) *Mardónios*, bodyguard of Xerxes, whom Themistocles' brother Agesilaos has killed in the battle at Artemision, because he mistook him for the king himself (Agatharchides of Samos, cited in Plutarch, *Parallela Minora* 2 = *Moralia* 305D); however, this account seems to be unhistorical.

4. (El.) *Mar-du-nu-ia*, clearly a priest of the Elamite god Humban, who in Darius's 23rd year (= 499 BCE) received wine for sacrificial offering (PF 348:3; cf. Hallock, 1969, 153). The other attestations of El. *Mar-du-nu-ia* (except the two quoted above) in PF 60:2 f. and 1848:5 do not show any specific prosopographical trait.

5. In the Babylonian administrative texts of the Achaemenid period at least two different bearers of this name are mentioned for the years 479/78 and 423 BCE respectively (cf. Dandamayev, 1992, 98, no. 187; Stolper, 1992, 211-16; Zadok, 2009, 265, no. 351). According to the two tablets of June 479 and July 478 (concerning the delivery of bricks), the Mardonius named in them (^m*Mar-di-ni-ia* and ^m*Mar-du-ú-ni-ia*) was a Persian nobleman and the proprietor of an estate at Babylon; but it is rather difficult (or even impossible) to identify him with the famous commander (no. 2, above) who had died in the battle at Plataia (presumably in August 479 BCE). So, in all, neither of those persons can be identified with the bearers of this name who are attested in Greek texts (see Stolper, 1992, 211, fn. 1).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. A. Dandamayev, *Iranians in Achaemenid Babylonia*, Costa Mesa, Cal. and New York, 1992.

R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, Chicago, 1969.

R. T. Hallock, "Selected Fortification Texts," *Cahiers de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran* 8, 1978, pp. 109-36.

C. Hignett, *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece*, Oxford, 1963.

H. U. Instinsky, "Herodot und der erste Zug des Mardonios gegen Griechenland," in W. Marg, ed., *Herodot. Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung*, 2nd ed., Darmstadt, 1965, pp. 471-96.

M. Mayrhofer, *Die altiranischen Namen*, Wien, 1979, p. II/24, no. 40.

E. Obst, *Der Feldzug des Xerxes*, Leipzig, 1913.

E. Obst, "Mardonios. 1)," in Pauly-Wissowa, *RE* XIV/2, 1930, cols. 1654-58.

R. Schmitt, "Nachlese zur achaimenidischen Anthroponomastik," *BNF. Neue Folge* 6, 1971, pp. 1-27.

Idem, "Mardonios," *RLA* VII, 1989, p. 359.

Idem, *Iranische Anthroponyme in den erhaltenen Resten von Ktesias' Werk* (Iranica Graeca Vetustiora III), Wien, 2006, pp. 104-6.

Idem, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* V/5A. *Iranische Personennamen in der griechischen Literatur vor Alexander d. Gr.*, Wien, 2011, pp. 236-38, no. 193.

M. Stolper, "The Estate of Mardonius," *Aula Orientalis* 10, 1992, pp. 211-21.

R. Zadok, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* VII/1B. *Iranische Personennamen in der neu- und spätbabylonischen Nebenüberlieferung*, Wien, 2009, pp. 265 f., nos.



351 f.