



## MAZAEUS

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**MAZAEUS**, member of the highest [Achaemenid](#) aristocracy, who had a long career under [Artaxerxes III](#), [Darius III](#), and [Alexander](#) of Macedon.

*Name and rank.* On the satrapal coins of Mazaeus his name appears as *mzdy* (read as *Mazdai*), at Sidon sometimes abbreviated to *mz* (see Head, 1911, pp. 722, 731, 796; [Figure 1](#)). He is called a “friend” (*filos*) of Darius III and no doubt held that rank already under Artaxerxes III (see Diod., 17.55.1). He was probably descended from [Hydarnes](#) (Old Persian: Vidarna, DB IV 84-85, one of the six men who put Darius I on the throne, Hdt. 3.70.2), for he called his eldest son Hydarnes. The latter was a commander in the Persian counter-offensive in Asia Minor, 333-332 BCE (Curt., 4.5.14); later he was taken by Alexander into the elite corps [*agēma*] of the Companions (Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.4). The Greeks transcribed his name as MAZAIOC, read *Mazdaios*. With the later change of letter zeta to the single sound /z/, the name became Mazaios (thus to the Greek authors) and in Latin Mazaeus.

We do not know his date of birth, but in view of his son’s command in 333/2, probably at least at the age of thirty, his date of birth would have been in the 370s or early 360s. He first appears on the historical record when he is sent, together with the “satrap” of Syria, Belesys, to crush the rebellion of Tennes, king of Sidon. At that time he was satrap of [Cilicia](#) (Diod., 16.42.1). Whether the Babylonian Belesys really had the title of satrap is uncertain: [Diodorus](#) cannot be trusted for accuracy, calling Mazaeus (who we know was a satrap) *archōn* and Belesys satrap. It may well be that Belesys was subordinate to Mazaeus (see below). Nectanebōs of Egypt, who had inspired the rebellion in



order to keep the Persians away from [Egypt](#), sent the Rhodian [Mentor](#) with an army to aid Tennes, and he defeated the Persian commanders. But hearing of the greatly superior army under Artaxerxes III marching against them, Tennes and Mentor combined to join the king. Tennes was executed, and from year 16 of Artaxerxes (344-3 BCE) until the conquest of Phoenicia by Alexander (333 BCE), Mazaeus issues coins at Sidon.

On his Cilician coins Mazaeus does not give his title, with only one exception, where he calls himself “Mazdai who is over Across the River (i.e., Syria) and Cilicia” (Head, 1911, p. 732). Since the order of his coins cannot be recovered, it is not unlikely that this was the *first* of his coins, on which he announced his status, and then Belesys would have been his subordinate in the campaign against Tennes; Diodorus’s wording (see above) is irrelevant.

Under Darius III, he is surprisingly inactive in the early resistance to Alexander. The Cilician satrapy was taken from him and entrusted to Arsames (Arr., 2.4.5; cf. 1.12.8, not naming his satrapy). We hear nothing of him at the battle of Issus and during Alexander’s march through his old province of Syria. It may be that Darius, who took some time to realize the seriousness of Alexander’s challenge, and who had come to the throne as an outsider, would not initially trust a descendant of Hydarnes with a large and potentially wealthy satrapy (cf. Badian, 2000, pp. 254 f.) It is difficult to explain his disappearance from the record in those early and decisive years in any other way. Darius’s insecurity confronted him with insoluble problems.

After the disasters in the west, however, Darius could not do without the experienced Mazaeus. Mazaeus was given a cavalry force (according to Arr., 3.6.2 three thousand, two thousand of them Greek mercenaries: the usual exaggeration of the numbers of Persian forces facing Alexander is here patent) to guard the Euphrates crossing against Alexander. It was no doubt intended as a delaying action, to gain time for the king to prepare for battle on the far side of the Tigris. (The accounts in [Curtius](#) and Diodorus are invalidated by their confusion of the Euphrates and the Tigris.) Mazaeus seems to have held his position for some time, but had to withdraw across the river when Alexander’s main forces approached. Diodorus and Curtius also report an order to scorch the earth, so as to make Alexander’s progress more difficult. But in view of the Persian aristocracy’s attested unwillingness to allow the lands under their care to be devastated (see Arr., 1.12.9-10) this should be rejected. It seems that Mazaeus was restored to the satrapy of Syria (by now largely honorary, although he seems to have saved some of the forces

stationed there) and a satrapy of “Mesopotamia” was added to it, which put him in charge of impeding Alexander’s progress to the Tigris, while Darius prepared the terrain and consolidated his position east of the river. Whatever Darius’s orders, Mazaeus did not have any forces that could meet Alexander’s. He seems to have withdrawn from the Euphrates straight to the king’s position.

*Gaugamela and Babylon.* At [Gaugamela](#), Mazaeus commanded the right wing of the Persian line (Diod., 17.59.5; cf. 58.2: supporting the scythed chariots’ attack on the other wing), with “the best of the cavalry.” When a gap opened in the Macedonian line, he sent his lighter troops, [Cadusians](#) and Scythians, to pour through it and make for the enemy’s camp, several miles behind the lines, where the baggage and the prisoners had been left. The main purpose must have been to free the prisoners, and especially the royal women, taken at and after the battle of Issus (as rightly suggested by C. B. Welles in his Loeb edition of Diodorus 17, pp. 288-89). The raid was successful, and the prisoners were free until the Macedonian victory. As the center and left of the Persian line broke and Alexander eagerly pursued Darius, Mazaeus’s wing held its ground and pressed hard upon the Macedonian left under Parmenio, forcing him to send a messenger to Alexander asking him to turn back. Alexander refused, and Parmenio held out until Darius’s flight became known and Mazaeus’s forces disintegrated.

Mazaeus at once saw that Darius’s cause was lost and hurried to [Babylon](#), to save the city from destruction by preparing it for surrender. But in a maneuver that was to be repeated in the Civil Wars of the Roman Republic, he left his son, Antibelos (see below), to follow the king (Arr., *Anab.* 3.21.1), so that, whatever the outcome, the family would survive.

When Alexander arrived, probably only with his cavalry, on 20 October 331, he was welcomed by Mazaeus and the rest of his family, by the forces that he had saved from the disaster, and by the people of Babylon in a style developed long ago for greeting its conquerors (see Kuhrt, 1990, pp. 121-30). A promise to restore temples was part of the procedure, and Alexander promised to restore the temple of Bel-Marduk, which (he was told) Xerxes had destroyed: the story is told in all the Alexander sources, although it must, at the least, be grossly exaggerated (see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White, 1987). However, that the temple was in some disrepair is certain, not only because Alexander must have seen it before making his promise, but because the Persians had annexed the temple revenues for the benefit of the king (see Dandamayev, 1992, pp.



19-20), so that little would remain for keeping the temples in repair. The promise to restore E-sagila would therefore be welcomed by the priests and the Babylonian population. Kuhrt's picture needs some correction.

The reason for Mazaeus's eagerness to save the city was a personal one: he must have had a Babylonian wife. The name of his son, Antibelos, disguised by its Greek prefix, makes it clear. (The first part may be *ntn*, Aram. "gift": cf. the Hebrew name Netanyahu "gift of God.") Curtius calls him, even more clearly, Brochubelus, "Blessed by Bel," 5.13.11.) A second son, Artiboles, may also have a partly Semitic name. (It has never been fully explained.) He was later admitted by Alexander to the *agēma*, together with his brother Hydarnes (see above): Arr. *Anab.* 7.6.4. M. A. Dandamayev has shown (1992, pp. 171-73) that generational interchange between Iranian and Semitic names is not uncommon, and that in at least some cases (presumably far more often than we can prove) it was due to intermarriage.

Alexander rewarded Mazaeus by making him satrap of Babylonia (Arr., *Anab.* 3.16.4; Curt., 5.1.44), the first Iranian to be given this honor by him. He held the office until his death in 328 (Arr. 4.18.3, Curt. 8.3.17), and he seems to have been given the unique privilege of issuing silver coinage in his name, as some satraps had done under the Achaemenids. But the armed forces left in the satrapy were under the command of a Macedonian, as was the garrison of the citadel. Such direct royal appointments, limiting the power of satraps, were established Achaemenid practice. At Babylon, Alexander first acted as Great King.

*Sources.* (1) Ancient sources. The literary sources are the usual sources for Alexander history: [Arrian](#), *Anabasis*, based on the court histories of Ptolemy and the Greek Aristobulus; Diodorus 17 and Curtius, chiefly based on Alexander's late contemporary Clitarchus, with Curtius adding interpretations based on his contemporary observations in the early Roman empire. Justin and Plutarch's *Alexander* do not add anything of importance for our topic. The only marginally relevant epigraphic source is the Old Persian DB IV (see [BISOTUN iii](#)), allowing us to arrive at Mazaeus's descent.

(2) The name. The simplification of Z (zeta) to a voiced aspirant cannot be precisely dated and seems to have occurred at different times in different dialects. (On Z = SD, which must have been pronounced /zd/, see, e.g., Kühner and Blass, 1890, sec. 1.156 f.; Palmer, 1980, p. 210.) In the area of Asia Minor that saw the first transliteration of Mazaeus's name it must be subsequent to

ca. 360 BCE. The Alexander historians show no sign of knowing the original pronunciation.

(3) Coins. They are most easily found in Head, 1911, pp. 722, 731-32 (Cilicia, various sites), 796 (Sidon, with regnal years of Artaxerxes III and Darius III), 816, 828-29 (Babylon: the “lion staters”). The Babylonian coins are usually assigned to his holding the satrapy of Babylonia under Alexander. However, since Darius gave him the satrapies of Syria and Mesopotamia, whose troops he commanded at Gaugamela (Arr. 3.8.6: the battle order, with each satrap commanding the army of his satrapy), he may have minted at Babylon even without residing there under Darius.

(4) Chronology. The Greek sources usually give details of Alexander’s marches. But for technical reasons, the precise date of the battle of Gaugamela was not known until recently, nor was the date of his arrival at Babylon. These dates were first revealed by A. J. Sachs (1988, pp. 176 ff.). The astronomical diary made the date of 1 October certain for Gaugamela and the date of 20 October for his reaching the outskirts of Babylon, to enter the city the next day. I have combined these dates with figures for marches given by Curtius (Badian, 1994, pp. 277-78).

(5) General. Mazaeus is treated in all the histories of Alexander. Of special treatments, H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage*, Munich, 1926, II, pp. 243-45 (no. 484) is still a useful basic survey, although it needs supplementing. P. Briant, *Histoire de l’Empire perse*, Paris, 1996, Index, s.v. Mazée, contains widely scattered discussions of Mazaeus in various contexts. His marriage to a Babylonian wife was first suggested on the strength of the names of two of his sons (Badian, 1965, p. 175). M. Dandamayev’s masterly work, *Iranians in Achaemenid Babylonia* (Costa Mesa, 1992) provides supporting background. For interchange of names between generations, see citation in Badian, 2000.

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