



ORONTES

ORONTES, Old Iranian masculine name, attested only in the Greek forms *Oróntas*, *Oróntēs* (Latin *Orontes*, *Oronta*), *Orondēs*, *Aroandēs*, *Oro-*, *Aru-*, *Oruándēs*, which reflect certainly — since most of these variants denote traceably one and the same person (no. 2 below) — a form OPers. **Arvanta-* (continued by MPers., NPers. *Arvand*), which is to be connected with Av. *auruuant-* ‘swift, vigorous, brave’ and possibly shortened from a compound name like Av. *Auruuaṭ.aspa-* ‘Having swift horses’ (see, in greater detail, R. Schmitt, pp. 66–8).

Among the known bearers of this name are:

1. (Orontas) A Persian nobleman and military officer of high rank, belonging to the royal family; as the commandant of the citadel of Sardis, he waged war against [Cyrus](#) the younger and even attempted his life repeatedly; he tried to betray him to Artaxerxes II Mnemon shortly before the battle of Cunaxa, but was taken prisoner and sentenced to death by a court martial (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.6.1–11; 9.29).

2. A Bactrian, son of Artasouras/Artasyras (*OGI* no. 264. 4f.), satrap of Armenia under Artaxerxes II Mnemon (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.5.17; Pompeius Trogus, *prolog.* 10), who in 401 B.C.E. had given him his daughter Rhodogoune in marriage (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.4.8; 3.4.13; Plutarch, *Artox.* 27.7; *OGI* no. 391–2) and so obliged him to the royal house. In two inscriptions of king Antiochus I of Commagene (ca. 69–34 B.C.E.), to be found on his monument at Nemrut dağı (*OGI* no. 391–2), Orontes, called Aroandes (son of Artasouras and



husband of Artaxerxes's daughter Rhodogoune), is reckoned, among others, as an ancestor of the "Orontids" ruling over Commagene, who traced back their family to the great Achaemenid kings. According to Plutarch (*Arat.* 3.5) he resembled Alcmaeon, the son of Amphiaraus, in appearance.

Orontes is very often mentioned in connection with things Persian between 401 and 349 B.C.E.; thus he faced the Ten Thousand Greeks at their withdrawal across Armenia to the Black Sea (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.4.8f.; 2.5.40; 3.4.13), especially at the river Centrites, which formed the frontier between the Carduchians and the Armenians (*ibid.* 4.3.4). In 386/5 B.C.E. he was the chief of the Persian infantry in the war against the Cyprian king Euagoras (Diodorus 15.2.1f.). After having wrongfully accused the commander of the navy, his fellow-satrap Tiribazus, who then was taken prisoner and sent to the royal court but was finally acquitted and reinstated, Orontes had made peace in a form which was advantageous for Euagoras and therefore was not accepted by the king (Diodorus 15.8.3–9.2; 10.2–11.1; Polyaeus 7.14.1). Owing to these circumstances he fell from favor with the king (Diodorus 15.11.2).

In later years (362/1 B.C.E.) this same Orontes was "satrap of Mysia" (rather, the subordinate governor of some coastal province) and the leader of the revolting satraps of Asia Minor (Diodorus 15.90.3; 91.1; Pompeius Trogus, *prolog.* 10), for which position he was best fitting because of his noble birth, his kinship with the king, and not least his deep-rooted hatred of the king. Misled by his love of power and fraud (as in the Cyprian War before), he betrayed his fellow satraps to the king. But he revolted a second time, probably owing to his dissatisfaction with the king's rewards, and launched several attacks, which were continued (as can be concluded for 354/3 B.C.E. from Demosthenes 14.31) in the reign of the new king Artaxerxes III Ochus (r. from 359/8 B.C.E.; here probably belong the accounts of Polyaeus 7.14.2–4). During that time he also conquered and occupied the town of Pergamum (cf. the so-called "Pergamene chronicle" *OGI* no. 264), but finally he must have become reconciled with the king, since this Pergamene inscription goes on to say that he gave back the town to the king and died then (supposedly in 344 B.C.E.). In 349/8 he was honored by a decree of the Athenians with the civic rights and a golden wreath (*Inscriptiones Graecae* II/III2 no. 207, to which stone belong fragments of a covenant, controversial with regard to its time, between Orontes and Athens).

His portrait is to be found on coins struck by him during the Satraps' Revolt in Clazomenae, Phocaea, and Lampsacus (see B. V. Head, *Historia numorum*, 2nd

ed., Oxford, 1911, p. 507; recently F. Bodenstedt, “Satrapen und Dynasten auf phokäischen Hekten,” *Schweizer Münzblätter* 26, 1976, p. 74 no. 4). (See also, in general, R. D. Wilkinson, “Orontes, son of Artasyras,” *Revue des Études arméniennes* N.S. 7, 1970, pp. 445–50; M. J. Osborne, “Orontes,” *Historia* 22, 1973, pp. 515–51; C. M. Harrison, “Coins of the Persian Satraps,” Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1982.)

3. Leader of the Armenians (together with Mithraustes) in the battle of Gaugamela (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.8.5), hence presumably the satrap of Armenia under Darius III Codomannus (who held this same rank before his accession to the throne); from the fact that we find homonymous satraps of the same province some decades before and after him (see nos. 2 and 4, respectively), it may be inferred that this province was (at least partly) hereditary within one family, which can be traced back to the famous “Seven Persians,” and that this Orontes was a descendant of Hydarnes, too, and possibly a grandson of no. 2. Since Alexander the Great did not subdue Armenia and never even approached this province, it must be the same Orontes, who is satrap of Armenia still in post-Alexandrian times, about 316 B.C.E. (Diodorus 19.23.3; Polyaeus 4.8.3), all the more so as this Orontes is a friend of the Macedonian general Peucestas (Diodorus, *ibid.*; see, in general, H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* II, Munich, 1926, p. 295 no. 593).

4. A descendant of Hydarnes, one of the “Seven Persians,” the last satrap of Armenia (to about 190 B.C.E.), when it belonged to the Seleucid Empire (Strabo 11.14.15); he was apparently subdued by Antiochus III the Great, who then divided the land between his generals Artaxias and Zariadris; from the fact that these two declared themselves kings after Antiochus’ defeat at Magnesia in 190 B.C.E. (*ibid.*), it may be concluded, that Orontes did not bear this title (whether Strabo’s information is chronologically correct is not certain: cf. Hatto Herbert Schmitt, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Antiochos’ des Grossen und seiner Zeit*, Wiesbaden, 1964, p. 38 with n. 4).

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