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From Thermopylae to the Persian Gates: A New Look into Ariobarzanes' Identity and Political Status

Morteza Arabzadeh Sarbanani¹ 

Abstract

Diodorus Siculus, Quintus Curtius Rufus, Polyaeus, and Arrian are the primary historians who have written about the Battle of the Persian Gates but their accounts differ in some details. Much research has been done on the cause of differences between these historians, their method of historiography as well as their sources; but in this article, the main focus has been on the identity and political status of Ariobarzanes, the general who led the Persians in the aforementioned battle. As this essay argues, the clarification of this issue hinges on a large extent understanding Ariobarzanes' end at the Persian Gates. Of course, due to discrepancies between classical sources and the absence of any Iranian evidence in this regard, this is not an easy task, but this article tries to find the most reasonable answer by identifying the most accurate classical account, and then presents essential historical results to be drawn from it. It should be noted that so far, various researchers, have speculated on the identity of Ariobarzanes with skepticism, but in this article, with detailed criticism of classical resources, the identity and political status of Ariobarzanes are clarified.

Keywords: Ariobarzanes; Persian Gates; Alexander the Great; Arrian; Quintus Curtius Rufus; Diodorus Siculus; Polyaeus.

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Introduction

"Others have given various accounts of Alexander, in fact there is no one over whom historians have been more numerous and less harmonious" (Arr. *An.* Arrian's preface, 2). This statement from Arrian at the beginning of *Anabasis* more than nineteen centuries ago perfectly illustrates the complexity of studying Alexander's history. The subject of the present article is a fine example in this regard, showing that not only the sources written about Alexander long after his death but also the works of those who personally accompanied him in his expeditions differed from each other. The importance of Alexander's campaign for the history of the late Achaemenian period is evident. Meanwhile, the study of the narratives concerning the conquest of Persia¹ by Alexander creates several ambiguities that few scholars have paid attention to. Persia was the ancestral land of the Achaemenian dynasty, and Ariobarzanes' resistance against Alexander, his defeat, and the subsequent burning and looting of Persepolis by the Macedonians are reminders of the Battle of Thermopylae, Leonidas' defeat of Xerxes, and the conquest of Athens by the Persians from many aspects. The pioneer Iranian scholar, Hassan Pirnia, was one of the first historians who commented on this: 'The Battle of the Persian Gates is very similar to the Battle of Thermopylae, and the tactics used by Xerxes and Alexander to defeat their foes were the same. The bravery that the Spartan Leonidas showed in Thermopylae is similar to the bravery of the Persian Ariobarzanes here.

But in one thing there is a difference between them. The names of the brave were recorded in Greece and remained in history. They wrote inscriptions on their graves and glorified their names. But in Iran, if Greek historians had not mentioned this incident, we would not have heard of this sacrifice and conscientiousness at all' (Pirnia, 2012: 1160-1161). Apart from Pirnia, many other modern historians have pointed out the fascinating and significant similarities between the Persian Gates and Thermopylae (Burn, 1973: 121; Heckel, 1980: 171-172; Speck, 2002: 51-92; Mileta, 2020: 191-210).

In this article, however, the main focus is on Ariobarzanes, the Persian commander at the Persian Gates. Ariobarzanes is the name of several individuals in history (for a brief introduction of all of them see Dandamayev, Shahbazi & Lecoq, 1986: 406-409), and there is very little historical information about the one who is our subject. Among the ancient authors, Arrian mentions Ariobarzanes more than others, but whether all his references are related to one person has been questioned (see Briant, 1996: 1049). The main reason for the skepticism is the contradiction of classical sources regarding the end of Ariobarzanes at the Persian Gates. Quintus Curtius Rufus speaks of Ariobarzanes' death (Curt. V, 4, 33-34), while Arrian of his survival (Arr. *An.* III, 18, 3). Without a detailed study, modern historians have each accepted the accounts of one of these historians as fact (see Nöldeke, 1887: 141 who follows Curtius, cf Bosworth, 1980: 325 who agrees with Arrian) and subsequently gave their opinions about Ariobarzanes' identity and political status. This article, however, explains how Curtius, probably influ-

¹ Here and in other instances in this article, Persia refers to the region southwest of Iran, not the whole Persian Empire.

enced by Herodotus' account of the Battle of Thermopylae, kills Ariobarzanes in his narrative and why Arrian's account, despite his errors, should be accepted.

Sources and Problems

Primary sources of the present study are the accounts of Arrian, Quintus Curtius Rufus, Diodorus Siculus, and Polyaeus on Alexander's expedition to Persia. None of these historians were contemporaneous with Alexander, but they have directly or indirectly used the works of people who accompanied Alexander in his campaigns. Thus, although none of the histories of Alexander's time have survived, important fragments of their works have come down to us through the accounts of later historians. From mentioned historians, especially Arrian and Curtius are significant because they have dealt with the Battle of the Persian Gates in much more detail than the others. The report of Diodorus is serious because it is the oldest source we have in this regard. Polyaeus' narrative though does not have anything new¹, can be used to

find the sources of these late accounts. Plutarch and Strabo also briefly mention the invasion of Persia by Alexander the Great, although they do not name Ariobarzanes.

The main problem is that in some details there are differences between the accounts of Diodorus, Arrian, and Curtius, and the main reason for these differences lies in various sources they have used; not to mention that each of these historians, based on their interests, rewrote the history of Alexander (Zambrini, 2007: 212). This brings us to the historiography and sources of these ancient authors, a subject that is of fundamental importance for current study; as the differences in some details between the reports of ancient historians, especially Arrian and Curtius, about the Battle of the Persian Gates are so gross that we must inevitably accept one of them. Another important problem is that none of our main sources on the Battle of the Persian Gates, namely Arrian, Diodorus, Curtius and Polyaeus have explicitly mentioned their sources in this regard; Thus, to identify their main sources we have no choice but to carefully compare their narratives with each other and examine the most important and well-known sources they have used in general. Fortunately, this has been done by many scholars before (Hammond, 1996: 26-33; Bosworth, 1997: 215-216; Atkinson, 2000: 307-325; Bosworth, 2003: 167-198; Howe, 2015: 165-195), and to avoid duplication, I have briefly reviewed the results of their research in the table below (for a detailed study of these accounts, readers may directly see Diod. Sic. 17, 68; Curt. 5, 3, 17-23; 4, 1-34; Arr. An. 3, 18, 1-9; Polyaeus, Strat. 4, 3, 27):

¹ Polyaeus has erroneously recorded the name of the commander of the Persians at the Persian Gates Phrasaortes. However, According to Arrian, after taking Persepolis, Alexander chose the Phrasaortes son of Rheomithras as its satrap. The reason behind Polyaeus' error is not evident. Heckel (1980: 171) simply blames his carelessness. Bosworth (1980: 324-325) thinks that Phrasaortes was indeed present at the Persian Gates, but Polyaeus confused his role with Ariobarzanes. Following Bosworth, Howe (2015: 171-177) offers a more attractive hypothesis, and that is it was not Polyaeus himself, but his source, Callisthenes, who cited Phrasaortes as the Persian leader at the Persian Gates.

Table 1. The Main Sources of the Primary Extant Accounts on the Battle of the Persian Gates.

	Diodorus of Sicily	Quintus Curtius	Arrian	Polyaenus
His Source on the Battle of the Persian Gates	Cleitarchus	Cleitarchus	Ptolemy (supplemented by Aristobulus)	Callisthenes

There are fewer consensuses about Polyaeus' source. Here, I have followed Howe (2015: 176-178) who suggests Callisthenes as Polyaeus' main source on the battle of the Persian Gates (unlike Hammond, 1996: 26 who considers Cleitarchus). On the other hand, if, as some scholars have pointed out (Schachermeyr, 1973: 35; Chugg, 2015: 551, 606), Cleitarchus himself used mainly Callisthenes, then the problem becomes more interesting. But before going any further, it is worthy to classify the sources that ancient historians had on the battle of the Persian Gates. Accordingly, the works of authors who were personally present in the campaigns of Alexander the Great are considered primary, those who have directly benefited from their works are secondary, and those who have indirectly used them are tertiary sources. This classification is very simple, meets the needs of this article, and is vital for our understanding of the historical value of the extant narratives. Back to Table 1, Callisthenes, Ptolemy, and Aristobulus are first-class sources since all of them accompanied Alexander the Great and were personally involved with his campaigns, including the one to Persia. In the case of Cleitarchus, most scholars think that he was not present in Alexander's campaign (for a discussion in this regard as well as the date of Cleitarchus see Tarn, 1979: 16-28), hence he should be considered a secondary source. Subsequently, Diodorus of Sicily and Quin-

tus Curtius who have used Cleitarchus, should be considered tertiary sources. Arrian and Polyaeus on the other hand, are secondary sources for their direct use of primary sources.

But what does this classification tell us? Can the historical value of the existing narratives be judged solely on it? The answer to these questions is negative. Just because Arrian is a secondary and Curtius is a tertiary source, Arrian's narrative cannot be considered more historical. However, the fact that Arrian has directly used Ptolemy, who was personally involved in the battle, is an advantage over Curtius. Moreover, the relationship between Callisthenes and Cleitarchus is particularly essential. It is certain that Cleitarchus in general used a wide range of primary sources and one of them was most likely Callisthenes, but the main focus of the present study is the battle of the Persian Gates and following Zahrnt (1999: 1387) I think Cleitarchus did use Callisthenes in this regard. The acceptance of this fact justifies well the fundamental similarities between the accounts of Polyaeus and Curtius. But the most important conclusion drawn from this classification is the extraction of two different historiographical traditions on the battle of the Persian Gates. One that originates from Callisthenes and is followed by Diodorus, Curtius, and Polyaeus, and another that originates from Ptolemy and is followed by Arrian. These traditions do not contradict each other

in general and the similarities between them are more than their differences.

The End of Ariobarzanes

As discussed before, Ariobarzanes' identity and position heavily depend on finding out about his end in the battle of the Persian Gates. Curtius and Arrian are the only ones who have spoken explicitly about this, but their reports are quite different. We also know that Arrian followed Ptolemy and Curtius used Cleitarchus in this regard. Hence, at the first glance, it seems that the main reason for this difference was the use of different sources by Arrian and Curtius. In other words, Ptolemy (the source of Arrian) acknowledged the survival of Ariobarzanes, and Cleitarchus (the source of Curtius) assumed that he was killed. In this case, the question arises why Diodorus, who, like Curtius, used Cleitarchus, does not speak of Ariobarzanes' death? Or why Polyaeus, who used Callisthenes (the source of Cleitarchus), is also silent in this regard? Only two answers can be given to these. The first and most unlikely, in my opinion, is that since the end of Ariobarzanes was irrelevant to Diodorus and Polyaeus, they did not mention it at all. But the second and more proper answer is that Diodorus and Polyaeus had simply followed their sources, namely Cleitarchus and Callisthenes, in this regard. I think if Cleitarchus or Callisthenes had cited anything about the end of Ariobarzanes, Polyaeus and Diodorus would have noted it as well. Therefore, the questions arise as why Cleitarchus and Callisthenes did not say anything in this regard, and more importantly, on what basis did Curtius speak of the death of Ariobarzanes?

Two explanations can be given as to the first question. Either the end of Ariobarzanes was not important for Callisthenes and Cleitarchus, or since he did not die in the battle and survived, they did not mention anything about it. I find the second option closer to the truth. As to the second question, the answer, in my view, is that Curtius was altered by Herodotus' account of the Battle of Thermopylae.

First of all, it should be emphasized that Herodotean elements had overshadowed the events of the battle of the Persian Gates long before Curtius. In other words, if we are to hold anyone responsible for imitating Herodotus, Callisthenes and Cleitarchus are the first. Here, it is better to dwell a little more on these two historians, because the narrative of three of our primary sources on the battle of the Persian Gates is based on them. I begin with Callisthenes since he seems to be the initiator of this tradition. Much has been discussed on Callisthenes' work and historiography (see Green, 2007: 22-24; Fox, 2004: 94-95; Pearson, 1960: 22-49), and all the evidence shows that he was the official historian of Alexander the Great, who was obliged to record Alexander's achievements epically and make him a heroic figure. For this reason, his work was a kind of heroic biography centered on Alexander, rather than a reflection of reality.

Cleitarchus was certainly a well-known figure in the ancient times, as Pliny calls him a celebrated authority (Pli. *HN*. X, 136) and many ancient authors have mentioned him in their works or used his work as a source. But his popularity did not prevent many ancient authors to criticize him. Cicero

considered him more of an orator than a historian (Cic. *De Legg.* I, 7), Quintilian appraises Cleitarchus for his talent but questions his honesty (Quint. *Inst.* X, 1, 75) and Strabo explicitly classifies him as those Alexander-Historians who did not care for truth (Str. XI, 5, 4). Similarly, many new historians have doubted the validity and precision of the contents of Cleitarchus' work (for a detailed study in this regard see Tarn, 1979: 43-55; cf Pearson, 1960: 212-42). In general, Cleitarchus had a more negative view of Alexander compared to others. His work was full of fictitious and mythical elements, several people such as Nearchus, Onesicritus, Aristobulus, Berossus, and Polycleitus have been suggested as his sources. Moreover, he was not very good at transferring the contents of his sources. To all these facts must be added that Dinon of Colophon, the father of Cleitarchus wrote an important history book about eastern empires, a *Persica* in the style of Ctesias. From the remains of Dinon's *Persica*, it is clear that he was a relatively reliable historian and had accurate information about the Achaemenid court and the customs of the ancient Persians (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013: 53-53). Therefore, it is very likely that Cleitarchus has also used his father's work, especially in matters relating to the Persians.

We now come to Curtius, the only historian who mentions the death of Ariobarzanes. Very little is known about Quintus Curtius, and we know him only through his book *Historiae Alexandri Magni*. There is disagreement about when he lived, and most scholars have suggested a time between the reigns of Emperor Augustus and Trajan (Hamil-

ton, 1988: 446-447). But apart from his date, his method of historiography as well as the value of his work has always been a matter of debate among scholars. It is clear that Curtius has largely interfered with his sources, and his account of the Battle of the Persian Gates is no exception. Also, many scholars have long questioned the historical value of Curtius' work by pointing out his many errors (Tarn, 1979: 90-100). Most modern scholars, however, take a more moderate view, emphasizing the importance of his work, especially the events in the aftermath of Alexander's death (Heckel, 1994: 67-78). It is certain that Curtius had many sources, among which Cleitarchus was a primary one (Huyse, 1993: 464-465), and for our case of study, it is certain that Cleitarchus was Curtius' primary source on the battle of the Persian Gates. As to the relation between Herodotus and Curtius, scholars have already pointed out some of the cases in which Curtius has imitated Herodotus (see Blänsdorf, 1971: 11-24).

Given what has been said, we must now return to the validity of Curtius' account of Ariobarzanes' death. In my view, given Curtius' historiography, as well as that of his source Cleitarchus, it is reasonable to doubt him. But the problem is that Curtius' account of the end of Ariobarzanes is different from all other accounts, so we must consider the possibility that he may have used his imagination. Curtius first informs us that after the defeat of the Persians at the Persian Gates, Ariobarzanes managed to escape with 40 cavalries and 5,000 infantry, but then after failing to enter Persepolis, the Persian general, and all of his soldiers were killed (Curt. V, 4, 13-34). Thus, Cur-

tius is not the only authority who speaks of the death of Ariobarzanes but also is the only source that speaks of the death of all of the Persians. Diodorus, on the other hand, only mentions the death of most of the Persians (not all of them) (Diod. Sic. XVII, 68, 6-7), and Polyaeus speak of the capture of some of them (Polyaeus. *Strat.* IV, 3, 27). Thus, Curtius' account seems at best very dubious, and it is quite possible that his account of the death of Ariobarzanes and all of his troops is a replica of the end of Leonidas and the Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae. Of course, there could be another explanation for Curtius' report, and that is he may have used another source. The main problem with proving the latter explanation is that there is no evidence for it. Apart from Diodorus, Arrian, and Polyaeus, whose sources were described earlier, Strabo and Plutarch also, to a much lesser extent, have something to say about the battle of the Persian Gates¹. Thanks to Strabo's testimony, we know that Nearchus and Onesicritus were his main sources regarding the geography of the coasts of the Persian Gulf, Susa, the country of the Uxians, and Persia (Str. XV, 3, 5). He also explicitly mentions Aristobulus for his account of the tomb of Cyrus the Great (Str. XV, 3, 7), but the most important evidence showing Strabo's use of Aristobulus and also Ptolemy for his account of the Persian Gates, is his use of the phrase 'the Persian

Gates' (Str. XV, 3, 6) just like Arrian. However, Strabo does not mention Ariobarzanes or the details of the battle and only briefly says that Alexander had to force his way through the mountains of the country of the Uxians and Persia (Str. XV, 3, 6). Plutarch, the same as Strabo, does not say a word about Ariobarzanes, only that Persia was guarded by the noblest of the Persians (Plu. *Liv. Alex.* 37). He also refers to the roughness of Persia and the Lycian shepherd who guided Alexander (Plu. *Liv. Alex.* 37), thus leaving no doubt that his source was either Cleitarchus or Callisthenes. Thus, the sources of Strabo and Plutarch were nothing but the sources of Arrian (Aristobulus and Ptolemy), Diodorus (Cleitarchus), and Polyaeus (Callisthenes). Therefore, considering the current evidence, the best explanation for Curtius' report on Ariobarzanes' death is his own interference.

Why Arrian is Right?

In the previous section, I mentioned the reasons for the suspicion of Curtius' report on Ariobarzanes' death. In this section, however, I will present the reasons that show that Arrian's report is more plausible as Arrian is the only one who speaks plainly about Ariobarzanes' survival. Let us first begin with Arrian's historiography and the general assessment of modern historians about his notable work, *Anabasis*.

According to most modern historians, Arrian's *Anabasis* is the most authoritative source about Alexander the Great (Tarn, 1979: 1-3; Green, 2007: 27-28; Liotsakis, 2019: 14-18), and Arrian owes much of this credit to his sources and method. At the very beginning of his book, Arrian

¹ Justin does not say anything about the battle of the Persian Gates but his account of the mutilated Greek captives in Persia (Just. Epit. XI, 14; cf. Curt. V, 5, 5-23; Diod. Sic. XVII, 69, 2-9) shows that his main source was Cleitarchus.

explicitly states that Ptolemy and Aristobulus are his primary sources, though he has occasionally used other narratives that were considered valuable (Arr. *An. Arrian's Preface*, 1). Arrian also states that of all those who have written about Alexander, he considers Aristobulus and Ptolemy superior since they had less reasons to lie and were more honest (Arr. *An. Arrian's Preface*, 2-3). However, this claim is not necessarily true, especially in the case of Ptolemy, who was a king and a politician and may have distorted history for his political interests¹. Thus, despite Arrian's credibility, one should not forget to be careful when studying *Anabasis*, as he is not so flawless, and he has come to erroneous conclusions, especially in some cases where his primary sources do not agree (see Bosworth, 1976: 117-139).

Arrian's testimony about his sources has made it easier for historians to study his work and track his method of historiography. Ptolemy and Aristobulus are both primary sources, they personally were present in Alexander's expeditions or parts of them, and witnessed many events up close. But the importance of Ptolemy and Aristobulus for the present study is that both were also present in Alexander's expedition to Persia. According to Arrian, Ptolemy played an important role in the battle of the Persian Gates (Arr. *An.* 3, 18, 9.), and Aristobulus also provides interesting information about the condition of the tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae (Arr. *An.* VI, 29,

¹ Interestingly, for Arrian, the political status of Ptolemy not only does not damage his honesty but, on the contrary, guarantees it, because he thinks that lying is much more offensive to a king than an ordinary person (Arr. *An. Arrian's Preface*, 2).

10; Str. XV, 3, 7). Although some scholars have questioned the role of Ptolemy in the Battle of the Persian Gates (Howe, 2015: 165-195), this matter is irrelevant here because my main focus is on the end of Ariobarzanes and there is no reason to assume that Ptolemy may have lied about it. It is noteworthy that Arrian's account of the survival of a handful number of Persians is consistent with that of Diodorus and Polyaeus (although the latter speaks of their captivity). Thus, Arrian's account of the end of Ariobarzanes is more valid than that of Curtius for two reasons. First, his primary source in this regard was someone who directly participated in the battle of the Persian Gates, and second, compared with Curtius, his report is more in line with other primary narratives, namely Diodorus and Polyaeus, in this regard.

Ariobarzanes' Identity and Political Status

What are the historical consequences of accepting Arrian's narrative? The first and most important conclusion to be drawn is the clarification of Ariobarzanes' identity. In the chapter regarding Alexander's expedition to Hyrcania, Arrian mentions Ariobarzanes one last time: 'Shortly afterward, Artabazus joined Alexander with his sons Cophen, Ariobarzanes, and Arsames ... but Artabazus and his sons remained in honorable positions with Alexander, especially since he and his sons were of the noblest Persians and also the most loyal to Darius' (Arr. *An.* III, 23, 7). Before going to Ariobarzanes' father, the key to his identity, let us first make sure that this Ariobarzanes is definitely the same Ariobarzanes who led the Persians at the Persian Gates. Prior

to this reference (*Arr. An.* III, 23, 7), Arrian has mentioned Ariobarzanes on two other occasions. One in the battle of the Persian Gates and the other before that in the Battle of Gaugamela (*Arr. An.* III, 8, 5). If Arrian, like Curtius, had spoken of the death of Ariobarzanes at the Persian Gates, we could have said with certainty that he is talking about two different Ariobarzanes; one who was a son of Artabazus, and another who was the commander of the Persians at the Persian Gates. But since Arrian explicitly cites the survival of Ariobarzanes from the Persian Gates, it is more likely that he is not talking about two different people. In other words, the Ariobarzanes who was present at the battle of Gaugamela is the same Ariobarzanes who led the Persians at the Persian Gates, and more importantly, he was a son of Artabazus. Of course, this idea can still be challenged as the name Ariobarzanes was very common among the Persians at that time, but considering that the Ariobarzanes who was present at the battle of Gaugamela, and the Ariobarzanes who commanded the Persians at the Persian Gates, both held important military duties, it is more likely that we are faced with one person, especially if we remember that the soldiers commanded by Ariobarzanes in Gaugamela were also related to Persia (*Arr. An.* III, 8, 5; *Curt.* IV, 7, 7-8).

Artabazus, the father of Ariobarzanes, is a well-known figure (for a brief introduction about him see Judeich, 1895, Cols.1299-1300) who, from the beginning of Alexander's invasion of Asia, with his sons were considered close friends of Darius. Artabazus' father, or Ariobarzanes' grandfather, Pharnabazus II, was

the famous satrap of Hellespont Phrygia, directly related to the Achaemenid dynasty (Briant, 1996: 350-351), and his father played a very important role in Western Anatolia for the Achaemenid state policy towards the Greeks since the time of Xerxes. Thus, Ariobarzanes was considered an Achaemenid by his father, which is why Arrian calls his father and brothers "the noblest Persians" (*Arr. An.* III, 23, 7) and there is no doubt that this royal blood, along with the connection of Ariobarzanes' family with Europe, was one of the reasons that led Darius to trust them with the most serious duties during Alexander's invasion. Moreover, it is probable that Ariobarzanes was from a Greek mother because we know from the testimony of the Classical authors that his father Artabazus married a sister of Mamnoon and Mentor of Rhodes, two famous Greek mercenary commanders who served the Achaemenids and According to Diodorus, Artabazus had ten daughters and eleven sons from this Greek woman (*Diod.Sici.* XVI, 52, 4; *Curtius* also mentions at least nine of his sons, see *Curt.* VI, 5, 4). The only objection to accept this opinion is the great number of children (21 people) from the Greek wife of Artabazus. Diodorus or his sources may have exaggerated in this regard, but all in all it is not impossible.

As to Ariobarzanes' political status or office, there is more difficulty. The first time Arrian introduces him, he is one of the Persian generals at the battle of Gaugamela (*Arr. An.* III, 8, 5). There he, along with two other Persian generals, Orxines and Ocondobates, commanded the tribes bordering the Persian Gulf. Curtius, however, mentions

Ariobarzanes along with Orobates as the commander of the Persian, Mardi, and Sogdian forces. He also states that the two worked under the supervision of Orsines, who was descended from one of the seven Persian families (Curt. IV, 7, 7-8). Therefore, Ariobarzanes was a general in the Battle of Gaugamela, but the interesting point is that Arrian calls him "satrap of Persia" when he comes to the Battle of Persian Gates (Arr. *An.* III, 18, 2). However, other historical evidence, including the Elamite tablets of Persepolis, show that Persia was not a satrapy at least during the reign of the first Achaemenid kings (Briant, 1996: 481-482). Although the name of Persia appears at the beginning of many Countries' lists of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, many scholars have pointed out that there is no reason to consider any of these countries a satrapy or an administrative unit of any kind (Tuplin, 1987: 113). In fact, Arrian's testimony is the first evidence from the beginning of the Achaemenid period for the existence of the satrapy of Persia. Therefore, to understand Ariobarzanes' political status, it may be better to examine the status of his brothers and father in the court of Darius III instead of relying on Arrian's suspicious report.

Previously, Artabazus' high position in the court of Darius III was explained. Interestingly, his sons also had serious duties and responsibilities. Pharnabazus, Ariobarzanes' most famous brother, was a general who fought the Macedonians on the Aegean front along with his uncle Memnon, and was so trusted by Darius that assumed all of his uncle's responsibilities after Mamnoon's death (Arr. *An.* II, 1, 3-5; II, 2, 1-2). We also know Cophen,

another brother of Ariobarzanes, who was Darius' quartermaster at Damascus in 333 BC (Arr. *An.* II, 15, 1). Given the military position of these people, as well as the role of Ariobarzanes at Gaugamela and the Persian Gates, it is apparent that he was a loyal and notable general. But it is hard to assume that he had a position beyond his military commitment. His father Artabazus, who certainly was far more significant in the eyes of Darius, was not a satrap. Therefore, Arrian's statement that Ariobarzanes was the satrap of Persia is doubtful.

Conclusion

A comparison of the accounts of Diodorus, Curtius, Arrian, and Polyaeus with an examination of their sources, Callisthenes, Cleitarchus, Ptolemy, and Aristobulus, shows that there have been at least two traditions about the Battle of the Persian Gates since the time of Alexander the Great. One that Arrian follows and bears less resemblance to Herodotus' account of the Battle of Thermopylae, and one that Diodorus, Curtius, and Polyaeus follow and bear more resemblance to Herodotus. Moreover, a comparison of the accounts of Curtius, Diodorus, and Polyaeus shows that Curtius' claim about the death of Ariobarzanes is not valid and therefore Arrian's statement about Ariobarzanes' survival should be taken seriously. Accepting Arrian's narrative, it became apparent that Ariobarzanes was a son of the famous Artabazus, from a prominent Persian family with royal blood. Artabazus and his sons played a significant role in Darius' strategy against Alexander the Great and like some of his brothers, Ariobarzanes held

great military responsibilities such as commanding some of the Iranian troops at Gaugamela and blocking Alexander's way to Persepolis. Moreover, Arrian's statement that Ariobarzanes was the sa-

trap of Persia, given the role and position of his father and brothers at that time, as well as the lack of Iranian evidence of the existence of the satrapy of Persia, seems highly doubtful.

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