

The Marriage of Gygaea and Bubares and Macedonian Relations with Persia

Herodotus' story (5.17-22; cp. Just. 7.3) about the youthful heroics of Alexander I cleverly tricking and disposing of without a trace seven Persian envoys together with their entire entourage is almost universally dismissed as unhistorical [e.g. How and Wells *ad loc.*; Hammond and Griffith 1979 (*HM* II): 99; Errington 1981: 140, 143; Badian 1994: 108; Scaife 1989: 132; Borza 1990: 102; Fearn 2007: 115; Sprawski 2010: 136 with n19; but Dascalakis 1965: 151-157 "slightly exaggerated"]. However, Herodotus' mention in the same context of the marriage of Gygaea, daughter of Amyntas I and sister of Alexander, to Bubares, son of the Persian nobleman Megabazus, is almost universally accepted as fact. This paper identifies and addresses several historical problems arising from the separation of the marriage from the alleged context.

In Herodotus' story the marriage was contracted when a search party came looking for the missing envoys, whom Megabazus, Darius I's general in Europe c. 513-510 BCE, had sent to demand 'earth and water' from Amyntas I. This establishes a date for the marriage by 510, i.e. when Amyntas was king. [Accepted by Hammond and Griffith 1979: 58; Borza 1990: 103 n15; Badian 1994: 111-112.] The date is challenged, however, on the statement of Herodotus (5.21) that *Alexander* gave the Persians a large sum of money (tribute or bribe?) and his sister Gygaea in marriage to Megabazus' son, and of Justin (7.3.9-4.1) that the marriage (love match!) ensured for *Alexander* peace during the rest of Darius' reign and favor with Xerxes in 480. Some argue Alexander could not have given his sister until he was on the throne, certainly not before c. 505 (Amyntas gave Anthemus to Hippias in his exile) and possibly after 498 (Just. 7.4.1: Amyntas died "soon" after Bubares' departure from Macedonia, assuming he was recalled at the outbreak of the Ionian Revolt) [e.g. Errington 1981: 141; Sprawski 2010: 137]. The context and date of the "historical" marriage necessarily bear on the long debated questions of when and how

Macedonia first came under Persian authority. [E.g. Hammond and Griffith 1979 = *HM* II 58-60, and 1989: 42-43; Errington 1981; Balcer 1988: 4-6; Borza 1990: 104-105.]

As Errington (1981) notes, the implication of the envoys never being seen again is that the ‘earth and water’ tokens of submission agreed to by Amyntas (Hdt. 5.18.1) were never delivered to Darius. Were relations arranged on other terms then? [Xydopoulos 2012: 29-30: the marriage is evidence for loose client status.] Making no mention of ‘earth and water’ or even who is on the Macedonian throne—Alexander is assumed—Herodotus (6.44) also states that the Macedonians were subjugated to Persia by Mardonius, i.e. in 492, all the peoples east of Macedonia having been subjugated *earlier* (Hdt. 5.2-18, 6.44-5; Balcer 1988: 15). If we are not to reject his implication that this is the *first* subjugation, we need to ask what this says about Macedonian relations with Persia prior to 492.

Synkellos (Moss. 296.10) states that at the time of Xerxes’ expedition Alexander gave ‘earth and water’ to the Persians; is this a second or third submission? In winter 480/79 Mardonius chose Alexander to act as Persian ambassador to the Athenians for two reasons: (1) he was honored at Athens as ‘proxenos’ and ‘euergetes’, (2) he had a marriage connection with Persian nobility. If in 479 the marriage (obviously still intact) carried more political weight than vassalage, it seems it has been undervalued for its historical importance. For the underlying implication is that Macedonia was powerful enough to be worthy of such a tie. This paper challenges previous views on the relationship between Macedonia and Persia in the late sixth and early fifth centuries, and specifically the erroneous view that Macedonia was always an insignificant power prior to Philip II.

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