CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ARTAXERXES III (358-338 B.C.)

Artaxerxes III thus came to the throne (if the Greek accounts are to be trusted) by bloody means; and he is said to have ensured his place upon it by having as many as eighty of his half-brothers put to death. The prize thus cruelly won was huge, and ambitious men before him thought it worth much sacrifice of life; for as his uncle, the younger Cyrus, said, when seeking it, to the Greek officers in his pay: 'My father's realm extends towards the south to a region where men cannot dwell by reason of the heat, and to the north to a region where they cannot dwell by reason of the cold; and all that lies between these limits my brother's friends rule as satraps'.

The reconquest of Egypt

This great empire had contracted during the last years of Darius II and Artaxerxes II had failed to restore it to its former bounds; but his son now took vigorous measures to do so. He re-established Persian authority in Asia Minor, ordering the satraps there (who had attempted further insurrection) to disband their Greek mercenaries; and he overcame the still rebellious Cadusians and enrolled their fighting men in an army gathered for the reconquest of Egypt. This was a more difficult task, and the first campaign, of 351-350, ended in failure, and with Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Cilicia in revolt. It was five years before Artaxerxes marched again on Egypt, at the head of a huge army, and this time he was successful, making himself master of the whole of Lower Egypt by 343. He took harsh measures to discourage further risings: the walls of the chief cities were razed, and the gold and silver of the temples was confiscated, together with the holy records (which were later redeemed by the priests at heavy cost). Later Greek writers have Artaxerxes also slaughtering the Apis-bull with his own hand, and the no less holy ram of Mendes; but this, it is thought, is probably an adaptation of the slanders uttered about Cambyses (although whether originating with Greek writers or Egyptian priests there is no knowing).

---

1 Xenophon, Anabasis, I.vii.6.
2 See Olmstead, Persian Empire, 440; Kienitz, Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens, 107.
3 See Kienitz, op. cit., 108.
this and in other ways, it is said, Artaxerxes III has been 'often underestimated and misrepresented. He was hard and at times also brutal and terrible, but a skilled politician and strategist, energetic and tough, wise and also upright. He was the man whom the Achaemenian Empire then needed'.

Egypt thus came under Persian rule again after over half a century of independence; and there is nothing to tell us of the fate during those fifty odd years of the Persian communities which had earlier become established there, with their Zoroastrian priests and their 'places of rites'. But if there had been slaughter and destruction, then there was restoration again at this epoch, attested by the 'Mithraion' which was still being maintained by Persians in Fayum in the period after Alexander.

A trilingual stele of Xanthos

In 1973 a striking monument was unearthed at the city of Xanthos (called in the local tongue Orna), namely a stele bearing inscriptions in Lycian, Greek and Imperial Aramaic. The three inscriptions are not versions of an identical text, but deal variously with the same subject matter, which was the establishment, in the sacred precinct of that city, of a sanctuary to a divinity known as the 'Lord (or King) of Caunos', with his companion-deity, who in the Greek version appears as Arkesimas; the appointment of a priest and his descendants to serve there; and the fixing of the endowments and regular sacrifices.

The Aramaic text is the only one to begin with a dating formula. Its lines, which are slightly damaged, run as follows: 'In the month Siwan of the first year of Artakhshāta the King in the citadel of Orna, Pixŏdara, son of Katamnō, the satrap who is in Karka and Termila, has declared: The citizens of Orna have undertaken to establish a cult (\(^kṛbp\)) in honour of the Lord the god of Caunos, and of R[.. .]. And they have appointed as priest Simias, son of Koddorasi. And there is a house (\(dm\)) which the citizens of Orna have given to the Lord the god. And year by year, on the part of the city, there is paid in silver a mina and a half. The said priest sacrifices at the beginning of the month a

---

5 See above, p. 186.
6 On which see H. Metzger and P. Coupel, Fouilles de Xanthos, II: l'Acropole lyçienne et son enceinte, Paris 1963.
7 The three versions were treated independently, in CRAIBL 1974, by H. Metzger (the Greek text), pp. 82-93; E. Laroche (the Lycian), pp. 175-25; and A. Dupont-Sommer (the Aramaic), pp. 132-49.
8 See Dupont-Sommer, loc. cit., 137.