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Rome's Relationship with Artaxias I of Armenia

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Edited by

Pierre Briant ✦ Waldemar Heckel ✦ Konrad H. Kinzl
Susan Treggiari ✦ Lawrence Tritle

In this issue:

Mary Frances Williams, 'Shouldn't you
have come and talked to me
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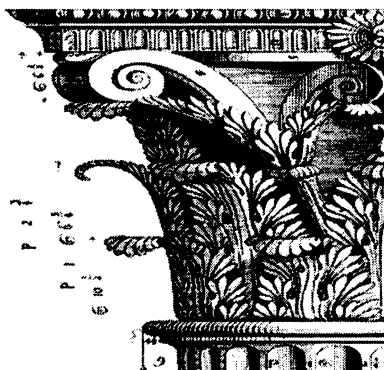
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ROME'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ARTAXIAS I OF ARMENIA

When the Seleucid king Antiochus III went down to defeat at Magnesia-by-Sipylus in Asia Minor in 190 BC, a new era opened up not only for Roman foreign affairs in the Greek East but for the people of Armenia. A new dynasty, destined to achieve greater success than any before or since, had suddenly come to power, and for the first time Rome established relations with Armenia. This first official notice of Armenia predates the beginning of a more substantive involvement with the region by about a century. From the time of Sulla to the end of antiquity and beyond, Armenia played a prominent role in the Romans' eastern policies. The immense amount of time, energy, and resources expended on the Romans' unending 'Armenian Question' indicates the value they placed on Armenia, once its strategic importance relative to the Parthian empire (and later its Sassanian successor) was recognized. But in c. 190 BC, no such consideration influenced the Senate's decision to acknowledge formally the new regime that had come to power in the wake of Antiochus' defeat. Armenia's new king was Artaxias I (Arm. Artašes), a dynamic figure worthy of more scholarly attention than he has received, at least by classical historians. This neglect is understandable given the picture we get from our sources, that Armenia was seemingly distant from Rome's eastern interests in this period and thus the Romans paid little attention to that region. In light of this state of affairs, the Senate's recognition of Artaxias is all the more curious. However, we can account for the Senate's initial diplomacy and subsequent activity (or lack thereof) by considering these matters in the context of Rome's overall approach to the East in the early second century, giving particular attention to the career of Armenia's new king and the relationship he most likely had with the Romans.

Strabo 11.14.15 tells us that Antiochus III appointed two of his *strategoi*, Artaxias and Zariadris, to rule in his name certain territories north of the Taurus range and east of the Euphrates. Artaxias thus ruled Greater Armenia and Zariadris Sophene. After Antiochus' defeat, the two rulers declared their independence and were recognized by Rome as autonomous. Strabo is our only source for this diplomatic recognition. However, he can be presumed reliable because the source for much of his information on Armenia was Theophanes of Mytilene (11.5.1, 11.14.4, 11.14.11), who had accompanied Pompey on his expedition through the country in the mid-60s BC and thus learned much from the natives about their history, culture, geography, and so on. Unfortunately, the circumstances of the recognition remain unclear, for Strabo's language is sadly imprecise.¹ Indeed, one must be cautious about the suggestion that the first Armenian embassy was sent to Rome, 'aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach', after the defeat of Antiochus and the Senate's recognition of the claims of Artaxias and Zariadris to 'kingship' (Asdourian 1911: 12). Nevertheless, in the political climate following Magnesia, in which Rome's supremacy in the Mediterranean was generally acknowledged, such a conclusion is reasonable. In any case, whether the Armenian kings or the Romans first made the diplomatic overtures, the main question, again, is *why* did the Roman Senate acknowledge Artaxias and Zariadris and presumably establish *amicitia* with them? We shall look at the question in the broader context of Rome's eastern strategy following the Treaty of Apamea, which, in 188, codified the terms of Antiochus' surrender. The extension of Roman power eastward

¹ εἰθ' ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀντιόχου τοῦ μεγάλου στρατηγῶν τοῦ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους πολεμήσαντος διηρέθη δίχα, Ἀρταξίου τε καὶ Ζαριάδριος· καὶ ἦρχον οὗτοι, τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιτρέψαντος· ἡττηθέντος δ' ἐκείνου, προσθέντοι Ῥωμαίοις καθ' αὐτοὺς ἐτάττοντο, βασιλεῖς προσαγορευθέντες (11.14.15).

in the second century has been described by a number of scholars, including R.M. Kallet-Marx (1995: 24-8), E.S. Gruen (1984: 643), and P. Green (1990: 414-15, 437), who characterize this power as conceptual rather than physical (i.e., military). In other words, although the time had not yet come for the Roman army physically to incorporate the East into the empire, a Roman presence (e.g., the *threat* of military force if needed) was certainly felt and hung over the equilibrium of Greek and Asiatic powers that the Romans tried to establish with the Treaty of Apamea. Armenia, though more remote than the states of Asia Minor, may have had a role to play in maintaining that equilibrium. D.M. Lang (1980: 126)² and C. Toumanoff (1963: 74) have even associated the recognition of Artaxias and Zariadris with the terms of the Treaty of Apamea, although there is no mention of the two kings and their realms anywhere in the extant text, as preserved by Polybius (21.43) and Livy (38.38). In any case, we may put forward the following hypotheses to explain Rome's recognition of Artaxias and Zariadris and the events that followed: 1) After Rome's first official notice of Armenia, the Romans decided to have Armenia play the same basic role as that of Pergamum, Cappadocia, and others—to maintain a balance in the region for the sake of stability.³ 2) For his own part, Artaxias no doubt welcomed Roman recognition of his sovereignty in Armenia and expected some material benefits to accrue as a result, but in time his relationship with Rome changed as the Romans repeatedly showed that they were not interested in serving the agendas of local rulers in the East. 3) Consequently, the disillusioned Artaxias became less reliable as an ally and in fact became more a destabilizing force in the region. It is to test these hypotheses that I propose to look at the career of Artaxias I, architect of Armenia's rise in the second century, and attempt to gauge his potential as a Roman ally.

Although historians generally regard the Artaxiad as a new dynasty in Armenia, supplanting the Orontid, the break with the past was not so complete. In 200 BC, Artaxias did usurp the throne and remove Orontes IV (Strabo 11.14.15; Moses Khorenats'i 2.46),⁴ but he was no foreign puppet of a Seleucid king. In fact, he may have been related to the Orontid royal family.⁵ In any case, Strabo's account suggests that Antiochus III had a hand in the revolt, or at least benefitted from it after the fact, for Artaxias ruled Armenia and Zariadris Sophene as *strategoi* of Antiochus. Toumanoff asserts that the two were at

² See also Burney and Lang 1971: 192 and Lang 1983: 512-13.

³ Lang explains the Senate's motives as follows: the Senate 'was glad to acquire two grateful allies in that strategic part of the world—pending completion of the usual preliminaries to swallow them up and annex lands to the Roman republic itself' (1980: 126). This explanation does not hold because, as noted above, the last thing Rome was interested in, in the second century BC, was annexation of the East, especially a region on the other side of Asia Minor! Secondly, the Republic *never* annexed Armenia. The first person to incorporate Armenia as a Roman province was the emperor Trajan (AD 98-117), over 300 years after the accession of Artaxias and Zariadris.

⁴ An inscription found near Armavir in 1927, dated to around 200, also mentions the death of King Orontes. See further Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 194-6.

⁵ Three marker stones inscribed in Aramaic found near Lake Sevan in the north of Armenia describe Artaxias as the son of a Zariadris, and in one of them Zariadris is said to be an Orontid. The text can be found in Frye 1962: 277 n. 35. In another stele from the district of Zangezur, Artaxias claims to be an 'Orontid king' (Perikhanian 1966: 18). Obviously, one should be cautious of putting too much stock in the Orontid patronymic since Artaxias' claim could merely be an attempt at legitimization. Cf. Toumanoff 1963: 291 n. 59 and Garsoïan 1997: 48. Additionally, Artaxias' father is not the same as Zariadris of Sophene, a conclusion to be drawn from the stylistic differences of their coins (Bedoukian 1978: 7).

odds with each other, an enmity that Antiochus fostered in order to control Armenia more easily (1963: 292). However, after their independence around 190, the two showed no signs of acting against each other, although the same cannot be said for Armenia and Sophene in later periods. In the years that followed, Artaxias and Zariadris, apparently working in cooperation, vigorously expanded their realms in almost every direction, extending their territory northward to the Cyrus River, southward into Taron (at the expense of 'the Syrians'), eastward to the Caspian Sea, southeastward into Media-Atropatene, and westward into parts of Lesser Armenia and the land of the Cataonians in Cappadocia (Strabo 11.14.5). Among those at whose expense these acquisitions came were the Seleucids, especially in Taron. We do not have a time frame for the kings' campaigns, and they could well have continued, at least in Artaxias' case, into the 160s, possibly provoking Antiochus IV to invade Armenia, as we shall see presently.⁶

As Strabo (11.14.5) makes clear, one consequence of Armenia's political consolidation was a linguistic consolidation as the Armenian language became more commonly used. Artaxias established his capital over this increasingly-homogenous domain sometime in the 180s. The city, called Artaxata after himself, was founded on the Araxes River. Strabo (11.14.6) and Plutarch (*Luc.* 31.3-4) record a legend that Hannibal was heavily involved in the project. The latter says that he located the site, laid out the plan, and even supervised the construction. Although this account is dubious, Hannibal's involvement would make the *terminus ante quem* of Artaxata's founding 183, the year in which he committed suicide in Bithynia. Archaeology has revealed a major city with paved streets, baths, and other markers of heavy urbanization. The city became a major crossroads along the east-west trade routes from India and the north-south from the Black Sea; the great number of Greek coins attests to its prosperity (Garsoïan 1997: 49). The Armenian historian Moses Khorenats'i also associates Artaxias' reign with a time of great prosperity.⁷ The rise of Greek culture in Armenia, traditionally associated with the reign of

⁶ One factor that bears on the timing of the kings' territorial conquests is the identification of 'Armenia' at Polybius 25.2.11, where a Mithridates is described as 'satrap of Armenia' during the Anatolian war of 183-179. O. Mørkholm 1966: 29 n. 35 identifies this 'Armenia' as Sophene while F.W. Walbank 1979: 272-3 refers to Lesser Armenia. If the former, then Zariadris would no longer be in power at this point, and the campaign that Strabo at 11.14.5 associates specifically with the former *strategoi* would have been completed by then, at least in the case of Sophene. All things being considered, Sophene seems the better choice, if not conclusively. Polybius' language suggests (somewhat contradictorily) that Mithridates' 'Armenia' was the smaller part of a greater whole because he describes Artaxias as ὁ τῆς πλείστης Ἀρμενίας ἄρχων (25.2.12). Although Sophene was demonstrably independent (politically) of Greater Armenia in 188 and remained so throughout the second century, the two formed a cultural and linguistic homogeneity (Strabo 11.14.5), perhaps resolving the contradiction at Polybius 25.2.12. Of course, we cannot be certain that Polybius is thinking in those terms when he writes τῆς πλείστης Ἀρμενίας. We also have the theory of T. Reinach 1890: 41 n. 1, deemed reasonable by Walbank 1967: 99-100, that the Mithridates who was Antiochus III's nephew (Polyb. 8.23.3) and the satrap at 25.2.11 are one and the same. Despite the terms used by Walbank (Armenia Minor) and Reinach (Petite-Arménie), this argument strengthens Sophene's case, not Lesser Armenia's, because Polybius 8.23 refers to Antiochus' campaign against Xerxes, dynast of Sophene, in 212. Antiochus' advisors recommended that once Xerxes was in his possession, the king should not release him but Μιθριδάτη παραδοῦναι τὴν δυναστείαν (8.23.3). It is conceivable that Antiochus' nephew did eventually (after an interlude of rule by Zariadris) acquire the kingdom designated for him in 212 and, as ruler of that kingdom, Sophene, participated in the Anatolian war of 183-179 (*infra*).

⁷ Further, he says that Artaxias increased the population of Armenia by settling foreigners in the land. Consequently, he reorganized the political divisions within the country, marking the newly delineated villages and estates with boundary stones (2.56). The three marker stones excavated near Lake Sevan are inscribed with Artaxias' name and royal title in Aramaic (which, along with Greek, continued in official use

Tigranes II (95-55), is more properly dated to Artaxias' reign. In some of the inscriptions found at Armavir and dated to c. 200 BC are excerpts from Euripides, a reference to Hesiod, and part of a Seleucid calendar (Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1994: 194-6). Moses (2.12) says that Artaxias brought bronze statues of Artemis, Apollo, and Heracles from Lydia. At 2.11, he relates that Artaxias struck coins with his own image. Given that his Orontid predecessors and Artaxiad successors struck coins with Greek legends, we can surmise that he probably did as well, although unfortunately there are no surviving coins that we can safely attribute to him (Bedoukian 1978: 8; cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1994: 196). The picture of Artaxias that emerges from the Armenian tradition, as recorded by Moses, is of a wise and successful ruler. The archaeological record points to an Armenia that was moving forward materially and culturally. As we shall see, there is a stark contrast between this Artaxias, the architect of Armenia's transformation, and the one who animates the accounts of classical writers.

The next event that we hear of in Artaxias' reign occurs in 179. This year saw the end of a war sparked by the aggressions of the king of Pontus, Pharnaces. From 183, Pharnaces tried to extend his power in Asia Minor, only to lock horns with the coalition of Eumenes II of Pergamum, Ariarathes IV of Cappadocia, Prusias II of Bithynia, and others. Among Pharnaces' allies was Sophene, now ruled by Mithridates.⁸ In the treaty signed in 179, Mithridates was fined 300 talents διότι παραβάς τὰς πρὸς Εὐμένην συνθήκας ἐπολέμησεν Ἀριαράθην (Polyb. 25.2.11), thereby renewing war in Cappadocia on the heels of Zariadris' campaign against the Cataonians. Artaxias was also included in the treaty, probably as an ally of the Pergamene coalition although we have no indication of his direct involvement in the war (25.2.12). The treaty was made without the intervention of the Romans, even though in the course of the war both sides had sent embassies to Rome, and the Senate answered by sending delegations to investigate the situation (Polyb. 24.1.1-3, 24.5, 24.14-15). The third and last delegation had the further commission of trying to settle the matter. Eumenes and Ariarathes requested that the legates arrange a meeting between Pharnaces and themselves, whereat the true nature of the Pontic king's iniquity would show through. The legates agreed to try and, upon Pharnaces' refusal, concluded that he was as much the villain as his enemies had charged. That verdict was reinforced when further talks broke down and the Pontic king had proven himself dedicated to the path of war. With this result, the legates gave up and returned to Rome (Polyb. 24.15.1-12). This outcome might seem curious since the eruption of hostilities on a meaningful scale in Asia Minor was not in Rome's interests. However, the Treaty of Apamea provided a remedy designed to deal with such instability. It established an equilibrium of states in the East so that any problems that arose could be dealt with locally and with little intervention from Rome, which had more pressing matters to attend to elsewhere.⁹ Thus the local states of Anatolia worked out the treaty

despite the spread of the spoken Armenian) and match the description of such stones in Moses' account (Lang 1980: 126-7, Garsoïan 1997: 49). On the chronological difficulties of Moses' account, see Toumanoff 1963: 284.

⁸ See n. 6 above.

⁹ This is the general assessment of Gruen, who stresses the importance of Pergamum and Rhodes in the policing of western Asia Minor and the Aegean (1984: 548-9) and the importance of keeping Antiochus III out of those regions (1984: 643), in both cases for the purpose maintaining stability in the region. A.N. Sherwin-White echoes Gruen's view that the Romans wanted to free up their resources to deal with matters in Gaul, Spain, Liguria, and other places (1984: 52-3). However, Sherwin-White warns against emphasizing

of 179 on their own. Polybius is not specific that Artaxias was named in the treaty as an ally of the coalition, but we have good reason to believe he was not Pharnaces' ally, as Mithridates of Sophene was. For one thing, we should expect to find some comment on Armenian reparations, as we do Sophenian, especially since Artaxias' realm was so much larger than Mithridates'.¹⁰ Polybius' choice of the term 'satrap' for Mithridates suggests subordination to someone else, although the precise meaning of the term cannot be certain. In any case, if Mithridates were subordinate to Artaxias, 'the ruler of the greater part of Armenia', we should expect the treaty to be between Eumenes and Artaxias, not Eumenes and Mithridates. We should also expect Mithridates' reparations of 300 talents to devolve upon Artaxias. Still, Artaxias need not have been Eumenes' ally; he might have been a neutral party who was included in the treaty.¹¹ In favor of the notion of alliance with Eumenes, we can imagine that Artaxias envisioned adding Pontic territory to his expanding empire, given his appetite for conquest. Like Eumenes, Artaxias probably saw the strength and ambitions of his Pontic neighbor as dangerous. Although Artaxias' involvement cannot be demonstrated, if he was allied with Pergamum, then Pharnaces faced enemies both to the east and west. The potential for Pontus to wreak havoc in Anatolia was thus negated by this (from Pharnaces' point of view) disturbing state of affairs. The Romans, therefore, need not have worried that their allies, including Eumenes and Artaxias, faced great jeopardy from the rapacious Pharnaces. In this scenario, and it is only a scenario, Armenia enhanced the Pergamene alliance's ability to clean up a mess that Rome chose not to touch.

In 165,¹² Antiochus IV Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the Great, invaded Armenia and captured Artaxias (Diodorus 31.17a; Appian *Syr.* 45, 66), evidently keeping him on the throne as a vassal (Porphyry *FGrH* 260 F 38). Other than the fact that Artaxias threw off the Seleucid yoke upon Antiochus' death in 164, as subsequent events show, very little can be said about this war with certainty. Antiochus may have wished to re-establish the state of affairs that had existed before 190, returning Artaxias to his previous status as *strategos* of a Seleucid king (Mørkholm 1966: 167). Armenia's supposed ally Pergamum did nothing for Artaxias' cause. On the contrary, Pergamum was now allied with Syria, Eumenes having secured the throne for Antiochus IV (Appian *Syr.* 45; *OGIS* 248). By this point, Eumenes' relationship with Rome seems to have soured somewhat (Green 1990: 429; cf. Gruen 1984: 556-63, 573-6). Working now in collusion with Antiochus, as several Asiatic cities charged, he even actively worked against those in Galatia who

Pergamum as a buffer against Antiochus. 'Pergamum was not in that league'. Instead, he implies that the Roman Senate intended Pergamum to be a check on the Galatians (1984: 21). Antiochus, despite his territorial losses and huge indemnity payments, got off easy, given the circumstances. He retained his throne and was even allowed to defend himself against those whom he was forbidden to attack (Polyb. 21.43.24, Livy 38.38.16). In Gruen's view, Antiochus became 'an associate in the enterprise to maintain Mediterranean concord' (1984: 643). In other words, even Rome's subdued enemy was now to work in harmony with Roman allies and toward the Roman goal of stability in the East, which was more easily achieved, in theory, by a viable, legitimate monarch than in the chaos of usurpation or anarchy. Such a policy also motivated Rome's retention of Philip V in Macedonia, in 197, and Tigranes II in Armenia, in 66, to name two other examples.

¹⁰Polybius even describes Artaxias as ὁ τῆς πλείστης Ἀρμενίας ἄρχων (25.2.12).

¹¹Walbank 1979: 273 points out that neutral parties could be included in the treaty, a state of affairs that Gruen 1984: 554 suggests was common for Hellenistic treaties.

¹²The deficiencies of our sources make this date less than certain, but it is generally accepted. Mørkholm 1966: 166-7 discusses the possibilities.

supported Rome (Polyb. 30.30.3-5). So Artaxias could not count on help from Pergamum. What did Rome herself do about this assault on her ally? Nothing. At least, there is no indication in the extant material that the Senate so much as sent a commission of inquiry or that Artaxias sent an embassy to Rome to request aid. The silence is curious. By this point, Antiochus had been soundly put in his place. The infamous 'Day of Eleusis', on which Gaius Popilius Laenus had drawn a circle around him in the Egyptian sand, was now three years behind Antiochus (Polyb. 29.27.1-8; Livy 45.12.3-8). The year 168 had been pivotal in Roman relations with the East: the Romans had violently shown their displeasure with Perseus of Macedonia at Pydna and arrogantly with Antiochus Epiphanes at Eleusis, near Alexandria. The earnestness with which they had proceeded was a message that peace in the eastern Mediterranean was at the pleasure of Rome (Gruen 1984: 659). More specifically, the Romans, having checked Antiochus' Egyptian aggressions, had sent the message that he must abide by the Treaty of Apamea.

On the other hand, Antiochus' campaigns along the Arabian coast, in Elymais, and possibly against the Parthians¹³ did not give the Romans cause for concern. Can the same be said for Armenia? Although invading Armenia meant crossing the Taurus, the Treaty of Apamea had only required Epiphanes' father to withdraw across the Taurus *usque ad Halyn*¹⁴ *amnem, et a valle Tauri usque ad iuga qua in Lycaoniam vergit* (Livy 38.38.4-5). In other words, the Seleucids were forbidden access only to western Asia Minor, far to the west of the Armenian plateau, where Roman interests were not so vital. What had happened to the *amicitia* between Rome and Armenia established in 188? As an alternative to the explanation posed by Mørkholm (1966: 167), that Antiochus was the aggressor and sought to reduce Artaxias to his pre-190 status of *strategos*, let us consider the possibility that Antiochus' Armenian war was *defensive* in nature. We have already noted that the Armenian expansion described by Strabo at 11.14.5 came partly at Seleucid expense, particularly in the area known as Taron. Regions adjacent to Artaxias' realm were 'cut off' from the neighboring nations: ἐκ τῶν περικειμένων ἐθνῶν ἀποτέμμενοι μέρη. Strabo says that Taron was cut off from 'the Syrians' (Σύρων). Because Taron lay to the west of Lake Van and to the north of the future site of Tigranocerta, and thus rather far from Syria itself, by 'Syrians' Strabo must mean 'Seleucids'. In other words, Seleucid territory extended into Taron at the time of Artaxias' accession. This conclusion is consistent with what we know of the political situation in the region, for originally Antiochus III was firmly in control of lands well beyond Taron when Artaxias and Zariadris came to power and ruled their respective countries in his name. And so, Antiochus Epiphanes' invasion can be explained as revenge for losses incurred at an earlier time. As remarked above, we cannot know when the Armenian campaigns of expansion recounted at Strabo 11.14.5 were concluded. Having some idea of Artaxias' resources would help us focus our estimate of the time he spent building his empire, but such information is not available because of the dearth of archaeological remains for second-century Armenia. In any case, while Antiochus no doubt pursued 'the traditional offensive policy of his dynasty against Armenia' (Mørkholm 1966: 167), which stemmed from Antiochus the Great's campaigns against rebellious elements there, it is reasonable

¹³ On which see Mørkholm 1966: 166-80.

¹⁴ The controversy about whether the word should read *Halyn* or *Tanaim* or *Taurum* is of no consequence to my point here. See Gruen 1984: 641 n. 145 for a summary of the arguments and further bibliography.

to conjecture that Epiphanes' invasion was specifically a response to Armenian aggression. Such would be his report to any investigatory embassy sent from Rome. Rome's decision to stay out of the fray probably arose from two factors: 1) Antiochus was campaigning far to the east of the boundary imposed upon the Seleucids by Apamea, putting Armenia in the same category as Arabia and Elymais, and 2) Rome's would-be ally Artaxias, who by now had a bad reputation for rapacity (Diod. 31.22), had probably become an unstable element in the region in the course of his campaigns of aggression against his neighbors, so that now the Romans would not be sorry to see him disappear from the scene.

Nevertheless, Polybius evidently held out hope that Artaxias' nature could be changed for the better (31.16.1-2) as he commented on his scheme to divide Sophene with Ariarathes V of Cappadocia around 163. By this point, Artaxias was clearly acting independently and thus, as he had done almost thirty years before, must have broken away from Syria, probably upon the death of Antiochus IV in Persia. Diodorus (31.22) develops the story: evidently there had been some disruption in Sophene, with two claimants to the throne, Mithrobuzanes (son of Mithridates?) and another, seeking refuge at the courts of Ariarathes and Artaxias, respectively. When Ariarathes restored Mithrobuzanes 'to the realm of his ancestors' (ἐπὶ τὴν πατρῶαν ἀρχήν), Artaxias sent envoys to Cappadocia and urged Ariarathes to join him in the removal of both claimants and in the partition of Sophene between them. But Ariarathes refused and protected Mithrobuzanes. Diodorus ascribes this response to Ariarathes' nature, which was πολὺ κεχωρισμένος τῆς τοιαύτης ῥαδιουργίας. That his reputation was enhanced was a fortunate consequence of choosing the right path. But the truth is, Ariarathes had his reputation in mind from the start. His actual intention was to cultivate Roman good will, especially as his own political situation was still precarious (Gruen 1984: 582-3). There can be little doubt that the Romans disapproved of Artaxias' latest intrigue. At this point, the *amicitia* declared in 190-188 must surely have dissolved.

The picture of Artaxias in the 160s in our sources is hardly flattering. By now, he seems to have entered upon dubious schemes and shady alliances, of the type that he attempted and failed with Ariarathes. Such was his reputation that his last recorded act was an alliance with an unsavory character named Timarchus, Seleucid satrap of Media. Around 161, Demetrius I Soter of Syria, his newly-acquired throne still vulnerable and his support in Rome lukewarm at best, found himself challenged by Timarchus, who campaigned for support in the Roman Senate and bribed his way to senatorial recognition of his sovereignty. Then he raised an army in Media, intimidated many of his neighbors into submission, and formed his Armenian alliance. Or did he? The sources for this rebellion are Appian's *Syrian Wars* 47 and Diodorus 31.27a. But Diodorus is the only source who mentions Artaxias and lets his facts get away from him when he reports Timarchus as the victor. Although the Roman Senate did acknowledge Timarchus' claim to the throne (Diodorus), they offered no material help, and the satrap ultimately went down to defeat (Appian). Thus it is possible that the alliance with Artaxias is spurious. However, the alliance makes sense: Artaxias had always been ranged against Syria and his break from Seleucid vassalage suggests that he retained a certain measure of strength, of which Timarchus would want to take advantage. Unfortunately, as in the Anatolian war of 183-179, we have no evidence that Artaxias participated in Timarchus' revolt. Since Appian is certainly correct that Timarchus failed and was executed, it seems likely that he had not made use of his alleged ally's strength. Though the rebellion itself is

historical, Artaxias' role is probably not. Its inclusion in Diodorus would seem to be the result of Artaxias' reputation in the final years of his reign.

Reputation and reality are often of different realms. In a sense, Artaxias may have become a sort of *topos* for historiographers, not unlike Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and, as we have seen, Hannibal. As so often happens, the legend becomes larger than the man himself, so that, for example, Hannibal became a bugbear in Roman children's dreams while a boon for the story of Artaxata's foundation. The magnitude of his military success earned him a permanent place in the memories of those who hated him and those who admired him. Artaxias certainly has not come down in history as the household name that the others above have, but he was, to be sure, a dynamic and long-lived king who left so much of an imprint on Armenian history and on the classical historians that, in Diodorus at least (not to mention his sources), he became the *topos* of the rapacious eastern potentate with no shortage of dastardly schemes.

But this is to look at the issue after the fact. The historical Artaxias, or at least his relationship with Rome, underwent a change in the course of his long reign. The facts are that in the beginning the Senate acknowledged his status as king of Armenia and by the end he had acquired a reputation for rapacity and dirty dealing. It would seem, then, that somewhere along the line, his relationship with Rome soured, much as Eumenes II's had. In both cases, the reason was a conflict of agendas. Eumenes had counted on Rome's support for his own territorial ambitions, which, when taken too far, did not sit well with the Senate. An ally was valued as long as he did not threaten Rome or Roman interests in the East. Artaxias, too, overreached himself and thus failed to attain some of his goals in his later years, goals unapproved by the Romans. In the end he proved unsuitable for the task the Senate had in mind for him when it first acknowledged his sovereignty in 190-188, namely to participate in the maintenance of stability and balance in the aftermath of Apamea. But if his foreign policies ultimately failed, Artaxias achieved tremendous success at home, sowing the seeds of an empire that, under his grandson Tigranes the Great (95-55 BC), swept across the Near East and became a formidable enemy of Rome. This is the Artaxias so fondly remembered by Moses Khorenats'i. Interestingly, the Armenian accounts stress the success of his 'domestic' policy, so to speak, while in the classical sources Artaxias' character fares poorly because of the excesses of his 'foreign' policy. The correspondence between reality and the foregoing reconstruction of Artaxias' career and Rome's response to it, which was the means by which we have sought to explain Rome's first official notice of Armenia, is itself perhaps not exact. But we can at least consider it viable, having examined the scattered pieces of evidence in light of Rome's overall approach to the Hellenistic world.¹⁵

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