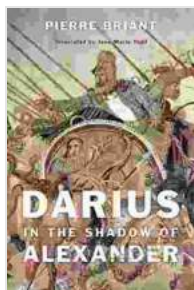


Darius III: The Last King of Persia in Alexander's Shadow



Darius in the Shadow of Alexander by Pierre Briant

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 602 pages
File size : 11488 KB
Screen Reader : Supported



Darius III, also known as Codomannus, was the last king of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia. His reign was marked by a series of conflicts with the rising power of Macedonia, led by the brilliant military strategist Alexander the Great. Darius' attempts to repel the Macedonian invasion ultimately failed, culminating in the decisive Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BCE, which led to the collapse of the Persian Empire.

Early Life and Accession

Darius III was born in 380 BCE to Arsames III, a grandson of King Darius II. He ascended to the throne in 336 BCE following the assassination of his predecessor, Artaxerxes IV. At the time of his accession, the Persian Empire was vast, stretching from the borders of India to Egypt. However, it was also facing internal divisions and a weakened military after decades of internal strife.

Conflict with Alexander the Great

Soon after Darius became king, Alexander the Great, who had succeeded his father Philip II of Macedonia, began his ambitious campaign to conquer the Persian Empire. In 334 BCE, Alexander crossed the Hellespont with a force of 40,000 men and invaded Asia Minor. Darius initially underestimated the Macedonian threat, but he soon realized the seriousness of the situation.

Over the next few years, the two armies clashed in a series of epic battles. The first major encounter was the Battle of Granicus River in 334 BCE, where Alexander's cavalry routed the Persian forces. This was followed by

the Battle of Issus in 333 BCE, where Darius' army was again defeated, forcing him to flee the battlefield.

Battle of Gaugamela

The decisive battle of the war took place at Gaugamela in 331 BCE. The Persian army, numbering over 100,000, was the largest ever assembled in antiquity. However, Alexander's superior tactics and leadership proved too much for the Persians. The Macedonian army broke through the Persian lines and Darius was forced to flee once more.

With the defeat at Gaugamela, the Persian Empire crumbled. Alexander pursued Darius and eventually caught up with him in the desert of Parthia. Darius was killed by one of his own satraps, Bessus, who had hoped to gain Alexander's favor.

Legacy and Significance

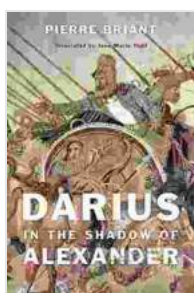
Darius III's defeat marked the end of the Achaemenid Empire and the rise of the Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great. Darius' legacy is complex. He was a competent ruler who inherited a vast and complex empire. However, he was also unable to effectively defend his kingdom against the Macedonian invasion.

Despite his failures as a military leader, Darius is remembered for his courage and dignity in the face of adversity. He was a skilled diplomat and a patron of the arts. His reign saw the construction of several magnificent palaces and the development of Zoroastrianism as the official religion of the empire.

Darius III's story is a reminder of the rise and fall of empires and the importance of leadership in times of crisis. His defeat at the hands of Alexander the Great marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the world.

Further Reading

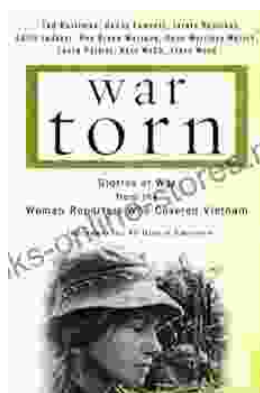
* Arrian, The Anabasis of Alexander * Diodorus Siculus, Library of History * Plutarch, Life of Alexander * Justin, Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus



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