Plutarch and the Fate of Antalkidas

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ANTALKIDAS was the leading Spartan ambassador of the fourth century B.C., an urbane man who quickly learned his way around the Persian court and who played a central rôle in Greek diplomacy during the Spartan hegemony. His success in negotiating the King's Peace of 387/6—often called the Peace of Antalkidas—is well known. Yet his later career is somewhat less certain, and the date of his death is disputed. According to the *communis opinio* Antalkidas committed suicide in 367/6 after his failure to dissuade King Artaxerxes from supporting Pelopidas and the Thebans in their efforts to sponsor a Common Peace.[1] Alternative views are few. D. J. Mosley has suggested that Antalkidas fell out of Persian favor and committed suicide sometime around 370 B.C.[2] K. J. Beloch denied that Antalkidas participated in the negotiations of 367 and claimed that he died later.[3] Recently, G. L. Cawkwell has maintained that Antalkidas was active at the Persian court as late as 361.[4]

The ancient testimony on the question comes from Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes* 22.6–7: *ἄχρι μὲν οὖν ἐπρώτευεν ἡ Σπάρτη, ξένον ἐποιεῖτο καὶ φίλον ὠνόμαζεν ἑαυτοῦ τὸν Ἀνταλκίδαν· ἐπεὶ δ' ἡττήθησαν ἐν Λεύκτροις, ταπεινὰ πράττοντες ἐδέοντο μὲν χρημάτων καὶ τὸν Ἀγησίλαον εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἐξέπεμψαν, ὁ δ' Ἀνταλκίδας ἀνέβη πρὸς τὸν Ἀρτοξέρξην, παρακαλῶν ἐπαρκέσαι τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις. ὁ δ' οὕτως ἐξημέλησε καὶ παρεῖδε καὶ ἀπέρριψεν αὐτόν, ὥστε καταβάντα καὶ χλευαζόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν, φοβούμενον δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἐφόρους, ἀποκαρτερῆσαι*. The only chronological hint in this passage is that Antalkidas' death coincided with Agesilaos' mercenary service in Egypt, which occurred sometime after Leuktra. From Xenophon's encomium

[1] *E.g.* W. Judeich, "Antalkidas," *RE* 1 (1894) 2345; E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* V[4] (Stuttgart 1958) 431; T. T. B. Ryder, *Koine Eirene* (Oxford 1965) 81; N. G. L. Hammond, *A History of Greece*[2] (Oxford 1967) 502; H. Bengtson, *Griechische Geschichte*[4] (Munich 1969) 282.

[2] "Pharax and the Spartan Embassy to Athens in 370/69," *Historia* 12 (1963) 249; "Euthycles: One or Two Spartan Envoys?," *CR* 86 (1972) 168; "Diplomacy in Classical Greece," *Ancient Society* 3 (1972) 12.

[3] *Griechische Geschichte* III[2] (Berlin and Leipzig 1922) 1.188 n.3 [hereafter, Beloch, *GG*].

[4] "Agesilaus and Sparta," *CQ* 70 (1976) 69 n.32.

Agesilaos (2.28) comes the information that the king served in Egypt when he was about 80 (*i.e., ca* 361 B.C.): *Ἐκ δὲ τούτου ἤδη μὲν ἔτη ἐγεγόνει ἀμφὶ τὰ ὀγδοήκοντα· κατανενοηκὼς δὲ τὸν Αἰγυπτίων βασιλέα ἐπιθυμοῦντα τῷ Πέρσῃ πολεμεῖν καὶ πολλοὺς μέν πεζούς, πολλοὺς δὲ ἱππέας, πολλὰ δὲ χρήματα ἔχοντα ἄσμενος ἤκουσεν, ὅτι μετεπέμπετο αὐτόν, καὶ ταῦτα ἡγεμονίαν ὑπισχνούμενος.*[5] Yet at 2.25–27 Xenophon states that Agesilaos' career as a mercenary captain began after Epameinondas' first invasion of Lakonia (370/69), and he tells of several of the king's exploits before his Egyptian adventure. The problem, then, is to determine when in the 360s the activities of Antalkidas and Agesilaos coincided.

First, Mosley's view that Antalkidas died *ca* 370. In 371 the Spartans summoned the Greeks to accept another Common Peace.[6] To further Spartan efforts Antalkidas was busy at the Persian court, and his presence there caused Kallistratos and the Athenian delegation obvious anxiety (Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.12). Furthermore, Antalkidas was successful, for Artaxerxes supported Sparta.[7] When Antalkidas returned to Sparta, he was elected ephor, and he was present during Epameinondas' invasion of 370/69.[8] This is hardly the career of an unsuccessful diplomat. Obviously Antalkidas had fulfilled his mission at Susa, had won the Great King's support, and was popular enough among the Spartans to win election to the ephorate. Moreover, Agesilaos too was still at home, for he directed the Spartan defense during Epameinondas' operations. These conditions do not fit the requirements of Plutarch's testimony in the *Artaxerxes*, and another date for Antalkidas' death must be sought.

The next candidate is, of course, Pelopidas' peace efforts of 367/6.[9] In response to a Spartan embassy to Artaxerxes the Thebans and their Peloponnesian allies sent delegations to Susa seeking a Common Peace. The only Spartan ambassador known to us is Euthykles.[10] No ancient source specifically puts Antalkidas in Susa during these

[5] *Cf.* also Plut. *Ages.* 36ff; Diod. 15.92.2ff; Nep. *Ages.* 8.2ff. On Xenophon's *Agesilaos*, see D. Krömer, *Xenophons Agesilaos* (Inaug.-Diss. Berlin 1971).

[6] Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.1ff; Diod. 15.50.4f; Plut. *Ages.* 28.1–4. H. Bengtson, *Staatsverträge des Altertums* II[2] (Munich and Berlin 1975) no.269.

[7] G. L. Cawkwell, "Epaminondas and Thebes," *CQ* 66 (1972) 258.

[8] Plut. *Ages.* 32.1; Judeich, *RE* 1 (1894) 2345.

[9] For the chronology of these years, see J. Roy, "Arcadia and Boeotia in Peloponnesian Affairs, 370–362 B.C.," *Historia* 20 (1971) 591–92; *cf.* also Bengtson, *Staatsverträge* II[2] no. 282.

[10] Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.33; B. Niese, "Euthykles," *RE* 6 (1907) 1506; Mosley, *CR* 86 (1972) 167–69.

negotiations, not even Plutarch's *Artaxerxes*. Those who have advocated the view that Antalkidas tried unsuccessfully to combat Pelopidas' embassy have assumed that in *Artaxerxes* 22 Plutarch is describing only the events of 367/6. Far from being a chronological unit, *Artaxerxes* 22 falls into three parts. In the first section (22.1–5) Plutarch deals with Antalkidas' career at the Persian court prior to the conclusion of the King's Peace of 387/6. At 22.4 he mentions the witticism of Agesilaos when he was chided for medizing: "*Φεῦ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ὅπου μηδίζουσιν ἡμῖν οἱ Λάκωνες*," "*Οὐ μᾶλλον*," *εἶπεν*, "*οἱ Μῆδοι λακωνίζουσι;*"—an incident which in the *Agesilaos* (23.4) he places after the King's Peace (*cf.* also *Mor.* 213B). The second part (22.6–7) treats Antalkidas' downfall, which Plutarch places sometime after Leuktra. The third section (22.8–12) covers the conduct of the Thebans Pelopidas and Hismenias and the Athenian Timagoras at the Persian court in 367/6, which receives corroboration from *Pelopidas* 30. Plutarch makes no temporal connections between any of these three episodes; instead he has strung together anecdotes about three unrelated embassies. The only thing which these three parts have in common is that they concentrate on the ways in which the various envoys conducted themselves at the Persian court. There is absolutely no reason to conclude that *Artaxerxes* 22 is a chronological unit or that Plutarch is treating the events of a single occasion.

There is indeed a very good reason why the Spartans would not have chosen Antalkidas for this mission. Although Antalkidas was a favorite of Artaxerxes, by whom he had been paid unique compliments, he was also *ξένος ἐκ παλαιοῦ τῷ Ἀριοβαρζάνει* (Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.28), and in 367/6 that was a cause for embarrassment. By then Ariobarzanes had come under Artaxerxes' suspicion. In 369/8 Ariobarzanes, acting under the King's instructions, had sent Philiskos of Abydos, a man who had served the satrap well, to Delphi to conclude with the Greeks another Common Peace.[11] Philiskos convened the congress, but he also took the opportunity to further the interests of his mentor.[12] He began to hire Greek mercenaries for the service of Ariobarzanes, and

[11] Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.27; Diod. 15.70.2. *Cf.* Beloch, *GG* III².1.181; Ryder, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 80. For the reasons behind Artaxerxes' desire for a Common Peace at this time, see R. Seager, "The King's Peace and the Balance of Power in Greece, 386–362 B.C.," *Athenaeum* N.S. 52 (1974) 58–59.

[12] Dem. 23.141–42, 202; Th. Lenschau, "Philiskos," *RE* 19 (1938) 2378–79; G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London 1972) 39.

he put them to good use. He placed 2000 of them at the disposal of Sparta, and they no doubt served with Archidamos when he won the Tearless Battle in 368 B.C.[13] The satrap had thereby put the Spartans in his debt, and it is hardly surprising to learn that the Spartans concluded an alliance with him (Xen. *Ages.* 2.26). By winning over the Spartans Ariobarzanes was attempting to insure that when he raised the standard of revolt he would be able to recruit additional mercenaries from the ranks of his new allies. Artaxerxes cannot have been pleased by the conduct of Philiskos and Ariobarzanes. The satrap's maintenance of Philiskos' mercenaries and the employment of them beyond the Persian realm were disagreeably reminiscent of Cyrus the Younger's preparations for his rebellion (Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.6ff). Artaxerxes had seen it all before, and he disliked the signs. For that matter Ariobarzanes may already have been in revolt by late 367, although that is by no means certain.[14] At any rate, any friend of Ariobarzanes, especially one such as Antalkidas, was likely to get a cool reception in Susa at this time.

Furthermore, Agesilaos' conduct in these years does not fulfill the requirements of *Artaxerxes* 22.6–7. When Ariobarzanes revolted, Agesilaos took military service under the rebel.[15] In the course of this service Agesilaos had some dealings with Tachos, who governed Egypt and who was helping to put down Ariobarzanes' rebellion. Yet there is nothing to indicate that Agesilaos himself traveled to Egypt in the course of the fighting. Instead all the campaigns of which we have information were conducted in the northeastern Aegean.[16] Once these operations were completed, Agesilaos returned home, and nothing more is heard of him until 362, when he defended Sparta against Epameinondas' second invasion of Lakonia.[17] So there is no real evidence that Antalkidas participated in the negotiations of 367/6, and

[13] Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.27–32; Diod. 15.70.2, 72.3; Meyer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 422.

[14] Judeich, *RE* 2 (1895) 832. Although A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago 1948) 413, placed Ariobarzanes' revolt in 367, Beloch, *GG* III².2.255, suggested instead 366. The sources do not permit a more precise dating.

[15] Xen. *Ages.* 2.26 speaks of Agesilaos only as an envoy, but Nep. *Ages.* 7.2–3 and *Timoth.* 1.3 state specifically that the king was paid for his services. On Nepos' testimony see O. Schönberger, "Cornelius Nepos von einem herrschenden Vorurteil befreit," *Hermes* 96 (1968/9) 508–09. Despite Xenophon's claim, Agesilaos was clearly serving as a mercenary captain.

[16] Xen. *Ages.* 2.26–27; Nepos, *Tim.* 1.3; Beloch, *GG* III².1.193; Olmstead, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.14) 413.

[17] Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.9ff; Kallisthenes, *FGrHist* 124 F 26; Diod. 15.83.1ff; Plut. *Ages.* 34.3–11.

good reason to doubt it. Moreover, Agesilaos was nowhere near Egypt at this time.

That leaves 361 B.C., the only time in which Agesilaos is known to have served in Egypt.[18] This was also the old king's last campaign, and he did not live to complete it. In addition, the situation in Greece and the poverty of Sparta amply explain why Agesilaos, despite his age, again undertook the rigors of soldiering. After the battle of Mantinea in 362 Sparta's diplomatic position had improved somewhat, but even at that the future held little promise. Many Peloponnesian states joined in alliance with Athens, and Tegea, Megalopolis, Argos and Messene remained loyal to Thebes.[19] Moreover, the Spartans once again refused to become a party to the Common Peace concluded that year and were still isolated.[20] Even Epameinondas' death did not prevent the Thebans from sending Pammenes with 3,000 hoplites and 300 cavalry to assist Megalopolis in 362/1.[21] In view of all this it is not surprising to learn that Agesilaos once more betook himself to mercenary service and that Antalkidas, once the foremost Spartan diplomat, was again chosen for an embassy to the Great King. Both men had the task of gaining additional support and desperately needed financial assistance for their beleaguered state. Of the two Antalkidas had the more difficult assignment. By 361 Artaxerxes had his hands full with the Satraps' Revolt, and he harbored little love either for the man who had failed him or for the state that he represented. Ever since Artaxerxes had decided in favor of the independence of Messene, the Spartans had opposed him;[22] and now he refused to help them in their hour of need, especially when their king had taken service with one of his rebellious subjects. These conditions explain admirably the reasons behind the Great King's conduct in Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* (22.6–7). One can also understand Antalkidas' plight. Because of his failure at Susa and the subsequent ill treatment that he suffered from his countrymen, and, perhaps even more important than these things, because of the failure of his life's work, Antalkidas committed suicide.

Yet one question remains. What was Plutarch doing in the *Arta-*

[18] Xen. *Ages.* 2.28; Diod. 15.90.2, 92.2–6; Plut. *Ages.* 36 *ad fin.*

[19] *IG* II² 112 [Bengtson, *Staatsverträge* II² no.290]; Diod. 15.84.4; Dem. 15.27, 16.25; P. Cloché, *Thèbes de Béotie* (Namur, n.d. [1952]) 174–75.

[20] Plut. *Ages.* 35.3–6; Kallisthenes, *FGrHist* 124 F 23; Bengtson, *Staatsverträge* II² no.292.

[21] Diod. 15.94.2–3; Th. Lenschau, "Pammenes," *RE* 18 (1949) 298.

[22] Cawkwell, *CQ* 70 (1976) 71.

xerxes, and why did he mention the conduct of Antalkidas, Pelopidas, Hismenias and Timagoras in the same chapter? The answer lies in Plutarch's aims and methods. Though the events of the fourth century B.C. were ancient history in Plutarch's day, he looked upon the Greek wooing of the Persian king with obvious distaste. The first twenty chapters of the *Artaxerxes* deal with the years 404–395, and at 21.6 Plutarch states that Antalkidas had persuaded the Spartans to accept the King's Peace (that of 387/6), which he described εἰ δεῖ τὴν τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὕβριν καὶ προδοσίαν εἰρήνην καλεῖν, ἧς πόλεμος οὐδεὶς ἀκλεέστερον ἤνεγκε τέλος τοῖς κρατηθεῖσι. Plutarch begins chapter 22 by telling of Artaxerxes' compliments to Antalkidas;[23] and then he comments sourly ἐξορχησάμενος [*sc.* Antalkidas] ἐν Πέρσαις τὸν Λεωνίδαν καὶ τὸν Καλλικρατίδαν, which is reminiscent of Herodotos' words (6.129): Ὦ παῖ Τισάνδρου, ἀπωρχήσαό γε μὲν τὸν γάμον. ὁ δὲ Ἱπποκλείδης ὑπολαβὼν εἶπε, Οὐ φροντὶς Ἱπποκλείδῃ. Just as Hippokleides danced away his marriage by his silliness, so Antalkidas by currying favor with the Great King danced away all that the noble Spartans of old had fought and died for. Timagoras, on the other hand, is depicted as a man of shameless greed, one who put his own avarice above the welfare of his state, and who let himself be made a tool of Artaxerxes (22.9–12).[24] This picture of Timagoras recurs in the *Pelopidas* (30.8–11), where Plutarch contrasts Timagoras' venality with Pelopidas' refusal to accept any gifts except those customarily given to ambassadors.

That leaves the conduct of Pelopidas and Hismenias to be accounted for. Plutarch was genuinely proud of the Thebans (especially Epameinondas and Pelopidas) under whom Thebes enjoyed its ἀριστεία.[25] He uses the disgraceful examples of Antalkidas and Timagoras to underline his contention that the two Theban envoys conducted themselves in an honorable fashion.[26] At 22.8 he says specifically about Pelopidas ἀλλ' οὗτος μὲν οὐδὲν αἰσχρὸν ἐποίησεν. He next tells how Hismenias resorted to a trick to avoid doing obeisance to the King: Hismenias threw his ring on the floor, then stooped to pick it up. Although Hismenias' artifice may seem to us more crafty than honor-

[23] This anecdote is repeated at *Pelop.* 30.6.

[24] *Cf.* Dem. 19.137, 191; *Suda s.v.* Τιμαγόρας; G. L. Cawkwell, "The Common Peace of 366/5 B.C.," *CQ* 55 (1961) 83; Mosley, *GRBS* 9 (1968) 157–60; *CR* 86 (1972) 12.

[25] A. Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London 1974) 28–29.

[26] Interestingly enough, Plutarch seems more concerned with the deportment of these two men than whether they won the King over to their cause.

able, the episode enjoyed a certain popularity in antiquity, and Aelian (*VH* 1.21) retells it with a number of embellishments. Thus the ignoble conduct of Antalkidas and Timagoras serves as a foil for the more manly deportment of Pelopidas and Hismenias, which is the same device that Plutarch used in *Pelopidas* 30 to contrast Timagoras' avarice with Pelopidas' restraint. As C. P. Jones has demonstrated, this technique is very popular with Plutarch, who employs it frequently.[27] There is a second aspect of Plutarch's method. Plutarch is as usual pointing up a moral: both Antalkidas and Timagoras comported themselves dishonorably, and they each died ignominiously because they ultimately failed their duty. Not so with Pelopidas and Hismenias. They served their state well, and indeed Pelopidas' end was a noble death at the battle of Kynoskephalai and a magnificent funeral.[28] In *Artaxerxes* 22 Plutarch is pointing up a moral (and defending the good name of his Theban heroes), not giving a detailed account of Greek diplomacy at the Persian court.

So rather than infer that Antalkidas took part in the negotiations of 367/6 but failed to achieve results, we must conclude that he had nothing to do with that embassy. His last mission to the Persian court occurred in 361 and ended in humiliation and death. Plutarch mentions Pelopidas and Hismenias in *Artaxerxes* 22 only to contrast their nobility to the ignominy of Antalkidas and Timagoras, as if to say that they at least did not dance away the interests and fame of Thebes.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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[27] *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford 1971) 73–74, 102. Plutarch used this same device in his account of the trials of Epameinondas and Pelopidas in spring 369; see my "Plutarch on the Trials of Pelopidas and Epameinondas (369 B.C.)," forthcoming in *CP*.

[28] Plut. *Pel.* 31.2ff; a statue of Pelopidas, sculpted by Lysippos, was erected at Delphi; *cf.* E. Sjövist, "Lysippus," in *Semple Lectures*, SER.II (Norman 1973) 10–11.