

"Vanished Persian Army Said Found in Desert "

from Thebes to attack the Oases of Siwa and destroy the oracle at the Temple of Amun



Excerpt from recent news item by 'By Rossella Lorenzi Sun Nov 08 2009' Discovery News/Archaeology News - "Vanished Persian Army Said Found in Desert":

The remains of a mighty Persian army said to have drowned in the sands of the western Egyptian desert 2,500 years ago might have been finally located, solving one of archaeology's biggest outstanding mysteries, according to Italian researchers.

Bronze weapons, a silver bracelet, an earring and hundreds of human bones found in the vast desolate wilderness of the Sahara

desert have raised hopes of finally finding the lost army of Persian King Cambyses II. The 50,000 warriors were said to be buried by a cataclysmic sandstorm in 525 B.C.

"We have found the first archaeological evidence of a story reported by the Greek historian Herodotus," Dario Del Bufalo, a member of the expedition from the University of Lecce, told Discovery News.

According to Herodotus (484-425 B.C.), Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, sent 50,000 soldiers from Thebes to attack the Oasis of Siwa and destroy the oracle at the Temple of Amun after the priests there refused to legitimize his claim to Egypt.

After walking for seven days in the desert, the army got to an "oasis," which historians believe was El-Kharga. After they left, they were never seen again.

"A wind arose from the south, strong and deadly, bringing with it vast columns of whirling sand, which entirely covered up the troops and caused them wholly to disappear," wrote Herodotus.

A century after Herodotus wrote his account, Alexander the Great made his own pilgrimage to the oracle of Amun, and in 332 B.C. he won the oracle's confirmation that he was the divine son of Zeus, the Greek god equated with Amun.

----- Ussher Reference -----

3480 AM, 4190 JP, 524 BC

985. In a rage, Cambyses ordered an expedition against Ethiopia, without making any provisions for grain or food. Like a mad man, as soon as he had heard what his Fish Eaters had said, he

immediately marched off with all his own foot soldiers, ordering the Greeks to stay behind. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 25. 2:33}

986. When he came as far as Thebes in Egypt, he selected about fifty thousand of his army and sent them to rob the land first, and then to burn the temple of Jupiter Ammon, making slaves of all the inhabitants of the place as they did so. Then he marched on toward Ethiopia. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 25. 2:33} {*Diod. Sic., l. 10. c. 14. s. 3. 4:77}

987. On that journey, Cambyses subdued those Ethiopians who bordered on the lower parts of Egypt, and who lived in the city of Nysa and kept the holy days to Dionysus. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 97. 2:125} Cambyses renamed Saba, the capital of the Ethiopians, and the island on which it stood, Meroes in honour of Meroe, who was his wife and his sister. {*Strabo, l. 17. c. 1. s. 5. (790) 8:19} {*Josephus, Antiq., l. 2. c. 10. s. 2. (249) 4:273} She had accompanied him into Egypt and later died there. No other king of Persia before him had married his sister. Shortly after this, he married his older sister Atossa. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 31. 2:41} After his death, she married Magus, and after him she married Darius Hystaspes. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 68,88. 2:89,115}

988. The army, which set out from Thebes against the Ammonians, travelled seven days across the sands before coming to the city of Oasis. (This city was inhabited by those Samians who were of the Aeschrionian tribe.) From there they came to a country called The Isle of the Blest.

989. As they marched from there across the sandy plains and were midway between Oasis and Ammonia, it is said that while they

were eating, a very strong wind arose out of the south. It brought those shifting sands upon them and overwhelmed them all. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 26. 2:35,37} {Justin, Trogus, l. 1. c. 9.} Fifty thousand men died in that sand storm. {*Plutarch, Alexander, l. 1. c. 26. s. 6. 7:303}

990. The army which was going with him against the Ethiopians ran out of provisions after five days. When they had lost hope of any food, they cast lots and started to eat one another. When Cambyses saw this, he returned to Thebes, having lost most of his army. {*Herodotus, l. 3. c. 25. 2:35} {*Seneca, Natural Questions, l. 2. c. 30. s. 2. 7:147,149} Lucan stated: {*Lucan, l. 10. (280) 1:611}

And mad Cambyses, marching toward the east,

Came to the long-lived Ethiopians:

And wanting food, his own men up did eat;

And yet the head of the Nile never found.

3673b AM, 4383 JP, 331 BC

1829. Alexander got them started and wanted them to work quickly. [E216] He journeyed to the temple of Zeus Ammon, having an ambition to go there because he had been told that Perseus and Hercules had been there. {*Plutarch, Alexander, l. 1. c. 26. s. 6. 7:301} {*Arrian, Anabasis, l. 3. c. 3. s. 1. 1:229} This was affirmed by Callisthenes in the history of Alexander which he wrote, and he was cited by Strabo. {*Strabo, l. 17. c. 1. s. 43. 8:115,117}

1830. Therefore, he followed the coastline as far as Paraetonium, finding some fresh water along the way, two hundred miles from Alexandria, according to Aristobulus. {*Arrian, Anabasis, l. 3. c. 3. s. 3. 1:229}

1831. He was met about halfway by envoys from the Cyrenians. They presented him with a crown and other costly gifts, among which were three hundred horses trained for war and five chariots, each drawn by four horses. These were the best horses that could be found. He accepted these gifts and made a league of friendship with the Cyrenians. {*Diod. Sic., l. 17. c. 49. s. 3. 8:259}

1832. He passed through the dry country from Paraetonium to Mesogabas, where the temple of Ammon was. He wandered over the plains while the hot wind blew from the south. Callisthenes claimed that he was saved from death partly by a shower of rain, which settled the sand, and partly by a flock of ravens, which led him on the way. [L304] He further added this fable to the story, that often, when the men wandered out of the way in the dark, the ravens would call them back into the right way again with their cawing. {*Strabo, l. 17. c. 1. s. 43. 8:115,117} {*Plutarch, Alexander, l. 1. c. 27. 7:303}

1833. Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, stated that there were two serpents which went before the company, making a noise, and which led them to and from the temple again. However, Aristobulus, with whom most writers agree, stated that there were two ravens which persisted in flying before the army, and that these were Alexander's guides on the way there. {*Arrian, Anabasis, l. 3. c. 3. s. 5,6. 1:231}

1834. Having come to Bitter Lake, he went on about twelve miles farther and passed by the Cities of Ammon. After a day's journey from there, they came to Zeus Ammon's grove and the temple. {*Diod. Sic., l. 17. c. 49. s. 6. 8:261}

1835. There the priests of the temple had been secretly bribed beforehand and instructed what to say. As soon as Alexander approached to enter through the temple doors, they all came and greeted him by the name of Ammon's son. {Justin, Trogus, l. 11. c. 11.} So we learn from this event that the god, although deaf and dumb, had the power, through the priests, to lie as they wished. Anyone who came to consult the oracle could be told exactly what he wanted to hear. {Orosius, l. 3. c. 16.}

1836. Callisthenes stated that the priests permitted no one but Alexander to come into the temple in his ordinary attire. All the rest were required to change their clothes and to hear the oracle from the outside. The oracle told Alexander various things by signs and vague language, telling him plainly, however, that he was Zeus' son. {*Strabo, l. 17. c. 1. s. 43. 8:115} Yet Alexander, in a letter to his mother Olympias, said that he had received many secret oracles there, which he would tell her alone on his return. {*Plutarch, Alexander, l. 1. c. 27. s. 5. 7:305}

1837. In the same letter, or in some other letter to his mother, (which I am sure was what Tertullian meant, {*Tertullian, De Pallio, l. 1. c. 3. 4:8}) Alexander said that he had been told by Leon, a principal priest among the Egyptians, that those who were now gods, had formerly been men. In worshipping them, the countries preserved the memory of their kings and ancestors.

{*Augustine, City of God, l. 8. c. 5. 2:147,148} {*Augustine, City of God, l. 8. c. 27. 2:167} {De Consens. Evangelist, l. 1. c. 23.} {Minucius Felix, Octavius} {Cyprian, De Idolor. Vanitate.} At the beginning of the letter in which he had written this to his mother, he opened with:

“Alexander the king, the son of Zeus Ammon, sends greetings to his mother Olympias.”

1838. She, in her answer, very wittily replied: (from Marcus Varro, in a book of his entitled Orestes, or On Madness:{* Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights, l. 13. c. 4. s. 1,2. 2:423})

“Now, my good son, I pray thee, be content and do not accuse me, nor lay anything to my charge before Hera. For she will do me some shrewd turn, if you in your letters make me a step-queen to her.”

1839. Alexander was well pleased at having received such an answer, as he admitted by his own confession. He returned from there to Egypt by the same way he had come, according to Aristobulus. Ptolemy said he took a shorter way to Memphis. {*Arrian, Anabasis, l. 3. c. 4. s. 5. 1:233}