

# Charidemos

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Charidemos of Oreos was an outstanding Euboian MERCENARY of the fourth century BCE, who was also granted Athenian citizenship and became an influential STRATEGOS; the main source about his career is the Demosthenic speech *Against Aristocrates* (Dem. 23), which unfortunately gives us an exceedingly negative and arguably false portrait, hence the need to compare it with the picture provided by other sources.

His first attested activity is three years' service in the pay of the Athenian *strategos* Iphikrates, near Amphipolis between 368/7 and 365/4 BCE, followed by service under the Thracian king Kotys, the Olynthians, the Athenian *strategos* Timotheos, and the Phrygians; such repeated changes of sides are misread by Demosthenes as a sign of lack of loyalty and betrayal, but they need instead to be interpreted in the light of the normal career of a mercenary. Charidemos then returned to Kotys' service in 360/59. After the Thracian dynast was murdered, Charidemos' position appears to have been strengthened, since the young heir (and brother-in-law) Chersobleptes greatly relied on the military experience of the general.

Charidemos later contributed to the negotiation of the treaty of alliance with Athens in 357 (IG II<sup>2</sup> 126; Rhodes and Osborne 2003: no. 47), probably as a result of which he received the honor of Athenian citizenship (Dem. 23.65, 89, 187); from then on, he always pursued Athenian interests, as shown by the gold crowns, the liturgies, and the various strategies (four, but probably many more) he was

awarded, leading us far from the Demosthenic portrait.

In the following years, he continued to operate in the north Aegean area against the Macedonian kings, so much so that he was on the list of the anti-Macedonian Athenians whose surrender was demanded by Alexander the Great (see ALEXANDER III, THE GREAT) after the revolt and destruction of Thebes in 335 (Plut. *Dem.* 23.4–6; Arr. *Anab.* 1.10.3–6). On this occasion Charidemos was arguably the only one who actually went into exile, resuming his mercenary activities under the only strong enemy of Alexander, the king of Persia. Shortly after, in 333, he died a glorious death: he dared to criticize King Darius III's tactics and was sentenced to death, whereas the facts proved that he was right. Even in this last episode of his life he showed his military and strategic skills, as attested by Diodorus, who called him "a man admired for his courage and strategic genius" (17.30.2).

SEE ALSO: Diodorus of Sicily; Euboea; Olynthos; Persia and Greece; Thracia.

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