The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East

Volume V: The Age of Persia

Edited by

KAREN RADNER
NADINE MOELLER
D. T. POTTS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

CIP data is on file at the Library of Congress
ISBN 978–0–19–068766–3

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190687663.001.0001

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed by Sheridan Books, Inc., United States of America

Contents

62

The Northeastern Regions of the Persian Empire

BACTRIANA, SOGDIANA, MARGIANA, CHORASMIA, ARIA, PARTHIA, THE SAKAS, AND THE DAHAE

Michele Minardi

62.1. Introduction

The territories that are grouped together in this chapter as the northeastern holdings of the Persian Empire (figure 62.1) had different patterns of socioeconomic development prior to the Persian period.[1] Before the Persian Empire's expansion in the east, complex societies and sedentary economic structures had been successfully established in some of these territories that afterward continued their existence within the new state context. Most prominently, this is the case with Bactriana. In some other areas, such as Chorasmia, polity formation occurred only at a later time,

1. The following additional abbreviations are used: DB for the Bisotun inscription of Darius I; DNx, DPx and DSx for the various inscriptions of Darius at Naqš-e Rustam, Persepolis and Susa; XPh for Xerxes I's inscription from the Persepolis garrison quarters. The chapter was language-edited by Karen Radner.

Michele Minardi, *The Northeastern Regions of the Persian Empire* In: *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*. Edited by: Karen Radner, Nadine Moeller, and Daniel T. Potts, Oxford University Press.
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190687663.003.0062

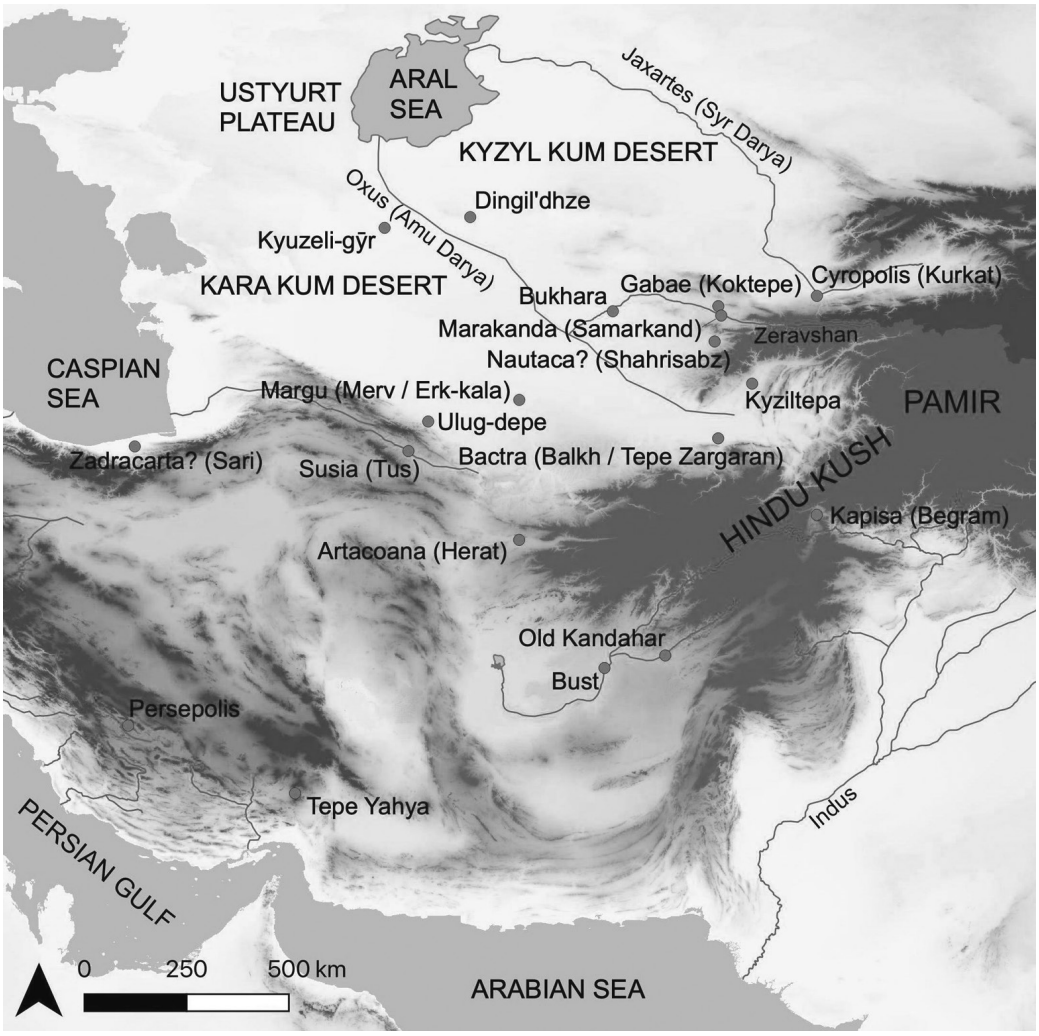

FIGURE 62.1. Sites mentioned in chapter 62. Prepared by Andrea Squitieri (LMU Munich).

seemingly as the effect of external impulses, and quite possibly of the Persian Empire (mediated through a Central Asian agent).

Furthermore, the area of imperial political influence in Central Asia is hard to define, as we know only what the Persian kings believed to be "theirs" (figure 62.2). Outside the empire's eastern and northeastern geographical borders, there were the pastures of the eastern Scythians, the semi-nomadic *Sakā* of the Persian sources (called Sakas in the following). To these regions' great socioeconomic and environmental variability from semi-arid plains to mountains and steppes, and from urban to semi-nomadic contexts, the Persian rulers seemed to have responded with specific solutions, ranging from the exercise of direct political and

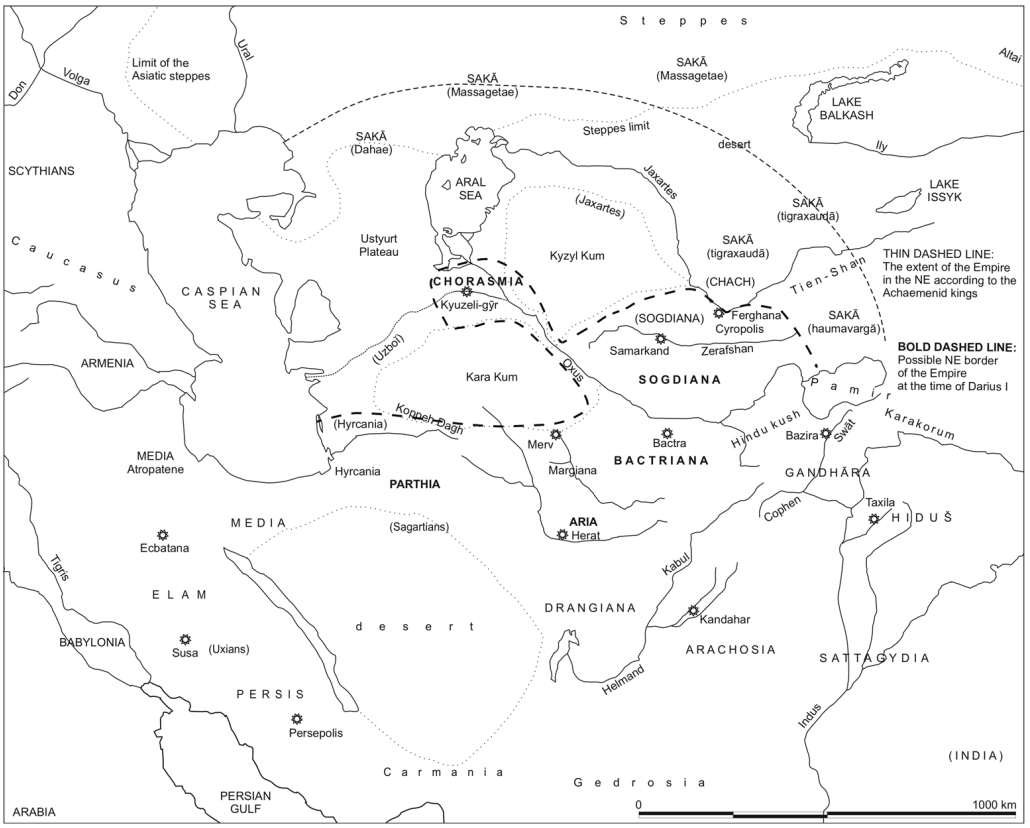

FIGURE 62.2. The extent of the northeastern regions of the Achaemenid Empire, with the hypothetical extension of its borders and of its hegemony at the time of Darius the Great marked with the bold dashed line. The extent according to the Achaemenid inscriptions is marked with the thinner line of short dashes. Author's drawing.

administrative control over preexisting organized communities, to the agricultural "colonization" of new lands, to the implementation, as dictated by need, of those relation mechanisms (warfare, trade, and diplomacy) deemed necessary to control, influence, and utilize the forces of the mobile groups beyond their borders.

Given that the Persian domination over its vast Central Asian territory lasted for more than two centuries, we would expect a wealth of explicit archaeological evidence, especially from those sedentary areas which were under direct (and persistent) imperial administrative control. But this is not the case: most of the extant Persian-period material comes from the steppes, from the burial mounds of the Sakas, with whom the Persian Empire had generated a two-way pattern of fruitful exchanges that left its most detectable traces in the arts and crafts of the

time and some echoes beyond. Much is yet to be done in this field, especially as data is virtually nonexistent for all satrapal seats in the east.

What we do know is that in the eastern regions of the empire, the effects of the Persian domination (or in the case of the Sakas, of its proximity) seem to have been remarkable for certain areas. But in other regions, despite their centrality in the economic and administrative system implemented by the conquerors, such outcomes are far less tangible; in such lands, continuity seems to have been the norm. The Persian imperial presence imposed, with military force, the mechanisms of territorial and political control as implemented across their vast empire, and the reflections in the archaeological record are still the subject of much debate due to a lack of incontrovertible archaeological evidence for the Persian imperial presence, accompanied by the meagerness of the historical sources.

However, it remains a fact that the political aegis of the Persian Empire from Cyrus the Great (559–530 BC) to Darius III (335–330 BC)—and administratively, since Darius I (521–486 BC)[2]—in Asia must have been significant. As has been recently recognized thanks to the publication of a handful of administrative documents from a satrapal archive of Bactriana (unfortunately without archaeological context) and from Old Kandahar in Arachosia, this aegis is not completely intangible. Such evidence, together with the ongoing study of the archives of Persepolis, is helping to lay important groundwork for future archaeological investigations in Central Asia and paint a vivid image of a dynamic imperial administration, capable of managing people and resources in all the regions of their world.

62.2. Avestan geography and the traditions about Cyrus's conquests in Central Asia

Before entering recorded history, most of the future Persian holdings in Central Asia were already part of that oral patrimony that the Avesta has handed down to us in two *Young Avesta* lists: that of the "Aryan

2. Briant 2009.

countries" created by Ahura Mazda (*Vd* 1), and the list contained in the hymn to the *yazata* Mithra (*Yt* 10).[3] Both lists include only toponyms located beyond western Iran proper, to the east and northeast of the territories of modern Iran.

The geographic horizon of the *Young Avesta* includes most of the territories that are grouped together in this chapter as the northeastern territories of the Persian Empire: Margiana, Aria, (Gawa and) Sogdiana and Chorasmia (*Yt* 10); and (Gawa and) Sogdiana, Margiana, Bactria, and Aria (*Vd* 1). The two catalogues do not match, possibly due to the particular regional patriotism of their composers, who lived before the mid-sixth century BC.[4] Bactria in *Vd* 1 is described (like Arachosia) as "beautiful, with uplifted banners." From the written sources of the Persian Empire, mainly from the corpus of royal inscriptions from the Persian heartland in the Persis, we know that these territories were under the effective control of the empire since at least the time of Darius I (522–486 BC). About the time before this ruler pursued the empire's consolidation and reorganization, the literary sources at our disposal can provide some information, albeit entangled with the legendary. Hence the banners of Bactra and perjaps of Old Kandahar, described in the Avesta, were supposedly captured by Cyrus II (ca. 600–530 BC) before his accession to the throne.

Ctesias of Cnidus, who served as a physician at the court of Artaxerxes II (404–358 BC) from 404 to 398/397 BC, is the author of several works on Persia and India and also dealt with the legendary figure of the Assyrian king Ninus and his wife Semiramis, discussing Ninus's military involvement in the east.[5] After his conquest of Babylonia, Ninus

> was seized with a powerful desire to subdue all of Asia that lies between the Tanaïs (i.e., Volga and Syr Darya)[6] and the Nile (. . .).

---

3. Grenet 2015.

4. Grenet 2005; 2015.

5. Ctesias FGrH 688 F1b (*apud* Diod. Sic. 2.2.1–2). For recent editions of the fragments of Ctesias's *Persika* and *Indika*, see Lenfant 2004 (in French); Llewellyn-Jones and Robson 2010 (in English).

6. Minardi 2015: 30–37. See below, section 62.4 with fn. 100.

> Consequently, he made one of his friends the satrap of Media, while he himself set about the task of subduing the nations of Asia, and within a period of seventeen years he became master of them all except the Indians and Bactrians.[7]

According to this tradition, Ninus's conquests in Asia were successful; the lands he subdued, from Parthia to Chorasmia, are (anachronistically) a match with the maximum extension of the Persian Empire as we know it, with the sole exception of Bactria, where the king's efforts were initially fruitless. But Ninus, after a withdrawal to his homeland of "Assyria,"[8] embarked on a second campaign against Bactria,[9] during which he conquered a series of cities and thus isolated its capital.[10] Bactriana is described by Ctesias as a country with "many large cities for the people to dwell in,"[11] and with the most famous of all, Bactra, seat of the king Oxyartes, whom Ninus eventually defeated.[12] Later Semiramis, after her husband's death, once she had "put in order the affairs of Ethiopia and Egypt," decided to campaign against India from a base of operations in Bactra.[13] In their sequence and narrative structure, these legendary events are similar to the scant information reported by Ctesias and Herodotus about Cyrus II, the founder of the Persian Empire.[14]

---

7. Diod. Sic. 2.2.1–2.

8. Diod. Sic. 2.2.4.

9. Diod. Sic. 2.4.1; 2.5.3.

10. Diod. Sic. 2.6.4.

11. Diod. Sic. 2.6.1–8.

12. Xen. *Cyr.* 5.1.3 mentions that Abradatas, the king of Susa under "Assyrian" rule, was in Bactra when his city was taken by Cyrus; could this be an indication of the existence of diplomatic links with the western regions that predate the Persian Empire?

13. Diod. Sic. 2.16.1.

14. As there is no indication whatsoever that the Assyrian Empire ever targeted Central Asia, perhaps these stories echo a possible Median authority over the region. For the links of the Medes, Elam, and Persia with Central Asia in the

Ctesias hints at the fact that also Cyrus initially failed to conquer Bactra and that success came only after a second attempt when the Bactrians surrendered, following his defeat of the Median king Astyages.[15]

In the fragments surviving of Ctesias's narrative, we also find some information about Cyrus's campaign against the Sakas, led by a king named Amorges (and by his wife Sparethre, who was capable of defeating the Persian king to rescue her husband), and on his clash with the Indians and the Derbikes.[16] Notwithstanding the fact that in Ctesias's narration, this enterprise would eventually prove fatal to Cyrus, the land of the Derbikes "surrendered to Cyrus" thanks to the help of the recently acquired ally, the Saka king Amorges (who also supported Cyrus with the conquest of Sardis). On his deathbed, Cyrus appointed his eldest son Cambyses as king and made his younger son Tanyoxarkes (= Bardiya)[17] the "master of the Bactrians, Choramnians [= Chorasmians], Parthians,

---

period prior to the formation of the Persian Empire and their legacy in the Persian period, see Curtis 2005; Genito 2005; Briant 2010; Álvarez-Mon and Garrison 2011; Potts 2014: 59–87; Álvarez-Mon et al. 2018; Rollinger 2020. On the excavation of the Central Asian "Median" site of Ulug-depe, see Lecomte 2013.

15. Ctesias FGrH 688 F9 (*apud* Phot. *Bibl.* 72 p. 36a 9–37a 25). Note that Ctesias FGrH 688 F8d (46) (*apud* Nic. Dam.) specifies that once Astyages had been defeated, first the Hyrcanians, and then the Bactrians, Parthians, and Sakas surrendered to Cyrus. On the textual sources for Cyrus and Astyages, see Briant 1996: 25–26, 41–45.

16. At some point in time, the Derbikes may have dwelled in the steppes north of Hyrcania; see Minardi 2015: 50–51. For other hypotheses about their location, see Potts 2014: 99–102 (with references). In any case, the described events appear to be located in the Indo-Iranian borderlands.

17. Possibly this Tanyoxarkes was the successor of Cambyses, or the impostor Gaumata mentioned by Herodotus and by Darius I in his Bisotun inscription (DB §11–§16); see Briant 1996: 109–118; Vogelsang 1998 (with references). In Xen. *Cyr.* 8.7.11, he was appointed by Cyrus as satrap of Media, Armenia, and Cadusia. The centrality of Bactriana and of its satrap, who was a member of the royal family (*contra* Jacobs 1992, with specific reference to Bessus), is confirmed by episodes in which Bactra is at the center of dynastic disputes, namely during the times when Xerxes and later Artaxerxes I (464–424/423 BC) ascended to the throne (sources discussed in Briant 1996: 540–541; 581; 587; see also Petit 1990: 202–203).

and Carmanians, allowing him to have these lands exempt from tribute."[18] Furthermore, Cyrus appointed other members of his family as "satraps" and he "made Amorges their friend ratified with a handshake and pledges of good faith." Thus, according to Ctesias and his sources, Cyrus was held responsible for the first thrust of the Persian expansion toward the east, up to India on the footsteps of the fabled Ninus. According to Pliny,[19] Cyrus also destroyed during his campaigns in the east a city in the region of Capisene, presumably referring to Kapisa (modern Begram in Afghanistan).[20]

Cyrus's desire to subdue the Sakas and Bactrians in the east is also reported by Herodotus: while still in Ionia, the king already planned to personally lead his army against these countries (and in the west, against Babylon and Egypt) and thus decided to leave the Ionian affairs to one of his generals.[21] In Herodotus's version of events, Cyrus marched eastward after the conquest of "Assyria and Babylonia" (with Babylon being taken in 539 BC),[22] but this narrative omits the war in Bactria (about which Herodotus remains silent until his much later discussion of the satrapies established by Darius I).[23] Instead, the focus lies on the campaign(s) against the Massagetae, a Saka population that was led, after the death of her husband, by a queen named Tomyris, who would eventually defeat the Persians (comparable to the above-mentioned Saka queen Sparethre in Ctesias's narrative); and in this version, it is this woman who kills the

18. A similar list of countries is given for Ninus: "Cadusii, Tapyri, Hyrcanii, Drangi, of the Derbici, Carmanii, Choromnaei, (. . .), Borcanii, and Parthyaei" (Diod. Sic. 2.2.3).

19. Plin. *HN* 6.25.

20. Or an earlier city with the same name. Note that Darius I's Bisotun inscription (DB §45) mentions the fortress of Kapiškani (on this toponym, see Bernard 1974), where the rebel leader Vahyzadata fought Vivana, the Arachosian satrap or ally of Darius (a former Bactrian general according to Vogelsang 1998: 217). Cf. the above-mentioned passage about Ninus besieging cities in Bactria.

21. Hdt. 1.153.

22. Hdt. 1.178–201.

23. About Herodotus's silence on Bactriana, see Briant 1996: 49–50.

Persian ruler. Herodotus therefore followed a story of Cyrus's demise that is different from that used by Ctesias.[24]

The ethnonym "Massagetae" was diachronically employed in a generic meaning as a (sometimes archaizing) designation for the populations who dwelt in the steppic area between the Caspian Sea and the Jaxartes river (modern Syr Darya).[25] When adopted in the west, it can encompass in certain cases the Chorasmians who dwell south of the Aral Sea on the lower reaches of the Oxus river (modern Amu Darya). The Massagetae were "neighbors" of another macro-group of Sakas, the Dahae, who are mentioned by the Persian kings for the first time in an inscription commissioned by Xerxes.[26] Concerning Cyrus's death, Berossus followed a tradition similar to that of Herodotus and recorded that the king died at the hands of the Dahae.[27] Herodotus also mentioned the Dahae in a short list of "nomadic Iranians" in connection with Cyrus's rise to power.[28] In the western sources, generic ethnonyms such as Dahae, which the ancient authors sometimes subdivided into lists of sub-groups,[29] were often confused with each other, or even more frequently considered equivalent to each other, due to limited knowledge about the steppic areas of Central Asia beyond the Jaxartes river and the Aral Sea.

Our brief survey of the available sources on Cyrus's military advances in the east highlights the fact that the king focused on the polity controlled by Bactra. But this was clearly not the exclusive focus of his actions, as his efforts were also directed toward extending his influence

---

24. As well as Xen. *An.* 8.7, according to whom the king died in his bed at an advanced age. On Cyrus's death, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1985.

25. Minardi 2015: 32–44.

26. For this inscription of Xerxes from Persepolis (XPh) known as "Daiva Inscription," see Kuhrt 2007: 304–306, no. 7.88.

27. Berossus *apud* Euseb. *Chron.* 5.5.

28. Hdt. 1.125.

29. E.g., Str. 9.8.1–2; on the Dahae, Massagetae and Saka contingents at the Battle of Gaugamela, see section 62.3.1.

over the Sakas of the steppes beyond the Jaxartes to the northeast of his realm, and apparently over some "Indians" (perhaps east of Arachosia). Reading Ctesias, it also appears that already at that time, Saka horsemen played a fundamental role in the imperial army, and the story of Amorges, who metamorphosed from a defeated enemy to a key ally, may therefore reflect some degree of historicity.

The foundation of the outpost of Cyropolis ("City of Cyrus" in Greek), located at the gates of the Fergana valley and possibly to be identified with modern Kurkat in Tajikistan,[30] should probably be linked with the establishment of a defensive, albeit porous border with the Saka populations; this border was settled and therefore productive (as evidenced by the choice of the river valley).[31] Chorasmia, an "oasis" projected toward the steppes, might have been taken during the same campaigns for the same strategic reasons: Cyrus's endeavor to control the semi-nomadic populations beyond the Jaxartes river and the Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum deserts (figures 62.1 and 61.2), by establishing agricultural outposts capable of sustaining stable garrisons and defensive stations.

Xenophon wrote that Cyrus "ruled also over Bactria, India and Cilicia; and he was likewise king of the Sacians."[32] It is difficult to identify historical facts in the legends about Cyrus's life and his possible death in Central Asia, and it is futile to attempt a precise reconstruction of his

30. Grenet and Rapin 2001.

31. Cf. Arr. *An*. 4.1.3: After the demise of Bessus, Alexander "was himself planning to found a city on the Tanais (i.e., the river Jaxartes) and to give it his own name. For in his view the site was suitable for the city to rise for greatness, and it will be well placed for any eventual invasion from Scythia and as a defense bastion of the country against the raids of the barbarians dwelling on the other side of the river." See also Briant 1996: 766–768. Alexander, seizing the control of the border fortresses of the Persian Empire, evidently tried to control the Sakas beyond the Jaxartes river by following the Persian example (*contra* Briant 1996: 767, who sees a "rupture" in Alexander's strategies compared to that of the Persian Empire). Archaeological and epigraphic material show that the Sogdians later (before the second or early third century AD) colonized Chach, the territory north of Fergana, specifically to the detriment of the "nomads"; see Grenet et al. 2007.

32. Xen. *Cyr.* 1.1.4.

Central Asian military operations. But a few general observations can be made. The key point that all available textual sources make concerns Cyrus's resolve and eventual success in conquering the eastern regions. This conquest was centered on the twofold necessity of subduing and controlling the Saka population groups, and of establishing a strong base in Bactriana (and Arachosia), a polity with a developed infrastructure and rich in natural resources,[33] strategically located between India and the semi-nomadic populations dwelling on both sides of the Jaxartes and north of the Oxus. Later, Darius I pursued similar strategies of conquest and consolidation (section 62.3.1). Importantly, Cyrus's resolve and success were well-known to Alexander the Great, who sought to emulate his Central Asian conquest.[34]

62.3. The Persian Empire's northeastern holdings under Darius I and his successors

Cambyses II (530–522 BC), the eldest son of Cyrus the Great, did not campaign in the east, but his eventual successor Darius I devoted much energy to securing Central Asia for his empire. In modern discussions about the Persian presence in the region, Darius holds a much more prominent role than Cyrus. This is because more textual sources are available: Darius's own testimony as recorded in the royal inscriptions, including the accounts of various military campaigns he conducted in order to consolidate his claim to the throne. At that time, the Persian Empire's authority extended over a large and heterogeneous entity made

33. Most importantly, precious metals including copper, silver, and gold, as discussed by Ctesias in his *Indika* (FGrH 688 F45, *apud* Phot. *Bibl.* 72 p. 45a 21–50a 4) and also in one of Darius's inscriptions from Susa (DSf; see Lecoq 1997: 234–237 and Kuhrt 2007: 492–495, no. 11.13 (i)).

34. Once in the area of Gedrosia and Drangiana, Alexander met the Arimaspians, whose ancestors had helped Cyrus fight the "Scythians" (Arr. *An*. 3.27.4; cf. Diod. Sic. 17.81.1). Then he moved against Bactra (Arr. *An*. 3.28.1). According to Arrian's sources (Arr. *An*. 4.24.3), Cyrus had also fought in Gedrosia with the intention of invading India.

of peoples, or "nations" (Old Persian *dahyāva*, singular *dahyu-*),[35] of whom Darius portrayed himself as the proud master.

62.3.1. The testimony of the royal inscriptions and the classical sources

Of the foremost importance is the victory relief with its trilingual inscription that Darius had carved into the rockface of Bisotun (DB; chapter 55 in this volume).[36] It celebrates the king's triumph over the usurper Gaumata (according to Darius, an impostor posing as the prince Bardiya) and other rebel leaders (522/521–519 BC). The text of the inscription contains a full list of all the "nations" (*dahyāva*) subject to the Persian Empire, including Parthia, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactriana, Sogdiana, and "Scythia."[37] Furthermore, the Bisotun inscription provides some details about the organization of these northeastern regions.

Among those "nations" whose revolts Darius had to suppress after his accession to power were the Parthians (and Hyrcanians), the Margians, and the *Sakā tigraxaudā* ("Sakas with Pointed Hats"). According to Darius, Parthia was then governed by his own father Vištaspa, evidently the satrap of the region who also had jurisdiction over Hyrcania;

---

35. As Jacobs 2011 argued, rather than "satrapy," it is the Old Persian word *dahyu-* that is the most appropriate term to define the administrative units of the Persian Empire, as the word can signify "district" or "land" in a general sense, as well as more specifically "province." Following Basello 2013: 52, who also considers the Elamite translation of the term (cf. also Lecoq 1993; 1997: 188), better still would be to translate this word as the compound "people-nation" (in Italian, *popolo-paese*). In my rendering of *dahyu-* as "nation," between quotation marks, I follow Schmidt 1970.

36. Schmitt 1991; 2000; Lecoq 1997: 83–96; 187–214; Vogelsang 1998 (with references). For an easily accessible translation of Darius's Bisotun inscription in English, see Kuhrt 2007: 141–158, no. 5.1. For the modern designation of the Persian inscriptions as, e.g., DB for Darius's Bisotun inscription, see chapter 54 in this volume.

37. Sakas are here generically categorized as, and perhaps grouped with, the western Scythians. In the Babylonian version of the Bisotun inscription, they are considered akin to (or confused with) the Scythians of Cimmeria; see Kellens 1987: 677; Lecoq 1997: 188 n. 6; and cf. Hdt. 7.63: "The Persians call Saka all the Scythians."

Margiana appears to have been under the authority of Dadaršiš, the Persian satrap of Bactriana. In Parthia, Vištaspa was deserted by part of his army as some of his troops pledged their loyalty to the Median rebel leader Fravartiš; Darius did not intervene personally, but instead sent reinforcements to the contingents still loyal to his father. In the case of the rebellion in Margiana, Darius declared that he left matters entirely in the hands of the satrap of Bactriana, to whom he nevertheless gave the order to act. Darius personally led the military expedition against the "Sakas with Pointed Hats" who dwelled beyond the Jaxartes river.[38] Their ruler Skunkha was eventually captured. His depiction as the last in the line of the chained rebel leaders on Darius's monument at Bisotun is very distinct, as he sports a tall, pointed headdress. In his stead, Darius appointed another member of the "Sakas with Pointed Hats" as their leader and so, as he states in his inscription, they "became mine."[39]

In addition to attesting to the existence of the Bactrian and Parthian satrapies (and of the sub-districts of Margiana and Hyrcania that are otherwise missing from all the other lists of regions in the Persian inscriptions), the account of the Bisotun inscription also elucidates how a Saka "nation" was kept under the Persian Empire's control (figure 62.3), by balancing warfare and diplomacy, through imposing loyalty oaths and tribute payments, also in the form of the obligation to provide military assistance to the imperial forces. This aside, Sakas may have served as mercenaries in the Persian Empire's army.

The Bisotun inscription was the first inscription commissioned by Darius, and indeed the first royal inscription by which the Persian kings left testimonies of some of their activities and information on the extension of their vast realm.[40] Another important example is the inscription

38. Minardi 2015: 29–32 (with references). In two other inscriptions of Darius (DH and DPh, see Lecoq 1997: 218–219 and Kuhrt 2007: 476–477, no. 11.1), the Sakas are described as the easternmost of Darius's subjects, "dwelling beyond Sogdiana" (see below in the present section).

39. Schmitt 1991: 76; Lecoq 1997: 214.

40. For a French translation of the Persian inscriptions, see Lecoq 1997; for their German edition, see Schmitt 2009. The most important texts are available in English translation in Kuhrt 2007.

FIGURE 62.3. Cylinder seal, and its modern impression, depicting an allegorical scene of battle between the Persian king and two *Sakā tigraxaudā*; a representative of possibly another eastern "nation" is shown as the king's captive. British Museum, BM 132505. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.

that celebrates the construction of Darius's palace in Susa (DSf).[41] In this text, Darius stresses the efforts necessary to erect the palace and mentions several "nations" of the empire as suppliers of exotic and precious materials, in some cases together with specialist craftsmen. The three easternmost "nations" (DSf §7) are grouped together with the western satrapy of Lydia in Asia Minor (DSf §9): the Bactrians and the Lydians—conceived as antipodal regions at the empire's northeastern and northwestern edges[42]—supplied gold, the Sogdians lapis lazuli and carnelian, and the Chorasmians turquoise.[43] This serves to highlight in a concise

41. For Darius's palace inscription from Susa (DSf), see Lecoq 1997: 234–237 and Kuhrt 2007: 492–495, no. 11.13 (i). The *terminus ante quem* of this text's composition is 512 BC; see Jacobs 2017.

42. In parallel position to "Ethiopia" (Kuša) in the empire's southwest and India-Arachosia in its southeast (DSf §10), which both supplied ivory for the palace.

43. In the inscription DSaa (see Lecoq 1997: 245–246 and Kuhrt 2007: 497, no. 11.13 (iib)), a shorter variant of the inscription DSf, Chorasmia, Bactriana,

manner the vast extent of the empire,[44] while the Bisotun inscription gives a full catalogue of all "nations" that the king had under his control. With small variations, this list is attested in other of Darius's inscriptions, namely from Susa (DSe)[45] and Persepolis (DPe),[46] and from his rock-cut tomb at Naqš-e Rustam (DNa)[47] whose façade was also decorated with a complex relief that included allegorical depictions of the "nations" as throne-bearers, identified with individual captions (DNe; see section 62.3.2).

By interpreting the arrangement of these lists, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the geographical conception of the Persian Empire and the spatial distribution of its "nations."[48] From the center of the empire with its heartland Persis, Media, and Elam, space seems to have been conceptualized as radiating along four distinct axes. In the earliest list in the Bisotun inscription, the sequence of the "nations" was shaped also by the concept of a circular route passing through all the territories of the empire.[49] The directions of the four main vectors could be changed according to the areas that were meant to be emphasized. For instance, the list of "nations" in Darius's inscription from Persepolis (DPe) differs from that in his Naqš-e Rustam inscription (DNa) in that the southeastern axis leads toward Maka (modern Oman)[50] rather than Drangiana. However, the northeastern axis of Darius's texts always linked

---

and Sogdiana are listed in exactly this sequence after the mention of Parthia and Aria. The precious materials associated on the base of DSf with these "nations" are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, turquoise, and carnelian.

44. Cf. DH and DPh: from India (instead of Bactriana) to Lydia, from the Sakas "beyond Sogdiana" to Ethiopia.

45. For DSe, see Kuhrt 2007: 491, no.11.12.

46. For DPe, see Kuhrt 2007: 486, no.11.7.

47. For DNa, see Kuhrt 2007: 502–503, no. 11.16.

48. On this subject, see Dan 2013; Minardi 2015; Rapin 2018 (with further literature).

49. For this reason, the northeastern axis in the Bisotun inscription follows an ideal path through Parthia, Aria, Drangiana, Chorasmia, Sogdiana, Bactriana, and Gandhara.

50. On Maka (modern Oman), see Potts 2010.

Bactriana, Sogdiana, and Chorasmia.[51] Parthia preceded Aria, and Aria preceded Bactriana in all these lists, despite differences in detail (with the Sagartians preceding Parthia in DPe, and Drangiana preceding Aria in DPe and also in the Bisotun inscription, with Maka as the final entry in these two texts). While the general arrangement of these lists seems to shift during the time of Darius's son and successor Xerxes (486–465 BC), in his so-called Daiva Inscription from Persepolis (XPh),[52] Parthia, Aria, Bactriana, Sogdiana, and Chorasmia are still listed in this sequence and therefore continue to be seen as spatially and conceptually connected. Geographically, their locations follow one of the main routes of the royal road toward the east.

In these lists of imperial "nations," the mention and position of the lands of the Sakas show a much greater degree of variability. This seems to reflect the different relationship and also levels of knowledge of the Persian Empire toward these semi-nomadic population groups.[53] In the lists of Darius's Bisotun inscription and Persepolis inscription (DPe), there is only a generic mention of the Sakas without any specific reference to the "Sakas with Pointed Hats," despite the fact that they figure so prominently in the account of Darius's wars in the Bisotun inscription. In his inscriptions from Susa (DSe) and Naqš-e Rustam (DNa), on the other hand, the Sakas are divided into several distinct groups: in the east, the already familiar "Sakas with Pointed Hats" and the "Haoma-Drinking Sakas" (*Sakā haumavargā*),[54] and far away in the west beyond the Danube, the "Sakas beyond the Sea" (*Sakā paradraya*). Skunkha and his "Sakas with Pointed Hats" appear in the Bisotun inscription as an

51. So in DSe, DPe and DNa. However, in the Bisotun inscription, Chorasmia seems isolated from Bactriana and Sogdiana, as it is listed before Sogdiana; see Minardi 2015: 163; cf. also Dan 2013: 93.

52. For XPh, see Kuhrt 2007: 304–306, no. 7.88.

53. Note also that the Dahae are mentioned only once (XPh §3), as are the Sagartians (DPe §2).

54. The botanical identification of *haoma*, a plant or mushroom from which a ritual drink was prepared, is uncertain and the subject of much debate; for the *hoama* drink and the rituals associated with it, see, e.g., Taillieu and Boyce 2003.

addendum for the year 419 BC (cutting into the Elamite version of the text);[55] this demonstrates that Saka was a generic term that could be further specified if the imperial authorities gained a more precise understanding of these population groups.

In Darius's Hamadan inscription (DH) and also in another inscription from Persepolis (DPh),[56] where the main concern was to exemplify the enormous extent of the empire without the need to list all its "nations," the only Sakas mentioneed are as those living "beyond Sogdiana" (in the Babylonian version, "on the other shore of Sogdiana," i.e., beyond the Jaxartes river). Furthermore, the Sakas, and in particular the "Haoma-Drinking Sakas," are in these lists typically positioned close to Gandhara and the Indian territories; the "Haoma-drinking Sakas" seem to have been located south of the "Sakas with Pointed Hats," who resided north of the Pamir and east of Sogdiana.[57] Persian evidence originally from Egypt further confirms the variability in labeling the Saka groups: while featuring the usual cluster of "Aria, Parthia, Bactriana, and Sogdiana," the list of "nations" in the inscription incised on the pedestal of the statue of Darius, created in 514 BC in Egypt but discovered in Susa, mentions "Sakas of the Marshes and of the Plain," which may be an alternative designation for the "Sakas with Pointed Hats" and "Haoma-Drinking Sakas" in Darius's other texts.[58] Moreover, Chorasmia is listed just before these Sakas after the people of the Indian lands, pointing perhaps to a recent reorganization of that region within the imperial administration.[59]

Should we consider all these *dahyāva* to have been individual satrapies? In other words, had every one of the northeastern "nations" a

55. Lecoq 1997: 86.

56. For DH and DPh, see Lecoq 1997: 218–219 and Kuhrt 2007: 476–477, no. 11.1.

57. Tucci 1977.

58. Known as DSab; see Kuhrt 2007: 477–482, no. 11.2; Yoyotte 2010; and see chapter 61 in this volume.

59. Minardi 2015: 166. Cf. Chorasmia's position in Darius's Bisotun inscription, where it seems isolated from Bactriana and Sogdiana.

satrapal seat within its territory? This is certainly not the case, because some of these "nations" were not actual polities with defined borders and also were not perceived as such by the imperial authorities. This is evident in the case of the Sakas: the specifications attached to the generic label clearly reflect an increase in geographical knowledge about Central Asia as a consequence of contacts with the Persian Empire. Not only can we observe an incremental differentiation between various semi-nomadic groups in the east, but this also occurs in the west with the addition of the Skudra and the "Sakas beyond the Sea" in Darius's Naqš-e Rustam inscription (DNa). As William Vogelsang stressed on the basis of the works of the Alexander biographers, the Persian satraps clearly administered large areas that included various *dahyāva*, and it would therefore be incorrect to identify all the *dahyāva* as satrapies.[60]

According to Herodotus, the satrapies created by Cyrus were inherited by Darius, who expanded their number to twenty.[61] Herodotus's catalogue groups the Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, and Arians together into the sixteenth satrapy, while Bactriana constitutes the twelfth satrapy, and the Sakas with the Caspians made up the fifteenth satrapy. But, as underlined by Bruno Jacobs, "Herodotus had no authentic source at his disposal" and his catalogue "is as incompatible with the lists of the Achaemenid inscriptions as with those of the Alexander historians or with the numerous attestations of the Greek and Latin authors."[62]

A good example is a passage about a plain "once belonging to the Chorasmians," at the border of their country and that of Hyrcania, Parthia, Sarangia (Drangiana), and the land of the Thamaneans.[63] The plain is described as a valley that is "encircled by mountains" and crossed by the river "Akes" with its five tributaries, all streaming down from the mountains. Although the general description brings the valleys of

60. Vogelsang 1990.

61. Hdt. 3.89.

62. Jacobs 2011. According to the assessment of Jacobs 1994; 2011, the Persian Empire was organized in "great satrapies" with main and minor constituent parts; for a critical reaction, see Briant 2020: 30–31.

63. Hdt. 3.117.

Fergana and Swat to mind, such a large valley simply does not exist in the area in question.[64] However, the importance of this passage does not lie in the geographical information offered by Herodotus, but in the meaning of the anecdotal episode attached to it: the valley had once belonged to the Chorasmians, but since the subjugation of the area (an allusion to the Persian conquest of this land) it was in the possession of the Persian king. The king exerted his control over the population of the valley through the management of its water (building dams, not canals), which was necessary for the cultivation of "sesame and millet." According to Herodotus, the satrapies involved paid the revenue from these hydraulic works and subsequent water management in addition to their yearly tribute.

Another list in Herodotus mentions the northeastern "nations" of the Persian Empire in the description of Xerxes's army after crossing the Hellespont in 480 BC,[65] where the contingents appear arranged according to *ethne* ("ethnicity"). Grouped together with the Persians and Medes and others who all carried an *akinakes* dagger (section 62.3.2) were the Hyrcanians, mustered under the command of Megapanos, the future governor of Babylonia. The contingent of the Bactrians and of the "Amyrgian" Sakas, described as wearing a pointed *kyrbasia* (corresponding to the "Haoma-Drinking Sakas" in the Persian inscriptions), was under the command of Xerxes's brother Hystaspes (who was not the satrap of Bactriana).[66] The Parthians and the Chorasmians were also led by a single commander, as were the Gandharans and the Dadicae (perhaps to be identified with the Dards),[67] while the Sogdians and the

64. This passage, in association with a fragment of Hecataeus (FGrH 172, *apud* Ath., *apud* Steph. Byz.) in which "cities" of the Chorasmians are said to lie east of Parthia, fueled misguided speculations about a "Great Chorasmian" kingdom that should have existed in Central Asia before the time of Cyrus. On the deficiencies in Herodotus's information on Central Asia, see Minardi 2015.

65. Hdt. 7.59–99.

66. Masistes, another brother of the king, was governor of Bactriana (Hdt. 9.113) and a commander of higher rank (Hdt. 7.62).

67. Tucci 1977.

Arians were each organized under separate command. According to Herodotus, these latter contingents were commanded by Persian generals and all were equipped like Bactrian fighters, with "short spears" and bows.[68] Although the reliability of this list can be called into question,[69] one might still suggest that at the time of Xerxes, the Chorasmians, the Dadicae, and the Sakas may have served in this roster as auxiliary troops at a sub-satrapy level.

This catalogue can be compared with the roster of armed forces gathered 150 years later by Darius III in order to face Alexander at Gaugamela in 331 BC.[70] Arrian described not only the composition of the army mustered by the king,[71] but also the battle array set up to counter the attacker's forces.[72] Bessus, at that time satrap of Bactriana, commanded both the Indians "bordering on the Bactrians"[73] and the Sogdians, in addition to the Sakas "who came, not as subjects of Bessus, but on the basis of an alliance with Darius," and who had their own leader.[74] Considering that we have already seen the Bactrians and the Sakas fighting side by side in

68. On the allegorical representations of these *dahyāva* as throne-bearers on the façade of Darius's tomb in Naqš-e Rustam, and their riders' gear, see section 62.3.2.

69. Minardi 2015: 28–29.

70. The army roster reported for the Battle of Issus is far more generic (Curt. 3.2.1–12) and features different contingents: for logistical reasons, the Bactrians, Sogdians, and "Indians" are absent, but the army is supported by Hyrcanians and other Central Asian "nations," including the Derbikes who dwell around the Caspian Sea. Note that is possible that the Derbikes mentioned by Ctesias (section 62.2) are an entirely different group; cf. Francfort 1985 who identified them with the Dards.

71. Arr. *An*. 3.8.3–6.

72. Arr. *An*. 3.11.3–7.

73. This is also confirmed by documents from the Persepolis Fortification archives; see Henkelman 2018: 234, with reference to Briant 1984: 73.

74. This episode is about the relations between Saka leadership and the Persian crown. It should be compared with the episode regarding the pact between the Saka ruler Amorges and Cyrus (section 62.2), and Darius's appointing a new Saka leader of his choice after the defeat of Skunkha (see above in the present section).

Xerxes's army, this grouping seems important. We can perhaps assume that the authority over the neighboring semi-nomadic populations had been delegated to Bactriana, or that the region was held responsible for marshaling these as troops serving the imperial army. Be that as it may, it seems that the control of Bactriana was a key concern that occupied the Persian king himself.

Arrian's description continues with the contingents of the Arians and the Parthians, led by their own satraps Satibarzanes and Phrataphernes, who also commanded, respectively, "Indian hillmen" and Hyrcanians. At this point, there is no mention of the Chorasmians or of the Dahae. However, the Dahae appear in the second detail within the battle array and are described together with the Bactrians and the Arachosians as forming the "left wing" of the army. Once again, the Bactrians and the Sakas were deployed together "in advance on the left wing." We may thus consider that in the first passage, the Dahae were tacitly included with the Sakas. On the right wing, there were, among other contingents, the Parthians, the Hyrcanians, and again the Sakas.[75] The deployment strategy for these Central Asian troops may not have been primarily organized according to their "nationality,"[76] but according to military purposes, while making sure that they were still connected to their own commanders.

The one northeastern *dahyu-* known from the Persian sources that is missing from this roster is Chorasmia, a region that may have been conflated with other designations. In Arrian's account, the Chorasmians may have been subsumed under the generic label of the Sakas, or they may have been confused with the Dahae, who were in turn on several occasions conflated with the Sakas. Curtius, whose description of the army generally agrees with Arrian, provides some additional details: on the left wing of Darius's army, he positioned the Bactrian cavalry with the Dahae (and the Arachosians), who were followed first by scythed chariots and then by Bessus and other Bactrian horsemen with a rear guard of

75. Led by the general Mazaeus according to Diod. Sic. 17.60.5.

76. Cf. Arr. *An*. 2.8.8; Diod. Sic. 17.58.1.

"Massagetae" (possibly in this case corresponding to the otherwise missing Chorasmians).[77] However, that Chorasmians served in the armed forces of the Persian Empire is beyond doubt and also well documented by sources from Egypt and Babylonia.[78]

62.3.2. The allegorical representations of the northeastern "nations"

In addition to the Persian inscriptions, there are also depictions of the *dahyāva* constituting the Persian Empire. Under Darius I, a standardized allegorical depiction of the constituent "nations" was developed, in the form of man bearing the king's throne ("throne-bearers") in a characteristic "Atlas pose." Although deliberately stereotypical, these representations give us an indication of the Persian perception and classification of the populations subject to the empire's rule.[79]

Rendered on the reliefs of the façades of the rock-cut royal tombs at Naqš-e Rustam and at Persepolis (chapter 55 in this volume), these throne-bearers are aligned in two rows that are placed one above the other, and are depicted as physically and metaphorically displaying their support for, and subjection to, the Persian ruler.[80] Thanks to the captions inscribed on the individual throne-bearers on Darius's tomb (DNe), we know their identity and that their sequence follows

77. Curt. 4.12.6–7.

78. In Egypt, Chorasmians are attested at the Persian garrison at Syene (modern Asuan) in 465 BC: Porten and Yardeni 1986–1999, nos. B2.2, B2.3 and D3.39b; see also Becking 2017. Chorasmians are also mentioned in Babylonian documents from the time of Cyrus to that of Darius; see Dandamaev 1992: 67–68, 130, 132, 145, 164–165. The Babylonian documentation also records the presence of Arians and Bactrians as well as Sakas ("Cimmerians"); see Dandamaev 1992: 162–164. Note that as of now, there are no references to the Chorasmians in the Persepolis Fortification archives of the time of Darius I (on which see Henkelman and Stolper 2009; Henkelman 2018).

79. The imperial interest in the ethnicity of the various population groups constituting the realm is also apparent in the documents of the Persepolis Fortification archives; see Henkelman 2018: 224.

80. Root 1979: 147–171.

the order of the list in Darius's Naqš-e Rustam inscription (DNa): for the northeastern regions, we have a Parthian, an Arian, a Bactrian, a Sogdian, a Chorasmian, a "Saka with Pointed Hat," and a "Haoma-Drinking Saka."[81]

These depictions were given specific features that were clearly selected in order to represent and distinguish each of them according to the Persian point of view. However, as Erich Schmidt stressed, despite their individuality, the representatives of the various "nations" may share elements of dress and gear and even their general appearance with each other.[82] Thus, there is a strong resemblance between the Parthian and the Bactrian (Schmidt's "East Median group"); between the Sogdian, the Chorasmian, the "Saka with Pointed Hat," and the "Haoma-Drinking Saka," which are almost identical (Schmidt's "Scythian group"); and between the Arian, the Drangian, and the Arachosian (Schmidt's "East Iranian group"); whereas the Median representative is depicted with characteristics that place him halfway between the members of "East Median" and "West Median" groups.[83] On the other hand, the characteristics of the members of the "East Iranian group" are quite similar to those of the Bactrian and Parthian: only the boots, and thus also the fit of the trousers, differ. Evidently, Bactrians and Parthians were perceived as similar to the Medes in both appearance and equipment, while Sogdians and Chorasmians were perceived (or just shown) as akin to the Sakas.[84]

---

81. Minardi 2015: 20–22. Note that the delegations depicted in the procession at the Apadana of Persepolis are not explicitly identified, and their identification must therefore be considered in some cases speculative.

82. Schmidt 1970: 108–118 with figs. 39–53.

83. According to Schmidt 1970: fig. 41, the Median representative forms the "West Median group" together with the Armenian and the Cappadocian because of the distinctive headgear with a tassel on the back (although the Mede's tassel is much longer than that of the Armenian and Cappadocian, and his longer beard more closely matches those of the Parthian and Bactrian).

84. As postulated by Negmatov 1994: 443–444, this might be a further indication of the chronology of the Chorasmians' inclusion in the Persian Empire's sphere of influence (perhaps already at the time of Cyrus; see Minardi 2015) and could be considered an indication of the effects that imperial control had on their

But each "nation" was differentiated by distinctive details from its look-alikes: for example, the Chorasmian's hood (perhaps the *kyrbasia* of the Greek sources) was mounted with a "coronet" rather than pointed like the Sogdian's headgear;[85] and the tip of the hood of the "Haoma-Drinking Saka" differed in its orientation from that of the Sogdian.

The depictions of all the throne-bearers from the northeastern territories of the Persian Empire had one piece of equipment in common: a distinctive dagger (*akinakes*) that they wore strapped to their right thigh. This dagger is characterized by the shape of its scabbard and a suspension system, which were specifically designed for horsemen.[86] More generally, carrying such a weapon is common to the depictions of all "trouser-wearing nations" (figure 62.4).[87] When riding, the Persians too wore trousers and carried such daggers.[88] Moreover, these weapons are also depicted among the objects carried by members of certain delegations in the procession of tribute-bearers at the Apadana in Persepolis.[89] This type of dagger certainly signified a certain status, and the Greek sources mention golden *akinakes* daggers as honorary

originally semi-nomadic cultures; see also Minardi 2015: 61–64 (with references). In a fragment of Ctesias (FGrH 688 F12, *apud* Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Χωραμναῖοι), the Chorasmians are said to be savages belonging to the "Persian *ethnos*," with famous hunting skills.

85. Thus on the relief of Tomb II (after the classification of Schmidt 1970; assigned to Xerxes); see Minardi 2018 (with references to comparable objects found in the "Oxus Treasure").

86. On the *akinakes* dagger, see Potts 2014: 69–73; Minardi in Betts et al. 2016; Minardi 2020. An ivory scabbard for such a weapon, possibly of Bactrian workmanship and carved in a style heavily influenced by Persian imperial art, was found as part of the "Oxus Treasure" together with other dedicatory offerings; see Litvinskij and Pičikjan 1999.

87. Including the Skudrians, except for the depiction of this "nation" on Tomb V.

88. Hdt. 7.61. On the riding costume of the Persians, see Stronach 2009.

89. E.g., Apadana delegation nos. 1 (perhaps Medes) and 17 (generic Sakas; on the debated identification of this delegation, see Potts 2012). Note that the members of Apadana delegation no. 2 (Elamites) carry "Persian daggers" instead. Cf. Gropp 2009.

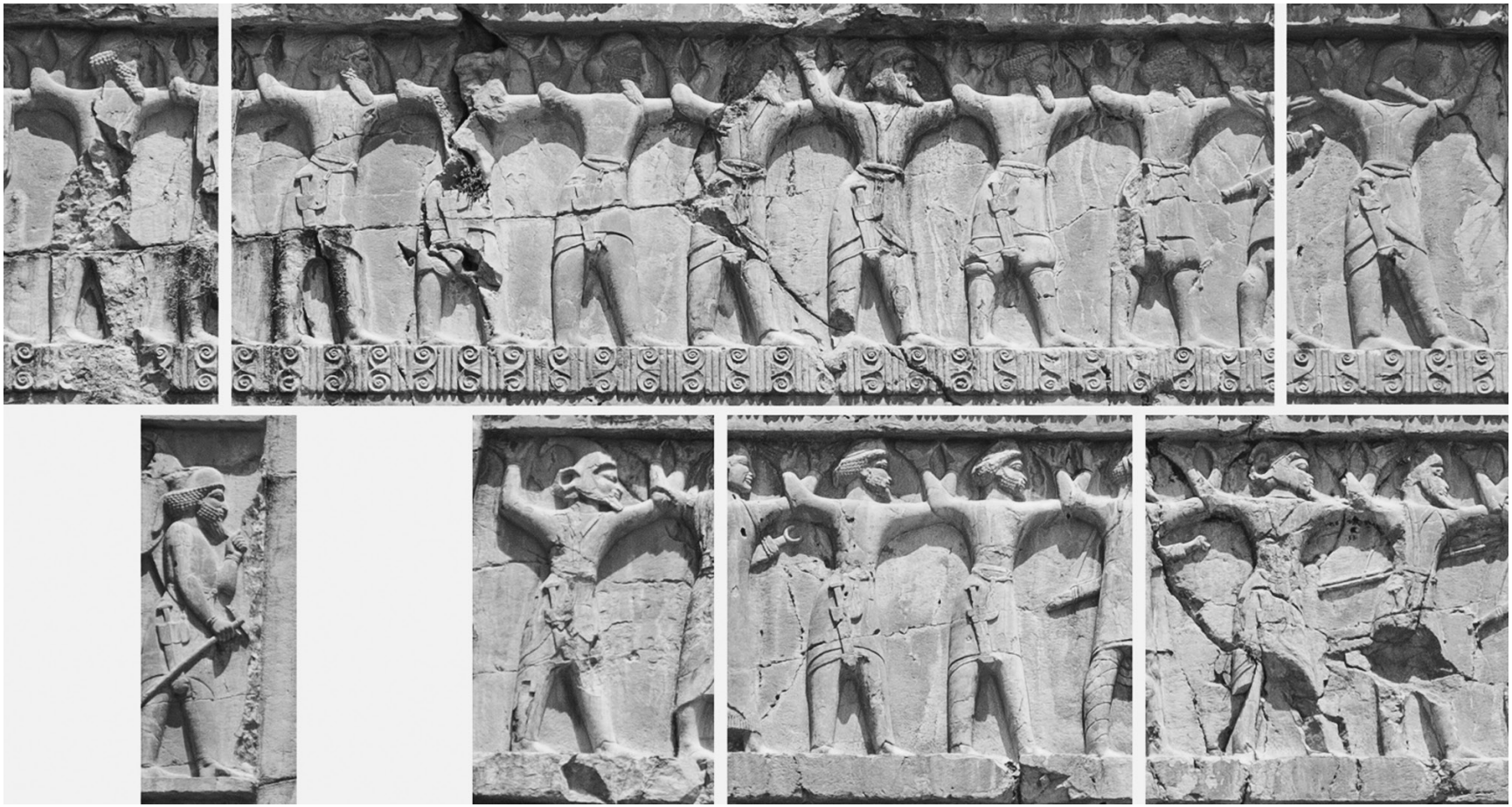

FIGURE 62.4. Details of the relief on the façade of Tomb II at Naq ~~Attristam~~, showing all the representatives of "nations" that are equipped with an *akinakes* dagger and wear trousers. Top row: the "nations" in the upper register; lower row: on the left, the king's weapon bearer and, on the right, the "nations" in the lower register. Author's photographs.

gifts bestowed by the Persian ruler,[90] who himself wore this type of weapon.[91]

Both the trousers and the *akinakes* dagger were strongly associated with horse-riding. As those throne-bearers that do not wear trousers also carry other weapons, it seems obvious that in the depiction on the royal tombs, all the representatives of the northeastern territories, as well as the Medes, Armenians, Cappadocians, Skudrians, Scythians, Arachosians, and Drangians, were implicitly portrayed as mounted horseback warriors. Although they would arguably have fought also with other weapons,[92] the tomb reliefs do not show this, and only the Persian king is depicted as an archer.[93] To put emphasis on the nature of certain "nations" as horseback riders may not have been a comment on their cultural identity, even less so on their ethnicity;[94] from the imperial point of view, this may have served to highlight that these were the regions that provided contingents of horsemen in response to the empire's demand.

A different visual rendering for the Persian Empire's constituent "nations" was employed on the pedestal of Darius's Egyptian statue. Here, using an ancient Egyptian motif, the allegorical representations

---

90. E.g., Xen. *An.* 1.2.27; 1.8.29.

91. Curt. 3.3.18, describing the dagger as hanging from a belt. Note that Arr. *An.* 6.29.5 mentions that Aristobolus saw in the tomb of Cyrus, among other precious objects, "Median trousers" and *akinakes* daggers. Curt. 3.3.6 mentions also an obscure project of Darius III who, at the beginning of his reign, ordered the reshaping of the scabbard of the Persian *akinakes* (the "Persian model"?) after the fashion of the Greeks.

92. The equipment of the Sakas appears to have been different, as they are shown in other Persian-period depictions as carrying war picks, both as weapons (for an example from a cylinder seal, see figure 62.3) and as tribute (in Delegation no. 17 at the Apadana of Persepolis); for further references, see Bernard and Inagaki 2000: 1400–1401; Summerer 2007; Wu 2010; Potts 2012; Tuplin and Ma 2020. Cf. Hdt. 7.64.

93. On the Persian king as an archer, see Root 1979: 164–169. The king's spear-holder is depicted as a Persian who carries his own bow, while the king's quiver-bearer is depicted as a Mede wearing an *akinakes* dagger. For the identifying labels DNc and DNd on Darius's tomb, see Lecoq 1997: 224–225.

94. Cf. Vogelsang 1992; 1998; also Brentjes 1993.

were all depicted as men kneeling on the ground, raising their arms in a gesture of worship.[95] Once again, the Saka, the Sogdian, and the Chorasmian wear a hood: plain in the case of the Chorasmian, pointed in the case of the Sogdian and the Saka, but with differences in orientation and design of the tip. The Parthian wears a sort of turban, while the Arian is dressed similarly to the Mede, with a cloak (*kandys*) thrown around his shoulders and a headgear similar to that worn by the Persian.

62.4. The satrapy of Bactriana and its relationship to the Sogdians, the Chorasmians, and the Sakas

Western historical accounts written after the end of the Persian Empire about the resistance mounted against Alexander the Great are an important source of information about the empire's northeastern regions. They elucidate the relationships between Bessus, the last satrap of Bactriana, and his Central Asian allies, and therefore more generally the organization of the imperial regions under their control. It appears that in the aftermath of the defeat of Darius III at Gaugamela in 331 BC, all the eastern regions of the empire were involved in the war against the western invaders. While we do not know much about Parthia, an early conquest of Alexander's, Aria certainly fought alongside Bactriana.

Pierre Briant hypothesized the central role of the satrap of Bactriana in exercising imperial authority over a large part of Central Asia, including Sogdiana.[96] Bactriana was certainly at the center of the "Upper Satrapies" of the Persian Empire, and its satrap likely also had jurisdiction over Margiana (at least in Darius's times) and possibly over Chorasmia: in general, the local elites of these regions (*hyparchs*, as they are often called by classical authors) were subordinate to the satrap.[97] As emerged from

95. Yoyotte 2010: 286–296.

96. Briant 1984: 71–75.

97. Briant 1984: 103; 2020: 39: "It is entirely possible that *hyparchs* held a mixed status of the sort known throughout Achaemenid history, of local dynasts who

our previous discussions in section 62.3.1, Bactriana served also as the main contact for managing the empire's relations with the Sakas who lived east of the imperial territories, beyond Sogdiana and the Jaxartes and north of Gandhara.[98] The Hellenistic sources, principally gathered by Curtius and Arrian, confirm the close relationship between Bactriana, Sogdiana, the Sakas, and Chorasmia.

According to Curtius,[99] after having declared himself the new Persian ruler under the name Artaxerxes V, a drunken Bessus, "terrified" by Alexander's swift advance toward Bactriana, discussed at a war council with his "friends and commanders of the troops" (i.e., the Persian, Sogdian, and Bactrian leadership) his plan to withdraw to the land of the Sogdians, beyond the Oxus. He planned to use the river as a defensive line ("wall") while awaiting the arrival of auxiliary troops from the "neighboring peoples" of Bactriana. According to Curtius, these included: Chorasmians, Dahae, and Sakas, Indians and "Sakas beyond the Tanais" (that is in this case, the Jaxartes river),[100] i.e., the very same contingents that had previously served under his command at the Battle of Gaugamela. Although in this specific case, we cannot exclude the possibility that the expected help were hired mercenaries, such auxiliaries may have well been under Bessus's control because he was the satrap of Bactriana, or perhaps he could expect their support due to his new position as king of the Persian Empire. But not all in Bessus's war council agreed with his plan, presumably because his royal prerogatives were not recognized by all (exemplified by the figure of Gobares the Mede), and when he eventually crossed the Oxus he did so with only a handful of

---

were in a relationship of subordination with respect to the satrap, but who nonetheless preserved broad autonomy within their own territory, which they managed as they saw fit, under condition of paying tribute and sending contingents of horsemen in response to satrapal requisitions."

98. Briant 1982: 203–226; cf. Francfort 1984.

99. Curt. 7.4.

100. Curt. 7.4.15: "An army from the Tanais river." Note that the classical sources confuse and conflate the Volga = Tanais and the Syr Darya = Jaxartes, which were thought to be one river that separates Europe from Asia.

allies, as most of the Bactrians had deserted him and returned to their own estates.[101]

Arrian's narrative about the same episode is much less detailed:[102] Bessus and the Bactrians, with the support of some Persians and Dahae,[103] prepared to resist Alexander's advance. Then Bessus withdrew beyond the Oxus to Sogdiana and set up camp in Nautaca (possibly Shahrisabz in southern Uzbekistan), where he received Dahae and Sogdian reinforcements, led by the Sogdian leader Spitamenes, but was deserted by the Bactrian cavalry (that had previously already left the satrapal capital Bactra almost defenseless).[104] As soon as Alexander crossed the Oxus, Spitamenes and Dataphernes (possibly a Bactrian in the Sogdian leader's entourage) betrayed Bessus and handed him over to the invaders.[105] Spitamenes then became the leader of the resistance against the invaders, which initially may have centered on Cyropolis on the Jaxartes, the main stronghold on the frontier and difficult to seize,[106] as well as having strategic importance for the relations with the Sakas (section 62.2).

How Chorasmians, Sakas, and Dahae were involved in the events following Bessus's capture and eventual death is unclear. The classical sources are generally poorly informed about the semi-nomadic populations living beyond the Syr Darya and about the densely populated and heavily fortified region of Chorasmia beyond the Kyzyl Kum and

---

101. Curt. 7.4.20–22. This parallels the actions of the commanders of Darius III after the defeat at the Battle of Gaugamela.

102. Arr. *An*. 3.28.5–9.

103. In this passage, Arrian seems to distinguish between Dahae "who live on this side of the Tanais" and Dahae "from the Tanais." Quite possibly, he used the ethnonym Dahae as a generic designation in order to avoid the even less specific term Sakas.

104. Arr. *An*. 3.29.1. For an analysis of this episode and an assessment of its use for reconstructing the inner organization of the satrapy of Bactriana, see Briant 1996: 768–770.

105. Arr. *An*. 3.29.6; cf. Curt. 7.5.21, who mentions a further conspirator, the Bactrian Catanes.

106. Curt. 7.6.15–22; Arr. *An*. 4.1–4.3.5.

Kara Kum deserts. However, it seems that these "nations" were now freed from any previous oath of allegiance to the Persian king and/or the satrap of Bactriana. Although Alexander established a new authority in Bactra, Spitamenes was still fighting the invaders, and it seems that at first the Chorasmians, Sakas, and Dahae did not desert his cause. We may infer that in the aftermath of Bessus's death, the Sogdians of Spitamenes still had some support from the Sakas.[107] After campaigning in eastern Sogdiana, and after the siege of Cyropolis and its refoundation,[108] Alexander continued to have trouble in Marakanda (modern Samarkand) that was caused by Spitamenes,[109] who was supported by Dahae troops and/or Sakas;[110] and the Macedon invader was forced to lead a campaign across the Jaxartes in order to contain the Sakas,[111] battling and pursuing them into the desert.[112] As a result of this, the Sakas beyond the Jaxartes sent an embassy to Alexander to "surrender,"[113] and Alexander was finally free to march toward Samarkand, whereas Spitamenes retreated to "the royal residence of the Sogdians."[114] The fact that the captive Bessus's nose and ears were mutilated at this point in the narrative and that he was now sent to Ecbatana to be executed[115]

---

107. Arr. *An*. 4.3.6; 4.4.2; Curt. 7.7.16–17.

108. Arr. *An*. 4.4.1; Curt. 7.6.25.

109. Curt. 7.7.24.

110. Dahae: Curt. 7.7.32; Sakas: Arr. *An*. 4.6.1.

111. Arr. *An*. 4.4.5; Curt. 7.8.5.

112. Arr. *An*. 4.4.8–9; cf. Curt. 7.9.13.

113. Curt. 7.9.17–18; Arr. *An*. 4.5.1. Considering the difficulties endured by Alexander's army up to this point (as reported both by Arrian and Curtius), it seems more likely that a deal was struck with the Sakas in order to avoid a military confrontation while the invading force was still active in Bactriana and Sogdiana.

114. According to Curtius, Spitamenes fled to "Bactra." Following Rapin 2018: 286, "the royal residence of the Sogdians" was likely Gabae (modern Koktepe), but it might also have been a city further down in the Zeravshan valley in the area of Bukhara.

115. Arr. *An*. 4.7.3; Curt. 7.10.10.

is perhaps linked to the continuous resistance of the Sogdians and Bactrians.[116]

At this crucial point,[117] the "European Scythians" (apparently the Sakas beyond the Jaxartes), with whom Alexander had previously clashed, offered "friendship and alliances," and at the same time, Pharasmanes, "king of the Chorasmians," arrived in Zariaspa (possibly Marakanda, modern Samarkand)[118] with a retinue of 1,500 horsemen;[119] Alexander sent the Chorasmian ruler to Artabazus "the Persian," "to whom he had entrusted affairs in Bactria," and rather vaguely, also "to all the other neighboring satraps." Curtius also reports two embassies received by Alexander sent by the Sakas and by Phrataphernes, the "governor" of the Chorasmians, "a neighbor to the Massagetae and the Dahae," who had "sent messengers to promise his obedience."[120] These events are also mentioned by Justin as the "surrender" of the Chorasmians and the Dahae to Alexander.[121]

At this point, Curtius and Arrian's narratives concerning the last actions of the Sogdian leader Spitamenes diverge slightly.[122] According to both authors, as well as Strabo, Spitamenes had his last base and refuge beyond a desert, in the land of his Saka allies—according to Arrian, the Massagetae; and according to Curtius, the Dahae,[123] whereas Strabo specified that

---

116. E.g., Arr. *An*. 4.1.1.

117. Arr. *An*. 4.15.1–4.

118. For the proposed identification of Zariaspa with Marakanda, see Rapin 2018.

119. For comparison, note that the Bactrian cavalry was composed of 8,000–9,000 units at the Battle of Gaugamela, according to Curt. 4.12.6.

120. Curt. 8.1.7–9.

121. Just. *Epit*. 12.6.18.

122. Minardi 2015: 37–44.

123. Minardi 2015: 41. In Arr. *An*. 4.6.6, after Spitamenes's second siege of Samarkand and before the mutilation of Bessus, the Sogdian leader was pursued by Alexander along the valley of the Polytimetus river (modern Zeravshan) to where "there is nothing but the desert," i.e., the Kyzyl Kum desert. Already Daffinà 1967: 55 suggested that Spitamenes's flight may have ended in Chorasmia.

C62P45

> belonging to the tribe of the Massagetae and the Sacae are also the Attasians and the Chorasmians, to whom Spitamenes fled from the country of the Bactrians and the Sogdians.[124]

Spitamenes was eventually betrayed and killed by his Saka allies, who were "frightened" of Alexander,[125] and it is rather likely that the Chorasmian and Dahae embassies were sent to Alexander only after Spitamenes's demise and after Bessus's captivity in Bactra had come to an end, before the conqueror began his march toward India.[126] Although the rulers of the Chorasmians and Sakas (and as we have seen, probably also the Dahae) controlled territories that were not subject to Alexander, they still pledged their obedience and recognized the new authority.[127] Strabo recorded that

> Alexander did attempt to lead an expedition against these [i.e., unidentified Saka populations dwelling north of Sogdiana] when he was in pursuit of Bessus and Spitamenes, but when Bessus was

124. Str. 9.8.1.

125. Curt. 8.3.16; Arr. *An*. 4.17.17.

126. A Chinese source confirms the geopolitical connection between these two "states" at the end of the first millennium BC, as the Chorasmians and Dahae sent an ambassador to the Han court around 110 BC, following the example of the Arsacids; see Minardi 2015: 57–58 (with references). On Chorasmia and the Dahae, see Minardi 2015: 45–47 (with references) and also Olbrycht 2015. At that time, some of these Dahae may have dwelled in the delta of the Syr Darya; see Vainberg and Levina 1993; Minardi 2015: 83.

127. Minardi 2015: 41. This is clear from both Arrian and Curtius's narratives. Thus, Arr. *An*. 4.15.1–5 writes, "The purpose of the embassy was to express the readiness of the Scythians to do whatever Alexander commanded"; and that the king of the Sakas "would also come to visit Alexander if summoned, and hear Alexander's command from Alexander himself." According to these and other sources, the Sakas were not defeated and conquered and Chorasmia was never reached by the invaders, therefore remaining *terra incognita*; see Minardi 2013; 2015: 125. However, later in his narrative, Arr. *An*. 7.10.5–11 reports a speech made by Alexander to encourage his soldiers that included Chorasmia in a list of conquered regions, alongside Parthia and Hyrcania.

> captured alive and brought back, and Spitamenes was slain by the barbarians, he desisted from his undertaking.[128]

It is unclear whether Spitamenes was indeed a traitor or whether the story of his betrayal was a literary construct to discredit the defeated enemy.[129] Especially the portrayal of Bessus as a usurper of the Persian crown may have been partially or even entirely constructed in order to justify Alexander's actions, designed to portray him as the rightful successor to the Persian Empire.[130] In any case, news of Bessus's execution seemed to be one of the causes for Spitamenes's downfall and the surrender of his supporters. Bessus apparently continued to serve as a catalyst for the local resistance against the invaders, and for that reason, Alexander seems to have made the timely decision to execute the last satrap of Bactriana and self-proclaimed last king of the Persian Empire, who had been held prisoner in his former satrapal capital until then. After the mutilation of his nose and ears by order of Alexander, Bessus was sent to Ecbatana,[131] where he was publicly displayed and then executed.[132] Hence, Bessus was treated and punished as a traitor in accordance with Persian customs.[133]

For our purposes, the most important point is the very obvious political supremacy of Bactriana vis-à-vis the neighboring "nations" (with a clear preeminence of Sogdiana among those), and of its satrap as an

---

128. Str. 11.11.6. Cf. also Arr. *An*. 4.4.8 (see above in this section).

129. With Darius III being betrayed by Bessus, and Bessus betrayed in turn by Spitamenes.

130. Cf. Briant 2003: 199, 345–346. It was only after Spitamenes's revolt had been suppressed that Alexander made his attempt to introduce *proskynesis* (on which see chapter 65 in this volume), "the quintessential act of homage to the Persian king"; see Bosworth 1996: 109, with note 55.

131. Curt. 7.10.11.

132. Arr. *An*. 4.7.3.

133. Cf. Darius I's Bisotun inscription, describing the rebel leaders' mutilation and public execution (DB §32–§33); cf. also Hdt. 3.69. As indicated by Arrian (Arr. *An*. 4.7.3), Alexander was conscious of this Persian custom.

agent of the Persian king. At the time of Alexander's conquest, the complex relationship between Bactriana and its satellites was rooted in over two centuries of Persian hegemony in Central Asia, which the Greek commentators found impossible to grasp in all its nuances. The varying titles given to the Chorasmian leader ("governor," "king") and the inconsistent use of labels such as "Massagetae," "Sakas," and "Dahae" are clear examples of the difficulty they had in codifying the organization and hierarchies of those regions, especially when outside their own firsthand experience.

Recently published Aramaic documents from Bactriana (but unfortunately without any known archaeological context)[134] confirm and reveal how the Persian authorities from one end of the empire to the other "installed identical hierarchies and administrative procedures," rendering obsolete all those "theories about the peripheral character of Bactriana-Sogdiana in the Empire."[135] However, the general shortage of primary sources for the northeastern regions of the Persian Empire makes it extremely difficult to say more than this.

What evidence there is, however, allows some firm conclusions. Most importantly, just like Parthia and Aria (see below in this section), Bactriana was a satrapy, with its satrapal seat at the city of Bactra (modern Balkh/Tepe Zargaran), while there were no satrapal seats in Sogdiana, in Chorasmia, among the Sakas beyond the Jaxartes, or in the lands of the Dahae. Politically, all these "nations" all orbited around Bactra, as confirmed by both Persian sources and later texts commenting on the Persian period. Their cultural patterns were diverse: while the deserts and steppes were inhabited by semi-nomadic populations, the region of Chorasmia was by the second half of the fifth century BC culturally fairly homogenous and, just like Sogdiana, a polity of sedentary people, although the classical authors were unaware of this. According to these same commentators, the Dahae dwelled on the steppe belt stretching

134. For the edition, see Naveh and Shaked 2012.

135. Briant 2020: 36–37. Two fragmentary Elamite tablets from Old Kandahar, published by Fisher and Stolper 2015 and reconsidered in a broader context by Henkelman 2017, confirm this also for Arachosia.

from the northeast of the Caspian Sea toward the east.[136] From the Chorasmians, the Dahae were separated geographically in the west only by the arid Ustyurt Plateau, and as has been suggested repeatedly in this chapter, it is very likely that the classical sources sometimes conflated or confused the two groups, and also other semi-nomadic confederations.[137]

Bessus's struggle against the invading forces not only involved the "nations" subject to his own satrapy, but also other nearby satrapies, including Aria and Arachosia. After the demise of Darius III and after Alexander's sojourn in Zadracarta (of unknown location; perhaps Sari), "the greatest city of Hyrcania," "the place where the palace of the Hyrcanians was," the Macedonians moved toward Aria with the intention of invading Bactriana, by passing through the satrapy of Parthia.[138] Reaching Aria, Alexander met in the city of Susia (modern Tus) with Satibarzanes, the satrap of Aria, who surrendered to him (perhaps recognizing him as the new ruler) and was thus kept in office.[139] In Arrian's narrative, it is at this precise moment that Bessus proclaimed himself the new Persian king under the regnal name of Artaxerxes V. So it was perhaps not coincidentally, that when Alexander left Aria to advance on Bactriana, Satibarzanes rebelled against the Macedon and gathered his forces in his capital Artacoana (modern Herat).[140] It is plausible to

136. Str. 11.8.1–2; and cf. also Plin. *HN* 6.19 who uses more, and far more randomly chosen, ethnonyms.

137. Minardi 2015: 45–47. Cf. Curt. 8.1.7–9, who describes the Chorasmians as "neighbors" of the Dahae and Massagetae. The wealth of mentions of the Dahae by Roman historians dealing with sources on Alexander the Great is probably due to their renown in Roman times, when they became part of a literary topos: e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 2.3, 11.8; Luc. *Alex.* 2.296, 7.429; Valerius Flaccus 2.157; Verg. *Aen.* 8.727–728; and cf. Appian, who lists in the army of Antiochus III (222–187 BC) the "mounted archers of the Dahae, Mysia, Elymais, and Arabia, who, riding on swift camels shoot arrows with dexterity from their high position, and use very long thin knives when come to close combat" (App. *Syr.* 32).

138. Arr. *An*. 3.25.1. Alexander traveled along one of the royal roads of the Persian Empire, on which see Briant 2010; 2012.

139. See also Diod. Sic. 17.77.5.

140. According to Arr. *An*. 3.25.5, "where his palace was."

assume that once a credible candidate to continue the dynastic line of the Persian Empire had emerged in the shape of Bessus, the satrap of Aria would have joined his side rather than stay loyal to the invader.[141] However, at the news that Alexander planned to retaliate and lay siege to Artacoana instead of continuing his march toward Bactria, Satibarzanes was abandoned by most of his men and fled.[142] Alexander then appointed Arsaces, a Persian, as the new satrap of Aria and resumed his march eastward. However, Satibarzanes was not yet defeated and returned to reclaim his former satrapy with the assistance of Bessus,[143] and Phrataphernes, the satrap of Parthia, who had remained loyal to Alexander, was sent alongside Macedon troops to subdue Satibarzanes in Aria. But before Alexander had crossed the Oxus in order to challenge Bessus, Arsaces was removed from his post for treason, and again, a new satrap of Aria was appointed.[144]

These events highlight once again the regional prominence of Bactriana, or of Bessus himself who, after the collapse of the central imperial administration, still continued to muster forces able to resist the invaders: assessing military obligations and mobilizing troops is among the basic powers of any ruler. Bessus's claim to the Persian throne, together with the impressive military support that he was able to harness (not only Bactrian forces, but also Saka and Indian auxiliaries and/or mercenaries), seems to have renewed belief in the viability of the empire's survival in the satraps of Aria and Arachosia, who initially surrendered

---

141. Arr. *An*. 3.25.5: "He (Satibarzanes) had decided, on learning of Alexander's advance, to go from there (i.e., his palace) with his troops to Bessus and join him in attacking the Macedonians." Cf. Curt. 7.3.2; Diod. Sic. 17.78.1–2.

142. Arr. *An*. 3.25.7. Note that Barsaentes, satrap of Arachosia and Drangiana (Arr. *An*. 3.21) and "one of those who had joined in attacking Darius," was, according to Arrian, a traitor to Darius III but an ally to Bessus. In Arrian's narrative, he subsequently fled eastward, and this may have been a strategic retreat, although the flight of the various protagonists of the imperial leadership (Bessus, Spitamenes, Satibarzanes, and Barsaentes) to the lands of their "barbarian" allies is clearly a literary topos.

143. Arr. *An*. 3.28.2; Curt. 7.3.2; Diod. Sic. 17.81.3.

144. Arr. *An*. 3.29.5; 4.7.1.

to the invader after the defeat of Darius III at Gaugamela.[145] Bessus's authority was strong enough even to appoint his own satraps, such as Barzanes as satrap of Parthia in opposition to Phrataphernes, who had pledged allegiance to Alexander.[146] However, much of the power relationship at play in the northeastern territories of the Persian Empire is distorted by the classical sources, which only ever depicted the satraps and other leaders of the Persian Empire as loyal and capable when they were allied to Alexander; if they maintained their original alliances, they were portrayed as traitors and cowards.

62.5. The archaeology of the northeastern regions of the Persian Empire

The written sources at our disposal indicate that a Bactrian polity existed already prior to the conquest of Cyrus and the incorporation into the Persian Empire. Once integrated into the emerging imperial structures in the sixth century BC, Bactriana gradually extended or perhaps consolidated its influence over the adjacent territories until the arrival of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century BC, including over those areas inhabited by the semi-nomadic Saka peoples. The disproportionate amount of data about Bactriana in comparison to all the other regions in the northeast of the Persian Empire should not be considered accidental, but the direct result of its prominent political role. While data about Parthia is scant prior to the Arsacid ("Parthian") period from the mid-third century BC onward (which is beyond this chapter's scope), similar processes of imperial integration can be envisaged for Aria and also Arachosia (chapter 63 in this volume). Hyrcania, it seems, had a more significant role during Cyrus's time than it held in the later phase of the Persian Empire and the time of Alexander's invasion.

145. According to a Babylonian chronicle, the troops of Darius III deserted him after the Battle of Gaugamela and went back to their homes; see Bernard 1990 and also Rollinger 2016 (on the ideological bias of this composition).

146. Arr. *An*. 4.7.1.

Chorasmia is the only settled region of Central Asia without any early proto-urban development. In the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, this area was occupied by different cultural groups with a steppic background, and the shift toward a state organization was apparently prompted only by the impact of the Persian Empire.[147] The region became a frontier zone of the Persian Empire, at the edge of its settled areas and at a considerable distance from any of its main centers, the closest being Samarkand. At the site of Kyuzeli-gȳr (in the north of modern Turkmenistan),[148] a fortified settlement was established, and there is clear evidence for irrigation works and thus extensive land exploitation, increased social complexity, and a new material culture characterized by the adoption of a Yaz III–derived ceramic typology, which during the fifth century BC was widespread in all the areas irrigated by the lower reaches of the Oxus. Bactrian agency in the imperial strategies in Chorasmia is likely.

Under the Persian Empire, the preexisting political structures of all the lands discussed in this chapter likely underwent some reconfiguration, but concrete information is currently wanting in the absence of data: even for the main centers of Central Asia, such as the cities of Bactra (modern Balkh/Tepe Zargaran) and Margu (modern Merv/Erk-kala),[149] we still lack basic archaeological knowledge concerning the pre-Persian and Persian periods.[150] The societies within the empire's northeastern regions, from the settled regions along the river valleys with

147. Minardi 2015; 2018; 2021.

148. See Minardi 2020.

149. On the limited excavations of the Persian-period settlements in Merv/Erk-kala (modern Turkmenistan) and in Balkh/Tepe Zargaran (modern Afghanistan), see Vidale et al. 2008: 195; Cerasetti 2008: 35–36; Lhuillier 2018: 266.

150. On the archaeology of the Persian period in Central Asia, see Francfort and Lecomte 2002; Francfort 2005; Briant and Boucharlat 2015; Lhuillier 2018; Rapin 2021 (with further literature). On Bactriana in particular, see Lyonnet 1997; Bernard et al. 2006; Besenval and Marquis 2007; Fouache et al. 2012; Marquis 2018; Lhuillier et al. 2021; on Sogdiana, see Rapin and Isamiddinov 2013; Rapin 2017; on Chorasmia, see Minardi 2015; 2020; on Margiana, see Gubaev et al. 1998; Cerasetti 2008; Salvatori and Tosi 2008; on Parthia and Hyrcania, see Jacobs 2021; and on Aria, see Vogelsang 2003.

their relatively high population density and developed agriculture to the semi-nomadic population groups in the steppes, would have entertained a range of different relationships with the imperial authorities and also with each other, which certainly developed and changed throughout the two centuries of Persian domination.[151] Once in a while, the scarce material evidence at our disposal from the Central Asian territories receives important additions, such as the two recently published, fragmentary Elamite clay tablets that were excavated at Old Kandahar,[152] or the Aramaic documents from Bactriana (which appeared on the art market, very regrettably without archaeological context).[153] However, even this material is hardly sufficient to comprehensively address the key questions of the degree of imperial interference and of the efficacy of the imperial administration, e.g., in directly controlling the local economy, and these matters continue to be debated.[154]

Archaeologically speaking, the imprint left by the Persian Empire in the northeastern territories is scarcely visible, as it is "hidden" by the strong local continuities in settlement, material cultures, and traditions, which in Central Asia are exemplified by the widespread Iron Age Yaz II/III typological ceramic group. To quote Johanna Lhuillier,

> In the current state of research, the Persian presence itself is visible only through some fortresses likely hosting some military contingents and acting as administrative centres, located on some strategic points to control the territory. Following Cattenat and Gardin (1977), Askarov and Al'baum (1979), and Lyonnet (1990), we consider that these elements indicate the autonomous development

151. E.g., in relation to the management of labor and military force and workers of the administration; see Briant 2012.

152. Fisher and Stolper 2015.

153. Naveh and Shaked 2012.

154. Briant 2001: 162–165; 2020 (with further references); and also Genito 1998b; Henkelman 2017: 150. On the case of Margiana, see Genito 1998a; Cerasetti 2008: 34–36; and note the more cautious points of view expressed by Vidale et al. 2008: 195; Cattani 2008: 146.

> of the local society, a part of which acted as a relay to the political and administrative Achaemenid power, under the Persian rule.[155]

But, to paraphrase a question posed by Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, what kind of empire are we trying to find?[156] The elements listed by Lhuillier all concern key aspects of socioeconomic control. That the Persian Empire exercised a systematic centralized control and management over Central Asia is confirmed by the above-mentioned documents from Bactriana and Old Kandahar, and also the texts from the Persepolis Fortification archives concerning the eastern populations.[157] For nearby Arachosia, a Persian-period weight found in the region of Bust (in the Helmand province of Afghanistan) adds to the evidence for imperial economic control.[158] Arsacid Parthia and Chorasmia exhibit a strong cultural legacy of the Persian Empire, as the Aramaic script that had been introduced there by the imperial chancelleries[159] was used to convey the local Middle Iranian languages centuries after the empire's demise.[160] In this regard, also the economic and cultural legacy left by the Persian Empire's hold over India has to be taken into account.[161]

According to the explicit mentions of the Alexander biographers, the satraps and the local elites lived in palaces that were located in their capital cities. Satraps were, as in the case of Bactriana, members of the royal family. Court life, with its etiquette, customs, and art—and thus its ideological imprint,[162] certainly mirrored the practices of the imperial

---

155. Lhuillier 2018: 267.

156. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1990.

157. Henkelman 2017.

158. Trousdale 1968.

159. Bader 1996: 252; Livshits 2003 (with references).

160. On the Sogdian language and script, see Grenet et al. 2007; and on the Kandahar bilingual, see Émile Benveniste in Schlumberger et al. 1958: 35–48; also Briant 2009.

161. Iori 2019. See also chapter 63 in this volume.

162. On this subject, see Basello 2013.

court (for which see chapter 65 in this volume). But just as details of local administration are unknown, we lack basic data on the lifestyles of the Central Asian elites of the Persian period. An important indicator for the influence of imperial court culture is arguably the so-called tulip bowls that have been discovered in archaeological contexts in the widespread regions under the aegis of the Persian Empire, from Sardis in Lydia (chapter 51 in this volume) to Barikot in Pakistan (chapter 63 in this volume). Although such ceramic forms were also created and used after the end of the Persian domination, the results of archaeological fieldwork seem to indicate that, at least in certain areas of Central Asia, the "tulip bowls" were originally a cultural hallmark of the Persian Empire. Found at various sites across the region,[163] the use of such bowls is certainly a reflection of the acculturation of local elites to Persian court culture, probably through the agency of regional centers about which we sadly lack data.[164] Certain echoes of Persian-period culture in Central Asia can also be traced in the arts and crafts and to some extent in the traditional religious practices of later periods.[165] An important element is arguably the Zoroastrian liturgical calendar as adopted in Central Asia, which originated in the Persian Empire.[166]

To control the landscape, the primary means of wealth production in this fundamentally agricultural world, was to control the societies and economies of the subject territories, which the Persian Empire achieved in its northeastern regions through a system of larger and

163. For finds of "tulip bowls" from Old Kandahar, see Fleming 1996; Helms 1997; from Chorasmia, in particular the site of Dingil'dzhe, see Minardi 2015: 91–92; 2020; from the Sogdiana, in particular the site of Kyziltepa, see Wu 2018 (who considers the area to be northern Bactria; cf. Rapin 2013: 74–78); from Parthia, see Lhuillier and Bendezu-Sarmiento 2018. Comparable pieces are known from Sardis in Asia Minor (see Dusinberre 1999), the island of Bahrain (see Højlund and Andersen 1997), and Pakistan (see Petrie et al. 2008; Iori 2019; Olivieri and Iori 2020; Olivieri 2021: 316–318; and chapter 63 in this volume). See also Magee 2004: 80–81.

164. Minardi 2016 (with references).

165. Minardi 2020 (with references).

166. de Jong 2015.

smaller administrative centers and subordinate fortresses. The interconnection of territorial expansion, imperial control, and wealth generation in Central Asia during the Persian period seemingly meant an increase in agricultural exploitation and the necessity for the construction of new settlements and irrigation works, as assumed, e.g., at Kyziltepa in the upper reaches of the Oxus (now in the extreme east of modern Uzbekistan).[167] Only further fieldwork in Central Asia will be able to clarify whether such projects were directly spearheaded by the Persian authorities or the result of local initiatives that connected themselves to preexisting or imperial infrastructures.[168] Intensified archaeological research may also result in the recovery of additional written documents, as the case of Old Kandahar has so promisingly shown. We can reasonably hope that new material will emerge that will either prove or disprove the currently held assumptions about the northeastern territories of the Persian Empire.

REFERENCES

Álvarez-Mon, J., and Garrison, M.B. (eds.) 2011. *Elam and Persia*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Álvarez-Mon, J., Basello, G.P., and Wicks, Y. (eds.) 2018. *The Elamite world*. London and New York: Routledge.

Askarov, A.A., and Al'baum, L.I. 1979. *Поселение Кучуктепа*. Tashkent: FAN.

167. Wu et al. 2015, discussing the "intensive cultivation regime" attested there that may be connected with the Persian Empire's influence. Cerasetti 2008 hypothesized that similar processes were at work in Margiana during the Iron Age. Erk-kala at Merv (ancient Margu) was founded and Tepe Zargaran at Balkh (ancient Bactra) extended into the Persian imperial period; see Cerasetti 2008: 35–36; Vidale et al. 2008: 195; Lhuillier 2018: 266.

168. Building on the evidence from Tepe Yahya in the Kerman Province of Iran, Magee 2004 understands the Persian Empire's influence in the region as a matter of ideological and political pressure on the local elites, exerted by a centralized power that, nonetheless, allowed this center and its territories to maintain a certain degree of economic autonomy. For a similar approach regarding the Sistan region of eastern Iran, see Maresca 2018. On the "continuous collective cooperation" necessary for artificial irrigation, see Vidale 2018.

Bader, A. 1996. Parthian ostraca from Nisa: some historical data. In Anonymous (ed.), *La Persia e l'Asia Centrale da Alessandro al X secolo* (Atti dei Convegni Lincei 127). Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 252–276.

Basello, G.P. 2013. Le unità amministrative dell'impero achemenide (satrapie): il potere percepito dai popoli sottomessi e le immagini di ritorno. *Ricerche storico bibliche* 25: 37–97.

Becking, B. 2017. The other groups that were. . . . Some remarks on different minor ethnicities in Persian period Elephantine. *Journal for Semitics* 26: 820–848.

Bernard, P. 1974. Un problème de toponymie antique dans l'Asie Centrale: les noms anciens de Qandahar. *Studia Iranica* 3: 171–85.

Bernard, P. 1990. Nouvelle contribution de l'épigraphie cunéiforme à l'histoire hellénistique. *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 114: 513–541.

Bernard, P., Besenval, R., and Marquis, P. 2006. Du "mirage bactrien" aux réalités archéologiques: nouvelles fouilles de la DAFA à Bactres (2004–2005). *CRAIBL* 150: 1175–1254.

Bernard, P., and Inagaki, H. 2000. Un torque achéménide avec une inscription grecque au Musée Miho (Japon). *CRAIBL* 144: 1371–1437.

Besenval, R., and Marquis, P. 2007. Le rêve accompli d'Alfred Foucher à Bactres: nouvelles fouilles de la DAFA 2002–2007. *CRAIBL* 151: 1847–1874.

Betts, A.V.G., Grenet, F., Yagodin, V.N., Kidd, F., Minardi, M., Bonnat, M., and Kashimov, S. 2016. The Akchakhan-kala wall paintings: new perspectives on kingship and religion in ancient Chorasmia. *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 7: 125–165.

Bosworth, A.B. 1996. *Alexander and the east: the tragedy of triumph*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brentjes, B. 1993. Waffen der Steppenvölker, I: Dolch und Schwert im Steppenraum vom 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr. bis in die alttürkische Zeit. *AMIT* 26: 5–45.

Briant, P. 1982. *État et pasteurs au Moyen-Orient ancien*. Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme.

Briant, P. 1984. *L'Asie centrale et les royaumes proche-orientaux du premier millénaire (c. VIII^e–IV^e siècles avant notre ère)*. Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations.

Briant, P. 1996. *Histoire de l'Empire Perse: de Cyrus à Alexandre*. Paris: Fayard.

Briant, P. 2001. *Bulletin d'histoire achéménide, vol. II*. Paris: Thotm.

Briant, P. 2003. *Darius dans l'ombre d'Alexandre*. Paris: Fayard.

Briant, P. 2009. The empire of Darius III in perspective. In Heckel, W., and Tritle, L. (eds.), *Alexander the Great: a new history*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 141–170.

Briant, P. 2010. Suse et l'Élam dans l'empire achéménide. In Perrot, J. (ed.), *Le palais de Darius à Suse: une résidence royale sur la route de Persépolis à Babylone*. Paris: Presse de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 22–48.

Briant, P. 2012. From the Indus to the Mediterranean: the administrative organization and logistics of the great roads of the Achaemenid Empire. In Alcock, S., Bodel, J., and Talbert, R.J.A. (eds.), *Highways, byways and road systems in the pre-modern world*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 185–201.

Briant, P. 2020. Bactria in the Achaemenid Empire: the Achaemenid central state in Bactria (again). In Payne, R., and King, R. (eds.), *The limits of empire in ancient Afghanistan: rule and resistance in the Hindu Kush, circa 600 BCE–600 CE*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 21–44.

Briant, P., and Boucharlat, R. 2015. Introduction. In Briant, P., and Boucharlat, R. (eds.), *L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide: nouvelles recherches*. Paris: De Boccard, 17–25.

Cattani, M. 2008. The final phase of the Bronze Age and the "Andronovo Question" in Margiana. In Salvatori, S., and Tosi (eds.), *The archaeological map of the Murghab delta: studies and reports series, vol. II: the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the Margiana lowlands: facts and methodological proposals for a redefinition of the research strategies.* Oxford: BAR, 133–151.

Cattenat, A., and Gardin, J.-C. 1977. Diffusion comparée de quelques genres de poteries caractéristiques de l'époque achéménide sur le plateau iranien et en Asie centrale. In Deshayes, J. (ed.), *Le plateau iranien et l'Asie centrale des origines à la conquête islamique: leurs relations à la lumière des documents archéologiques*. Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 225–248.

Cerasetti, B. 2008. A GIS for the archaeology of the Murghab delta. In Salvatori, S., and Tosi (eds.), *The archaeological map of the Murghab delta: studies and reports series, vol. II: the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the Margiana lowlands: facts and methodological proposals for a redefinition of the research strategies.* Oxford: BAR, 29–37.

Curtis, J. 2005. Iron Age and the transition to the Achaemenid period. In Curtis, V.S., and Stewart, S. (eds.), *Birth of the Persian Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris, 112–131.

Daffinà, P. 1967. *L'immigrazione dei Sakā nella Drangiana*. Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.

Dan, A. 2013. Achaemenid world representations in Herodotus' *Histories*: some geographic examples of cultural translation. In Geus, K., Irwin, E., and Poiss, T. (eds.), *Herodots Wege des Erzählens: Logos und Topos in den Historien*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 83–121.

Dandamaev, M.A. 1992. *Iranians in Achaemenid Babylonia*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda.

de Jong, A.F. 2015. Religion and politics in pre-Islamic Iran. In Stausberg, M., and Vevaina, Y.S.-D. (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to Zoroastrianism*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 85–102.

Dusinberre, E.R.M. 1999. Satrapal Sardis: Achaemenid bowls in an Achaemenid capital. *AJA* 103: 73–102.

Fisher, M.T., and Stolper, M.W. 2015. Achaemenid Elamite administrative tablets, 3: fragments from Old Kandahar, Afghanistan. *ARTA* 2015.001. Retrieved from http://www.achemenet.com/pdf/arta/ARTA_2015.001-Fisher-Stolper.pdf (last accessed February 17, 2021).

Fleming, D. 1996. The Achaemenid material. In McNicoll, A., and Ball, W. (eds.), *Excavations at Kandahar 1974 and 1975: the first two seasons at Shahr-i Kohna (Old Kandahar) conducted by the British Institute of Afghan Studies*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 365–390.

Fouache, E., Besenval, R., Cosandey, C., Coussot, C., Ghilardi, M., Huot, S., and Lamothe, M. 2012. Palaeochannels of the Balkh River (northern Afghanistan) and human occupation since the Bronze Age period. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 39: 3415–3427.

Francfort, H.-P. 1984. Review of Briant 1982. *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 73: 369–384.

Francfort, H.-P. 1985. Notes sur la mort de Cyrus et le Dardes. In Gnoli, G., and Lanciotti, L. (eds.), *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci memoriae dicata*. Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 395–400.

Francfort, H.-P. 2005. Asie centrale. In Briant, P., and Boucharlat, R. (eds.), *L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide: nouvelles recherches*. Paris: De Boccard, 313–352.

Francfort, H.-P., and Lecomte, O. 2002. Irrigation et société en Asie centrale des origines à l'époque achéménide. *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57: 625–663.

Genito, B. 1998a. The Iron Age in Merv Oasis. In Gubaev, A., Koshelenko, G., and Tosi, M. (eds.), *The archeological map of the Murghab delta: preliminary reports 1990–1995*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 89–96.

Genito, B. 1998b. The Achaemenids in the history of Central Asia. In Gubaev, A., Koshelenko, G., and Tosi, M. (eds.), *The archeological map of the Murghab delta: preliminary reports 1990–1995*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 149–158.

Genito, B. 2005. The archaeology of the Median period: an outline and a research perspective. *IrAnt* 40: 315–340.

Grenet, F. 2005. An archaeologist's approach to Avestan geography. In Curtis, V.S., and Stewart, S. (eds.), *Birth of the Persian Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris, 29–51.

Grenet, F. 2015. Zarathustra's time and homeland: geographical perspectives. In Stausberg, M., and Vevaina, Y.S.-D. (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to Zoroastrianism*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 21–38.

Grenet, F., and Rapin, C. 2001. Alexander, Aï Khanoum, Termez: remarks on the spring campaign of 328. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 12: 79–89.

Grenet, F., Sims-Williams, N., and Podushkin, A. 2007. Les plus anciens monuments de la langue Sogdienne: les inscriptions de Kultobe au Kazakhstan. *CRAIBL* 151: 1005–1034.

Gropp, G. 2009. Die Darstellung der 23 Völker auf den Reliefs des Apadana von Persepolis. *IrAnt* 44: 283–359.

Gubaev, A., Koshelenko, G., and Tosi, M. (eds.) 1998. *The archeological map of the Murghab delta: preliminary reports 1990–1995*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente.

Helms, S. 1997. *Excavations at Old Kandahar in Afghanistan 1976–1978: conducted on behalf of the Society for South Asian Studies (Society for Afghan Studies): stratigraphy, pottery and other finds*. Oxford: BAR.

Henkelman, W.F.M. 2017. Imperial signature and imperial paradigm. In Henkelman, W.F.M., Jacobs, B., and Stolper, M.W. (eds.), *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich: imperiale Muster und Strukturen / Administration in the Achaemenid Empire: tracing the imperial signature*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 45–256.

Henkelman, W.F.M. 2018. Bactrians in Persepolis—Persians in Bactria. In Lhuillier, J., and Boroffka, N. (eds.), *A millennium of history: the Iron Age in Central Asia (2nd and 1st millennia BC)*. Mainz: Zabern, 223–256.

Henkelman, W.F.M., and Stolper, M.W. 2009. Ethnic identity and ethnic labelling at Persepolis: the case of the Skudrians. In Briant, P., and Chauveau, M. (eds.), *Organisation des pouvoirs et contacts culturels dans les pays de l'empire achéménide*. Paris: 271–329.

Højlund, F., and Andersen, H.H. 1997. *Qala'at al-Bahrain, vol. 2: the central monumental buildings*. Aarhus: Jutland Archaeological Society.

Iori, E. 2019. Mind the gap: local persistence and Iranian legacy in Gandhara: new evidence from Swat. In Genito, B., and Maresca, G. (eds.), *Ceramics and the archaeological Achaemenid horizon: Near East, Iran and Central Asia*. Naples: Unior, 191–207.

Jacobs, B. 1992. Der Tod des Bessos: ein Beitrag zur Frage des Verhältnisses der Achämeniden zur Lehre des Zoroasters. *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 24: 177–186.

Jacobs, B. 1994. *Die Satrapienverwaltung im Perserreich zur Zeit Darius' III*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.

Jacobs, B. 2011. Achaemenid satrapies. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition. Retrieved from https://iranicaonline.org/articles/achaemenid-satrapies (last accessed January 29, 2021).

Jacobs, B. 2017. Kontinuität oder kontinuierlicher Wandel in der achämenidischen Reichsverwaltung? Eine Synopse von PFT, *dahyāva*-Listen und den Satrapienlisten der Alexanderhistoriographen. In Henkelman, W.F.M., Jacobs, B., and Stolper, M.W. (eds.), *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich: imperiale Muster und Strukturen / Administration in the Achaemenid Empire: tracing the imperial signature*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 3–44.

Jacobs, B. 2021. Parthia. In Mairs, R. (ed.) *The Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek world*. London and New York: Routledge, 56–77.

Kellens, J. 1987. DB V: un témoignage sur l'évolution de l'idéologie achéménide. In Gnoli, G., and Lanciotti, L. (eds.), *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci memoriae dicata*. Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 677–682.

Kuhrt, A. 2007. *The Persian Empire: a corpus of sources from the Achaemenid Empire*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lecomte, O. 2013. Activités archéologiques françaises au Turkménistan. *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 21/22: 165–190.

Lecoq, P. 1993. Observations sur le sens du mot *dahyu* dans les inscriptions achéménides. *Transeuphratène* 3: 131–140.

Lecoq, P. 1997. *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide*. Paris: Gallimard.

Lenfant, D. 2004. *Ctésias de Cnide: la Perse, l'Inde, autres fragments*. Paris: Les belles lettres.

Lhuillier, J. 2018. Central Asia during the Achaemenid period in archaeological perspective. In Gondet, S., and Haerinck, E. (eds.), *L'Orient est son jardin: hommage à Rémy Boucharlat*. Leuven: Peeters, 257–271.

Lhuillier, J., and Bendezu-Sarmiento, J. 2018. Central Asia and the interaction between the Iranian plateau and the steppes in late first millennium BC: case study from Ulug-depe in Turkmenistan. In Minardi, M., and Ivantchik, A. (eds.), *Ancient Chorasmia, Central Asia and the steppes: cultural relations and exchanges from the Achaemenids to the Arabs*. Leiden: Brill, 328–350.

Lhuillier, J., Bendezu Sarmiento, J., and Marquis, P. 2021. Ancient Bactra: new data on the Iron Age occupation of the Bactra oasis. In Lhuillier, J., and Wagner, M. (eds.), *Archaeology of Central Asia during the 1st millennium BC, from the beginning of the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 33–48.

Litvinskij, B.A., and Pičikjan, I.R. 1999. Handles and ceremonial scabbards of Greek swords from the temple of the Oxus in northern Bactria. *East and West* 49: 47–104.

Livshits, V.A. 2003. Three silver bowls from the Isakovka Burial-Ground No. 1 with Khwarezmian and Parthian inscriptions. *ACSS* 9: 147–172.

Llewellyn-Jones, L., and Robson, J. 2010. *Ctesias' History of Persia: tales of the Orient*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lyonnet, B. 1990. Les rapports entre l'Asie centrale et l'empire achéménide d'après les données de l'archéologie. In Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H., and Kuhrt, A. (eds.), *Achaemenid history, vol. IV: centre and periphery*. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 77–92.

Lyonnet, B. 1997. *Céramique et peuplement du chalcolithique à la conquête arabe: prospections archéologiques en Bactriane orientale (1974–1978), vol. 2*. Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations.

Magee, P. 2004. *Excavations at Tepe Yahya, Iran, 1967–1975, vol. IV: the Iron Age settlement*. Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum Press.

Maresca, G. 2018. Between "Early" and "Late" Iron Age in south-eastern Iran: notes on the possibility to evaluate the "Achaemenid impact" on the area. *Vicino Oriente* 22: 197–211.

Marquis, P. 2018. The Balkh oasis: a huge potential. In Lhuillier, J., and Boroffka, N. (eds.), *A millennium of history: the Iron Age in Central Asia (2nd and 1st millennia BC)*. Mainz: Zabern, 159–170.

Minardi, M. 2013. A four-armed goddess from ancient Chorasmia: history, iconography and style of an ancient Chorasmian icon. *Iran* 51: 111–144.

Minardi, M. 2015. *Ancient Chorasmia, a polity between the semi-nomadic and sedentary cultural Areas of Central Asia: cultural interactions and local developments from the sixth century BC to the first century AD*. Peeters: Leuven.

Minardi, M. 2016. Elite, wine consumption and status symbols in Ancient Chorasmia. *ACSS* 22: 262–294.

Minardi, M. 2018. The Oxus route toward the south: Persian legacy and Hellenistic innovations in Central Asia. In Minardi, M., and Ivantchik, A. (eds.), *Ancient Chorasmia, Central Asia and the steppes: cultural relations and exchanges from the Achaemenids to the Arabs*. Brill: Leiden, 87–154.

Minardi, M. 2020. Achaemenid echoes in the wall paintings of Akchakhankala, Chorasmia, and their broader significance for Central Asia. *JAC* 43: 1–42.

Minardi, M. 2021. The north-eastern border of the Achaemenid Empire: introducing the Chorasmian Late Iron Age. In Lhuillier, J., and Wagner, M. (eds.), *Archaeology of Central Asia during the 1st millennium BC, from the beginning of the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 71–88.

Naveh, J., and Shaked, S. 2012. *Aramaic documents from ancient Bactria, from the Khalili Collections*. London: Khalili Collections.

Negmatov, N.N. 1994. States in north-western Central Asia. In Harmatta, J., Puri, B.N., and Etemadi, G.F. (eds.), *History of civilizations of Central Asia, vol. II*. Paris: UNESCO, 432–447.

Olbrycht, M.J. 2015. Persia beyond the imperial frontiers: the nomads of the South Ural region versus the Near East. *Anabasis* 6: 257–309.

Olivieri, L.M. 2021. *Ceramics from the excavations in the historic settlement at Bīr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai (Barikot) Swat, Pakistan (1984–1992), part 1: the study*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.

Olivieri, L.M., and Iori, E. 2020. Early historic data from the 2016 excavation campaigns at the urban site of Barikot, Swat (Pakistan): a shifting

perspective. In Greaves, L.R., and Hardy, A. (eds.), *Religion, society, trade and kingship archaeology and art in South Asia and along the Silk Road, 5500 BCE–5th century CE, vol. 1: archaeology, seals and inscriptions, iconography and artistic expression*. New Delhi: Dev Publishers, 79–104.

Petit, T. 1990. *Satrapes et satrapies dans l'empire achéménide de Cyrus le grand à Xerxès l^er^*. Paris: Les belles lettres.

Petrie, C.A., Magee, P., and Nasim Khan, M. 2008. Emulation at the edge of empire: the adoption of non-local vessel forms in the NWFP, Pakistan during the mid–late 1st millennium BC. *Gandhāran Studies* 2: 1–16.

Porten, B., and Yardeni, A. 1986–1999. *Textbook of Aramaic documents from ancient Egypt*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Potts, D.T. 2010. Achaemenid interests in the Persian Gulf. In Curtis, J., and Simpson, St.J. (eds.), *The world of Achaemenid Persia: history, art and society in Iran and the ancient Near East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 523–533.

Potts, D.T. 2012. A "Scythian" pick from Vaske (Gilan) and the identity of the XVII^th^ delegation at Persepolis. In Baker, H.D., Kaniuth, K., and Otto, A. (eds.), *Stories of long ago: Festschrift fur Michael D. Roaf*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 459–470.

Potts, D.T. 2014. *Nomadism in Iran: from antiquity to the modern era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rapin, C. 2013. On the way to Roxane: the route of Alexander the Great in Bactria and Sogdiana (328–327 BC). In Lindström, G., Hansen, S., Wieczorek, A., and Tellenbach, M. (eds.), *Zwischen Ost und West: neue Forschungen zum antiken Zentralasien*. Mainz: Zabern, 43–82.

Rapin, C. 2017. Sanctuaires zoroastriens sogdiens de Gava à l'époque hellénistique (Koktepe et Sangir-tepe). In Henkelman, W.M.F., and Redard, C. (eds.), *Persian religion in the Achaemenid period*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 417–460.

Rapin, C. 2018. On the way to Roxane, 2: Satraps and hyparchs between Bactra and Zariaspa-Maracanda. In Lhuillier, J., and Boroffka, N. (eds.), *A millennium of history: the Iron Age in Central Asia (2nd and 1st millennia BC)*. Mainz: Zabern, 257–298.

Rapin, C. 2021. The empire's northeast. In Jacobs, B., and Rollinger, R. (eds.), *A companion to the Achaemenid Persian Empire*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 311–323.

Rapin, C., and Isamiddinov, M. 2013. Entre sédentaires et nomades: les recherches de la Mission archéologique franco-ouzbèke (MAFOuz) de Sogdiane

sur le site de Koktepe. In Bendezu-Sarmiento, J. (ed.), *L'archéologie française en Asie centrale: nouvelles recherches et enjeux socioculturels*. Paris: De Boccard, 113–133.

Rollinger, R. 2016. The battle of Arbela in 331 BCE: disloyal "Orientals" and the alleged "panic" in the Persian army: from Neo-Assyrian kings to Alexander III. In Svärd, S., and Rollinger, R. (eds.), *Cross-cultural studies in Near Eastern history and literature*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 213–242.

Rollinger, R. 2020. The Medes of the 7th and 6th c. BCE: a short-term empire or rather a short-term confederacy? In Rollinger, R., Degen, J., and Gehler, M. (eds.), *Short-term empires in world history*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 187–211.

Root, M.C. 1979. *The king and kingship in Achaemenid art: essays on the creation of an iconography of empire*. Leiden: Brill.

Salvatori, S., and Tosi, M. 2008 (eds.). *The archaeological map of the Murghab delta: studies and reports series, vol. II: the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the Margiana lowlands: facts and methodological proposals for a redefinition of the research strategies.* Oxford: BAR.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. 1985. The death of Cyrus: Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as a source for Iranian history. In Bailey, H.W., Bivar, A.D.H., Duchesne Guillemin, J., and Hinnells, J.R. (eds.), *Papers in honour of professor Mary Boyce*. Leiden: Brill, 459–472.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. 1990. The quest for an elusive empire. In Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H., and Kuhrt, A. (eds.), *Achaemenid history, vol. IV: centre and periphery.* Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 263–274.

Schmidt, E.F. 1970. *Persepolis, III: the royal tombs and other monuments*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, R. 1991. *The Bisitun inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian text*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

Schmitt, R. 2000. Bisotun, III: Darius's inscription. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* IV/3: 299–305. Retrieved from https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bisotun-iii (last accessed January 29, 2021).

Schmitt, R. 2009. *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achaimeniden: editio minor mit deutscher Übersetzung*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.

Stronach, D. 2009. Riding in Achaemenid Iran: new perspectives. In Aviram, J., Ben-Tor, A., Eph'al, I., Gitin, S., and Reich, R. (eds.), *Ephraim Stern volume.* Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 216–237.

Summerer, L. 2007. Picturing Persian victory: the painted battle scene on the Munich Wood. *ACSS* 13: 3–30.

Taillieu, D., and Boyce, M. 2003. Haoma. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* XI/6: 659–667. Retrieved from https://iranicaonline.org/articles/haoma (last accessed February 17, 2021).

Trousdale, W. 1968. An Achaemenian stone weight from Afghanistan. *East and West* 18: 277–280.

Tucci, G. 1977. On Swāt: the Dards and connected problems. *East and West* 27: 9–103.

Tuplin, C.J., and Ma, J. (eds.) 2020. *Aršāma and his world: the Bodleian Letters in context, vol. II: bullae and seals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vainberg, B.I., and Levina, L.M. 1993. *Чирикрабатская культура*. Moscow: Rossi´skaya Akademiya Nauk.

Vidale, M. 2018. Irrigation and canals in ancient Iran: resurrecting Wittfogel? In Callieri, P., and Rossi, A.V. (eds.), *Civiltà dell'Iran: passato presente futuro*. Rome: Scienze e Lettere, 27–53.

Vidale, M., Battistella, E. and Guida, G. 2008. Iron-working and ceramic recycling on the surface of a Late Iron age fort at the north-eastern fringe of the Murgab delta. In Salvatori, S., and Tosi, M. (eds.), *The archaeological map of the Murghab delta, vol. II: the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the Margiana lowlands: facts and methodological proposals for a redefinition of the research strategies*. Oxford: BAR, 195–219.

Vogelsang, W.J. 1990. The Achaemenids and the eastern Scythians. In Gnoli, G., and Panaino, A. (eds.), *Proceedings of the first European conference of Iranian studies: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.* Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 305–312.

Vogelsang, W.J. 1992. *The rise and organisation of the Achaemenid empire: the eastern Iranian evidence*. Leiden: Brill.

Vogelsang, W.J. 1998. Medes, Scythians and Persians: the rise of Darius in a north-south perspective. *IrAnt* 33: 195–224.

Vogelsang, W.J. 2003. Herat, II: history, pre-Islamic period. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* XII/2: 205–206. Retrieved from https://iranicaonline.org/articles/herat-ii (last accessed January 29, 2021).

Wu, X. 2010. Enemies of empire: a historical reconstruction of political conflicts between Central Asians and the Persian Empire. In Curtis, J., and Simpson, St.J. (eds.), *The world of Achaemenid Persia: history, art, and society in Iran and the ancient Near East*. London: I.B Tauris, 545–563.

Wu, X. 2018. Exploiting the virgin land: Kyzyltepa and the effects of the Achaemenid Persian Empire on its Central Asian frontier. In Lhuillier, J., and Boroffka, N. (eds.), *A millennium of history: the Iron Age in Central Asia (2nd and 1st millennia BC)*. Mainz: Zabern, 189–214.

Wu, X., Miller, N.F., and Crabtree, P. 2015. Agro-pastoral strategies and food production on the Achaemenid frontier in Central Asia: a case study of Kyzyltepa in southern Uzbekistan. *Iran* 53: 93–117.

Yoyotte, J. 2010. La statue égyptienne de Darius. In Perrot, J. (ed.), *Le palais de Darius à Suse: une résidence royale sur la route de Persépolis à Babylone*. Paris: Presse de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 256–299.