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ACHAEMENID DYNASTY II. THE EMPIRE

ii. The Empire

Structure. The Persian empire was a multinational state under the leadership of the Persians; among these peoples the Medes, Iranian sister nation of the Persians, held a special position. The Persian and, more generally, the "Aryan" (i.e., Iranian) character of the king, his descent, his newly written language (DB IV.89), and his supreme god, Ahura Mazdā, also called "god of the Aryans" (twice in the Elamite version of DB), are repeatedly emphasized, although the Achaemenids did not go as far as the Sasanians, who called their kingdom "empire of Iran and Non-Iran." The designation of the Achaemenid "empire" was, I think, *xšāça* (OPers. form from Iranian **xšaθra*, not meaning "rule"), and not *būmi* "earth" (as supposed by Herrenschmidt 1976, pp. 35 and 43). The expanded state was—apart from the domains of local authorities (princes, dynasts, etc.), who partly persisted under the satraps' supervision (e.g., in Cyprus or the cities of Phoenicia and Asia Minor)—divided into provinces. These are called "countries" (OPers. *dahyāva*, stem *dahyu-*) in the inscriptions, and "satrapies" by the Greeks after their governors, the satraps (OPers. *xšaçapāvan*; OIr. **xšaθrapāna*, in Akkadian *aḫšadrapanu*, Biblical Aramaic and Hebrew *ʾaḥašdarpan*, Imperial Aram. *ḥšatrapan*, Egyptian *ḫštrpn*; OIr. *xšaθrapā, in Lycian *χssadrapa*, Greek *satrápēs*, etc., Latin *satrapēs*, etc.) or "protectors of the kingdom" (see R. Schmitt, "Der Titel "Satrap"," *Studies in Greek, Italic, and Indo-European Linguistics offered to Leonard R. Palmer*,

Innsbruck, 1976, pp. 373-90). Such satrapies seem to have existed in similar form in the Median empire, since the forms of the title preserved in the collateral tradition are not the OPers. ones. Their arrangement was presumably systematized by Darius, who thus, abandoning local self-government according to unchanged traditions as in the reign of Cyrus and Cambyses, developed a novel system of administration. The countries had to pay tribute to the king (e.g., DB I.19)—all except the Persians, who had a privileged, exempt position—and to carry out his orders (e.g., DB I.19ff., 23ff.) and obey his law (ibid., I.22ff.). They stood in fear of the king and his law (DP[ersepolis]e 7-9, DS[usa]e 37-39) and were called the king's followers (DB I.18ff.; for the term *bandakā* used there, see below).

The state created by Darius' reforms was primarily based on a reorganized provincial administration, although the political system was partly adapted to the local circumstances (see above). Many problems are unsolved, e.g., that of the integration of Cilicia, whose local dynasty was removed only by Artaxerxes II. The Achaemenids' rule over the conquered peoples was, on the whole, quite liberal, and a great deal of autonomy was conceded to the individual peoples of the empire, especially to those of ancient civilization—the Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, and Jews. There was only an administrative unification of the peoples, and there seems to have been no intention to achieve cultural uniformity. Each people could maintain its own institutions, customs, forms of business or government, language, and religion (in brief, its individuality), as long as the general administration of the empire was under Persian control. Note, e.g., the Jews' return to Palestine, permitted by Cyrus, or the attitude of Cyrus to the Babylonians and of Cambyses to the Egyptians, so that the Babylonians acknowledged Cyrus as rightful successor of Nabonidus and the Egyptians recognized Cambyses as founder of a legitimate new dynasty (the 27th). Living and working together in the great centers of the empire such as Susa or Persepolis, where the population was mixed (as one sees from the names attested), caused mutual tolerance, assimilation, lively contacts between various ethnical groups, and a sort of cultural-religious syncretism.

Society in Achaemenid Iran was feudal, as inherited from Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European times; its feudal structure, based on a personal loyalty between the king and each single subject, can no longer be doubted since Geo Widengren's *Der Feudalismus im alten Iran* (Köln and Opladen, 1969). Closely connected with the royal court was the nobility with its large estates. The chief authorities of administration and the military, the satraps and generals, are

called (in DB, passim) the king's *bandakā* "vassals, followers" (not "slaves," as the OPers. word has been mistranslated formerly). They bore the "belt of vassalage" and therefore were named as "those equipped with a binding (OIr. **banda*), a belt," whose loyalty was generously remunerated and whose disloyalty was severely punished by the king (DB I.21ff., IV.65-67). To sum up, we may say that the people were subject to the king, as the king was subject to Ahura Mazdā. That castes or classes of society such as slaves or fully enfranchised citizens were firmly institutionalized can not be proven.

Administration. The administrative center of the empire was the royal palace, where the complicated bureaucratic and administrative system was organized according to the Babylonian model. Here at the court, as well as in all other administrative authorities, the chancellery was run very accurately; as in other ancient Near Eastern states, administrative communication between the king and the provincial offices was by letter (e.g., the Aramaic documents issued by the Egyptian satrap Aršam [see Arsames]). The uniform administrative language in the bureaucracy (of which we know little) and the general means of communication and diplomatic correspondence was Aramaic. Aramaic had already in Neo-Assyrian times become the diplomats' international language; and its triumph over cuneiform as a writing system followed from that of papyrus as a writing material. Under Cyrus, Aramaic was used by administrative offices in the western part of the empire; under Darius, in the whole empire. Modern scholars therefore coined the term *Reichsaramäisch*, "Imperial Aramaic." Aramaic documents have been found from Upper Egypt (Elephantine) and western Asia Minor (Sardis) to northwest India. In contrast, the royal inscriptions were written mostly in three languages and in cuneiform writing systems (Old Persian, Elamite, Babylonian; sometimes also in Hieroglyphic Egyptian and Aramaic). Seemingly it was Darius, as he claims (DB IV.88-92), who gave orders to make up a (cuneiform) script appropriate to express the Old Persian language when he entertained the idea to inscribe his own *res gestae*, his activities against usurpers and rebels, at the rock of Bīsotūn. Those OPers. inscriptions which pretend to originate from Ariaramnes or Arsames (AmH, AsH) are late Achaemenid forgeries; those allegedly by Cyrus (CMa-c) were put there by Darius; previously there had only been Elamite and/or Babylonian inscriptions. Old Persian (both language and writing) was used only for monumental inscriptions of the kings (at their palaces, tombs, or other monuments) or for vases and seals of the king and other notables; but it was neither in common usage nor employed for practical purposes. The major

inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings (e.g., DB, high above the road, or that on the king's tomb at Naqš-e Rostam) were intended to impress their subjects and "must be explained as documents prepared for show and . . . cannot be interpreted as compositions intended to be read and understood by the people" (Cameron 1955, p. 87).

In those countries where Aramaic did not prevail in pre- or early Achaemenid times, national languages and scripts were used (see explicitly in Esther 1:22, 3:12, 8:9): Demotic in Egypt; Greek in correspondence with Ionian Greeks (as in the famous Gadatas letter, found in Magnesia); above all, Elamite in the territory of the old Elamite kingdom and, because of its position and civilization, in Fārs too. In Fārs, the proper center of the empire, Elamite was used as the administrative language (as we see from the immense Persepolis archives) until Artaxerxes I. When the administration was reorganized in about 460 B.C., Aramaic totally displaced the Elamite language and cuneiform writing. This continuous usage of the Elamite language and script in Fārs leads to the supposition that Old Persian cuneiform writing was indeed invented at a relatively late date.

Susa was the administrative capital of the Achaemenid empire, probably from Darius' time; and its cosmopolitan nature is amply attested by archeological finds. (Under Cyrus the seat of government remained in Ecbatana.) Susa was the most important capital, as we see from contemporary accounts (Aeschylus, *Persae*, whose scene is laid there; Herodotus, 5.49.7; Esther 1:2, etc.); the old Elamite fortress there had been magnificently enlarged by Darius (see DSf). At times, according to the season, the king's residence was also in Babylon (seven months in winter: Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.6.22) and Ecbatana/Hamadān, which was an ideal resort in midsummer (ibid.; idem, *Anabasis* 3.5.l5; but see Athenaeus 12.8, where it is said that in winter the kings were at Susa, in summer at Ecbatana, in autumn at Persepolis, and the rest of the year at Babylon). In the Persian mother country, Pasargadae, founded by Cyrus, and nearby Persepolis did not function as seats of government. Both were unsuitable because of their remoteness. (For late Achaemenid times, however, Diodorus Siculus makes the interesting remark that Persia "excelled by far the other satrapies with regard to density of population" [19.21.4].)

Persians played a special role in the administrative apparatus. They had never been governed by a satrap, but always by the king himself; and in their hands were concentrated the most important and influential civil and military offices. The inscriptions (e.g., DNa 44-47) emphasize the merits of the Persians.

Over the entire administration stood the **hazārapati*, who also commanded the royal bodyguards (see below).

The provinces were governed by the satraps—powerful officials appointed by the king with unlimited tenure (e.g., Aršam was satrap in Egypt ca. 454-03 B.C.). As their title specified, they were “protectors of the kingdom” of their feudal lord, not tributary kings (since they lacked a *xšaça* of their own). In later times, admittedly, practice fell short of theory. The satraps were immediate representatives of the king and directly responsible to him. As leaders of the local administration, they dispensed justice, collected tribute (a duty often farmed to leaseholders or business firms, which gained enormous profits), and superintended taxation and the economic system. They also negotiated with neighboring states and waged war. Usually satraps were chosen from the Persian (and Median) noblemen, and the most important satrapies often were bestowed on royal princes: e.g., Parthia on Hystaspes, Darius’ father (DB II.93ff.); Bactria on Masistes, Xerxes’ brother (Herodotus 9.113.2); Lydia on Artaphrenes, Darius’ brother (ibid. 5.25.1), and, in later years, on Cyrus “the Younger” (Xenophon). By and large the satraps had the power of a king in miniature. Not only was the satrap’s court and government a copy of the royal ones; but also some satraps, especially in later times, behaved as minor kings and became insubordinate and rebellious. The king’s power, theoretically absolute even in local affairs (as the last resort of appeal and commander-in-chief of the standing army), shifted with time in favor of the satraps.

Cyrus’ division of the empire into satrapies was adjusted by Darius after the suppression of the revolting usurpers. The state of things at the beginning of Darius’ reign is attested in DB, where the following “twenty-three countries” are enumerated (DB I.14-7): Persia, Elam, Babylon, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, “the peoples at the sea” (i.e., Dascylitis; see R. Schmitt, “Die achaimenidische Satrapie *tayaiy drayahyā*,” *Historia* 21, 1972, pp. 522-27), Lydia, Ionia, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, and Maka. But even during the reign of Darius further changes must have taken place; since in later lists of peoples and countries (Old Persian as well as hieroglyphic), other names occur, such as Sagartia, India, Thracia, Libya, and Caria. The lists known to us vary greatly in number, form, and content over time; the number of satrapies tends to grow, while their size becomes smaller. The changes in the division and boundaries of the satrapies, and the causes thereof, are largely unknown; we must reckon

with new conquests (since our sources encompass a long period of time) as well as with reorganizations (mergers of several satrapies or the lifting of former sub-satrapies rendered more independent); and we must consider that the original twenty-three countries were too large for efficient government. Moreover the smaller and less mighty the satraps were, the simpler was control (see below); finally, the feudal structure of society called for more and more people to be incorporated into the government.

The satraps themselves underwent regular inspections by other officials, called "the king's eyes" or "the king's ears" who traveled all over the empire (accompanied by troops sufficient for immediate action), paid unexpected visits for examination of the satraps' conduct or other representatives' administration (e.g., at the immense royal estates), and reported directly back to the king. These royal inspectors or controllers, confidants to the king (to avoid saying his spies) normally stood in strained relations to satraps and local authorities. Unfortunately the Iranian form of such title(s) is not attested; in Iranian sources we find neither "the king's eyes," "the king's ears," or anything similar. Greek sources vary between "the king's eye" (Herodotus 1.114.2; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.2.10-12, 6.16, etc.) and "the king's ears" (ibid., 8.2.10-12; cf. Herodotus 1.100.2 on the Median Deioces' "watchers and listeners"); an Aramaic papyrus from Elephantine does preserve *gwšky'*, the plural form of **gōšak*, which reflects (as does Armenian *gušak* "informer") an OPers. *gaušaka- "listener."

Law and justice. Cyrus II and Darius I introduced new modes of legislation and jurisdiction. This "new" law, and especially civil law, although based on ancient Persian law, was strongly influenced by ancient Near Eastern law (see, particularly, Olmstead 1948, pp. 122ff.). Unfortunately no Achaemenid law code, comparable to the Babylonian one or to the Hittite laws, has survived, if any ever existed. The reform of laws was of great importance in Darius' program for the reorganization of the empire, since in such a multinational state legal order was necessary for public safety. It is obvious that his inscriptions intend to underline his role as a great lawgiver; even Plato praised him as the model of a good lawgiver and king, since it is by his laws that the Persian empire has been preserved "up to now" (*Epistula* VII, 332 b). The importance of law as foundation of the Achaemenid state is also reflected by stories in Greek sources about Achaemenid justice and jurisdiction. Owing to the *Gottesgnadentum* of the kings (see above), kingship on earth was tied to divine right. The king's law (Darius says that the countries observed "my law"

[DB I.22ff.]) was God's law (Xerxes demands the law of Ahura Mazdā to be followed [XPh 49f., 51-53]); and the king's will was universal law in the whole empire. Every royal decree, if sealed with the king's seal, was considered irrefutable and unchangeable law (cf. Esther 1:19, 8:8; Daniel 6:9, 6:16). The "new" law of the Achaemenid kings was spread over the entire Near East; Persian *dāta* "law" (repeatedly attested on the inscriptions), which was widespread among Babylonians, Aramaeans, Jews, and other peoples (e.g., Babylonian *da-a-ta ša šarri* [*Dar*. 53.15] and Aramaic *dṯ dy mlkʾ* [Ezra 7:26], "the king's law"), is something like a key word of Achaemenid history. The royal lawgiver, however, was not only concerned with his law code being valid in the whole empire, but also with previous local legal traditions and customs. So Darius is reckoned the sixth Egyptian lawgiver (Diodorus 1.95.4), since he ordered the Egyptian law that was valid to the forty-fourth year of the pharaoh Amasis to be collected, as is proved by the so-called Demotic Chronicle (Pap. 215 BN; see W. Spiegelberg, *Die sogenannte demotische Chronik* . . . , Leipzig, 1914). This collection of royal and religious laws, finished sixteen years later (495 B.C.), was written on papyrus in Aramaic and Demotic. Likewise the efforts of the scribe Ezra to codify the Mosaic Law for the Jewish community returned from exile, completed under Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:11-26; Nehemiah 8:1), are thinkable only with the Persian kings' interest and sympathy.

Judicial authority was in the hand of the king and special "royal judges" (Herodotus 3.31.2-3), who were chosen from the Persians and appointed by the king for life; the principle of the king's absolute and unlimited autocracy was thus maintained. The official title of these judges seemingly was OPers. **dātabara-* ("law-bearer"), as is attested by Akkadian *da-(a-)ta-ba(r)-ra*, etc., Elamite *da-ud-da-bar-ra*, Aramaic *dtbr* (plural form *dtbryʾ*) and later Iranian evidence. They had to dispense justice and to interpret the ancient laws. In doing so, the following principles were to be observed: The facts were to be inquired into closely; and in particular the weight of the crime was to be set against previous merits of the accused (cf. Herodotus 7.194.1-2). The latter principle should be compared with the Zoroastrian conception of judgement after death, where the good and the bad deeds of the dead are weighed by Rašnu. The Achaemenids were serious about the judges' justice; Greek authors several times report corrupt judges being sentenced to death (e.g., Herodotus 5.25.1 ; 7.194.1-2). Punishment was as cruel as in the ancient Near East generally. Execution, crucifixion, impalement, mutilation, banishment were common (see DB II.73-76, 88-91 on the impaled and mutilated rebels Phraortes

and Ciçantaxma).

Tribute. In order to establish a sound economic foundation for his empire, Darius, in connection with his reform of administration, imposed a fixed tribute on each country (with the exception of Persia and the Persians, these being untaxed, probably from Darius' times), and he standardized weights and measures. In the reign of Cyrus and Cambyses no formal tribute had to be paid and the kings were satisfied with receiving gifts. Under Darius all provinces (more exactly, all *nomoi* "tax districts" which were based on the new arrangement of the satrapies but seemingly not identical with them) had to pay a fixed yearly amount in gold and silver, and some a fixed supplementary tribute in kind (horses, grain, etc.), according to their economic resources. Because of this assessment of the tribute and similar acts, the Persians called Darius, in mockery, the "huckster" (Herodotus 3.89.3). Detailed statistics with exact data on the tributes paid by the twenty tax districts, no doubt depending on an official Persian source, are given by Herodotus (3.90-94). Converting the gold value into silver value, he (3.95.1-2) computed the total amount to 14,560 Euboean silver talents. The rates for the single districts were calculated carefully; but since they never changed, while the economic situation got worse and worse, they became more and more oppressive. This fixed tribute (OPers. *bāji-*)—both gold, silver, ivory, vessels, etc., and cattle, corn wine, oil, etc.—seems the most important source of revenue; it flowed into the vast royal treasuries (see Herodotus 3.96.2) in Ecbatana, Susa, and particularly Persepolis. The latter treasury (**ganza-*, whose chief was a **ganzabara*) has yielded thousands of economic tablets in Elamite which give a lively impression of the activity of the administration. Other sources of revenue were customs dues, specifically municipal, highway, and transit duties, of which we know no details. All this was used for meeting the king's and state's expenses: payment of the king's servants and officials, of the army and, in later times, mercenaries, and of the expenses for public works, such as the construction of palaces, roads, and canals.

Monetary system. Darius I probably was the first king of the Achaemenid dynasty to strike coins, as is suggested by Herodotus 4.166.2, where Darius is said to have struck coins from purest gold. He adopted with this an achievement of the Lydians, whose king Croesus had introduced the first true monetary system. Darius promoted the development and use of coins and introduced a uniform state currency. No doubt first induced by the demand of the littoral provinces accustomed to coins, he thus created an important

means for the empire to be consolidated by furthering trade and traffic. In particular, banking activities were facilitated. For private banks, as they were known to Mesopotamia from the 2nd millennium B.C., new opportunities were opened, as we learn from surviving business records. Murashu and Sons at Nippur evidently made a good profit, ca. 455-403 B.C., with tax-collecting and banking, i.e., the keeping of deposits and money-lending (at rather high interest).

The new standard was the gold daric (*dareikós*), struck from very pure gold (23.25 carat, i.e., only three percent admixture) and approx. 8.34 grams in weight; 3,000 darics made one talent—the largest weight and monetary unit. The name *dareikós* must not be connected, as Greek lexicographers suggest, with the king's name, but may be derived from an unattested OPers. **dari-* (Av. *zari-*) "yellow, golden;" *statēr dareikós* would be simply "gold stater" (see the references in Christensen 1933, p. 279, n. 1). These gold coins were to be struck only by the central authority, the king, who therefore assumed responsibility for the coin's regular weight and alloy. There were also silver coins, the so-called shekels (*síglos*), struck from very pure silver (more than 90 percent) and approx. 5.56 grams in weight; twenty shekels were the equivalent of one daric, the relation between gold value and silver value being fixed at about 40:3. Gold darics and silver shekels (these being the primary legal tender) were of the same type. They were roughly oval in shape, struck from small egg-shaped metal globules, had no legend, and remained essentially unaltered from ca. 515 B.C. until the breakdown of the empire. The reverse was only an irregular incuse square; the obverse showed the Persian king (in a fairly idealized portrait) with beard and the crenellated crown, in a half-running, half-kneeling position, wearing the royal robe and holding a bow in his left and a spear in his right hand (hence the daric was called "bowman"). Minting of gold coins (darics) was a royal prerogative; silver and copper coins could also be struck, as occasional issues, in the name of satraps and generals (in particular for payment of soldiers) or local dynasts and autonomous cities. These unofficial coins sometimes bore legends in Aramaic, Lycian, Greek, etc. To this class belong a number of the earliest real portraits on coins; the oldest of these satrap portraits (on an electrum hecte from Phocaea) is dated 453/2 B.C. by F. Bodenstedt ("Satrapen und Dynasten auf phokäischen Hekten," *Schweizer Münzblätter* 26, 1976, pp. 70f.).

The transition to financial transactions in cash can be observed easily in the tablets of the Persepolis treasuries. In the first years of Darius' reign, wages

had been paid in kind; but during the next decades cash payments increased quickly so that the new system was fully established at the end of Xerxes' reign. However, Persian coinage played an important role only in Asia Minor and in trade with the Greek cities; in the other countries trade was usually conducted in kind. The reform of the monetary system stopped halfway, since the kings preferred to hoard the precious metal in their treasuries so that most of the royal treasure remained uncoined (until it fell into the hands of Alexander) and thus was withdrawn from circulation. The scarcity of coined money turned out to be a severe disadvantage for the development of the financial system on the whole.

Economics. International commerce expanded greatly in Achaemenid times, stimulated particularly by the introduction of fixed weights and measures and, above all, of a settled monetary system (see above). In all subjugated countries throughout the empire advantageous conditions for economic development were created. The imperial administration had to cope, in particular, with the immense distances. To facilitate communication between the different parts of the empire and especially with its capitals, Darius ordered a number of roads to be built, which connected Susa and Babylon with the provincial capitals and made possible a rapid transport of (trade) caravans, post troops, and the king's inspectors. The best known of these is the so-called "Royal Road" (described by Herodotus 5.52-54) from Susa to Sardis (later extended to Ephesus) through Assyria, Armenia, Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Phrygia and crossing the rivers Tigris, Euphrates, and Halys. In all, its length was 450 parasangs (see below) or 13,500 stades (i.e., about 2,600 km; Herodotus 5.53), and it was furnished with 111 royal post-stations (*stathmoí*) with the best quarters (ibid. 5.52.6). There were other (and in part older) roads—natural caravan routes as well as artificial "all-weather roads"—e.g., from Babylon via Susa to Persepolis, from Babylon through the Zagros Mountains and via Ecbatana to Bactria and India, or from Issus across Asia Minor to Sinope on the Euxine coast.

These roads were carefully controlled and supervised by patrols, as we know from Greek authors; and they were divided into parasangs (*parasangae*) equal to thirty stades on the average. This term, whose interpretation is uncertain, did not indicate a constant distance; it was presumably a measure of time, the distance covered by a pacing horse in one hour (consequently varying according to the difficulty of the road). Traces of such roads discovered by archeologists attest high quality and a new method of building paved roads that are grooved for wheeled vehicles; it is not surprising that the network of

these Achaemenid roads survived long after the fall of the empire. Another achievement rendered possible by these roads was a regular postal service, which probably perpetuated a similar Assyrian institution, and, for its part, served as a model for Alexander, his successors and, indirectly, even the Romans. This system was based on the relay stations along the roads, where relieving couriers and remounts were available day and night (Herodotus 8.98; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.6.17-18) so that these royal envoys (*ángaroi*), "more rapid than cranes" (ibid., 8.6.18), could cover the distance from Sardis to Susa in only seven days; Herodotus 5.53, by contrast, gives ninety days as the rule.

Trade was further stimulated by completion of the ancient Suez Canal, which connected the Mediterranean with the Red Sea and thus made possible direct contact from the western to the eastern borders of the empire. The canal was already planned by the Egyptian pharaoh Nekho but was finished by Darius (cf. Herodotus 2.158; Strabo 17.1.25; and particularly Darius' stelae with quadrilingual inscriptions found near the ancient canal, among them DZc; see also G. Posener, *La première domination perse en Ēgypte*, Cairo, 1936). It led from the Nile (at Bubastis) through the Wadi Tumilat and through (or along?) the Bitter Lakes to the Red Sea (at Suez), was broad enough for two triremes sailing side by side, and could be passed through in four days (Herodotus 2.158.1). With both a thirst for geographical knowledge and interest in a long-sighted trade policy (i.e., a search for new markets and new natural resources), Darius sponsored expeditions such as that of Scylax of Caryanda (Caria), who discovered the mouth of the Indus (i.e., the sea-route thither from the Persian Gulf) and its navigability (Herodotus 4.44). His description of this expedition in his *Periplūs* brought the first information about India to the occident. Other Greeks were similarly active in the Achaemenid empire; e.g., Democedes of Croton and Ctesias of Cnidus practiced medicine at the court of Darius I and Artaxerxes II respectively.

The economic situation varied greatly in the different countries; but on the whole, the economic talent of Darius fostered a turn for the better. Significant changes took place in Achaemenid times with regard to agriculture, on which the empire's economic system depended to a high degree and which was greatly furthered by the Achaemenids. One major achievement was the improvement of irrigation, which was of vital importance for the increase of productive capacity in Egypt, Babylonia, Iran, and Central Asia, wherever water was short. Success in the unceasing struggle against the depletion of

cultivable land was possible only by digging subterranean irrigation canals (NPers. *qanāt*), which still today supply much of Iran and Afghanistan's water in agriculture. For the most part they were in possession of the king, who leased them at a high water rate, but who rewarded the building of a new canal also by conceding usufruct of the thus cultivated land to the kin in question for five generations (Polybius 10.28.3). Seemingly Darius was personally interested in the improvement of horticulture, as is seen, e.g., from his letter to Gadatas, who transplanted fruits from beyond the Euphrates to the Asian littoral. The most important owners of (often very large) estates were the king, the leading authorities' families (mostly Iranians), the temples, and the great business firms. These estates, including arable land, gardens, plantations, and zoological and hunting gardens (by the Greeks called *parádeisoi*), were the foundation for great wealth and power; normally they were farmed out (see, e.g., the Babylonian cuneiform tablets from Nippur, G. Cardascia, *Les Archives des Murašû . . .* , Paris, 1951). Nevertheless, the economic decline of the 4th century could not be prevented. The political situation was unsettled; and the administration was not always successful in economic, and especially financial, matters. The empire experienced over-taxation, inflation caused by storing specie, and the drain of money to mercenaries.

Military affairs. In order to maintain the political union, i.e., to maintain order within the empire and to defend its frontiers, military forces were of extraordinary importance. The composition of the army varied and developed in the course of time. Under Cyrus all male Persians were still required to fight for the king, while later there was a professional army and, in case of need, supplementary forces. In peacetime there was only a standing army composed of Persians (the bravest of the peoples belonging to the empire, according to Herodotus 7.83.2 and Diodorus 19.21.4) and Medes, both horsemen and foot-soldiers belonging to the nobility. This standing army, which may have been reviewed every year by the king or his representative, is called *kāra* in the inscriptions. The elite of this body of Medo-Persians were the royal guards, the 10,000 "Immortals" described by Herodotus 7.83 (cf. 7.40-41). He explains the term: If any of these guardsmen drops out owing to death or disease, a substitute is immediately supplied and the number again filled. In spite of this etiological interpretation, it is more probable that "immortal" is a mistranslation of OPers. *anušiya* "follower," confused with the (unattested) OPers. equivalent of Av. *anaoša* "immortal" (see A. Pagliaro, "Riflessi di etimologie iraniche nella tradizione storiografica greca," *Rend. Lincei*, serie

VIII, 9, 1954, pp. 146-51). Thousands of these 10,000 guardsmen composed the royal bodyguards in the palace (cf. the varied representations on reliefs from Persepolis and glazed bricks from Susa); their insignia were golden apples or pomegranates at the butts of their spears (accordingly they are named "apple-bearers" by Heraclides Cumaeus F 1 J.). Their chief was the **hazārapati* or chiliarch, who, as the "second after the king" (Diodorus 18.48.4), usually controlled the whole army. How far this official's power as a sort of "prime minister" went in Achaemenid times, is not sure, since the evidence to this effect is more recent.

Permanent garrisons, commanded by Persian officers, were quartered throughout the empire at many strategic points—forts on the main routes, frontier fortresses, or even military colonies such as Elephantine at the Egyptian-Nubian frontier, where Persian rule was supported and defended by Persians, Medes, Greeks, Carians, Chorasmians, etc., but especially by Jews (see B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine. The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968). In wartime this elite corps was supplemented by levy from all the different peoples of the empire (see the account on Xerxes' expedition against Greece in Herodotus 7.61ff.) under the command of Persians and Medes. This mighty militia, varying in number and drawn together from all satrapies, was divided into national units and armed according to their national customs. The number of these hurriedly collected troops is usually exaggerated by Greek authors, while in Iranian sources we find no data at all; their effectiveness can not have been very great. In the time of the later Achaemenid kings the Persian foot-soldiers were therefore replaced more and more by Greek mercenaries. About the organization of the Persian army we know little. The main units were horsemen (OPers *asabāra*), spear-bearers (*aṛštika*), and bowmen (*θanuvaniya*), the last two being subdivided, it seems, into cavalry and infantry detachments. (See DNb 41-45, where Darius claims: "As a horseman I am a good horseman; as a bowman I am a good bowman, both as a foot-soldier and as a horseman; as a spearman I am a good spearman, both as a foot-soldier and as a horseman.") Herodotus (1.103.1) traces this system, which seemingly remained unchanged (cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.8.9), to the Median king Cyaxares.

iii. Culture

Religion. The religion founded by Zarathushtra/Zoroaster had its root in the old Indo-Iranian (Aryan) religion; in this system the divine and the human spheres were placed under a higher order called *ṛtám* (Av. *aša*, OPers. **ṛta*),

which was realized as right and truth. The supreme god in Zoroaster's system was Ahura Mazdā (OPers. *Auramazdā*), the "Wise Lord" or "Lord Wisdom," who had created the world and disposed it. Fundamental was the antithesis of truth (proclaimed by Zoroaster) and falsehood (attacked by him), from which were developed, according to Zoroaster's cosmological speculation, the dualism between light and darkness, god and demon (i.e., Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu), good and evil, etc.

No doubt Darius was an ardent and devout worshipper of Ahura Mazdā. The "great god" (*baga vazṛka*) Ahura Mazdā is the only one Darius calls by name, although he invokes the "other gods, who are" (*aniyāha bagāha tayaiy hantiy*, DB IV.6l, 62ff.). His successors, by contrast, name other deities as well. Ahura Mazdā created heaven and earth, made the Achaemenids kings, and bestowed on them their kingdom (see above). It is "by the favor of Ahura Mazdā" (*vašnā Auramazdāha*) that the kings were kings and that they did what they did, as they themselves declare. The kings begged Ahura Mazdā's support and protection for themselves, for their clan, their empire, their deeds. Darius particularizes this in DPd 15-18: "May Ahura Mazdā protect this country from a (hostile) army, from bad harvest, from falsehood (i.e., riot and rebellion)." He speaks in intimate terms: "Unto me Ahura Mazdā was a friend" (DSj 4); "mine (is) Ahura Mazdā, Ahura Mazdā's (am) I" (DSk 4), so that we may speak of a rather personal relation between this king and his supreme god. The moralistic tone in some Darius inscriptions, particularly when he urges the doing of right and truth (cf. Herodotus 1.136.2 about education in veracity and 1.138.1 about the ignominy of lying), often recalls Zoroaster's own ethical teachings in the *Gāthās*. The Achaemenids might thus be understood as real Zoroastrians, although those elements of their religion which seem to be Zoroastrian may also be construed as reflections of the pre-Zoroastrian stage of Iranian religion. Moreover, it is certain that Darius was no missionary for Zoroastrianism. Like Cyrus, who restored the former position of the Babylonian Marduk cult, Darius excelled in tolerance of the cultural-religious heterogeneity of the peoples of the empire; this benefited the Egyptians, Greeks (cf. the Gadatas letter), Babylonians, and Jews, to whom the return to Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the Temple, granted by Cyrus in 538 B.C., was confirmed by Darius. The basis of this tolerance, however, is not apparent. (See, most recently, J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "La religion des Achéménides" in Walser 1972, pp. 59-82; idem, "Le dieu de Cyrus," *Acta Iranica* 3, 1974, pp. 11-21; M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, HO I.8.1.2, vol. II, *Under the Achaemenians*, Leiden, 1982). See Achaemenid Religion for a detailed

discussion of the subject.

Art (see also Art, Achaemenid). Achaemenid art is a solemn and dignified imperial art; on a hitherto unknown world-wide scale, serving as a glorification of the dynasty. It referred entirely to kingship, especially since Old Iranian religion, at least Zoroastrian religion, did not know temples. The enormous extension of the Achaemenid empire brought about an equally enormous development of splendor, particularly in architecture. The climax of Achaemenid art came when Persian power was at its height, when abundant gold and silver flowed into the royal treasury from the whole empire and the greatest kings of this dynasty endeavored to have palaces and capital cities larger and finer than those of their Babylonian and Assyrian forerunners. Very extensive building activity is to be observed in Susa, Pasargadae, and especially Persepolis.

In general, Achaemenid art is a blend of many elements of various origin (e.g., the column of Mediterranean provenance or palace ground plans in Babylonian style). This is not strange, since materials and artisans were brought from all provinces (see the Susa building inscription DSf, cited below). Achaemenid art followed various old and firm traditions, to a considerable extent those of older Near Eastern art, and was eclectic in taking over foreign features. Yet it combined single borrowed elements into a new whole and possessed “an undeniable unity and individuality” (Nylander 1970, p. 12). The participation of Greek masters favored the overcoming of Mesopotamian formal and figurative traditions, but individual names unfortunately are unknown to us. As long as the effect and the newly created whole was Persian in character, the Achaemenids were tolerant in artistic matters, too.

The history of Achaemenid art is bipartite; it falls into an “archaic” period represented chiefly by the monuments of Pasargadae, which Cyrus the Great had erected, and a “classic” period especially manifest in the monuments of Persepolis and the royal tombs at Naqš-e Rostam (both initiated by Darius) and remaining practically unchanged for two centuries. There are great differences between these two periods in form, style, and many other respects. Pasargadae is, in a sense, “the birth-place of Achaemenian art” (Nylander 1970, p. 21, and passim). It became the new residence of the king of a people that entered suddenly into the light of history. In the very heart of Fārs, Cyrus fostered bold experiment, which created in Pasargadae unusually wide-spread, unfortified grounds with simple buildings. (The strong Ionic influence on these has been worked out systematically by Nylander 1970). Pasargadae

with Cyrus' tomb, a monumental gate house, an audience hall and a residential palace with large column halls (see D. Stronach, *Pasargadae*, Oxford, 1978) was a holy place of the Achaemenids, where later kings were crowned (see Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 3.1-6 on the coronation ceremonies of Artaxerxes II).

With regard to the development of Achaemenid architecture, Pasargadae paved the way for Persepolis, now Taḵt-e Jamšīd "Throne of Jamshid," the city Darius founded ("formerly no fortress was built here," DPf 9ff., Elamite only); Xerxes I and Artaxerxes I finished it according to his ideas. On a great terrace at the foot of Kūh-e Raḥmat ("Mountain of Mercy"), it formed a ritual and representative center on a hitherto unknown scale, a palatial city appropriate to this powerful world-ruling empire (see E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis* I-III, Chicago, 1953-1970). The splendid buildings of Persepolis, in whose construction artisans from all satrapies were engaged (as we see from the wages assigned to them in the Elamite tablets from the Persepolis treasuries), are the culmination of this art and to a certain degree the distinctive mark of the empire. The ground plan of the Persepolis terrace (approx. 450 by 300 m), a homogeneous whole, is characterized by grandiose and representational construction, sense of space, and appropriateness; with its magnificent architecture and decorative elements it is no doubt one of the greatest artistic productions of ancient times. The typically Achaemenid monumental palaces such as the Hall of a Hundred Columns (70 by 70 m, the largest of all Achaemenid palaces) or the Audience Hall (OPers. *apadāna*) are still impressive, even in their ruined state. Notable are the tall (nearly 20m), slender columns with their animal protome capitals; the rich ornamental reliefs, partly based on Mesopotamian or Elamite patterns in their representations of the king (particularly in the so-called Audience Relief); and the monotonous but impressive parade of innumerable soldiers of the imperial army and tribute-bearing delegations of the nations, which decorate staircases and monolithic door-frames and symbolize the power of the multinational empire. Persepolis was of special significance for the Persian kings, who celebrated here their highest feast, the New Year's (Nowrūz) festival at the vernal equinox, and received at this occasion the gifts of the delegates from all the provinces.

One hour northwest of Persepolis, at Naqš-e Rostam ("Rostam's Picture"), there are four tombs of Achaemenid kings carved into the precipitous rock of the Ḥosayn Kūh. They are all of the same type, the later ones (presumably by

Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I, and Darius II) exactly copying the oldest one cut by Darius I (identified by its inscriptions, DNa-d). The huge tomb was destined for the king and eight relatives; its front, in the form of a recessed Greek cross, depicts in its central part the sculptured facade of a palace (22.5 m high, in front of the tomb proper) with tall columns (recalling Median and Urartian traditions). On top of this the king stands before a fire altar on a platform supported by the representatives of the thirty nations belonging to the empire. Similar tombs are to be found above the Persepolis terrace on the slopes of Kūh-e Raḥmat (attributed to Artaxerxes II and III) and southwest of the terrace in an angle of the rock (unfinished [that of Darius III?]). Near Naqš-e Raǰab (4 km north of Persepolis), remains of the unfinished tomb of (presumably) Cambyses II have been found; thus we can state that all Achaemenid kings were interred in their mother country Fārs, the corpse of a king deceased abroad being transported there in state (cf. Ctesias 15, sec. 44J.).

In Susa, the empire's political capital and old Elamite residence, the official cosmopolitan art of the Achaemenids is equally evident. Here Darius constructed a strong citadel in the old acropolis and a monumental palace on a large terrace; within that was a majestic audience hall (burnt down under Artaxerxes I). Government buildings were presumably in the so-called "Royal City" (southeast of the palace), which has not been excavated. The cooperation of the diverse nations in the construction of these buildings is attested in the building inscription DSf, an important text for the history of Achaemenid civilization: "The digging of the foundations, filling up the mud-ground with rubble [for the palace with immense stone columns intended by Darius, after the model of Cyrus' buildings in Pasargadae, at a place where formerly there were only buildings of clay bricks] and molding of the bricks has been done by Babylonians; cedar timber [used for the framework of the roof] was brought by Assyrians from Lebanon to Babylon and from there to Susa by Carians and Ionians; sissoo timber was brought from Gandhara and Carmania; the gold wrought here was brought from Lydia and Bactria; lapis lazuli and carnelian wrought here were brought from Sogdiana; the turquoise wrought here was brought from Chorasmia; silver and ebony were brought from Egypt; the colors for the wall-reliefs were brought from Ionia; the ivory wrought here was brought from Nubia, India, and Arachosia; the stone columns wrought here were brought from Elam. The stonemasons were Ionians and Lydians; the goldsmiths were Medes and Egyptians; the woodcarvers were Lydians and Egyptians; the brick layers [of the colored, glazed brick reliefs decorating the walls only in Susa, this continuing a Babylonian tradition] were Babylonians;

the wall-painters were Medes and Egyptians" (DSf 28-55). Thus the appearance of many foreign elements in technique and realization is not surprising, but they are applied by Persians autonomously and with a new conception for their own designs, so that the final product was Persian.

The representation of the omnipotent king and kingship is at its highest in the rock relief of Bīsotūn (with its important trilingual inscription) at a place holy from time immemorial (as its name reveals: Iranian *Bagastāna "Place of the gods," attested only in Greek, *Bagístanon óros* [Ctesias 1, see 13.1.2J. = Diodorus 2.13.1-2]) near the so-called "Gate of Asia." This monumental relief, some 66m above the road, was sculptured by Darius' order in 52l-519 B.C. It represents the king standing on the left (with two attendants behind him, his bow-bearer and his spear-bearer), his foot on the body of the defeated Gaumāta, and facing a line of nine captive rebels. Their hands are tied behind their backs and a rope around their necks links them together; above the whole is the symbol of Ahura Mazdā.

The Darius statue newly found at Susa gives a little insight into Achaemenid round sculpture, of which little is known beyond the report of Plutarch, *Alexander* 37.5, that a great statue of Xerxes in Persepolis (?) was overthrown by Alexander's soldiers. Greek statuary was much prized by the Achaemenids and was abundantly removed from Greece by Xerxes to his residences (cf. Arrian 7.19.2); the torso of a beautiful Greek statue has even been found in Persepolis (Schmidt, *Persepolis* II, p. 66). A great number of beautiful small Achaemenid objects are known: metalwork, above all tableware in gold and silver (*rhyta*, vessels, plates, cult utensils, etc.), jewelry (earrings, bracelets, etc.), weapons (daggers), seals and gems cut in the old Mesopotamian manner but with Iranian figures (e.g., with the king on a chariot fighting a lion or before a fire altar and with the symbol of Ahura Mazdā). All this is characterized by an animal style, as is typical for the Scythians; but, besides ancient Near Eastern animals such as the lion, bull, griffin, ibex, etc., there are typically Iranian ones such as horse or camel. The world's oldest preserved carpets, found in a kurgan of the Scythian necropolis at Pazyryk in the Altai region, belong, according to their motifs, to Achaemenid times (about 500 B.C.).

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