



## ASPAČANĀ

**ASPAČANĀ** (Elamite Ašbazana, Babylonian Aspašini, Greek Aspathines; possibly already in Nuzi (Aššuzzana), a senior official under Darius the Great and Xerxes. The name signifies “delighting in horses” (cf. Av. *Xšaθrō.činah-* and see W. Brandenstein and M. Mayrhofer, *Handbuch des Altpersischen*, Wiesbaden, 1964, p. 107; W. Hinz, *Neue Wege im Altpersischen*, Wiesbaden, 1973, p. 126). The sculptured façade of the tomb of Darius the Great at Naqš-e Rostam depicts the king standing upon a “throne” supported by his subjects, and flanked by two groups of superposed figures representing his most exalted officials. Of these, only two (both weapon-bearers of the king) are identified by accompanying trilingual inscriptions (DNc-d; Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 140). One is “Gaubrava (Gobryas), a Patischorian, King Darius’ spear-bearer;” he is well-known as one of the Six Helpers of Darius in his overthrow of the False Smerdis (E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis III*, Chicago, 1970, p. 86, pl. 23). The other, identified as (in the old Persian version) “Aspačanā, the *vaçabara*, holds King Darius’ *isuvā-*.” Aspačanā wears the “Median” dress (domed hat, long-belted coat, and tight trousers), and carries a large *gorytus* (bow-case and quiver combined) on his left shoulder and an ornamented battle-ax in his right hand (Schmidt, op. cit., p. 86, pl. 24). His function is problematic since the exact meaning of *vaça-* is disputed; it has been translated as “bow-case” (I. Gershevitch in W. B. Henning and E. Yarshater, ed., *A Locust’s Leg. Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, London, 1962, pp. 78f., n. 8), as “bow” (Kent, op. cit., p. 206), or as a dialectal variant of Avestan and Sanskrit *vastra-* “garment”— to give *vaçabara* the signification of “Chamberlain” (Hinz, op. cit., p. 155). Also, *isuvā-* has been variously explained as “battle-axe” or “bow-case” (Kent, op.



cit., p. 174 with literature). A comparison with the companion text introducing Gobryas supports Hinz's implied translation: "Aspačanā, the chamberlain, holds King Darius' *gorytus*" (loc. cit., and p. 140). A figure similar to that of Aspačanā occupies his position on the facade of the tomb of Darius' successors (Schmidt, op. cit., pls. 43, 51, 57, 63, 71), and also appears in the "audience reliefs" at Persepolis: in the "Treasury reliefs" (E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, Chicago, 1953, p. 166, pl. 121 ), and in those adorning the door-jambes of the Hundred-Column Hall of Xerxes (ibid., pls. 96-99).

The fact that Aspačanā wears a "Median" dress has led some scholars to call him "a Mede" (e.g., H. Lushey in *AMI*, N.S. 1, 1968, p. 70), and following Schmidt (op. cit., p. 169), many have identified the Treasury-relief figure with Aspačanā. However, the relief is later than Darius' reign (R. N. Frye, *JNES* 33, 1974, p. 383; A. Sh. Shahbazi, *AMI*, N.S. 9, 1976, pp. 152ff.), and the wearing of the "Median" dress is not necessarily an indication of nationality; rather, it is here a "military uniform" (A. Sh. Shahbazi, *Gymnasium* 85, 1978, pp. 498f.). Herodotus (3.70) calls Aspathines (Aspačanā) a "Persian" of exalted rank and counts him among the Seven Persians who overthrew the False Smerdis; but Darius himself names Ardumaniš (DB 4.86) in the place of Herodotus' Aspathines. The discrepancy has caused problems (most recently F. Geschnitzer, *Die sieben Perser und das Königtum des Dareios*, Heidelberg, 1977, pp. 20, 25), but a solution is at hand. The tomb-facade represents Darius among his six helpers in the same way as Ahura Mazdā is said to have been flanked by his six archangels; by 500 B.C., Ardumaniš was gone, and Aspačanā had assumed his position, and was depicted with the other six Persians on the tomb; this being known to the source used by Herodotus, the historian naturally counted Aspačanā among the helpers of Darius (Shahbazi, *AMI* 13, 1980, pp. 124f.). Indeed, Aspačanā's senior position is indicated by the fact that his father, Prexaspes, was the closest confidant of Cambyses (Herodotus 3.30), and was the King's messenger (ibid., 3.34; on the relationship see Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 255), while he himself appears to have been the cup-bearer of Cambyses (Herodotus 3.34, where, however, Aspačanā is not specified by name). Under Darius, Aspačanā served, among others, as a senior administrator at Persepolis (R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, Chicago, 1969, p. 670b), and continued in this position at least till the third year of Xerxes (G. G. Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets*, Chicago, 1948, pp. 102-08). A number of Persepolitan tablets accordingly bear the impression of his seal, with the text: "Aspačanā, son of Prexaspes" (E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis II*, Chicago, 1957, pp. 9, 13, 24 [seal no. 14]). Aspačanā's influence survived him,



and his son, Prexaspes II, was one of the admirals of Xerxes in 480 B.C. (Herodotus 7.97).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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