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MEDIA

MEDIA, ancient population region and kingdom in northwestern Iran. The name is attested as Gk. *Mēdía*, OPers. *Māda* (Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 202), Assyrian and Babylonian *Mādāya* (Parpola, 1970, pp. 230-31; Zadok, 1985, pp. 214-15).

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

At the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, Median tribes began to settle in the territory of the future Media in western Iran, where, at that time, are attested many small principalities and different linguistic and ethnic groups: Gutians, Lullubians (see LULUBI), Kassites, and Hurrians. Later, in the 9th-8h centuries BCE, the role of the Medes greatly increased; and, finally in the 7th century, the whole of westerṇ Iran and some neighboring territories were attributed to Media. Thus, the boundaries of Media changed gradually over several hundred years; nevertheless its precise geographical extent remains unknown to us (Diakonoff, 1985, pp. 36 ff.).

In the early period, the western frontiers of the Median principalities, which were independent from each other, passed not far beyond the western reaches of the Hamadān plain. Our information on the northern and eastern frontiers of Media, however, is very limited. The original territory of Media, as it was known to the Assyrians (see ASSYRIA) during the period from the last third of the 9th century until the beginning of the 7th century BCE, was bounded on the north by Gizilbunda, which was located in the mountains (Qāflānkuh) to the north of the Hamadān plain; on the west and northwest it did not extend beyond the Hamadān plain and was bounded by the Zagros mountains, except

in the southwest. There Media occupied the Zagros valley, and its boundary lay at the Garin mountain range, which separated Media from Ellipi, a kingdom in the area of Piš-e Kuh to the south of Kermānšāh. On the south it bordered on the Elamite region of Simaški, that is, the present-day valley of Ḵorramābād.

On the east and southeast, the territory of Media seems to have been delimited by the Dašt-e Kavir desert (see DESERT) and by the country Patušarra, described by the Assyrians as lying on the border of the Salt Desert (probably Dašt-e Kavir). The mountain range near Patušarra was known to the Assyrians as Bikni and was referred to as the "Lapis Lazuli Mountain." Usually, scholars equate it with Mt. Damāvand located to the northeast of Tehran (see, e.g., Reade, p. 40). Patušarra apparently was the region mentioned in Middle Persian as Padišxwār (in the vicinity of Damavānd: Herzfeld, pp. 194, 317-18), where the mining of lapis lazuli is attested in early medieval times (Qazvini, I, p. 206; see Grantovskiĭ, 1983, pp. 28-29; cf. the opinion of Muscarella, 1987, p. 110, that the lapis lazuli paid in tribute to the Assyrians was "acquired by Median trade further east" [see BADAḴŠĀN iii]). Patušarra and Mt. Bikni probably were the most remote territory of Media that the Assyrians penetrated during their greatest expansion in the second half of the 8th century and the first decades of the 7th century BCE. Louis D. Levine (pp. 118-19), however, has argued that Mt. Bikni should most probably be equated with the Alvand range, which lies immediately west of Hamadān, and this identification has been accepted by S. C. Brown (1990b, p. 622) and a number of other scholars. Identifying Bikni with the Alvand range, if correct, means that the Assyrians never crossed this mountain and that all the territory of Media that they conquered or was known to them lay to the west of Hamadan.

The name of the capital of Media appears in 6th-century inscription of Darius I at Bisotun as OPers. *Hamgmatāna*-(DB 2.76, 77-78), El. Agmadana-, Bab. Agamtanu-, etc. (New Pers. Hamadān), and is transmitted by Herodotus and other classical authors as Ecbatana. Although it lay on the Great Khorasan Road, the Assyrian sources do not mention this city at all. There are, however, grounds to assume that the city Sagbat/Sagbita, repeatedly referred to in Assyrian texts, was an earlier form of the name Hamgmatāna found in Old Persian. Thus, the localization of Sagbat in the west of the Hamadān plain and the identification of Mt. Bikni with Damāvand in the east allows us to define roughly the original boundaries of Media until its expansion in the 7th century BCE (see Medvedskaya, 2002, pp. 47-50, 54).

ASSYRIAN CAMPAIGNS ON MEDIAN TERRITORY

Beginning with the 9th century BCE, the Assyrians regularly raided and looted regions of northwest Iran, where at that time existed dozens of petty principalities. The Assyrians could reach Media by two routes: from the north, via Gizilbunda, and apparently along the present-day Bijār–Hamadān road, from the northwest through Mesu on the western border of Gizilbunda, or through Kišesim along the Sanandaj–Hamadān road. The Assyrians always returned home from Media along the mountain part of the Great Khorasan Road, through Ḫarḫar, Araziaš, and Bit Barru, which constituted the northern part of Ellipi, and, finally, Bit Ḫamban. All these countries were located in the Zagros mountains, between Asadābād in the east, at the exit to the Hamadān plain, and the Mahidašt valley in the west. The latter was a part of Bit Ḫamban. The Assyrians reached the Khorasan Road not only from Media but also directly from the north, through Parsua and neighboring countries. In this case, passing along the route Sanandaj-Bisotun or Pāva–Kermānšāh, the Assyrians had on the left side not only Media, but also Ḫarḫar and Kišesim.

The first mention of the Medes in Assyrian texts refers to 834 BCE, when Shalmaneser III (r. 858-824) invaded Namri. Having entered deep into regions to the east of Parsua, in order to return home the Assyrians had to penetrate the Hamadān plain through the lands of the Medes and then to pass along the Great Khorasan Road. During this campaign they received gifts from twenty-seven “kings” of Parsua. When in the last quarter of the 9th century BCE the Urartians started to invade Iran, the Assyrian king Šamši-Adad V (r. 823-811 BCE) in 819/818 hindered further Urartian advance in the Lake Urmia zone, which made it possible to set out against Media. In 815 he conquered Gizilbunda and then marched against Sagbita, the “royal city” of the Median chief Hanaṣiruka, who first fled into mountains but later faced the enemy in battle. According to the Assyrian inscription, 2,300 Medes were killed and 140 of their horsemen were taken prisoner; and Sagbita, as well as 1,200 settlements located near it, were all destroyed (Grayson, 1996, p. 185, iii, 27b-36). This campaign was of great significance, since from that time Assyria imposed regular tribute on the Median tribes in horses, cattle, and handicraft products. Now the Assyrians transferred the main direction of their raids to Media. This transference was partly caused by the events in the Urmia zone, since by the end of the 9th century BCE the Urartians had conquered the west and south shores of Lake Urmia and had started to move forward to Manna (see MANNEA). Assyria failed to stop the Urartian advance and gradually

became a Mannean ally in its struggle against Urartu.

The Assyrians were not able to secure the results of the six campaigns (in the years 809, 800, 799, 793, 792, and 788) waged against Media by Adad-nerari III (r. 810-781 BCE), and subsequently a long political crisis began to develop in Assyria. Later, during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (r. 745–728 BCE), Assyria started organizing provinces in conquered countries, and this guaranteed a regular source of income and also provided a base for the conquest of neighboring territories. To the east of their country, the Assyrians created in 744 BCE, in addition to the already established province of Zamua, two more provinces called Bit Ḫamban and Parsua, and Assyrian governors and garrisons were installed there. Thus, the borders of Assyria moved close to Media. In 744, the Assyrians received tribute from the Medes and Manneans. Finally, in 737, Tiglath-pilesner III invaded Media proper, and this time the Assyrians reached the most remote parts of Media and exacted tributes from the "city rulers" of the Medes as far as the Salt Desert and Mt. Bikni. In an account of this campaign, Tiglath-pileser mentions "the provinces of the mighty Medes" and also asserts that in 738 he deported 6,500 people from northwestern Iran to Syria and Phoenecia (Tadmor, p. 164; Diakonoff, 1985, pp. 77-79). Later, Bit Ḫamban and Parsua were attached to Assyria, and Assyrian governors and garrisons were installed there. Sargon II also deported many Medes to Syria and settled people from north Syria and Samaria in the "cities of the Medes" (II Kings 17:6; see also Na'aman and Zadok, pp. 38-40).

Thus, late in the 8th century BCE, the first major unions and states based on tribal confederations began to arise on the territory of western Iran, which were headed by local chieftains. Manna, a region located to the east of Assyria, was one of such states. The Medes were not yet united but had many rulers.

Sargon joined the borders of the Assyrian provinces in the east with Media, an accomplishment that Tiglath-pileser had not been able to realize. Thus in 716 he made Ḫarḫar and Kišesim centers of new Assyrian provinces, adding to them some other territories of west Media, including Sagbat, and renamed these provinces Kar-Šarrukin and Kar-Nergal, respectively. He also strengthened Kar-Šarrukin in order to subjugate in future all Median lands. In the same year, the Assyrians received taxes from twenty-eight "city rulers of the land of the mighty Medes" (Luckenbill, ii, secs. 10, 11), but in 715, Ḫarḫar revolted, and the Assyrians had to conquer it again. In the next year, Sargon managed to stop Urartian advancement into Iran. In 713, he reached the distant bounds of Media at the Bikni mountains. During this campaign he

received tribute from forty-five city chieftains (see Luckenbill, secs. 24, 58). He carried out another expedition into Media in 708 but was unable to realize his purpose of conquering all Median lands or establishing stable control over them. Afterwards, both Sargon and his successor Sennacherib (r. 704-681 BCE) were engaged in war with Babylonia. Moreover, tribes in the territory of Iran who opposed the Assyrian predominance consolidated their efforts against it. Manna, situated to the northwest of Media, which had been a loyal ally of Assyria beginning at the very end of the 9th century, by 670 became an associate of Media. Ellipi was also inclining to support Media in its struggle against Assyria. At the same time, the penetration of Cimmerians and Scythians from the north posed a serious threat to Assyria.

This new balance of power in the east caused the Assyrian king Asarhaddon/Esarhaddon (r. 680-669 BCE) to undertake several expeditions into the territory of Iran. Between 679 and 677, the Assyrians defeated the "unpacified Manneans" and their Scythian allies led by Išpakaia, and they reached Mt. Bikni and Patušarra, where they seized two Median chieftains and brought them, together with their families and possessions, to Assyria (Heidel, ii, 20-23; iii, 53-64; iv, 1-5) Compared with Sargon's achievements, the results of the campaign of Esarhaddon were rather insignificant.

Soon after the last campaign against Media, three Median chiefs arrived in Nineveh with gifts, requesting Esarhaddon's help in their struggle against the rulers of the neighboring regions. These Medes were Uppis from Partakku, Zanasana from Partukka, and Ramataia from Urukazabarnu. Esarhaddon ordered the governors of the Assyrian provinces, which bordered on the districts of these Medes, to restore their power. They, however, were now obliged to pay regular tribute to Assyria. As is seen from this event, discord existed among Median rulers concerning whether to seek alliance with Assyria or to unite themselves in order to struggle against it. Ramataia, one of these Medes, is also referred to in the so-called "loyalty oaths" that were concluded on the occasion of the nomination of the successor to the Assyrian throne in 672 BCE. Among the seven names that have been preserved in these texts, three are indisputably Median. Their bearers were chieftains of several western regions of Media. In 672, agreements were concluded between Esarhaddon and each one of these Medes, which guaranteed their loyalty to the Assyrian king, as well as the security of their possessions. Scholars usually consider this agreement as a "vassal treaty" imposed by Assyrian administration on recently submitted vassals, but Mario Liverani has argued

that this agreement was a result of infighting among various Median groups, as well as of the presence of armed Median warriors stationed in the Assyrian palace and serving as bodyguards of the crown prince. The Median chieftains had to take an oath that their men at the Assyrian court would be loyal to Esarhaddon and his son Aššurbanipal (Liverani, 1995, pp. 61-62).

To judge by the queries from the time of Esarhaddon to the diviners of the sun god Šamaš, the situation on the eastern borders of Assyria was extremely strained. Magnates and governors of Bit Kāri in the province of Kišesim and Saparda in the province of Ḫarḫar, who had been sent with an army to collect tribute from the Median territories, began to return with empty hands, having been attacked by the detachments of the Medes, Manneans, Cimmerians, and Scythians (see Starr, nos. 64-71). This disguised resistance eventually resulted in the formation of a union against Assyria, and in about 672 the Medes and their allies rose in open rebellion against Assyria. Assyrian sources name three Median chieftains who headed the revolt; they were Kaštariti, “city lord” of Kār-kašši, located in the region of Sagbat of the province of Kišesim, Dusanna, ruler of Saparda, and Mamitiaršu, a Median “city lord” (Starr, nos. 41, 45, 50-51). The last of these perhaps was the head of some Medes who had remained independent from Assyria. Among them, Kaštariti, who gradually began to unite the Median tribes, played the leading role. Twenty-three omen texts concerning this revolt have been preserved, and his name is mentioned in seventeen of them. Esarhaddon considered Kaštariti to be the main culprit and the actual instigator of the revolt (Starr, no. 42); it was he who was particularly active in military operations and with whom it was necessary to negotiate in order to make peace with the rebels (Starr, nos. 43-57, 60-62). The rebels began by besieging the Assyrian fortresses in the provinces Ḫarḫar and Kišesim. The immediate aim of the revolt was to cut off the main line of Assyrian communication in the Zagros range and to cut off access to Ḫarḫar, which led to Media from the west. It seems that the revolt spread also to Ellipi, to the southwest of Ḫarḫar along the Great Khorasan Road. The revolt was successful, and the Medes achieved independence, although their state still did not yet include all Median provinces and tribes, and Assyria was still able to retain a few areas in western Iran. In a letter of about 669 BCE from the royal Assyrian archive, Media is mentioned with Urartu, Manna, and Hubuškia as a separate kingdom (Luukko and van Buylaere, no. 148), but it is not known how far it extended in the east and south during that time. Esarhaddon, in a summary of his achievements compiled at the end of his life, does not mention any more conquests in Iran, which also demonstrates that the Median revolt

was successful. Besides, the Manneans during this period were able to extend their dominion, becoming the northern neighbor of Assyria (Medvedskaya, 2002, pp. 30-32). A decade later, Aššurbanipal led an inconclusive expedition into Mannea as far as its capital. Later on, the Manneans, being afraid of the rise of Media, their former ally, resumed their alliance with Assyria and remained devoted to it until the fall of the latter. The latest mention of the Medes in the Assyrian sources belongs to about 658 BCE, when Aššurbanipal captured Birišatri, a chieftain of the Medes who had been an Assyrian vassal but later "threw away the yoke of the Assyrian supremacy" (Piepkorn, p. 36, IV:3-6).

THE MEDIAN DYNASTY

According to Herodotus (1.96-107), the Median dynasty consisted of four kings who belonged to the same family and ruled for 150 years. Since this dynasty was overthrown by the Persian king Cyrus II the Great in 550 BCE, to judge from Herodotus, the Median kings ruled during the following years (all dates are in BCE):

Deioces 53 years ca. 700-647

Phraortes 22 years ca. 647-625

Cyaxares 40 years ca. 625-585

Astyages 35 years ca. 585-550

Only Cyaxares (OIr. **hUvaxštra-*, Babylonian Umakištar) and Astyages (OIr. **Ṛšti-vaiga-*, Babylonian Ištumegu) of these kings are mentioned in cuneiform texts (Grayson, 1975, Chronicle 3, ll. 29, 30, 40, 47; Chronicle 7, ii, l. 2). Nevertheless, scholars have tried to find the names of Deioces and his son Phraortes in other relevant sources. Thus, a Mannean chieftain called Daiaukku, who is mentioned several times in neo-Assyrian texts (including also annals) from the time of Sargon II was identified with Herodotus's Deioces (see, e.g., Smith, 1869, p. 98). He is mentioned in the Assyrian sources as a Mannean provincial governor (*šaknu*) who joined the king of Urartu against the Mannean ruler, but he was captured by Sargon, who exiled him together with his family to Syria in 715 BCE. He apparently died there (Diakonoff, 1985, pp. 83, 90-91, 109, 112-13; see DEIOCES with references). His namesake may have been one of many chieftains of Median districts free from Assyrian rule.

Based on the assertion of Herodotus (1.106) that the Scythian domination over the Medes lasted for about twenty-eight years preceding the fall of Nineveh in 612 BCE, scholars have pushed back the beginning of the Median chronology to the year 728 BCE. This permitted them to identify Phraortes, the second Median king, with Kaštariti, the leader of the Median revolt against Assyria in 672. This identification is based on the statement in the Behistun (see BISOTUN) inscription (DB 2.13-17) that a Median pretender called Fravartiš (or Phraortes in Greek transcription), who revolted in 522-521 BCE against the Persian king Darius I, claimed to be Xšaθrita (Hašattritti in the Babylonian version of the inscription) "of the family of Cyaxares" (*Uvaxštrahyā taumāyā*). From this George Cameron concluded that "Kashtariti" was the throne name of the king Fravartiš/Phraortes, who may have been the father of Cyaxares (Cameron, pp. 174-77). I. M. Diakonoff likewise assumes that Xšaθrita (Kaštariti) was probably the person whom Herodotus calls Phraortes, son of Deioces (Diakonoff, 1985, p. 106). The same author agrees that Xšaθrita (not Phraortes) was the regnal name, since there was no need for a man who already bore a regnal name to assume another one (Diakonoff, 1956, pp. 275-76). Some scholars, however, are inclined to reject the identification of Phraortes, son of Deioces, with Kaštariti (see, e.g., Roaf, p. 62) or consider it doubtful (Young, p. 19; Brown, 1988, p. 75). Moreover, it remains unclear why Fravartiš should assume Xšaθrita as his throne name.

If the beginning of Deioces' reign is moved up to 728 BCE, then the absolute chronology of his dynasty can be presented in the following way:

Deioces 53 years r. 728-675

Kaštariti/Phraortes 22 yearsr. 675–653

Scythian domination 28 years 653–625

Cyaxares 40 yearsr. 625-585

Astyages 35 yearsr. 585-550

This chronology was rejected by scholars when René Labat demonstrated that, in a number of manuscripts of Herodotus's "Histories," the twenty-eight years of Scythian domination were included in Cyaxares' reign, and therefore Phraortes chronologically could not be Kaštariti of the Assyrian sources (Labat, p. 7). Édvin A. Grantovskiĭ (1998, pp. 139, 174-76) argued that this chronological problem could be solved on the basis of cuneiform sources,

which date the Median revolt against Assyria to about 672 and the end of the Median dynasty to 550 BCE. He offered the following dates:

Deioces r. ca. 672/671- the 40s of the 7th century BCE

Phraortes r. ca. 640- ca. 620)

Scythian domination ca. 635-615)

Cyaxares r. 620-584

Astyages r. 584-550

Thus, according to Grantovskiĭ, the Median dynasty existed for about 120 years; Deioces overthrew the Assyrian rule and founded the Median dynasty. Phraortes subjugated the Persians. The Median domination over Upper Asia began when Cyaxares defeated the Assyrian army in 612, and it continued for about sixty-two years. As to Scythian domination over Media and other countries, the statement of Herodotus (1.106) bears a legendary character and is not reliable, since it cannot be reconciled with the real 7th-century history of Media and all the rest of the ancient Near East (see Medvedskaya, 2000, p. 222).

According to another account of Herodotus (1.130), the Medes ruled over Upper Asia for 128 years. In this case, since the Median dynasty existed until 550 BCE, its rise should be dated in the year 678, that is, a few years before the revolt against Assyria. R. Drews (pp. 8-9) considered this figure of Herodotus not trustworthy, since, according to Hdt., 1.103, it was Cyaxares, the son of Phraortes, who conquered all Asia beyond (i.e., east of) the Halys river (the modern Kizil Irmak in Asia Minor). This could not have happened earlier than 625 BCE. But it may be possible to reconcile the apparent contradiction between these two reports of Herodotus (see Medvedskaya 2004, pp. 97-98). As already observed by George Rawlinson (I, pp. 407-9), Herodotus (1.102) may have transposed the two figures of 22 and 53 years which his informant had assigned to Deioces and Phraortes, respectively. Rawlinson proposed that it was Phraortes who ruled for 53 years and Deioces for 22 years. With this change to the first table, above, one obtains for Phraortes regnal dates of 678-625 BCE. Thus, according to Rawlinson, the sum of the reigns of the three Median kings after Deioces (53 + 40 + 35) would then be the 128 years of Hdt., 1.130. Phraortes overthrew the Assyrian dominance and, as Herodotus (1.102) states, attacked the Persian tribes, and then began to subdue all Asia, one

people after another. The results of the German archeological excavations at Besṭām (see BESṬĀM, entry no. 2), which was located to the north of Urmia, allow us to assume that the Medes attacked Urartu even before they started to subdue the Persian tribes (see below). Therefore, the starting point of the 128-year period of Median supremacy probably is the accession of Kaštariti/Phraortes, who began to rule a few years before the successful revolt against Assyria and reigned for 53 years. As to Deioces, the father of Phraortes, he was only a chieftain of the Medes, who began to consolidate the unity of the Median tribes (see Herodotus 1.101). It is possible that he was only the eponymous founder of the Median royal house. According to Diakonoff's suggestion (1985, p. 90), Herodotus oversimplified the event and transferred to Deioces the activities of several generations of Median chiefs, ascribing to him the founding of the Median kingdom. As to other Median kings, Cyaxares, in coalition with Babylonia, conquered Assyria and established his rule over Asia beyond the river Halys. Astyages was the last king of the Median dynasty. Thus, the rule of the Median kings can be presented as follows:

Deioces 22 yearsr. 700–678 BCE

Kaštariti/Phraortes53 yearsr. 678-625 BCE

Cyaxares 40 yearsr. 625-585 BCE

Astyages 35 yearsr. 585-550 BCE

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MEDIA EMPIRE

By the middle of the 7th century BCE, Media was a major kingdom, ranking with Elam, Urartu, Manna, and even with Assyria. Urartu posed a real threat to Media and in the first half of the 7th century continued its military activity in the east, penetrating into Iranian territory. In the middle of the same century, however, all fortresses in the eastern periphery of the Urartu dominion were destroyed by fire or were abandoned. In particular, to judge by evidence presented by Urartian seals and bullae, "Rusaδs City" (the present-day site of Besṭām) was plundered and destroyed by fire toward the end of the reign of Rusa II (r. 685-645/639 BCE), who had founded the town. This could be a result only of Median expansion, since there existed no other power in the region at that time that was able to destroy Urartu. The Median blow was apparently directed against the fortification line of the Araxes (Aras)-Urmia basin, which presented the only approach to Urartu from Media, since the

southern and western coasts of Lake Urmia had already been occupied by Manna. Probably, the Medes not only attacked the Araxes-Urmia bridgeheads but also penetrated into the interior of the country. Thus, in the 640s BCE. Urartu ceased to exist as an independent state (see Medvedskaya, 2000, pp. 33-35).

After the fall of Urartu, the Medes started to conquer Persia. But, according to Herodotus (1.102), who apparently knew nothing about Urartu and Elam, Persia was among the first to be attacked by the Medes. This could have happened only some time after about 641 BCE, when Cyrus I, the Persian prince of Anshan, became an Assyrian tributary and sent gifts to Aššurbanipal, together with his son Arukku as a hostage, after the Assyrian victory over Elam.

The Median king Phraortes united all Median tribes into a single state with Ecbatana as its capital. His son Cyaxares created a regular army, reorganizing it by type of weapon into spear-bearers, archers, and cavalry in place of the former levies structured by tribal principles (Herodotus, 1.103). Subsequent events of Median history are known from Babylonian sources, and its several episodes are described by Herodotus.

The Babylonians (see BABYLONIA) revolted against Assyrian domination in 626 BCE. The Chaldean Nabopolassar, the governor of the southern regions and the leader of the revolt, was soon recognized as king of Babylonia, and by 616 he was in full control of all Babylonian territory. Then he marched against Assyria. The Medes, led by their king Cyaxares, also decided to turn on their old enemy. In November 615 BCE, they attacked the Assyrian province of Arrapḫa (present-day Kirkuk) and also annexed the territory of its ally Manna. In 614, they seized Tarbiṣu near Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. They also surrounded Nineveh but did not succeed in taking it. In the same year the Medes besieged and captured Aššur, the ancient capital of the country. Nabopolassar with his army arrived on the field of battle only after the fall of Aššur. There the Medes and Babylonians concluded an alliance, reinforcing it by the marriage of Amytis, daughter of Astyages, Cyaxares' son, to Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar's son (Berossos, apud Schnabel, p. 271; cf. Cameron, p. 216, n. 9; Diakonoff, 1985, pp. 122-23).

In the spring of 613, a revolt against Nabopolassar occurred in Suhu, a region on the middle Euphrates, which later spread to central and southern Babylonia. He was on the verge of losing his power to the Assyrians and was

saved from this danger by the Medes (see Zawadzki, p. 111). Finally, after three months of siege, in August of 612, the joined forces of the Medes and Babylonians stormed Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, and took it. The major part in the city's downfall was played by the Medes. The city was plundered, and the conquerors returned home with enormous booty. The remains of the Assyrian army managed to leave for the city Ḥarrān in Upper Mesopotamia, where Aššuruballiṭ II, a member of the royal family who was appointed the new king, continued the struggle against the Babylonians, who had to face him without any help from Media. In the meantime, the Assyrians were reinforced by the arrival of the Egyptian army of Pharaoh Necho II. In November 610, the Medes returned to Mesopotamia and to the assistance of Nabopolassar. The joined forces of the Babylonians and Medes marched on Ḥarrān; upon their approach the Assyrians and Egyptians retreated to Carchemish, where they were eventually defeated. The Medes plundered Ehulhul, the main temple of Ḥarrān, and went home. After the fall of Ḥarran, the strategic center of Assyrian resistance was moved to Carchemish, a city on the Upper Euphrates, which at that time belonged to Egypt. Carchemish was captured by the Babylonians in 605 BCE. It is not clear whether the Medes also participated in this final defeat of the Assyrians (Diakonoff, 1985, pp. 123-25; Saggs, pp. 134-41; Dandamaev and Lukonin, pp. 54-59).

The main source for the Babylonian and Median military operations against Assyria is the so-called *Chronicle of Nabopolassar* (or *Gadd Chronicle*), which is a part of the Babylonian chronicles and covers the period from 616 to 609 BCE. In this text the Babylonian ally is first referred to as Medes but elsewhere also as Umman-manda. In particular, this Chronicle mentions Cyaxares as the king of the Umman-manda, whereas the same source in the report concerning the capture of Aššur designates him simply as a "Mede" (Grayson, pp. 93-94, ll. 24-65; Pritchard, ed., pp. 202-3). The same chronicle also states that the Umman-manda came to the assistance of Nabopolassar when he was at war with the Assyrians in the Ḥarrān region (Grayson, p. 95, ll. 59–61). To judge from a Babylonian letter, the term Umman-manda is a reference to the Medes. This letter, sent by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar, says that "the king has gone to Ḥarrān, [and] with him went large forces of Medes" (Contenau, no. 99). Evidently, Umman-manda and Mādāya (Medes) are used in these sources as different names for one and the same people.

After the fall of Nineveh, the western boundaries of Media lay near the plains of Mesopotamia. Until recently, it has been a common opinion that, as a result

of the fall of Assyria, the Medes took possession of the native Assyrian lands to the east of the Tigris, as well as the Ḥarrān region. This opinion is partly based on the so-called *Dream Text* of the Babylonian king Nabonidus, which states that the Medes dominated Ḥarrān for fifty-four years until the third year of his reign (Schaudig, p. 417, col. 1, ll. 27-29). In this case, the Medes possessed Ḥarrān from 607 to 553 BCE (see Diakonoff, 1985, p. 125). Moreover, still in the 5th century BCE and later, the Assyrian heartland was viewed in popular memory as Median land (for references see Dandamaev and Lukonin, p. 58). Such an opinion, however, is being reconsidered at the present time. Some scholars argue that the Assyrian heartland and Ḥarrān belonged to the Babylonians from the year 609 BCE and remained under their control until the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire in 539 BCE (see, e.g., Rollinger, pp. 292-305 with further references). It is true that, to judge from the *Babylonian Chronicle*, Ḥarrān remained under Babylonian dominance, while the Medes returned home after its capture from the Assyrians. It is, however, hard to maintain that Nabonidus would try to force upon his countrymen, and even on Marduk and other gods, the fiction that Ḥarrān belonged to Media while the Babylonians were ruling it. It is probable, therefore, that some time after 609 BCE the Medes seized Ḥarrān again and stayed there for a long period of time.

After the fall of Assyria, only four powerful states remained in the entire Near East, namely Egypt, Babylonia, Media, and Lydia. Soon, the relations between the former allies began to deteriorate, and both the Babylonian and Median rulers willingly accepted refugees from each other. For instance, as seen from a Babylonian letter drafted in 591 BCE, several citizens of Uruk fled to Media and then ignored the order of King Nebuchadnezzar to return to Babylonia (Dougherty, no. 359). On the other side, according to Babylonian texts dated to 595-570 BCE, the royal court distributed foodstuffs to some aliens, including a “refugee from Media” (Weidner, p. 930; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 154).

After his victory over Assyria, Cyaxares continued to expand the frontiers of his kingdom at the expense of northwestern and eastern neighbors. Judging by later indirect evidence, he succeeded in the conquest of the regions south and east of the Caspian Sea (i.e., Parthia and Hyrcania) and Armenia (see Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989, pp. 60-61). In 590 BCE, however, when the Median army approached the Halys river, they were attacked by Alyattes, the king of Lydia. The war lasted for five years, and, when a solar eclipse occurred during a battle on 29 May 585, both sides decided to conclude a peace treaty, according to which the frontier was established along the Halys river. The king

of Cilicia Syennesis and "Labynetus of Babylon" (probably, Nabonidus is meant here) acted as mediators of this treaty (see Herodotus, 1.74; cf. Rollinger, where the opinion is expressed that Asia Minor was never under direct and stable Median control). It was followed by a marriage alliance between Aryene, the daughter of Alyattes, and Astyages, the son of Cyaxares. It is possible, however, that about ten years later a second war, started by Astyages, broke out between the two states (Cobbe, p. 30; Diakonoff, 1985, p. 126).

In 585 BCE, Cyaxares died, leaving his throne to Astyages, who might be the one that established Median control over Elam. After a long rule, he lost his kingdom to the Persian king Cyrus II the Great. There are three main primary sources about the war between Persia and Media: the *Histories* by Herodotus (and also some other later classical works, including Strabo, 15.3.8), as well as the *Babylonian Chronicle* and the *Dream Text* of the Babylonian king Nabonidus. Herodotus's account apparently was based on an oral tradition of the Medes, and occasionally it cannot be reconciled with Babylonian historical data. According to him (1.123–28), Cyrus, being a grandson of Astyages (his daughter's son) and his vassal, rose in rebellion against him. The Babylonian sources do not speak of him as the grandson of Astyages and his vassal; they refer to him only as "the king of Anshan/Anzan" (i.e., of Persia, the present-day Fārs), while Astyages (Ištumegu) is named the "king of Umman-manda" (see the *Dream Text* in Schaudig, p. 417, no. 2, l. 29). As seen from the same text, the war between Media and Persia started in the third year of Nabonidus's reign, that is, in 553 BCE, and the *Nabonidus Chronicle* dates the defeat of Media in the sixth year of Nabonidus (i.e., 550 BCE). According to the *Dream Text*, Cyrus, "king of Anshan, with small army defeated the many troops of the Umman-manda and captured Ištumegu, king of the Umman-manda, and brought him in chains" (Schaudig, p. 417, col. I, ll. 27–29).

According to Herodotus (1.127-28), the Median nobleman Harpagos organized a plot against Astyages and during a battle defected with a large part of the troops to Cyrus's side. Then Astyages himself commanded the army in the second battle, but the Medes were defeated, and their king was taken prisoner. This information of Herodotus is supported in outline by the *Nabonidus Chronicle*, which states that, in the sixth year of the reign of Nabonidus, Astyages called his troops and marched against Cyrus. Then it adds that the troops of Astyages revolted, took him prisoner, and handed him over to Cyrus. The latter advanced to Agamtanu (i.e., Ecbatana), and took to Anshan the

silver, gold, and other goods found there (see Grayson, p. 106, II, lines 1–4). Thus, this war lasted from 553 to 550 BCE.

Different opinions have been expressed about the character of the Median kingdom. For instance, according to Ernst Herzfeld (p. 344), it was a powerful empire, which stretched from north Mesopotamia to Bactria and India. On the other side, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg (p. 212) insists that there is no real evidence about the very existence of the Median empire and that it was an unstable state formation.

It seems that Cyrus did not abolish the Median kingdom. What occurred was, rather, a transition of royal power from one dynasty to another. In any case, Cyrus and his Achaemenid successors adopted the official titles of the Median kings and their system of state administration. In the Achaemenid empire, Media retained its privileged position, occupying the second place after Persia itself. Media was a large province, and its capital Ecbatana became one of the Achaemenid capitals and the summer residence of the Persian kings. The Median nobility maintained its privileged position under Cyrus the Great, and also to a significant degree under his successors, in spite of a dangerous rebellion of the Medes against Darius I the Great in 521 BCE Gobryas (OPers. *Gaub(a)ruva-*), the first governor of Babylonia after its occupation by the Persians, may have been a Mede. In the *Nabonidus Chronicle*, he is attested as "the governor of the country Gutium," who took Babylon (Grayson, p. 109, col. III, l. 15). In the first millennium BCE, Gutium was an archaic name for Media or, at least, for its western part (Herzfeld, p. 194; Diakonoff, 1985, p. 117). It should also be mentioned that, along with the Persians and Elamites, Medes served in the standing army of the "10,000 Immortals" of the Achaemenids. The Greeks, Jews, Egyptians, and other peoples of the ancient world called the Persians "Medes" and regarded the Persian rule as a continuation of that of the Medes (see, e.g., Herodotus, 1.206). As seen from some Babylonian documents drafted after the conquest of Mesopotamia by the Persians, many Medes resided in Babylonia as important state officials, military officers, and royal soldiers. Moreover, it seems that some Medes lived in Babylon and perhaps in other big cities as private individuals. Cuneiform documents also attest that Babylonian businessmen were engaged in various transactions in Ecbatana and other cities of Media (for references see Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 153–56).

MEDIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

At present, we have no direct data on the social institutions and economic organization of Median society. Herodotus (1.101) mentions six Median tribes, of which only Arizantoi (< **arya-zantu* "having Aryan lineage") has an obvious Iranian etymology, but we have almost no information on these tribes. Apparently, some elements of the administrative system introduced by the Assyrians continued to function in the Median provinces also after the fall of Assyria and were gradually viewed by the Medes as their own traditional institutions. János Harmatta (p. 13) has attempted to trace the Median administrative system and, basing his argument mostly on linguistic data, has come to the conclusion that the Medes had "a highly developed bureaucratic organization, which later on was adopted also by the Achaemenids." In any case, the Achaemenid title for a satrap (OPers. *xšaçapavān-* "regional administrator") existed even prior to the emergence of the Median state for the designation of independent chiefs (Grantovskiĭ, 1970, pp. 154, 323–24).

Rich archeological material from Tepe Nush-i Jan (Nuš-e Jān), Godin (Gowdin) Tepe, and other ancient sites (see URARTU), as well as Assyrian reliefs demonstrate that in the first half of the first millennium there existed settlements of the urban type in various regions of Media, which were centers of handicraft production and of a sedentary agricultural and cattle-breeding economy. To judge from Assyrian sources, the basic economic occupations of the population in Median regions were the breeding of horses and handicraft production. From the Median districts the Assyrians received tribute of horses, cattle, sheep, Bactrian camels, as well as lapis lazuli, bronze, gold, silver, and other metals mainly in the form of fashioned objects, and also linen and woolen fabrics.

MEDIAN CULTURE AND ART

Before the rise of the Achaemenids under Cyrus II, Media obviously was the focus of the development of Iranian material and intellectual culture. However, no archives from Median times have been discovered, and we do not know whether the Medes had their own writing system. So far only one inscription of pre-Achaemenid times (a bronze plaque) has been found on the territory of Media. This is a cuneiform inscription composed in Akkadian, perhaps in the 8th century BCE, but no Median names are mentioned in it (cf. Diakonoff, 1978, with further references). A cuneiform inscription on a piece of silver has been excavated in Media at Tepe Nush-i Jan, but only the end of one sign and the beginning of the next have been preserved (Brinkman, p. 107). It is not known whether the Medes used Akkadian script for writing. But

some scholars are inclined to assume that the so-called Old Persian cuneiform was in fact Median cuneiform, which later was borrowed by the Persians (see, for instance, Diakonoff, 1970, pp. 121-22).

Herodotus (1.98) gives a description of Deioces' palace at Ecbatana, which, according to him, was an architectural complex built on a hill and surrounded by seven circles of walls so that the battlements of each wall out-topped those of the next wall outside it. The palace itself and royal treasuries were within the innermost circle. The battlements of these circles were painted with various colors and those of the inner two circles were covered with silver and gold respectively. It may be noted that, in the 6th century BCE, as known from Achaemenid inscriptions, Median goldsmiths adorned the walls of the royal palaces in the imperial capital at Susa (DSf 49-55; see Vallat).

Median art, however, remains a matter of speculation, and even its existence is denied by some scholars (see, for instance, Genito, p. 11). This situation apparently will last until the royal palaces in Ecbatana are discovered and studied. Oscar Muscarella (1994, p. 57) notes that "no examples of Median art and artifacts are known to exist in the archaeological record" (see also idem, 1987). Nevertheless, other scholars presume that such sites as Nush-i Jan Tepe and Godin Tepe located on the territory of historical Media and dated in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE were Median (see Calmeyer, 1987, pp. 565–69, with further references). The attribution of Bābā Jān III to Median culture is uncertain (see Muscarella, 1987, p. 112, n.12; idem, 1994, p. 58; Medvedskaya, 1992, pp. 73-79).

Although Tepe Nush-i Jan was not a capital city, according to David Stronach (1985), it became an important link in a chain of evidence on the composition and development of Median architecture, as well as in the incorporation of Median culture in the ancient Oriental civilizations. In the architecture of Tepe Nush-i Jan and Godin Tepe can be traced influence and direct borrowings of both the fine details and entire architectural forms and design of buildings that had precise analogues in Assyrian art (e.g., the plan of forts), in Urartian methods of erecting the buildings (rock-cut tunnel, the use of blind windows and recessed niches with dentil cornices, and cisterns for water). The columned hall had already been attested in the architecture of northwest Iran and Urartu, but in Tepe Nush-i Jan and Godin Tepe it does not have smaller rooms adjoining the hall. The columned hall became a representative building without any dwelling or economic functions, a prototype of the Achaemenid audience hall (see APADĀNA). One can also mention the lozenge-shaped plan

of the Central Temple in Tepe Nush-i Jan (see below), which is unparalleled elsewhere. Thus, the Medes not only borrowed some elements of foreign art but also used them in forms with new functions and meanings, that is, in a new context without their typical and initial qualities. Later, the Achaemenids borrowed the cultural achievements of the ancient Near East through the intermediary of the Medes.

MEDIAN RELIGION

Our information about the religion of the Medes is very scanty. Between 1967 and 1977, Stronach excavated a building that had been founded in about 750 BCE and appears to have been principally religious in character. It was located at Tepe Nush-i Jan, about 60 km to the south of Hamadān. The buildings were erected on a rock with a height of about 30 m and consisted of the "Central Temple," "Western Temple," "Fort," and "Columned Hall," which were surrounded by a circular brick buttressed wall. The Central Temple was of a tower-shaped form with a triangular inner sanctuary. Its floor-space is 11 x 7 m, and the walls are still eight meters high. Near the western corner of this sanctuary, a stepped fire altar was discovered which was built of mud brick. As is known, the cult of fire was a common Indo-Iranian legacy, and the temple in Tepe Nush-i Jan is the earliest of the temple structures in Iran that are known to us (Stronach, 1984 and 1985).

The rest of our information about Median religion is mainly based on the *Histories* of Herodotus and on the personal names of Median individuals. According to Herodotus (1.101), the Magi (*magoi* < OPers. *magu-)* were a Median tribe that provided priests not only for the Medes but also for the Persians. Thus, they constituted a priestly caste that passed their functions from father to son. Additionally, at the court of the Median king Astyages they acted as advisers, dream interpreters, and soothsayers. Thus, apparently, the Magi played a significant role at the court of the last Median kings (see Herodotus, 1.107; Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* II, s.v. magi; Schwartz, pp. 696-97). As for Median personal names, Assyrian texts from the 9th and 8th centuries BCE contain examples in which the first element is familiar from both Old Persian and Avestan: the Indo-Iranian word *arta-* (Av. *aša-* < Ind-Ir. **ṛtá* "truth"; q.v.) or theophoric names with *Mažda*kku and even the name of the god Ahura Mazdā (for references, see Grantovskiĭ, 1970, pp. 253–62; Dandamaev, 1976, pp. 216-17; Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* II, pp. 15, 104). Classical authors unanimously regarded the Magi as Zoroastrian priests. Diakonoff (1985, p. 141) assumed that "Astyages and perhaps even Cyaxares had already

embraced a religion derived from the teachings of Zoroaster (though certainly not identical with his doctrine).” The majority of scholars, however, do not share this opinion. Mary Boyce (*Zoroastrianism* II, p. 21) even argued that the existence of the Magi in Media with their own traditions and forms of worship was an obstacle to Zoroastrian proselytizing there. In all probability, as early as the 8th century, a kind of Mazdaism with common Indo-Iranian traditions prevailed in Media, to which specific features of Zoroastrianism were alien, whereas the religion reformed by Zarathustra started to spread in western Iran only in the first half of the 6th century BCE, under the last Median kings.

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