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MESOPOTAMIA I. IRANIANS IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

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i. Iranians in Ancient Mesopotamia

Medes. Beginning with the 9th century BCE, the Assyrians regularly raided the territory of Media, where dozens of small principalities existed with a mixed population of Medes and other nations of Qutian-Kassite origin. Assyrian sources contain important data on a number of dominions in Iran in the 9th-7th centuries BCE. The earliest contacts of the Assyrians with Iranian tribes began in the Zagros mountains. During the second half of the 8th century BCE, Medes became the predominant ethnic group in many regions of western Iran. The expansion of Assyria in the east at the end of the eighth century and the first decades of the seventh century BCE reached the territory of Media (Mādāya) with population of Western Iranian-speakers (see ASSYRIA i).

Media was an independent state from the last quarter of the 7th century BCE. During the reign of the Assyrian king Assarhaddon (r. 680-669 BCE), many chiefs of Median tribes became vassals of Assyria. In particular, around 676 BCE rulers of several Median tribes came to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, with gifts of horses and lapis lazuli (see below). It is also known that some Medes served at Assarhaddon's court as well as bodyguards of Aššurbānipal (r.

668-627 BCE, q.v.) during his tenure as the crown prince (see Liverani). It seems that already during the reign of Sennacherib (r. 704-681 BCE) some Medes lived in Nineveh. Thus, in 683 BCE. a certain Iranian called Partāma (Par-ta-a-ma) borrowed from an Assyrian two *homer*s five *seah*s of wine with the obligation to give it back within a certain period of time (*SAA* VI, pp. 147-48, nos. 181:4 and 182:3). Partāma was apparently a Mede who lived in Assyria permanently or during a certain period of time (see Dandamayev, 1992, p. 111; Schmitt, no. 107). Records of a number of Assyrian texts contain mentions of representatives from Median territories visiting Nineveh from time to time for official affairs (see Schmitt, nos. 47, 59, 72, etc.). For instance, it is known that during the reign of Assarhaddon, three Median rulers of various districts (Zanasana of Partukka, and Ramataia of Uraka-Zabarana, and Uppiš of Partakka) went to the Assyrian capital with gifts in order to seek help against their enemies (see ASSARDAHON).

After the fall of Assyria in 609 BCE, the Neo-Babylonian dynasty came to power in Mesopotamia. There is evidence that during the reign of the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus (r. 555-539 BCE), which is before the Persian conquest of Mesopotamia, some persons of Iranian origin (in all probability, Medes) were in the service of the Eanna Temple in Uruk, a city situated to the east of the Euphrates River. Two duplicate documents from Nabonidus's reign mention that a royal official Bagiʾāzu (Old Pers. *Bagayāza-) by name was assigned to Eanna. Both documents come from the Eanna archives and were drafted less than three months before the Persian occupation of Babylonia in 539 BCE (*YOS* VI, nos. 169/231; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 54). This official probably was a descendent of a Mede at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II some fifty years before.

Babylonian documents of the Achaemenid period mention about 400 Iranian names that belonged to approximately two thousand individuals. Particularly in Mesopotamia, many Medes resided in Babylonian cities as state officials, royal soldiers, and possibly also as private individuals. For instance, Michigan Collection, No. 89, a document from the archives of the Eanna Temple in Uruk regarding temple expenditures, belongs to the reign of Cyrus II or Cambyses, since it contains reference to Gubāru (Babylonian rendering of the Old Iranian name Gaub[a]ruva; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 73-79; see GOBRYAS), the governor of Babylonia and Eber-nāri (q.v.; i.e., the lands to the west of the Euphrates River). According to this text, thirty shekel of silver were issued to the "Mede, the chancellor" (line 41: LÚ *Mādāya bēl ṭēmi*), whose name is lost in the text (cf.

Stolper, 1989, p. 302). In the same text are mentioned also a Mede named Šummu (Dandamayev, 1992, p. 123) and a Chorasmian (line 51: *hurzimāya*).

Early in the reign of Darius I The Great (r. 522-486 BCE), a Mede Kākīa by name possessed a field located near Babylon (Strassmaier, p. 51). In 520 BCE, he was issued five *kor* (900 liters) of dates by the well-known Egibi business firm apparently as rent. Kākīa and his wife Uhšiya lived in Babylon in a rented house, the furniture and household utensils for which also had been rented from the Egibi house (Strassmaier, p. 57; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 89, 132). The name Kākīa is attested also in Assyrian texts dated to 859 and 856 BCE as the name of rulers of several regions of Media (see Schmitt, no. 72). Another Mede, by the name Ninakku, lived in Borsippa. In 499 BCE, his slave woman, a Babylonian named Eṭirtu, was used as security for a loan, but she ran away from the creditor in the night (*VAS* IV, no. 160; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 105-6). The Mede Būmasa, mentioned in a letter from the archives of the Ebabbar Temple, was a state official in the city of Sippar and in one case in 518 BCE was issued five *kor* (900 liters) of dates from there (*CT*, no. 43; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 67).

Some Babylonian documents mention also magi, who were Median priests. They apparently were sent to Mesopotamia in order to perform religious rituals for the Medes and Persians who resided there. According to a document, a certain Zattumēšu, who is attested as a magus during the reign of Darius I, owned a field near the city Kish (*OECT*, no. 163; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 144). Several documents from the Murašû business house mention also the "town settlement of the magi," which was located in the region of Nippur (*BE* IX, nos. 88, etc.). In this connection, the document YBC 11611 is of a considerable interest. It was drafted in the fifteenth year of the reign of Xerxes, "king of Persia, Media, king of Babylon and the lands" (471 BCE), and records payment for the purchase of a field, which constituted an enormous sum, namely 20 *mina*s and 48 *shekel*s of silver. This field was located in the district of Borsippa and was sold by a certain Re'indu, daughter of Parnaka (an Iranian name) to Napsānu, son of Tattannu, who is known also from a number of other Babylonian documents. It is noteworthy that the contract was made in the presence of a magus (*ma-gu-šu*) whose name is broken. It is also remarkable that his name is given at the head of a list of three judges (see Jursa and Stolper, pp. 145-252).

Persians. The earliest mention of Persians in cuneiform sources is given in an inscription of the Assyrian king Aššurbānipal about his victory over Elam

between 646 and 639 BCE. As noted in this inscription, "Kuraš, king of Parsumaš" sent his eldest son Arukku with tribute to Nineveh (see Weidner, pp. 1-7; cf. Grantovskiĭ, p. 252; Schmitt, nos. 21, 81). Parsumaš was located to the north from Elam. Usually scholars suggest that Kuraš of Parsumaš was the same person as the Kuraš, king of Anshan, that is, the grandfather of Cyrus II, but Potts (p. 18) rejects this equation.

Babylonian texts dated between 595 and 570 BCE record the issue of rations to foreigners at Nebuchadnezzar's court in Babylon. Among the men mentioned in these texts are three Persians: Anšia, Bagindū, and one more whose name is broken off (Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 29, 64). A document refers to the "Town of the Persians" (*BE* X, no. 101:13: URU É LÚ *par-ri-sa-a*), which was located in the Nippur region and apparently was named after some Persians who lived there.

Under Darius I (r. 522-486 BCE) and his successors, some Persians acted as judges in Babylonia. For instance, several documents from Nippur often mention Ištubazanaʾ, a judge at the district of the Sīn canal near Nippur (*BE* X, no. 8:8, etc.; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 88-89). Under Darius I, a contract between two Babylonians regarding an enormous loan was drafted in Babylon in the presence of the judge Ummādatu, son of Udunatu (*TCL*, no. 193; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 131, 136-37). In a record drafted in Dilbat during the reign of Darius I, the Persian Ahšēti, son of Kamakka, acts as a witness along with four Babylonian judges and two temple officials. The text contains a decision concerning two fields, the owner of which asserted that they did not belong to the king (*VAS* VI, no. 171; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 27-28, 90). In 508 BCE, another Persian, Padakka by name, possessed an estate in a place probably located near Sippar (Strassmaier, p. 397; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 107). Two documents from 508-507 BCE mention the Persian Partammu as the owner of a house in Babylon (Strassmaier, pp. 379, 410; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 111). The Persian Uhējāgam, son of Parnaka, who lived himself in Babylon in 423 BCE, owned a field located near Nippur. The field was leased to the Murašû business firm for the rental payment of one *mina* of silver. Tīriaimuš, brother of Uhējāgam, is also listed among witnesses (*PBS*, no. 5; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 126, 132). The Persian Arbatemaʾ was the owner of a storehouse in Borsippa and in 485 BCE collected half a year's rent for this storehouse (*VAS* IV, no. 191; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 31).

Houses and estates of the Persian princes Ahiamanuš, Arrišittu, Aršāma, Artarēme, Dundanaʾ, Ipradāta, Manuštānu, and others, as well as the estates of

Princess Amisirē, were located in the Nippur area in the second half of the fifth century BCE (cf. Stolper, 1985, pp. 59-67; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 26-27, 2829, 32-35, 41-43, 70-71, 86, 96-98). In one case Prince Manuštānu received 4,000 *kor* (i.e., 720,000 l) of barley from the Murašû firm as rent (Stolper, 1985, No. 59; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 97). In 429 BCE, Bagamīri, son of Mitradāta, who was married to the Babylonian girl Esagil-bēlit, leased for sixty years to the Murašû house his own field and the land that had passed to him after the death of his paternal uncle Rušundātu. They were located near to the field of another Persian, Rušunpātu (*BE* IX, no. 48; *TMH*, p. 144; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 57, 118). Thus, a part of the Persian nobility began to settle in Babylonia, becoming large landowners and renting out their fields. The estates of Queen Parysatis (Purūšātu), wife of Darius II, are also mentioned in a number of documents from Nippur and other cities (*PBS*, nos. 75:3; 119:12, etc.; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 115-16). It seems reasonable to assume that a considerable number of the individuals with Iranian names referred to in Babylonian texts without any indication of their ethnic origin were also Persians and to a lesser degree Medes.

Sakai. In modern scholarly literature the ethnic name Scythians denotes the ancient inhabitants of the northern cost of the Black Sea, while the Scythians of Central Asia are called Sakai. The Babylonian texts call the Sakai Cimmerians (Gimirrāya), using the ethnic name of the tribes that had penetrated the Near Eastern in the eighth and seven centuries BCE, that is, some time earlier than the Scythians. In the Persian and Elamite versions of the Achaemenid inscriptions, the Scythian tribes appear as Sakai, while in the Babylonian versions they are called Cimmerians. It seems that Cimmerians and Scythians (Sakai) were related, spoke among themselves different Iranian dialects, and could understand each other without interpreters. It was typical of Babylonian literature of the first millennium BCE to use archaic ethnic nomenclature. In contrast to the Babylonians, the Assyrians distinguished Cimmerians from Scythians. The only Babylonian text that refers to Sakai is the cuneiform text (*CT*, no. 93, line 9) from Sippar dated during the reign of Darius I, which mentions a certain Dēmiši as a “Saka” (LÚ *sak-ka-a-a*; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 70).

Sakai (i.e., Gimirrāya) are frequently referred to in Babylonian administrative and business documents of the Achaemenid period, often as royal soldiers in the military colonies established by the Persian administration after the conquest of Mesopotamia. For instance, in document from Dilbat drafted in

489 BCE, a field belonging to a Cimmerian is mentioned as a border of the land belonging to another person (Roth, p. 55, no. 16:16). In 529 BCE, Gubāru, the Persian governor of Babylonia, ordered a canal to be given at the disposal of the Cimmerians in order to irrigate their field, which was probably located in the Nippur region (*BE* VIII, no. 80). As seen from a document drafted in Babylon in 505 BCE, a Cimmerian named Sakita together with a Chorasmian called Ubaratta and some other persons acted as witnesses of a business transaction (Strassmaier, p. 458; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 119, 130). A document drafted in Nippur in 420 BCE records the payment of royal taxes in money, beer, flour, barley, etc. for bow fiefs belonging to the Cimmerians and rented out to the Murašû business firm. This payment was made through Taddannu (a Semitic name), who was "foreman of the Cimmerians, son of Tērijama, which is an Iranian name (*BE* X, no. 97; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 128).

As seen from a number of tablets, a military colony of Cimmerians existed around Nippur in the second half of the fifth century BCE. They rented out their lands to the Murašû firm, whose agents paid rent to the holders of the fiefs, and taxes in kind (grain, beer, sheep, etc.) as well as money to the king. The Cimmerians mentioned in the documents from Nippur usually bear Babylonian names, but their superior (LÉ *šaknu ša*, LÉ *gimirrāya*) was a certain Tīriparna. Tīribaza', brother of Tīriparnaʾ, is also mentioned in the same tablets. As we have seen above, a certain Taddannu, son of Tīrijama, was also a foreman of some Cimmerians. To judge by their names, they were Persians or Sakai (cf. Zadok, 1977, p. 123; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 126-27). Beginning with the Achaemenid period, proper names with the theophoric element *tīr–* are used for Persians, Parthians, and Scythians attested in Elamite administrative documents from Persepolis, and in Greek inscriptions from the northern coast of the Black Sea and elsewhere (see Dandamayev, 1977, p. 37, n. 48).

Since it was the Persian administration that established military colonies in Babylonia, it can be assumed that these Cimmerians were Sakai from Central Asia, subjected during the reigns of Cyrus and Darius I. By the fifth century BCE, the Sakai had adapted themselves to Babylonian customs and often gave their sons Semitic names.

One document from Uruk dated in the sixth regnal year of Cambyses II (r. 530-522 BCE) indicates that some Sakai served in boats in Babylonia (*VAS* XX, no. 49). As seen from this document, sixty liters of flour were issued to the Cimmerians Ušukaʾ and Tatakka, "who were in charge of ships" (Dandamayev,

1992, pp. 124, 141). Thus, some of the Sakai soldiers in Babylonia were appointed to guard the boats carrying official cargoes by the order of the royal administration. The same text also mentions interpreters whose services apparently were necessary for communication between the Sakai and Babylonian officials.

Arūmaya. All references to the ethnic group of the Arūmaya are found in Murašû documents from Nippur of the second half of the fifth century BCE. They were military colonists, mainly holders of bow fiefs. In one case eight individuals of this group received in 425 BCE two minas of silver, three sheep, and three vats of beer from the Murašû firm as rental for their fiefs located near Nippur (*BE* IX, no. 74). With a few exceptions, their names and patronymics are Iranian (e.g., Bagā, Ispataru, Tīridāta, Bagadāta, etc.). Seven years later, the same persons and three more men are mentioned as receiving approximately the same rent from the same firm (*PBS*, no. 122). In 420 BCE, a certain Bariki, son of Hurušadātu, and some other individuals were paid thirty shekels of silver as rent on their bow fiefs (*BE* X, no. 100; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 84). The foreman of this group was Tattannu, son of Bagaiāzu. Hurušadātu and Bagajāzu are Iranian names, but their sons had Semitic names. Thus, these colonists not always themselves cultivated their fiefs, which were situated in at least five districts, but rented them to the Murašû firm. Sometimes they gave their children Babylonian names. For instance, Bagāda's son, who in 419-417 BCE was the foreman of a group of Arumāya (*BE* no. 111:12), had the Babylonian name Bēl-nādin (Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 163-64). The question is: to what ethnic group these Arūmaya belonged? During several dozens years scholars considered that this ethnic name denoted inhabitants of the country Aria, or Areia (the Old Persian Haraiva, Elamite Harrima, Babylonian KUR, A-ri-e-mu in the Achaemenid inscriptions, Greek Areia), an Old Persian satrapy located to the east of Parthia, on the territory of Herat in modern Afghanistan (e.g., Zadok, 1977, p. 113). However, now such an opinion is considered erroneous or at least doubtful (see, e.g., Stolper, 1985, p. 72; Tavernier, p. 287).

Chorasmians. The first known representative of the region of Chorasmia is a man by the name Dadaparnaʾ mentioned in *UCP* (no. 38, line 7: LÚ *Ḫur-zi-ma-a-a*) from 534 BCE, and also in *UCP* no. 39 drafted at Bīt-Şapşap (probably near Uruk). Both documents were discovered at Uruk and probably belonged to the archives of the Eanna Temple. Dadaparnaʾ was an official messenger and apparently was obliged to take care of some palace property (Dandamayev,

1992, pp. 67-68). As seen from another text, in 527 BCE the Eanna Temple was ordered by the royal administration to send fifty slaves to a certain Šamaš-erība, the commander of a fortified outpost near Uruk, and to a Chorasmian (line 11: URU *Ḫur-zi-ma-a-a*) whose name is broken off. They were to serve as archers (Dandamayev, 1992, p. 164). Another document from the reign of Cyrus II The Great or Cambyses II mentions a Chorasmian (Michigan Collection 89, line 51: LÚ *Ḫur-zi-ma-a-a*) Ukiria by name, who was the manager of the palm grove in the royal manor in Amanu, a city near Uruk (Dandamayev, 1992, p. 132). Finally, a promissory note drafted in Babylon in 505 BCE mentions a Chorasmian (line 14: LÚ *Ḫur-zi-ma-a-a*) Ubaratta by name among the witnesses to the document, along with a Cimmerian and some other foreigners (Strassmaier, p. 458; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 130).

Other Eastern Iranians. A Babylonian document from the archive of the Egibi business house written in Babylon in 508 BCE mentions a certain Nanaja-silim, who was a female slave (Strassmaier, p. 379:14). Her name is Akkadian, but in the same text she is designated as a "Gandharian woman" (URU *Ga-an-da-ru-i-tum*). A slave woman with the same name was sold in Sippar in 512 BCE (Pinches, p. 104), but she is mentioned as a "Bactrian woman" (URU *Ba-ah-tar-ú –iʾ-i-ti*). Apparently, they were different individuals. Thus, during the Achaemenid period, Iranians acted in Mesopotamia as contracting parties, witnesses of various routine transactions, officials of the royal administration, soldiers, and military officials, as well as private individuals. The mixing of their personal names to a certain degree was due to intermarriages. For instance, a certain Gambia, daughter of Parnakka, who apparently was an Iranian, married a man with typical Babylonian name, Zērūtu (*VAS* V, no. 101; Dandamayev, 1992, p. 71). In another case, the Persian Mitradāta married in Nippur the Babylonian girl Esagil-bēlit, daughter of Bēl-ittannu, and their son bore the Iranian name Bagamīri (*BE* IX, no. 48; Dandamayev, 1992, pp. 57, 172). During the reign of Darius I, the references to Iranian names in Babylonia grew considerably, and in the fifth century BCE these became exceptionally large (see Zadok, 1977, pp. 107, 125). It is difficult, however, to distinguish between Median, Persian, Chorasmian, and other Iranian names, since these tribes used the same names and spoke related languages.

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