

Melammu
Workshops and
Monographs

6



The Persian World and Beyond

Achaemenid and Arsacid Studies
in Honour of Bruno Jacobs

Edited by Mark B. Garrison
and Wouter F.M. Henkelman

Zaphon

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Volume 6

Edited by
Sebastian Fink and Robert Rollinger

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Illustration on the cover: Bisotun, figure in the winged disk;
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The Persian World and Beyond. Achaemenid and Arsacid Studies in Honour
of Bruno Jacobs

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Medes and Iranian identity in the Achaemenid social imaginary

The Persepolis Apadana

Margaret Cool Root (Ann Arbor)

1. Preface

This study revisits an article I submitted in 2008 to the *Festschrift* for the late A. Shapur Shahbazi.¹ Here, I work with the same substantive topic. But I have updated the literature and expanded the scope and theoretical framework of discourse. I am delighted thus to bring elements my original offering to the memory of Professor Shahbazi into the honorific orbit of Professor Jacobs. Bruno Jacobs and I have shared (together with Professor Shahbazi) an interest in exploring the meanings and visual strategies of ethnic citation in Achaemenid art. May this fresh contemplation on the Medes celebrate Bruno's prolific contributions to our field, with eager anticipation of more to come!

2. Introduction: large issues, intertwined terms of discourse

2.1. Achaemenid art and the Apadana

The term 'Achaemenid art' here specifically characterizes the official representational tradition designed to express and to reinforce an ideology of empire canonized under Darius I (*r.* 522–486 BCE; Root 1979: 1). We can most comprehensively strive to discern its codes and aims from the heartland capital city of Persepolis with its neighbouring royal necropolis at Naqš-e Rostam.

The lavishly embellished Apadana on the Persepolis Takht was planned and mostly completed in the reign of Darius (fig. 1).² As an entirety, it represents an historical moment-in-empire of both attainment and potential. The codification of Achaemenid ideology and art at this time had to establish conditions for a hegemonic order after an explosive inaugural period of empire-wide unrest.³ With one eye on large-scale ambitions of imperial maintenance and expansion, Darius had his other eye on matters closer to home. There has been learned debate on the

¹ Root [in press]. Due to pervasive ripple effects of U.S. financial sanctions on Iran, the printing of that volume remains in limbo despite the best efforts of its editor, Kamyar Abdi. I thank another friend and colleague, Robert Rollinger, for encouraging me to develop the topic further and for offering stimulating conversation on possibilities during our co-residency at the Getty Research Institute.

² See Root 1979: 86–95, arguing for the Apadana as a structure that was well underway, with sculptural program set before the death of Darius; Root 1988, on the Apadana foundation deposit and the dating of the beginning of construction.

³ Explained from Darius's perspective in his Bisotun text (DB) and relief. See Kuhrt 2007: 135–77; Root 1979: 58–61, 182–226; Root 2013.

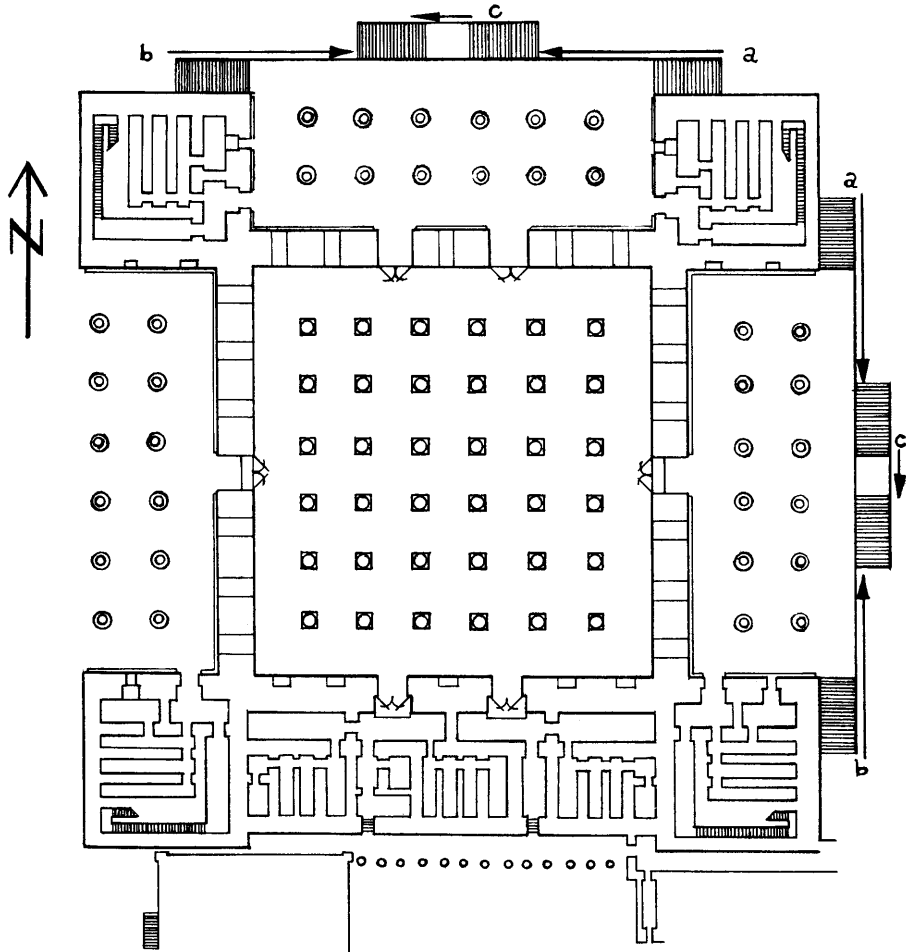


Fig. 1: Plan of the Apadana (after Root 1979: 87, fig. 10); a = Wing A, royal Persian nobles and royal equerries with horses and chariots; b = Wing B, 23 non-Persian gift-bearing delegations; c = original Central Panel: king and crown prince receive bowing official.

degree to which the reign of Darius represented a radical rupture with the line of Cyrus.⁴ This issue (among many others) has been elucidated by the quantitatively enormous and qualitatively rich evidence from the Persepolis Fortification archive (PFA) dating to 509–493 BCE in the reign of Darius, as will unfold throughout my paper. Deep cultural ties between Cyrus-Cambyses and Darius are now

⁴ From a specialist Iranist perspective, Rossi 2016, for instance, analytically reviews variant nuances in the three languages of the Bisotun monument relating to Darius's stated intention to restore what had been disrupted.

better understood.⁵ Darius enhanced this legacy by assiduously nurturing alliances. His marriage to Irtašduna (Gk. Artystone), a daughter of Cyrus and a former sister-wife of Cambyses, is one index of his attunement to the strategic importance of cultivating blood-bonds to the previous regime.⁶ He also tended to relationships within a wider set of concentric circles of notional family – from the Persian nobles who helped him rebuild in the wake of the early insurrections, outward. Thus, on one hand, Darius channelled cultural legacies and associations connecting his Persian-ness with its longstanding embeddedness in Elamite experience. On the other hand, he channelled associations within a large Iranian family to which Persians themselves belonged – along with the Medes.

Achaemenid art was a powerful tool in this complex endeavour. What, we will contemplate here as our overarching intent, can the portrayal of the Medes on the Apadana contribute to our understanding of the processes of cultural negotiation of imperial-family ties undertaken in the age of Darius?

By the time the Apadana was being planned, the imperial domain had achieved unprecedented physical reach. The trilingual text (DPh) inscribed on numinous gold and silver foundation plaques deposited at corners of the Apadana substructure anchored literal corners of the audience hall in terms of symbolic corners of an Achaemenid world.⁷ While stating military accomplishments as *faits accomplis*, these deposits did not imply hard boundaries with finite edges either geographically or conceptually.⁸ They alluded to soft, permeable frontiers of expansive possibility.⁹

In dialogue with its foundation rhetoric, the Apadana superstructure expressed resolution of outward-directed energy – with the economic, social, and geopolitical promise of empire funnelling inward to the centre. Furthermore, the portrayal of king and crown prince together as receivers of this imperial good on the original central panels of the Apadana facades openly projected the stability of the Achaemenid Persian royal line onto the future. Darius had designated Xerxes as his successor in order to ensure this.¹⁰

⁵ From different disciplinary perspectives see, e.g., Jacobs 2011 and Henkelman 2011.

⁶ The PFA explicates Irtašduna's ongoing significance in the royal household and beyond. See Henkelman 2010 on her estates; Henkelman 2011 on Darius's marriage to her; Garrison & Root 2001: 83–85 cat.no. 16 for her seal (PFS 0038); and Root 2021 for a detailed iconographical analysis.

⁷ See Root 1988, esp. 41–43 and Root 2015, fig. 1, on rhetorical charges of the medium and the message of DPh and its material packaging.

⁸ Herrenschmidt 2014 sheds light on this as a *spiritualized* ethos.

⁹ Emphasizing the importance of this feature of the Achaemenid imperial vision: Rollinger 2013; Khatchadourian 2016: 120–22; Dusinberre 2016: 122.

¹⁰ The south-door doorjamb reliefs of the Palace of Darius display a robed royal figure with garment pleats inscribed on the west jamb with the king's name and on the other jamb with the name of Xerxes as son of Darius (Root 1979: 83–86).

Simultaneously, achievements in administrative structure were myriad. The PFA constituted a commodities disbursement apparatus curated and held in Persepolis for its regional network. It was only one of many that kept a well-oiled machinery of process in place empire-wide.¹¹ Data from PFA texts, seals, and sealing praxis combine to produce game-changing studies on personnel (often named and designated by function and activity), intra- and inter-regional travel and connectivity, systems of governance, social economy, cultural practices, bureaucratic institutions, and interrelated traditions in visual culture.¹² The archive is a particularly important asset taken in tandem with the layered *symbolic* intentionality of Achaemenid art, because it conveys laconic reports on mundane transactions. Although these transactions often record information that illuminates courtly practices of cult, religious ritual, and social status performance, they are not, in themselves, vehicles of spiritual, social, or ideological messaging.

2.2. A social imaginary

In order to contemplate the ambitions of this moment-in-empire and its programmatic mandate (particularly as it relates to the Medes), we situate Achaemenid art within studies of the ‘social imaginary.’ This term was coined by Cornelius Castoriadis in a 1964 paper on Marxist theory, which he subsequently expanded into a fully developed treatise.¹³ Its conceptual underpinnings have been adapted for use in many other fields – from sociology and anthropology to psychoanalysis.¹⁴ As Castoriadis himself characterized it, a social imaginary solves a “functional problem” of self definition:

Every society up to now has attempted to give an answer to a few fundamental questions: Who are we as a collectivity? What are we for one another? Where and in what are we? What do we want; what do we desire; what are we lacking? Society must define its ‘identity,’ its articulation, the world, its relations to the world and to the objects it contains, its needs and

¹¹ Briant 2012 and Colburn 2013a synthesize and interpret data on the roads and messaging system that traversed the empire, with significant implications for social as well as military communication. This system symbolically as well as practically made manifest the notion of hegemonic connectivity.

¹² See Briant, Henkelman & Stolper (eds.) 2008 for trends in this scholarship to that date. Numerous specialized works on the PFA are cited throughout this paper.

¹³ Castoriadis 1987 is the English version of the original 1975 French edition of this lengthy monograph.

¹⁴ Castoriadis (1987: 2f.) expresses frustration over ways in which his term has been adapted, while Taylor (2004: 23–30) provides an accessible overview of scholarship on the social imaginary. Benedict Anderson’s seminal work on imagined communities in the framework of modern colonialism in Southeast Asia (1991 [revision of the 1983 edition]) is also useful as a model for experimenting with ways of thinking about the Achaemenid project.

its desires. Without the ‘answer’ to these ‘questions,’ without these ‘definitions,’ there can be no human world, no society, no culture – for everything would be an undifferentiated chaos. The role of imaginary significations is to provide an answer to these questions, an answer that, obviously, neither ‘reality,’ nor ‘rationality’ can provide ... (Castoriadis 1987: 146–47)

The Achaemenid “functional problem” (in Castoriadis’s terms) was the court’s perceived need to create a vision of empire that departed radically from prototypes of blatantly depicted economic or military domination offered by the powerful legacies of imperial Assyria and Egypt. Otherwise, why would these readily accessible paradigms not simply have been perpetuated?

Achaemenid art was, in essence, a response to this imperative. It created a social imaginary that defined and reinforced the Who and the What of a new empire as a collective enterprise. Indeed, an important feature of the monumental sculptural programs of Persepolis and Naqš-e Rostam is a tensional synergy enlivening notions of ethnically *individuated* peoples who participate in projects of *collectively* defined imperial community. These visualizations share ideals purveyed through rhetorical tropes of royal inscriptions.¹⁵ At the same time, however, different texts and images often offer distinctive inflections of these ideals.

One variation on this theme appears in representations of the ruler reverentially raised on high by personifications (sometimes bearing carved ethnic labels) of all the lands of the empire (fig. 2).¹⁶ Another (our principal focus here) appears on the extended relief system of the Apadana, where delegations from 23 non-Persian peoples of the empire are poised to offer gifts of praise to the Persian king (fig. 3).¹⁷ Both motifs present geopolitical visions of hegemonic world order met-

¹⁵ The Babylonian inscription (DPg) inscribed on the south wall of the Persepolis Takht is particularly apt, as it describes an empire pieced together out of all kinds of people from regions near and far with different topographies and landscapes, speaking all kinds of languages (Schmidt 1953: 63; Lecoq 1997: 229f.). Delshad 2019 offers fresh insights on the sacral valence of the messaging. This factor enhances the power of the one-out-of-many imperial paradigm. Compare Root 1990, esp. 116–20, suggesting that this same concept is reflected metaphorically in the polygonal masonry style of the Takht.

¹⁶ This imagery of the king on high appears on the tomb facades of Darius and his successors and selected doorjamb reliefs of the Central Building and the Hall of 100 Columns. See Kuhrt 2007: 500 (fig. 11.14), 502–5. For full photographic documentation of the tomb facades of Darius and his successors see Schmidt 1970: 80–90, 108–88, pls. 18–39. The motif is presented in Egyptian mode on the base of the Egyptian-made Statue of Darius from Susa (Roaf 1974; Root 1979: 131–61). See Root 1979: 68–72, 72–76, 95–100, 105–8 with figs. 10, 12, 15 for diagrams showing placement of the architectural reliefs displaying the king-on-high.

¹⁷ See Schmidt 1953: 70–106, pls. 15–61 for the 1930s excavation documentation and photographic dossier of all the delegate groups. This dossier is critical because Schmidt shows both the north and the east facade representations. Cf. Tilia 1972: 125–208 on the

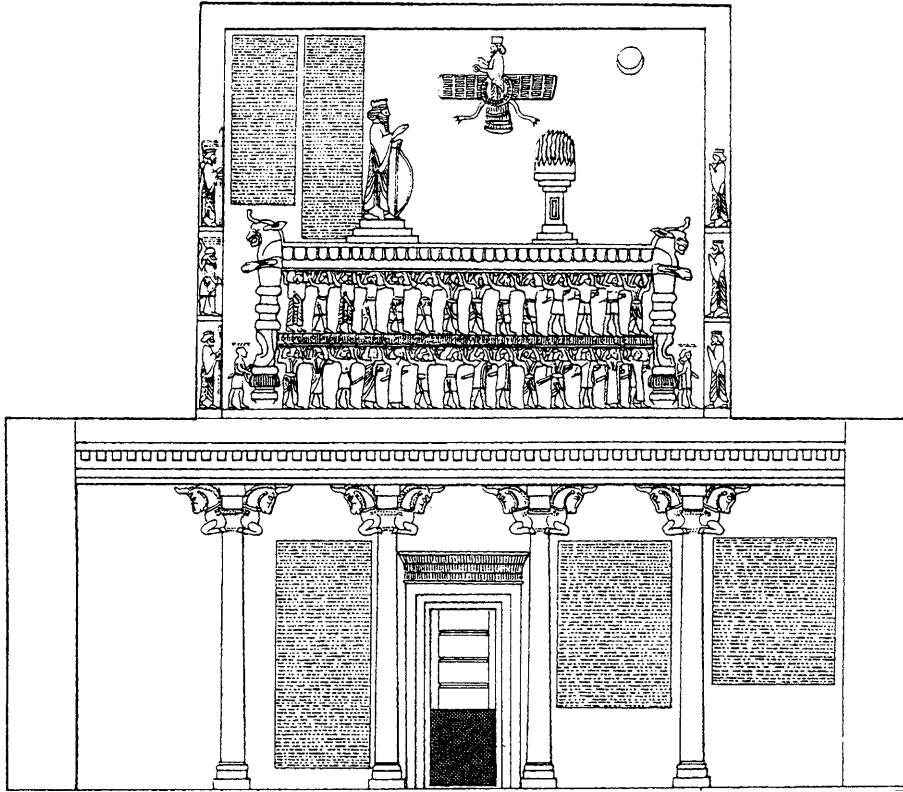


Fig. 2: Drawing of the tomb of Darius (adapted from Kuhrt 2007, fig. 11.14).

aphorically, as symbolically-coded performances of pious communal rituals of sacral kingship.¹⁸ The varied elements of their semantic fields furnished a toolkit of visual, material, and experiential cues that were deployed widely in official Achaemenid art across the empire and also adaptively emulated in satrapal courts negotiating myriad regional traditions and responses (Rehm 2013). These cues were also adapted to non-official registers of social expression embraced by indi-

original Apadana central panels.

¹⁸ See Root 1979: 131–61 on the cosmic background and symbolic meaning of the Achaemenid sculptural depictions of throne bearers. The sacral component of the motif of the king raised on high has been analysed by Helen Dixon (2009), with reference to its inflection in Biblical poetics and Judaeon performative practices under Persian rule. Garrison 2017 explores ways in which the imagery of upliftedness on the royal tombs is echoed more abstractly in a dossier of seal iconography used on Persepolis administrative documents that often relate to religious practices. See Root 1979: 227–84 on metaphorical constructs of the Apadana reliefs; Root 2013 and Root 2015 on dynamics of sacral kingship in Achaemenid art and the Persepolitan built landscape. Formal relationships between depictions of god and king in Achaemenid art have been the subject of extensive scholarship from diverse perspectives (see, e.g., Jacobs 2017).

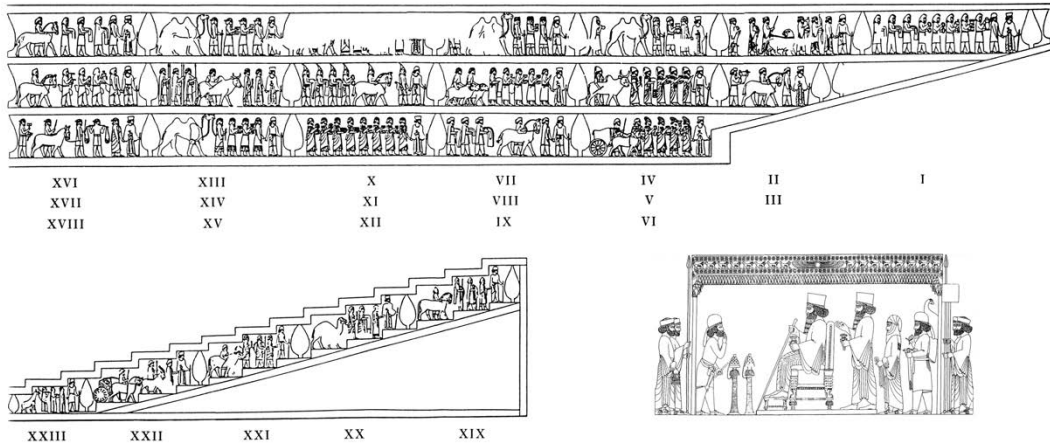


Fig. 3a (right): Reconstructed drawing of the Apadana: original Central Panel East (adapted from Tilia 1972, fig. 3); fig. 3b: simplified drawing of the 23 delegate groups on the Apadana, Wing B East (adapted from Koch 1993: 116).

viduals operating in specific regional settings.¹⁹

Most scholarship on the Apadana reliefs (and particularly on the 23 non-Perian delegate groups) has centred on tactics of ethnic differentiation in order to establish their discrete individuated identifications in a static taxonomic sense. Since the recovery of the well-preserved delegate groups of the east facade in the early 1930s and up to the present, this approach has yielded important insights (see §5.1 below).

My approach here is hugely indebted to all this work. While I depend upon it, I do not pretend to add to it *per se*. Instead, I ask questions and suggest possible resolutions in aid of pondering the conceptual weight of ethnic identity on the Apadana with the Medes as my looking glass.

2.3. Ethnicity and identity

‘Ethnicity’ and ‘identity’ are fraught and intertwined terms, carrying heavy historiographical baggage. Both exist along a discursive continuum from genetic indexing to societal construction.

Walter Pohl addresses ethnicity in sweeping well-annotated analyses centred substantively in late antique and early modern European historical studies. Use of the term is particularly problematic because of legacies of 20th century politics. Thus, he urges transparency. Each scholar should try to be self-reflective (see, e.g., Pohl 2018, esp. 31–34). From my vantage point across a still young 21st century, the weaponizing of ethnicity has determined the immigration politics of many nations, none more so than my own U.S.A. Based on this particular abysmal

¹⁹ Jacobs 2002; Jacobs 2010; Colburn 2013b; Root 2022.

track record (among others), I value considering ways in which our scholarly traditions have imposed upon Achaemenid art modern motivational assumptions about ethnicity that may essentialize Achaemenid intent to the point of misconstruing it. Addressing this historiographic issue will be the first tactical aim of my paper in aid of its larger topic.

Patrick Geary traces and interprets the idea of identity in Western thought as it has mutated through use in various disciplines from theology to psychiatry, to sociology and political science, and into cultural studies (Geary 2018). He stresses the importance of a mindfulness that ‘identity’ signifies a *kinetic process* of cultural negotiation. It is different from and more than an imposed classificatory identification.

Many of us today within pluralistic societies take negotiations of personal and group identity as a given in our lived experiences. This reality is now widely recognized in contemporary popular commentary as well as in academic discourse. Along these lines, scholarship on individuals within the Achaemenid Empire increasingly considers the significance of identity-in-empire as a process of cultural negotiation.²⁰

Thus, a second tactical aim of my paper is to explore features of identity construction on the Apadana that reveal an official programmatic vision of imperial identity. This vision, I will argue, plays out as a fluid, kinetic, experiential social imaginary. In this imaginary, the Medes emerge as pivotal – but not in the ways that our academic tradition has typically suggested. Their differentiated identification, as an end in itself, will cede primacy to considerations of their constructed identity as players within a larger imaginal collective of Iranian identity.²¹

2.4. Persians and Iranians

‘Persians’ refers to the Indo-European people who came to inhabit Fars/Parsa in southwestern Iran. The ancient Persians were part of a larger community of Iranian peoples. This can be confusing, since ‘Iran’ and ‘Iranian’ often refer in our contemporary parlance to the modern nation state – the Islamic Republic of Iran. The concept of an ancient Iranian identity is an important feature of Achaemenid imperial ideology, as this paper will explore. The word *arya-* in Old Persian inscriptions connoted “Iranian” by the time of Darius (Kellens 2005). It raises dif-

²⁰ Colburn 2020b, esp. 59–61 examines multi-faceted and contingent identity construction(s) expressed through a personal commission of inscribed statuary by Udjahorresnet, an administrative figure in late Saite and then Achaemenid Period Egypt. In Anatolia, the system of self-representation devised for the temple-tomb (the so-called Nereid Monument) of the Lycian ruler, Erbinna (Gk. Arbinas), is also exemplary. See Dusinberre 2013: 199–201 and Dusinberre 2016: 135 for commentary on its sculptural iconography in the context of negotiated identity.

²¹ I am indebted to Moorey 1985 for its inspiring ideas on the significance of Iranian traditions in the formulation of Achaemenid art.

ficulties because of modern associations of ‘Aryan.’ As a term and a concept ‘Aryan’ featured notoriously in the eugenics propaganda of National-Socialist Germany (Wiesehöfer 1988; Wiesehöfer 1990). It is crucial for us to disassociate the notion of Iranian-ness as we discuss it within the ideology of the Achaemenid Empire from these modern overlays.

3. Median matters

Traditional notions of the Medes were determined on the basis of Classical and Biblical testimonia, where tropes took hold and gained widespread acceptance in antiquity and thence in modern scholarship. The *medikos logos* of Herodotus (I.95–106) has been especially influential. Reflecting its pervasive impact, most experts into the last quarter of the 20th century accepted a primary core doctrine on Median power before Cyrus’s initial consolidation of a Persian empire: a) the Medes had achieved cultural and military dominance over the Persians; and b) the Medes in fact had built up an expansive empire of which the Persians were vassal subjects.

3.1. Medes and Media before Cyrus

The nature and the extent of this Median power – including the validity of considering it an empire at all – have now been examined critically from various disciplinary and theoretical angles.²²

Field archaeology has played a role here. Neo-Assyrian royal annals described attacks on Median fortified settlements in the NW Zagros. Archaeologists in the second half of the 20th century worked with these records in order to locate sites that might plausibly (if not definitively) be identified as ‘Median’ from their geographical position. The results were profoundly significant in many ways, although none of the sites yielded grand palatial/administrative establishments to affirm the claims of Herodotus.²³

²² See, e.g., Helm 1981; Brown 1988; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1988; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1994; Kienast 1999; Briant 2002: 909–10; Henkelman 2003; Rollinger 2003a; Rollinger 2003b; Rollinger 2008; Rollinger 2020; Steele 2003 [2007]; Tuplin 2004; Waters 2005; Waters 2011a; Wiesehöfer 2003; Zournatzi 2013; Rossi 2017; Bernbeck 2019: 5–8. Herrenschmidt 2014 seems, however, to remain committed to her earlier position (1976) that the Persians under Darius were reliant upon Median administrative expertise – seen as a legacy of former Median rule over the Persians.

²³ Iron Age sites in the vicinity of Hamadan include Hasanlu, Baba Jan, Godin Tepe, and Nuš-e Jan. See Stronach & Roaf 2007: 43–57 for a short recent review of excavation projects aimed at elucidating Median culture in this area; Gopnik & Rothman 2011, esp. 285–364 on Godin II. On problems of an archaeology of the Median heartland, from varied perspectives and for varied readerships see, e.g., Genito 1986; Roaf 1995; Rossi 2017 (a stringent analysis of challenges in determining what is a Median place, esp. at n. 478); Bernbeck 2019: 5–8.

Ecbatana, situated strategically along the east-west trunk route through the Zagros in northwestern Iran, may well have been the operational and administrative hub of Median power (in whatever form that power manifested). Herodotus considered it the centre of Median imperial domain. It certainly became a regional seat of governance in the Achaemenid Empire. Unfortunately, it lies under the modern city of Hamadan; scientific excavations have necessarily been spatially restricted. Iranian efforts have revealed extensive remains within this circumscribed zone; but so far, they post-date the period of presumed Median domination.²⁴ Portable objects said to have come from Hamadan (whether ‘Median’ or ‘Achaemenid’) raise many difficulties relating to the antiquities trade and forgery studios – both capitalizing on the cachet of Hamadan as a Median capital and then an Achaemenid satrapal seat.²⁵

The Median language also remains elusive. We do not have any authentic Median texts (Schmitt 2003; Rossi 2010). No written record (in any language) designating it as a Median place has been retrieved archaeologically and under controlled circumstances at one of the excavated sites that actually designates it as a Median place.

To date, there is not even a secure sense from archaeological evidence of the approximate *extent* of what might be termed a Median heartland – a core territory occupied by ethnic Medes in the Iron Age Zagros – as the Medes themselves might have defined its physical parameters in the time before the Persian Empire of Cyrus (Rollinger 2003b; Potts 2014: 75–77). At one end of the spectrum of current debate, Bernbeck implies scepticism that a Median heartland even existed: “*If there is any geographic reality to a region belonging to the Medes, it is the area around modern Hamadan, ancient Ecbatana, in western Iran*” (Bernbeck 2019: 8; emphasis mine). This extremely reductive position provocatively demonstrates how much of our conventional wisdom is based on assumptions. At the other end of the spectrum, Tuplin strives to look positively at what we *do* have archaeologically and through the Classical testimonia (now read with attention to their evidentiary frailties) that might lay the groundwork for fresh appraisal.²⁶

For all the definitiveness of tradition about the importance and nature of the Medes in relation to the Persians, both before and during the Achaemenid Empire,

²⁴ See iranohellenica.eie.gr/content/catalogue/hamadan-ecbatana/reports. The lack of excavated Median evidence under these circumstances does not prove a lack of Median occupation. Although palatial Achaemenid satrapal installations are known to have existed there, the restricted capacity to dismantle the modern occupation also means that even the Achaemenid presence is represented archaeologically as yet only through indicative but vestigial remnants (as, e.g., a royally inscribed column base).

²⁵ The status of unexcavated portable artifacts of Median/Achaemenid type including those that are ‘said to have come from Hamadan’ must be considered suspect (see Muscarella 1980; Muscarella 1987; Muscarella 1994; Muscarella 2000; Gunter & Root 1998).

²⁶ See Tuplin 2004 and Curtis 2005a (from a Near Eastern archaeology perspective).

our grasp of them remains tenuous. Significantly, though, evidence from the PFA texts and seals is now illuminating the backdrop of complex cultural exchanges and relationships in the earlier 1st millennium BCE, when Medes and Persians had already been embedded in the dynamics of western Iran. They increasingly clarify that Persian acculturation in Fars had, for generations, been complexly enmeshed with Elam and its cultural institutions. The pre-eminence of the Medes in relation to the Persians in the run-up to the Achaemenid Empire is not borne out by this primary source material.²⁷

3.2. Medes and Media in the Achaemenid Empire

Following from the primary doctrine of pre-Cyrus Median imperial dominance was a correlate doctrine applied to the Achaemenid period: a) the Medes enjoyed special honorific status in recognition of their past power over the Persians and their still charismatic cultural prestige; b) the Medes and Persians were symbolically fused in Achaemenid imperial thought as co-equal elites. Compelling analysis suggests, however, that in Classical and Biblical texts ‘Medes’ and ‘Persians’ were used interchangeably *not* as a reflection of socio-political actuality. Rather, the conjoining of Medes and Persians was a literary trope inspired at least in part by the reductive stereotyping of Achaemenid court society.²⁸

Although some references to Medes and Media exist, the PFA evidence does not support the idea of the Median people collectively as co-equal power-sharers with the Persians in the social and administrative practices of rulership in Achaemenid times.²⁹ Furthermore, while PFA dossiers provide a clear sense of the geographical parameters of the Persepolis/Parsa catchment area, the archive cannot do the same for the catchment area of a Median heartland within the Achaemenid system during the reign of Darius. Alas, we do not at present have an archive recovered from Achaemenid Ecbatana – functionally parallel to the PFA but based in the Median satrapal capital. We do, however, have abundant indicators of the importance of the place as a key administrative node (Henkelman 2017: 129–35, 143–49, 195–202).

As his satrap in Media at the beginning of his reign, Darius installed one of the seven trusted Persian allies who had figured prominently in quelling insurrections in Media (DB II §25; V §68): Vidarna (El. Miturna; Gk. Hydarnes). We witness him via the PFA as he returns to Media from Parsa/Persepolis. He issues orders directly on behalf of the king and receives people who travel specifically to meet with him en route (Azzoni & Dusinberre 2014: 7). The assignment of such

²⁷ See, e.g., Garrison 2011; Garrison 2013: 567–69. Various approaches to these matters include Rollinger 1999; Potts 1999: 306–7, 346; Miroschedji 2003; Stronach 2003: 258; Henkelman 2011.

²⁸ See Tuplin 1994 and Tuplin 2003 on many aspects of the tropic fusion of Medes and Persians; also Rollinger 2003a: 319 and n. 141.

²⁹ See Henkelman 2003 on Medes in the PFA texts; cf. Waters 2005.

a key figure as Miturna to the Median satrapy suggests the importance of maintaining a keen administrative eye on it through a Persian noble with battle-tested loyalty to the king. This glimpse of Darius's real-world strategies in satrap selection (not least with Miturna in Media) is now richly contextualized through deep analyses of the PFA (Henkelman 2020: 206–12 and *passim*).

3.3. Medes across the Apadana: Unpacking legacies

The now largely neutralized *text*-based Classical and Biblical trope of a cultural fusion and power-sharing between Medes and Persians during the Achaemenid Empire has left an enduring mark on the *visual* reading of Achaemenid art. On the Apadana and other buildings where figures in procession appear, those wearing the garment of narrow-sleeved belted tunic, footed leggings, and sometimes a long-sleeved coat have been characterized as Medes. Figures shown wearing the pleated robe with long, wide sleeves have been characterized as Persians (fig. 4).³⁰



Fig. 4: Apadana, Wing A East: detail of nobles in alternating garment types (photo M.C. Root).

³⁰ Schmidt 1953, for instance, consistently referred to any figure in the tunic and leggings as a Mede. Further complicating the terminological problem, several early interpretive studies (see, e.g., Dalton 1964, originally published in 1905; Walser 1966) referred to the wide-sleeved, pleated robe as ‘the Median garment’ because they were adopting confusing allusions to the garment in Classical texts that refer to ‘the Persians’ as ‘the Mede.’

Interpretations of the vision expressed on the Apadana reliefs depend upon how we understand which figures represent Medes across the entire representational system. If any figure wearing this tunic-and-leggings ensemble is by definition a Mede, the doctrine of co-equal Medes and Persians is summarily affirmed:

1. The official bowing before the enthroned king in the original central panel of each facade must be a *Median* courtier because of his garment. This then ‘proves’ that Medes occupied positions of high prestige and particularly close access to the king (fig. 5).

2. On Wing A, the courtiers lined up behind the king must be alternating Medes and Persians of equal and intertwined status because the two alternating garments show this. Their interactive proximity, as depicted on the reliefs, thus highlights even more the social inseparability of Medes and Persians in the Achaemenid Empire (fig. 6).

3. On Wing B, the ushers poised to bring each delegate group into the presence of the king must be alternating Medes and Persians because their alternating garments dictate this. Here again, is ‘proof’ that Medes served the court as trusted functionaries of equal and interchangeable stature with Persians (fig. 7).³¹



Fig. 5: Treasury Court 17: original Central Panel East from the Apadana (photo M.C. Root).

Refutations of this formulaic reading have shifted the terms of engagement now in much scholarship on Achaemenid visual and material culture. Shahbazi and I argued independently many years ago, for instance, that the so-called Median garment and the pleated robe in a given representational context were (on a first

³¹ Other sculptures on the Takht that have been read as presenting this co-equal mingling include the reliefs on the west wing of the north stair of the Council Hall / Central Building (Schmidt 1953, pls. 62–74) and the reliefs on the north doors of the Throne Hall / Hall of 100 Columns (Schmidt 1953, pls. 96–101).

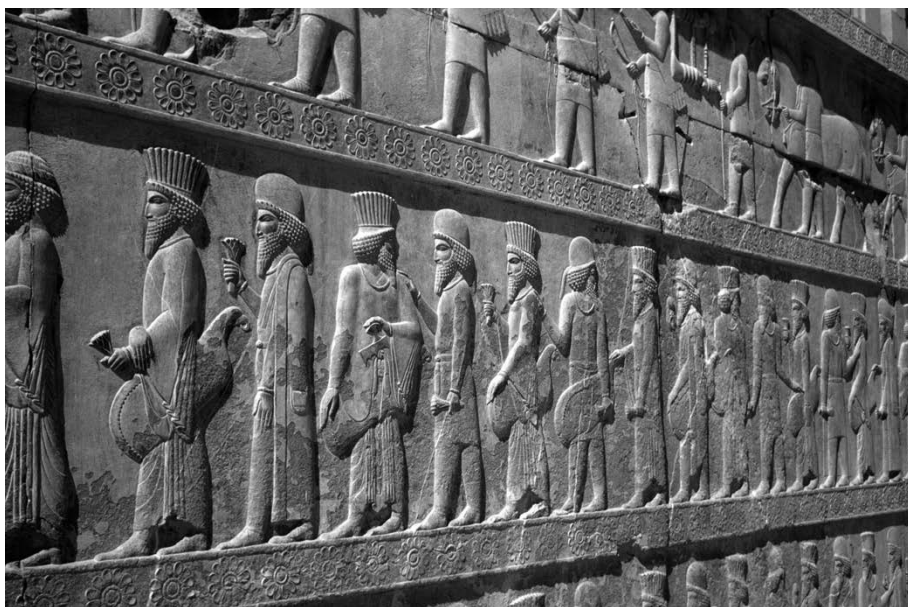


Fig. 6: Apadana, Wing B East: nobles awaiting ceremony
(photo M.C. Root).

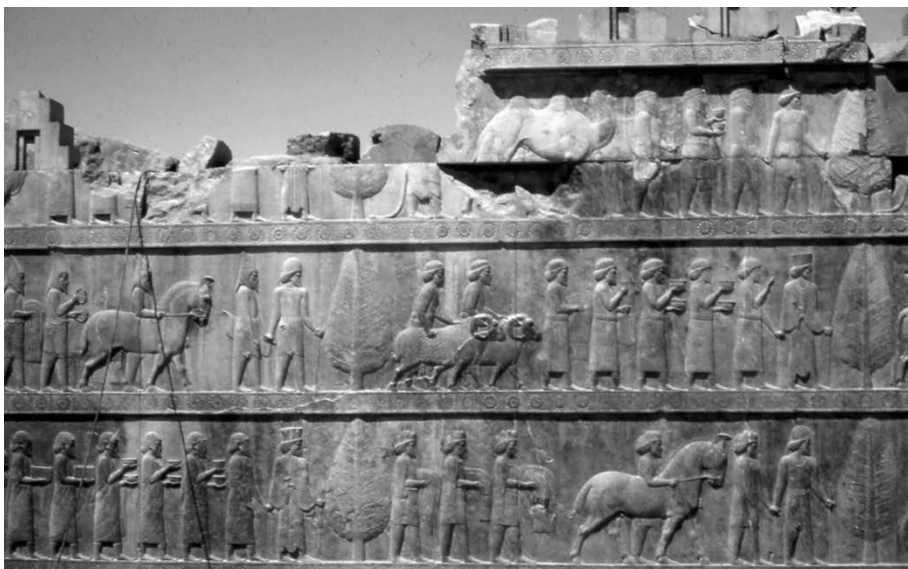


Fig. 7: Apadana, Wing B East: delegate groups VII–XII with ushers
(photo M.C. Root).

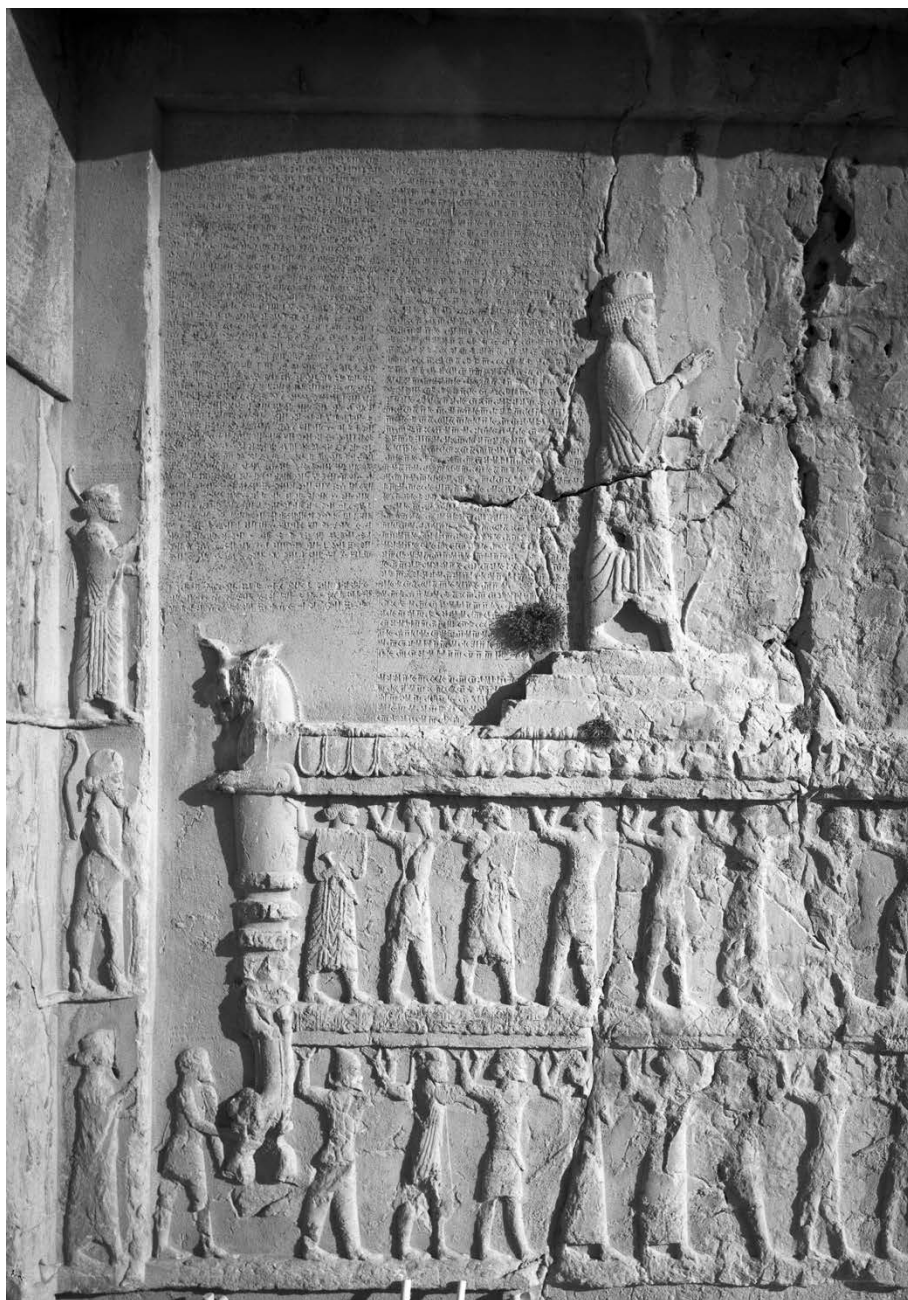


Fig. 8: Tomb of Darius, Naqš-e Rostam, detail: Gaubaruva/Gobryas (top) and Ašbazana/Aspathines (middle) flanking the main panel of the façade (photo courtesy Oriental Institute, University of Chicago).

level) signifiers of a figure's social function or activity within the imperial enterprise. The distinct garments referenced military/equestrian and courtly/administrative associations.³² Underlying those social functions cited by the garments, lay references to factors of deep-seated ethnic association as well.

One important indicator of this revised first-level understanding based on a functional paradigm is a pair of captioned figures on the facade of the Tomb of Darius (fig. 8). An eminent Persian man, Ašbazana (Gk. Aspathines), is shown wearing the tunic-and-leggings.³³ He is depicted here with specific intentionality in his military/equestrian capacity as an honoured weapon bearer of the royal courtège (DNd).³⁴ In other contexts of actuality or representation, he might have worn the pleated robe.³⁵ The figure of a lance bearer on the same facade is labelled Gaubaruva (Gk. Gobryas), "... lance bearer of King Darius" (DNc). Gobryas is another of the six named Persian nobles who helped Darius stabilize the empire. Darius states, for instance, that Gobryas crushed Elam (DB V §71). He played key roles in state affairs going forward (Schmidt 1970: 86, pl. 23; Briant 2002: 107–8 and *passim*). On the tomb facade, Gobryas wears the Persian robe. Although he does hold a weapon, he represents a courtly function here rather than a military/equestrian one. Duties of titled lancemen, as gleaned now from the PFA, were part of the critical administrative apparatus closely connected to the king himself and to the functional oversight of links within the royal domain (Henkelman 2002, esp. 20–22, 30).

The understanding that citations of function were referenced in the use-patterns of the two garments has now been widely (but not universally) accepted in Achaemenid studies.³⁶ Nevertheless, the tunic-and-leggings ensemble is still

³² See extensive discussion in Root 1979 (striving to reconfigure terms of the debate), esp. 349 (for index listing of 'Iranian riding costume'); see also Shahbazi 1979 (abstract of a conference paper). Early on, Moorey 1980 also acknowledged difficulties with the traditional characterization by placing 'Medes' in quotation marks. Moorey 1985 highlights the Iranian factor as the defining feature of this garment as opposed to a Median factor *per se*.

³³ See Schmidt 1970: 86, pls. 19, 22, 24–25. Roaf 1974: 101 n. 95 noted the problem presented by this characterization of Ašbazana's garment as 'Median.'

³⁴ For commentary see Root 1979, e.g., 73–74, 277, 279–82. On the status and importance of Ašbazana in historical sources and particularly in the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury archives see Garrison 1998.

³⁵ The two sequential seals of Ašbazana, PFS 1567* and PTS 14* (Garrison 1998, figs. 1, 4), do not depict the man literally, in the kind of documentary personhood-portrait mode we see on the Tomb of Darius. Rather, their imagery situates the human forms within a symbolic representational sphere.

³⁶ In her descriptions, Heidemarie Koch (Koch 1992; Koch 1993; Koch 2001) has consistently offered correctives to the traditional reading. Brentjes 1993 has emphasized that the riding costume related to widespread Iranian equestrian traditions rather than to Medes specifically. Jacobs 1994: 140–44 has also urged that we adjust our understanding based

called ‘the Median garment’ in some scholarly contexts. This may frequently reflect the desirability of an academic shorthand when word-count is paramount.³⁷ Equally relevant is the power lodged in significant documentary publications of enduring and deserved stature, such as Schmidt’s Persepolis excavation volumes.³⁸ A further regressive power lies in the potential for resurrection of the entire outdated interpretive package by a particularly authoritative and influential voice. Thus, for instance, a statement by the distinguished Iranist, Richard Frye: “The Bible speaks of the Medes and the Persians as one ruling group, which is confirmed by the reliefs of the two at Persepolis” (Frye 2005: 121; cf., similarly, Razmjou 2005).

3.4. The tunic-and-leggings before Darius

The riding costume *precisely* as it appears in Achaemenid art cannot be identified in representations of either Medes or Persians in the palace reliefs of Assyrian kings chronicling their raids to the east. But Zagros peoples shown bringing tribute on the walls of Corridor 10 of the palace at Khorsabad in the reign of Sargon II (721–5 BCE) do wear a costume that similarly reflects an active, non-sedentary lifestyle: a rather long tunic with an animal-fur cape and high, laced boots (fig. 9).³⁹ These figures are not labelled specifically as Medes, although the identification is plausible.⁴⁰ Some representations on unexcavated artifacts render a garment close to what we see on the Apadana. They have been called examples of ‘Median art’ representing Medes – produced before the fall of the Assyrian Empire. These images cannot, however, be proven to date this early; nor can their association with any Iron Age Median production or citational intent be established archaeologically.⁴¹

on the visual evidence. Stronach 2011 supports the revised position but is confusing in apparent lack of awareness of the legacy of already-published correctives. Garrison 2013: 578 comments succinctly that application of the term ‘Median garment’ to the tunic-and-leggings is “modern and erroneous.”

³⁷ Thus for instance, image captions on the 2020 Oriental Institute photo archive website perpetuate the old terminology: oi.chicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/Persepolis/.

³⁸ See Schmidt 1953; Schmidt 1957; Schmidt 1970. Schmidt’s volumes are critical and must continue to be consulted by new generations; but left un-annotated (and readily accessible through the laudable digital initiatives of the Oriental Institute), the old trope lives on.

³⁹ See, e.g., Louvre AO 19887: Amiet 1980, fig. 611; André-Salvini 1995, figs. 2–3.

⁴⁰ Roaf 1995, 61 considers it probable. Exactly what geographical localities the Assyrians considered Median is critical here; see Radner 2003; Rossi 2010; Rossi 2017.

⁴¹ See, e.g., on pieces from the so-called ‘Oxus Treasure’ Dalton 1964, pls. 14–15. The evidentiary problems posed by this particular material are severe: Muscarella 2003.

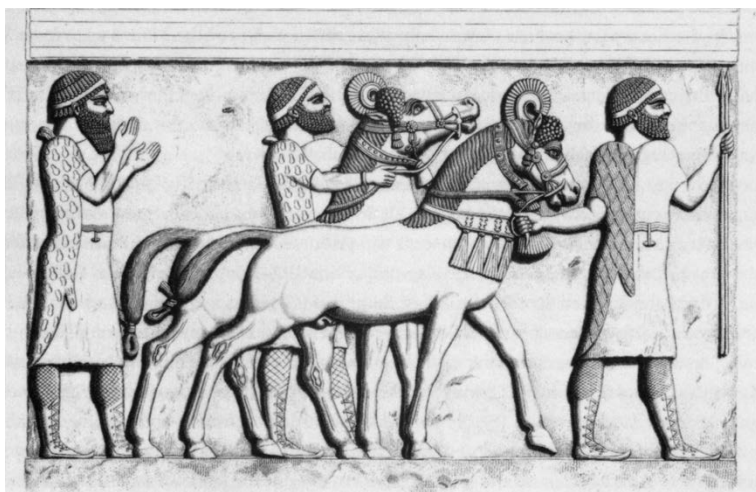


Fig. 9: Khorsabad, palace of Sargon II, Corridor 10: drawing of relief depicting tribute bearers from the Zagros, perhaps Medes (adapted from Botta & Flandin 1848–50, vol. 2, pl. 126 after Roaf 1995, fig. 24).

There is now excavated evidence from Persepolis that documents the tunic-and-leggings garment in a pre-Achaemenid representational tradition operating in Fars. The cylinder seal inscribed in Elamite with the legend “Kuraš (Cyrus) of Anzan, son of Šešpeš (Teispes)” is known to us through its application to multiple Elamite tablets in the PFA.⁴² The commissioner of the seal, this Cyrus of Anzan (Anšan), was an ancestral namesake – perhaps the grandfather – of Cyrus II (the Great, reigned *c.* 559–30 BCE).⁴³ PFS 0093* is an heirloom when it is used in the Persepolis administration of Darius (fig. 10).⁴⁴ Its imagery depicts an equestrian victor who wears a belted tunic apparently with long close-fitting sleeves. His legs seem to be encased in close-fitting leggings that may cover his feet. The rider wears some type of felt or leather cap folded so that it protrudes bulbously at the front.

PFS 0093* was a courtly commission of the long pre-empire period of fluid cultural relationships between Elamites and Persians in Fars. The seal’s carving style and compositional structure conform to late Neo-Elamite traditions at a time when multicultural entanglements along the Zagros were enhanced by strong resonances with the court art of Assyria.⁴⁵

⁴² On the history of our comprehension of the details of visual evidence represented by PFS 0093* see Garrison & Root 1998: 5–7, figs. 2a–c; see Garrison & Root [forthc.] for full catalogue entry.

⁴³ See Kuhrt 2007: 53–55; Waters 2011b: 290–92.

⁴⁴ See Garrison 2011 on the seal style and its implications.

⁴⁵ Garrison 1991 remains important for its detailed discussion of stylistic qualities, even

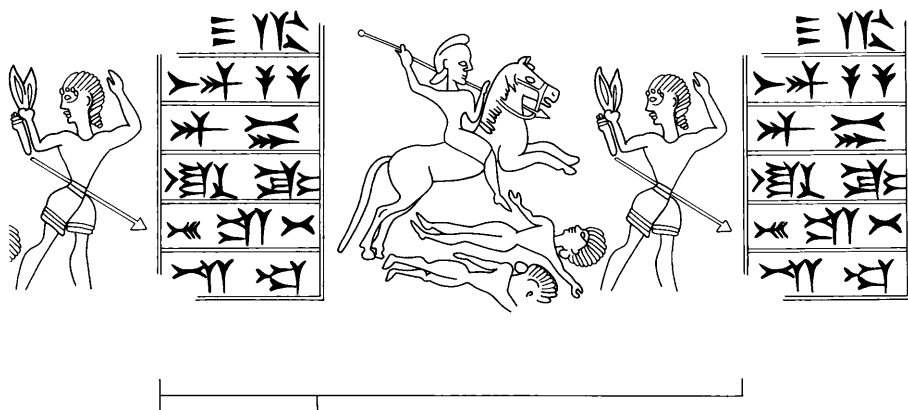


Fig. 10: Composite line drawing of PFS 0093* (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).

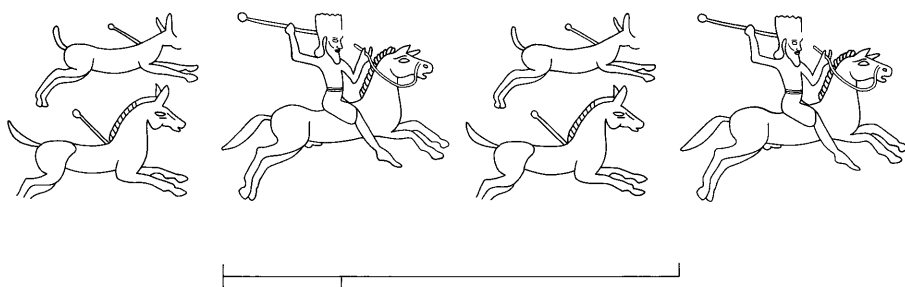


Fig. 11: Composite line drawing of PFS 0051 (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).

Another seal known through impressions on the PFA tablets also documents the riding garment in pre-Achaemenid Fars: PFS 0051 (fig. 11). Here, the rider is a hunter rather than a warrior. He wears the tunic-and-leggings; but his headgear is different: a high cylindrical hat terminating in small points.⁴⁶

PFS 0051, like PFS 0093*, is an heirloom when used in the Persepolis administration of Darius. The two seals emerge from the same courtly workshop environment (Garrison 2011; Garrison & Root [forthc.]). PFS 0093* is used administratively in the bureaucracy of Darius I according to the same protocols as royal-name seals commissioned in his own reign (Garrison 2014). This demonstrates

though many specific elements have now been superseded by Garrison 2011.

⁴⁶ This may be related (in reductive form) to the tall, feathered headgear worn by Persians on the reliefs of Aššurbanipal at Nineveh. See Barnett 1976, pl. 62, for a collection of fragments depicting Persian military contingents. See also Wäffler 1975; Koch 1993: 125–31.

linkages across time between Achaemenid institutional structures of governance and those of the poorly understood period from the late 7th into the 6th century. Similarly, the records ratified by PFS 0051 show that it was passed on in a chain of royally sanctioned deployment. When we encounter it on the PFA tablets, it is used by (or on behalf of) Irdabama, arguably the most important woman active within the archive. She was either the mother of Darius or one of his wives.⁴⁷

Taken together, PFS 0093* and PFS 0051 indicate that already in pre-Achaemenid Fars an equestrian garment composed of a tailored tunic-and-leggings was being used in court glyptic representations of Persian men in their equestrian pursuits as warriors and as hunters. It is probable that at least by the dawn of the 7th century BCE, the garment was a feature of Persian experience and negotiated identity in actuality as well as in art.

The tunic-and-leggings ensemble (and related costumes combining a tunic/coat with either footed leggings or trousers) had roots in the Eurasian steppes, where the garment type was compatible with the climate and hard-riding lifestyle. It seems generally accepted that the ultimate origins of such apparel (including the long-sleeved coat to be discussed later) resided in the Altai Mountains region. Actual footed leggings made of both felt and deerskin have been preserved intact from the frozen tombs of Iron Age nomadic elites at Pazyryk, including elaborately embroidered and beaded ones.⁴⁸ Representations on glazed brick fragments from Susa suggest the existence in the Achaemenid experience of versions also made of fabric tightly woven with colourful designs.⁴⁹ The Pazyryk remains specifically must post-date the construction of the Apadana.⁵⁰ But the tailored forms they document were developed much earlier. This evidence reveals that the garment served the combined needs of the region's lifeways, climate, terrain, and also its social structures that encouraged registers of status differentiation through ornamentation and related bodily presentation (Good 2011).

The cultural apparatus of riding gear so at home in the steppes of Central Asia was shared with peoples who had migrated through and also assimilated within

⁴⁷ See Henkelman 2010 on Irdabama's activities involving PFS 0051. Henkelman 2011: 613 emphasizes her strong connections (as gleaned through the archive) to the Neo-Elamite line based at Šullaggi in southeastern Khuzestan, proximate to the Zagros foothills.

⁴⁸ Rudenko 1970, esp. 88–89, where the terminology is confusing. See Good 2011: 92–97 for updated commentaries on the materiality of the felt and deerskin leggings (with beautiful illustrations).

⁴⁹ See Perrot 2010, fig. 371. Woven fabrics with elaborate designs also appear in the Altai assemblages, with Good 2011: 148 considering these a secondary adaptation of leather-working craft traditions. Numerous representations of generic Persian warriors on Athenian painted pottery depict them in similarly patterned riding garments (see, e.g., Miller 1997, figs. 110–11).

⁵⁰ See Thompson 1970: xxviii–xxix on revised dating of Barrow 2 to several generations of depositions hovering around c. 400 BCE.

the area over time.⁵¹ The precise mechanisms and footprints for the movements of Iranian peoples westward into the Zagros and to what becomes the Achaemenid heartland of Fars remain subject to debate; but the processes by which the riding gear became embedded in the social landscape of Fars surely reflected these processes.

Although the garment had become part of the toolkit of Median life in the Iron Age northwestern Zagros – as it had for the Persians – there is no evidence that the Medes either introduced it to the Persians or held any sort of proprietary domain over it.

4. Reading Medes and Persians anew on the Apadana

4.1. A descriptive big picture

The mirror-image reliefs on the north and east staircase facades of the Apadana present an extended array of figures engaged in the immediate preamble of a gift-giving ceremony. Some differences in details between the facade on the north (carved earlier) and the much better preserved one on the east will inform our reading of the Medes in due course. For now, though, we consider both facades together as mirror images. We highlight the most basic distribution of the two garment types that have loomed so large in traditional readings of the Median presence on the reliefs.

The representational fulcrum of the design shows the king and crown prince appearing in audience at the centre, on the original panels designed under Darius. The royal pair wear the robe. Elite attendants and also lance bearers (reminiscent of Gaubaruva/Gobryas on Darius's tomb facade) also wear the robe. A weapon bearer behind the royal pair wears the tunic-and-leggings. He is reminiscent of the captioned figure of Ašbazana/Aspathines on the tomb facade. So too, the official who bows before the king, announcing the readiness of the ceremonial events to begin, wears the tunic-and-leggings.

Behind this central panel, on Wing A, the equeries with royal horses and chariots all wear the tunic-and-leggings. Below them the two registers of nobles in alternating tunic-and-leggings and pleated robe appear in dialogic intimacy or solemn dignity behind their king as they await the start of the ceremony.⁵² Robed lance bearers stand at the forefront of this long sequence leading to centre.

Facing the king and crown prince, poised to move forward into their presence, the 23 groups of non-Persian peoples in three registers appear on Wing B, sepa-

⁵¹ See Moorey 1985: 24. Potts 2014: 59–87 reviews literature on the Iranisation of Fars. Other considerations of this topic include diverse opinions on the pathways by which Indo-Iranian groups such as the Medes and Persians established themselves along the Zagros (see, e.g., Rollinger 1999; Witzel 2013; Rossi 2017, esp. 475f.).

⁵² See Roaf 1983: 108f. for a simplified drawing of the nobles on Wing B north, effectively capturing this dialogic dynamic.

rated one from another by a cypress tree. Within each group, a court usher takes the lead delegate by the hand. These ushers wear alternately the court robe or the tunic-and-leggings. The members of each delegation wear specific garments (including the tunic-and-leggings and closely associated riding garments) and bring specific gifts to the king.

4.2. An interpretive big picture

When the two garments (robe and riding costume) are read as a coding of the multiple social functions within a landscape of Persian-ness, new interpretative potentials emerge for the entire scheme. The Apadana program becomes a balance scale in the process of achieving equilibrium. The centre point, the fulcrum, is the power rooted in stable dynastic presence (envisioned through the representation of the original central panels).

On Wing A is suspended the scale pan that holds the known weight standard: the backbone of loyal Persian-ness in its multiplicity of roles that symbolize the completeness of the Persian man in service to the king and the whole imperial enterprise. Any of these Persian men (as well as the king himself) might, on different occasions of actuality and in different contexts of visual representation, wear the tunic-and-leggings or the robe. Overall, the rhetorical emphasis Darius places on the ideal of “the Persian man” in monumental inscriptions is reiterated here visually.⁵³

On Wing B is suspended the scale pan that holds what will be weighed in judgment: the gifts and cooperation of the non-Persian peoples, all of whom will be led to the king by a Persian usher in alternating military/equestrian and courtly/administrative garb. Will the king determine that these peoples and their solemnly proffered encomia merit acceptance into the Achaemenid Persian embrace – into the large imaginal community of harmonious empire? That profound question infuses the entire relief system with liminality. It taps into – but re-invents – multiple traditions, aiming to address populations all over the empire and into its frontiers (Gunter 2020). The imagery is evocative of petitioning and judgment; death and rebirth; pious trepidation and apotheosis.⁵⁴ It suggests the potential for transformational resolution.

Within this aspirational ideological framework, garments and gifts of the supplicants bespeak identities-in-negotiation. Among them, only the Elamites wear the court robe. This visualized symbolic connection to the Persian core alludes to

⁵³ See Root 1979: 71, 183, 310. For suggestions of how the ideal of “the Persian man” played out in the hero imagery so prevalent in Achaemenid seal production see Garrison & Root 2001: 56–60.

⁵⁴ While Root 1979 explored reinventions of Egyptian and Mesopotamian imagery, Root 2008 specifically discusses the shifting resonances of the presentation motif in Greek tradition. In the Archaic period (when the Apadana was being planned), the imagery was associated with the apotheosis of Herakles.

the legacy of Perso-Elamite royal and administrative ties within the southwestern Iranian sphere of Persian experience (Root 2011, esp. 427–43). The fact that the tunic-and-leggings garment and its variants is, by contrast, worn by the Medes and eleven other delegate groups signifies a different but equally important imperial relationship to Persian-ness.

5. The Medes of Wing B on the Apadana

5.1. Identification

The absence of preserved captions on the Apadana has encouraged much debate over the identifications of several peoples represented by the 23 delegate groups.⁵⁵ By scholarly convention, numbering begins with the group nearest the royal audience scene on the original central panels. Group I is universally understood to depict the Medes. This placement aligns with the position of the Medes as following first behind the Persians themselves in representations of personifications of all the lands/peoples of the empire in Achaemenid art where carved labels are included. The Elamites follow as group II, again with scholarly consensus. A majority identify group III as the Armenians (fig. 12).⁵⁶

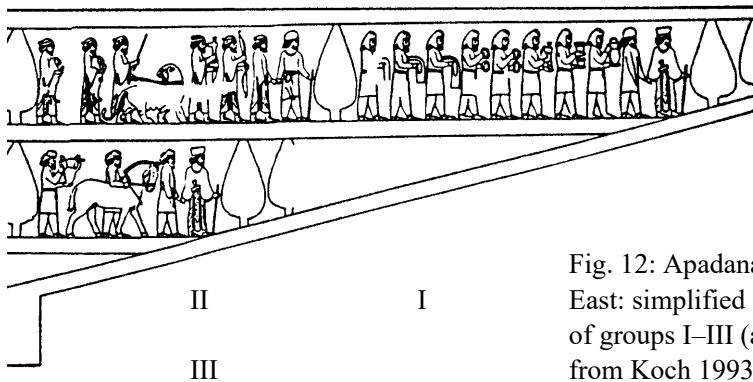


Fig. 12: Apadana, Wing B East: simplified drawing of groups I–III (adapted from Koch 1993: 115).

⁵⁵ See Schmidt 1953: 85–90 for terse descriptions of the 23 groups of both north and east. Walser 1966, among others, added interpretive discussion on individual identifications. Schmidt 1970: 146–58 coordinated the Apadana depictions with those on the royal tomb facades. See additional synthetic analyses of, e.g., Roaf 1974 (integrating the Statue of Darius from Susa); Jacobs 1982; Koch 1993: 93–116; Hachmann 1995; Tourovets 2001; Tourovets 2008; Gropp 2009: 293 (presenting a comparative grid of identifications proposed by these and more scholars to that date); Gropp 2009: 295 (for his own list). New archaeological findings continue to play a role in postulating the geographical homeland of specific delegations.

⁵⁶ The identification with the Armenians is now certainly correct: see, e.g., Schmidt 1953; Schmidt 1970; Walser 1966; Jacobs 1982: 84; Roaf 1974: 149; Gropp 2009: 295; Khatchadourian 2016 (from the perspective of Armenian archaeology as well as Achaemenid studies).

After group III, there is much more variability in proposed identifications. Briant observes that it is fruitless to attempt to reconcile Herodotus's list of satrapies with the representations of delegate groups on Wing B because they are very different types of sources with very different ambitions and meanings (Briant 2002: 390–93). Reliance on comparison with the labelled figures on the Tomb of Darius and the Statue of Darius from Susa cannot resolve all the issues. Tourovets, for instance, reinforces the inherent logical problems presented when scholars attempt to reconcile in a literal way the ordering of personifications on the royal tomb facades with the ordering of gift-bearing groups on the Apadana (Tourovets 2008, esp. 345–48). Some delegations on the Apadana apparently represent amalgams of more than one proximate ethno-geographical unit, whereas they are separated out on the tomb facades and the statue base. This, alas, is clearly evident in the depictions of some Apadana groups that will most concern us below (§5.4 and after). Definitive resolution of certain identifications among delegate groups will probably remain contested.⁵⁷

5.2. Group I: Pride of place?

Strategies for identifying groups on Wing B are intertwined with attempts to understand rationales for the ordering of the Wing B delegates from first to last. Such studies tend to emphasize variant possibilities of geopolitical mappings extending out from the Persian centre as the primary directive. The first-place position of the Medes within this scheme implicitly validates the now-deflated notion of a Median empire that once controlled the Zagros down into Fars, with the Persians there as vassal subjects. When we strip away a Median rule that produced proximity-by-occupation, other factors can move to the foreground. It was the Elamites (II), not the Medes, who were most physically proximate to Persian centeredness. Elam was more than geographically proximate to Persia: It *underlay* Persia. We have already discussed this factor with reference to PFS 0093* and PFS 0051 (§3.4 above). Culturally, the embeddedness of Persians there was profound and (inevitably) liable to exert retrospective ambivalence. The Achaemenids negotiated these complexities on the Apadana in distinctive ways (Root 2003; Root 2011).

Although most royal inscriptions listing the non-Persian peoples of the empire cite the Medes first, an instructive exception is the Old Persian (DPe) text of Darius I displayed on the south wall of the Persepolis Takht along with a closely related set of texts: DPd also in Old Persian, DPf in Elamite, and DPg in Babylonian. Together they form a cluster of statements that are surely the earliest composed for the site.⁵⁸ DPe offers a litany of the peoples. It is an explicit statement

⁵⁷ Almost 50 years ago, Roaf (1974: 91) predicted the general likelihood of this.

⁵⁸ See Schmidt 1953: 63; Lecoq 1997: 227–22; Kuhrt 2007: 487 (DPd), 486 (DPe), 488–89 (DPf), 483 (DPg). See also Root 2010: 27–35, on the suite of Takht texts, in dialogue with Herrenschildt 1990, esp. 54–60. More broadly on Achaemenid inscriptions as agents

of acquisition by the Persians. It surveys the peoples of the empire looking outward oppositionally from a particular literal place that has been staked out as Persian (Parsa) and the newly founded city (also Parsa). Here, the Elamites are named first, before the Medes. This particular roster of non-Persian peoples logically and strategically starts with them as closest to the geographical imperial core; then it moves out from there (Root 1990: 118–20).

In sum: The first-place position for the Medes on the Apadana depends on symbolic criteria rather than on any factor of maximal geographical proximity to the Persian centre past or present.

5.3. Place-space interplay: Medes-Elamites-Armenians

In addition to occupying first place on Wing B, the Median delegation is also longer by one whole human-figure measurement than any of the other standard-length groups.⁵⁹ This expansion of the Median delegation was discretionary. An additional cypress tree in the row of vegetation preceding the figural procession could easily have been inserted instead of an additional human figure.

The extra length of group I enhances the Medes' forward momentum. It exerts visual pressure against the paratactic grid and the framed time of Wing B, intensifying the imminence of the Medes' appearance before the king. Thereby, it enlivens the kinetic dynamic of the entire facade.

The elongation of the Median delegation might legitimately be interpreted as a statement of positive validation. A more cynical interpretation might, however, suggest that the expanded depiction was meant to emphasize the comprehensiveness of Achaemenid control of the Medes and their resources. Other possibilities also arise.

The placement of the Medes in relation to the Elamites (II) and the Armenians (III) creates a visual finger-pointing toward centre (fig. 12). This packaging subverts the norms for text lists of peoples. For instance, the narrative inscription of Darius on his tomb facade (DNa) lists the Medes first of lands outside Persia, followed by Elam, and then a group of lands east of the Zagros (Kent 1953: 137f.; Lecoq 1997: 219–21). Armenia is near the end of the entire roster. Similarly, on the captioned tomb relief (representing 30 peoples), the Mede and the Elamite follow directly upon the Persian in the upper row. But the Armenian (No. 20) is on the lower row, far removed from the Persian-Median-Elamite nexus (Schmidt 1970: 180). This is a reminder that different text lists and visual expressions had different agendas.

of legitimation strategies see Jacobs 2014.

⁵⁹ Groups III and XIX–XXIII occur at junctures of rising sections of the staircase. They are, by necessity, slightly shorter than the standard-length groups that stretch laterally across the main architectural expanse. Of these, groups III and XXIII are even shorter due to their placement.

The Bisotun text may inform the visually assertive clustering of Medes, Elamites, and Armenians on Wing B. Across its extended narratives, it dwells at some length and more than once specifically on rebellions in Media, Elam, and Armenia.⁶⁰ The events characterize Media as rife with treachery while simultaneously serving as a strategic operational base for Darius's military campaigns to quell revolts in the larger northern region. The Elamites in various ways were a close second – with suggestions of religious resistance in Elam adding an intriguing element. The Armenians, with their highland fortresses specifically mentioned, kept rising up even in the face of Darius's aggressive interventions – first putting a loyal Armenian in charge and then sending in a Persian when that failed (DB II §§26–30).

At Bisotun, the short summary text passage (DB IV §54) and the monumental relief which illuminates it portray together a moment after the battles are over. Auramazda symbolically offers all the bound captive insurgents to Darius for judgment one by one (fig. 13).⁶¹ The Apadana reliefs metaphorically portray a more evolved stage of conflict resolution following the revolts registered in the main Bisotun narratives (fig. 14).

Here on the Apadana, the construction of a stable empire has achieved a paradoxical equilibrium-in-motion between outward-pressing imperial energies and the inward-funnelling expectations of an imperial social contract, as presented on the superstructure. The place-space interplay of groups I-II-III may, thus, bespeak the successful pacification of these three peoples whose rebellions were emblematic for Darius in various ways. The visual device may also single them out for cautionary intimidation by bringing them closest to the panoptic royal gaze.⁶² An axis of watchful, co-optive awareness located in the Medes-Elamites-Armenians configuration on the Apadana finds echo in the distribution of royal inscriptions across the empire.⁶³

5.4. The Medes and other Iranians

A look at the Medes in combination with the eleven other delegate groups who wear the tunic-and-leggings variants puts them within a different cluster, which is equally thought-provoking. To wit: Every group wearing the tunic-and-leggings represents an ethnically Iranian population/region from the Northern Zagros and Transcaucasian highlands, extending westward deep into Anatolia and the

⁶⁰ See Kent 1953: 116–35; Schmitt 1991; Lecoq 1997: 83–96, 187–217; Potts 2006/7.

⁶¹ See Root 1979: 59–61, 182–226 (esp. 184–90); Root 2013.

⁶² Foucault 1995: 195–228 (translation of the 1971 original) is his classic text on panopticism. Although the sinister implications of the all-seeing in a carceral setting do not apply to the Apadana literally, the power dynamics of the panopticon are important for the Apadana in more abstract ways.

⁶³ See Rollinger 2016; Khatchadourian 2016 (for other diagnostics of persistent real-world tensions specifically in Armenia).

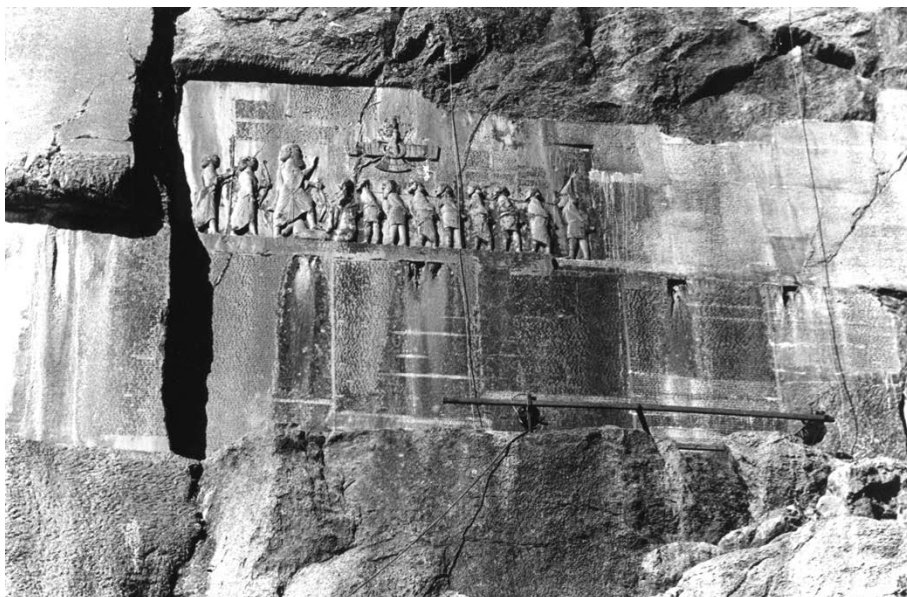


Fig. 13: Monument of Darius at Bīsotūn (photo courtesy George G. Cameron Photo Archive, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan).



Fig. 14: Apadana, Wing B East: delegate groups I–III (photo M.C. Root).

Black Sea area, and eastward across Central Asia and its northern steppes. The labelled personifications on the Tomb of Darius and the base of the Statue of Darius confirm this.⁶⁴ As noted earlier, some of these Iranian peoples seem to have been conflated on the Apadana so that they produce together a sense of the grandeur of this collective, but with reduced numbers. Another factor adds interesting complications: some of these peoples inhabited and moved around in areas of multiple climates and socio-ethnic ecologies. Thus, for instance, Roaf postulates that the labelled representation of the Arachosian on the Statue of Darius (cf. Apadana VII) differs in costume from that on the Tomb of Darius because the statue base references the lowland-facing aspect of the Arachosian arena, while the tomb facade references its East Iranian aspect (Roaf 1974: 113).

Here, I list the 12 groups on the Apadana Wing B that come under the designation of Iranian. While the number designations for these Iranian peoples are secure, several of the name-designations I suggest remain in flux from one scholar to another.

- I. (Medes)
- III. (Armenians)
- IV. (Areians)
- VII. (Arachosians)
- IX. (Cappadocians)
- XI. (Saka Tigraxauda)
- XIII. (Parthians)
- XV. (Bactrians)
- XVI. (Sagartians)
- XVII. (Sogdians/Chorasmians)
- XIX. (Skudrians)
- XXI. (Drangianans)

Group XVII exemplifies shifting scholarship. It has mostly been identified with the Sogdians,⁶⁵ but valid arguments from fieldwork perspectives now urge the Chorasmians.⁶⁶ Both peoples dwelt in a northeastern frontier region north of Bactria roughly between the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers. Groups XIX and XXI are also

⁶⁴ In some cases on the tomb facade poor preservation of figural details demands that description be based essentially on comparison with the analogous figure from one of the later facades. But the scheme is clear. See Schmidt 1970: 108–18 for narrative discussion; figs. 39–53 for photographs and thumbnail descriptions of all the personifications across all the royal tombs. Roaf 1974: 99–147 provides detailed comparative discussions on garment presentation, integrating the personifications on statue base.

⁶⁵ So, e.g., by Schmidt 1953; Schmidt 1970; Walser 1966; Jacobs 1982; Gropp 2009.

⁶⁶ See Potts 2012; Minardi 2015. Roaf 1974, *passim* and 149, opted early on to conjoin them as I have done here.

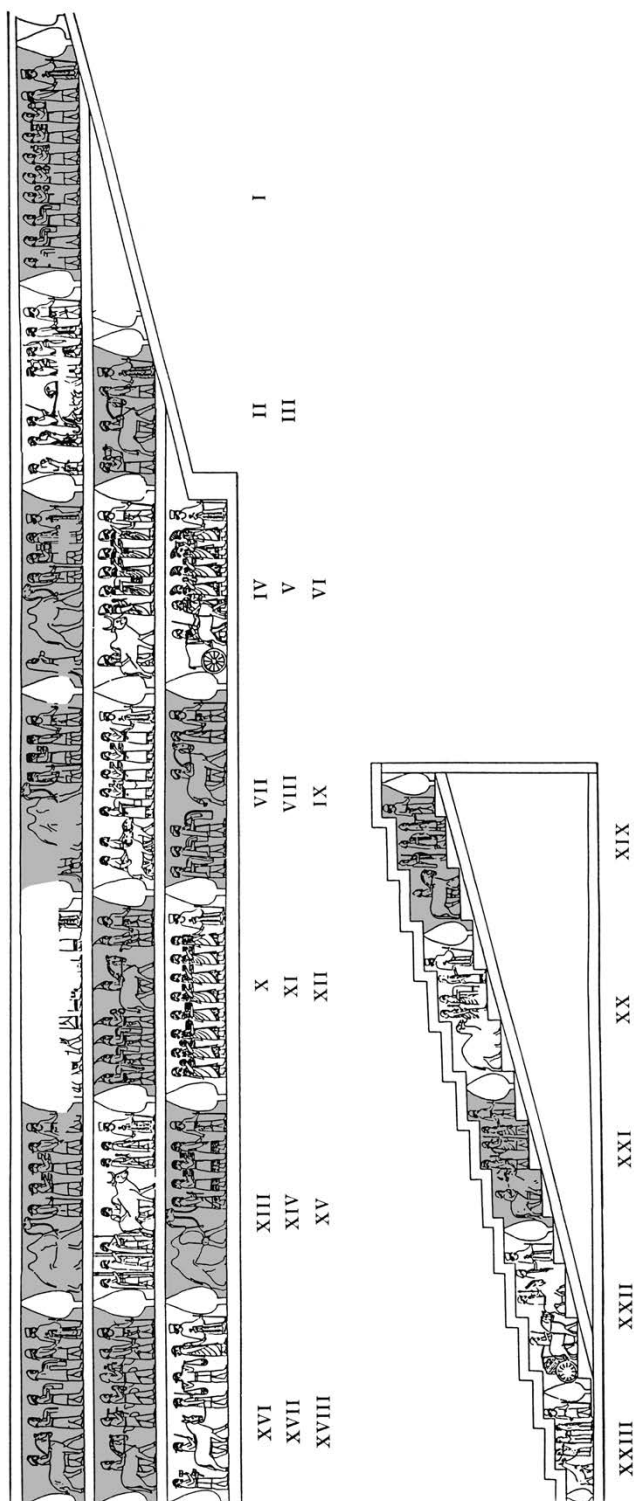


Fig. 15: Apadana, Wing B East: simplified drawing of the 23 delegate groups indicating the twelve Iranian peoples (adapted from Koch 1993: 115).

noteworthy. The Skudrians (XIX) wear a short pointed cap, similar to what the Skudrian on the royal tombs wears, plus long trousers. Their upper garment is, however, a wrap-around affair, which on the Apadana extends down to mid-calf. The Skudrians in this era were inhabitants of western Thrace. They may have been an Iranian people who had migrated westward to around the south coast of the Black Sea.⁶⁷ The identification of group XXI has also been in flux between multiple Iranian options. Schmidt, among some others, labels them the Drangianans (Schmidt 1953, pl. 47; Schmidt 1970). Along with tight-fitting leggings and tunic, they wear an atypical additional garment draped over the shoulder. If indeed, they represent Drangianans, they were inhabitants of an eastern desert region that also encompassed wet, fertile areas of the Helmand River plain.⁶⁸ This would certainly explain their gift of a great ox, which is unique among the Iranians and suggests a distinctive agrarian aspect that is being acknowledged here.

The tunic-and-leggings costume and its variants in Achaemenid art relates to and signifies membership in a notional Greater Iranian world to which the Persians also belong.⁶⁹ It thus creates a visual association among this large cohort, establishing a broad sense of diverse cultural-ecological connectedness (fig. 15).⁷⁰ Gropp understands the variants on the basic costume as clusters that reflect this, adding linguistic considerations to the discourse for each group (Gropp 2009: 328–31).

The peoples who wear the riding costume on Wing B are presumably all linguistically Indo-European; and most can be demonstrated to have been closely tied to the Indo-Iranian language family.⁷¹ The Armenians and Cappadocians are somewhat ambiguous in this regard compared to the others. Classical Armenian is replete with Iranian loanwords. It is, however, a matter of debate how close its

⁶⁷ See Rehm 2010a: 147–49; Gropp 2001 (on linguistic aspects of the name Skudra). Henkelman and Stolper (2009) argue for population groups in northwestern Anatolia that may have been comparable to what the Greeks called (Hellespontine) Phrygians.

⁶⁸ See Schmitt 1995; Gropp 2009: 331 (who offers useful discussion of Zranka/Drangiana, while designating them group IV rather than XXI).

⁶⁹ Gnoli 1989, esp. 1–27 reviews the historiography of the terms, bibliography, and concepts involved to that date. Shahbazi 2005 comments on Gnoli's work, reinforcing the significance of an ancient vision of Iran and Iranian-ness. See also Kellens 2005.

⁷⁰ See Widengren 1956; Moorey 1985: 26; Shahbazi 1992. The term 'Scythic' is sometimes used for the same general concept regarding this costume and other accoutrements of Iranian lifeways. See also Briant 1984: 35–41 on Medes and Central Asia as seen through the Classical sources. Tracing the adoption of the Egyptian god Bes across the Achaemenid Empire, Abdi 2002 finds its repeated association with military personnel through a process of Iranianisation whereby this Iranianisation becomes a mechanism of adaptive cohesion.

⁷¹ See Schmitt 1986; Herles 2014; Kuz'mina 2007: 104f., 171; Gropp 2009; Zadok 2013: 416–19.

linguistic connections are to Iranian.⁷² Old Phrygian (the language of ancient Cappadocians) is linguistically related to Greek (Brixhe 2008). Close links between Old Phrygian and Classical Armenian (with its Iranian ties) have also been detected (Obrador-Cursach 2019). Clearly, the field remains lively (see Giusfredi & Simon 2021).

The ways in which and the degrees to which linguistic affiliations indicate shared cultural traits raise complicated questions, of course (Rossi 2017). Constructed identities forged of life-way commonalities add other layers of complexity in any lived experience.⁷³ In simplified terms, the twelve delegate groups who wear the riding garment define multiple strong relationships that include varying linguistic associations with Iranian. The notion of *Iranian-ness* in the worldview of Darius was unencumbered by fine-points of 21st century ethno-linguistic scholarship. That said, DB IV §70 specifically declares that its text was written in Aryan (i.e., Old Iranian), with the Elamite version adding that this had previously had not been done (Lecoq 1997: 212f.). Similarly, on his tomb facade (DNa), Darius describes himself as "... a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan (Iranian), having Aryan (Iranian) lineage" (Kent 1953: 138). Taken together, these two declarations suggest the power Darius wished to define early in his reign around his insistently Persian identity embraced within his equally explicit Iranian identity.

Of the term *arya-* (meaning Iranian) in Achaemenid texts, Henkelman aptly states that it is "at once a recognition of a linguistic reality, a perception of inherited culture, and an evolving self-designation that evoked an imagined epic past for contemporary usage" (Henkelman 2011: 612). Herrenschmidt's examination of syntactical cues and rhetorical formulae in the Old-Persian inscriptions of Darius highlights the value he placed on affirming registers of being Iranian from the perspective of the imperial centre (Herrenschmidt 2014: 31–34).

5.5. A far-reaching Iranian sphere across time and space

A hint of the pre-Achaemenid 1st millennium social landscape of this sweeping Iranian sphere comes from the site of Kerkenes Dağ in Central Anatolia (Cappadocian territory). Kerkenes had long been known for its dominant natural position as a high place. On the basis of its location, physical attributes and indicators, the site was linked with Pteria (noted in Herodotus I.76 as destroyed in the 6th century BCE). The excavators thus considered the site a Median stronghold defending the western reaches of their imperial control (as in the *medikos logos* of Herodotus). Methodological problems were raised concerning this association with a now-discredited Median empire (Rollinger 2003a; Rollinger 2003b). Ultimately, discovery of a Phrygian inscription at Kerkenes forced a re-evaluation and a decoupling

⁷² See Kuz'mina 2007, esp. 171. Clackson 2008 rejects close Iranian linguistic roots, while acknowledging the influence of Iranian on Classical Armenian.

⁷³ Rothman 2003 offers useful comments on the Transcaucasian arena in relation to landscape-moulded identities.

from Herodotus's Pteria. It is now identified as a Phrygian stronghold.⁷⁴

Well before the recovery of the inscription, Elspeth Dusinger (not a Kerkenes team member) was invited to publish a remarkable ivory inlay panel decorated with an animal file in high relief, found within a large building complex there. The object was considered by the excavators to be long-sought visual and material evidence of elite representational traditions retrieved under controlled circumstances in a Median setting. Dusinger's detailed study of the piece explores its material, faktur, function, and iconographical relationships and meanings (Dusinger 2002). She places it within a wide intercultural contact zone of Eurasian craft and consumer networks. These networks span a northerly East-West axis reaching deep into Central Asia as well as across Anatolia. They inflected cultures across millennia (Kuz'mina 2008).

Although the Kerkenes ivory can no longer be called 'Median,' the far-reaching sphere Dusinger elucidates is one in which the Iron Age Medes also operated – as one of numerous peoples with both shared and distinctive traditions and interests at stake.⁷⁵ Francfort, also from the vantage point of pre-Achaemenid artifact analysis, suggests that the pervasive power and presence of the Iron Age Medes, about whom the Classical sources speak so much, should be understood largely as a reflection of their perception of what was really a vast relational system of multiple Iranian peoples (Francfort 2013: 167).

Working now with excavated material from Achaemenid Gordion, Dusinger explores borderlands theory as a means of assisting our apprehension of identity construction in the lived experiences of elites in imperial Cappadocia under Persian rule (Dusinger [in press]). Archaeologically this Iranian axis is also increasingly opening up to us at its easternmost frontiers thanks to interpretive syntheses of excavation data.⁷⁶ In this context, Francfort urges that we dismantle monolithic ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic preconceptions in our considerations of the reaches of Iranian-ness. Instead, it is critical to reckon with the diversity of its intra-cultural and supra-cultural phenomena (Francfort 2005: 304).

During the reign of Darius, as revealed by the PFA, operational procedures of governance across this same broad axis linked regional personnel and activities to the imperial centre (Henkelman 2018).

6. Accoutrements of dress: worn/gifted

Dress theory incorporates the accessories of attire into analyses of the performative agency of what people wear about the person and the ways these worn things

⁷⁴ Kerkenes was investigated through geophysical survey and excavation by Geoffrey and Françoise Summers between 1993 and 2012. A subsequent project with Scott Branting as principal investigator began in 2016. See now Summers & Summers 2021.

⁷⁵ Globalization theory enters in here; see Hodos 2020: 1–34 for a useful overview.

⁷⁶ See Francfort 2005; Mairs 2014; Minardi 2015; Tsatskheladze 2019.

affectively define and project personhood.⁷⁷ Garment accessories that may be worn and/or brought as gifts by delegate groups raise questions about their intended associations and the rationales governing their appearance (or lack of appearance) among non-Persian Iranians on the Apadana. The Medes are the focus here in their depicted relationships with Persian-ness and with Iranian-ness (Schmidt 1953, pl. 27; here figs. 16a–b).



Fig. 16a: Apadana, Wing B North: Medes (I) (Photo courtesy the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago).



Fig. 16b: Apadana: Wing B East: Medes (I) (photo courtesy the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago).

6.1. The domed hat

A smooth domed hat with a lappet hanging from the back has traditionally been characterized as a specific attribute of ‘Median’ apparel.⁷⁸ This conventional generalization relies, of course, on the faulty assumption that figures wearing the tu-

⁷⁷ See McFerrin 2017; McFerrin 2019; McFerrin 2021.

⁷⁸ Thus, for instance, Schmidt 1953, 85 describes as “typical Median dress” the tunic-and-leggings plus domed hat.

nic and leggings across the entire Apadana and elsewhere in Persepolis are all Medes. In fact, the hat is worn by all Persians on the Apadana who are attired in the tunic-and-leggings ensemble. The actual Medes portrayed on the Apadana – who are restricted to the members of group I – tell a different story.

The lead Median delegate on both north and east does wear the domed hat. On the north, the remaining members of the delegation are not preserved *in situ* above the waist.⁷⁹ On the east, where the remaining figures are fully preserved, they do not wear the domed hat. Rather, they wear a triple-creased cap (the *bashlyk*) that extends down the back of the head and may incorporate side flaps. The high folds of this *bashlyk* are reminiscent of the headgear worn by the rider on PFS 0093*, the seal of Cyrus of Anzan (§3.4).

As far as preserved evidence from other delegate groups allows us to say, the only other delegation on Wing B that includes a figure wearing the domed hat is XVI (Sagartians), on the east.⁸⁰ Here, too, it is only the lead delegate who wears it, with the remaining figures wearing the *bashlyk*.

In terms of its allusions to actual traditions of apparel, the domed hat and the *bashlyk* both cite headgear made of felt. This is a strong, dense nonwoven wool fabric that can be moulded into variant forms of headgear and ornamented by beating colourfully dyed and decoratively shaped pieces of felt into the matrix. Such headgear provides protection from extremes of cold and heat, while also having the potential to be visually and materially imposing. Traditional processes in felting documented from northern Europe and across Asia, reach back as far as the 3rd millennium BCE and remain alive today in many of these regions including Fars and the southern Zagros (Wulff 1966: 222–24; Álvarez-Mon 2010: 5 n. 30).

The pedigree of the domed hat in ancient western Iran does not validate it as an emblem of specifically and exclusively Median identity. In the Palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad, the representation presumably depicting Medes shows them wearing a flat headband (Amiet 1980, fig. 611; cf. §3.1 and fig. 9 above). Instead, it harks back to headgear worn by the Elamite king Te-Umman and some others of his royal circle in the 7th century, as represented on the reliefs of Aššurbanipal

⁷⁹ A fragment in Tehran (inv.no. 2006) partially preserves two figures wearing tunic-and-leggings and the domed hat who face left, as do delegates on Wing B, north. Bleibtreu 2000, no. 110 and Piacentini 2001, no. 116a both link the fragment to the north stair. Piacentini does, however, acknowledge that it could come from one of the other (later) buildings decorated with gift-bearer reliefs at Persepolis. Indeed, this fragment cannot come from group I of the Apadana north facade. My determination is based a) on stylistic grounds and b) on iconographical grounds. The fragment in Tehran preserves, at its left edge, the back of the head of an immediately preceding gift-bearer. On the Apadana north stair, it is the rear of the horse that immediately precedes the first of the two human figures under discussion. Furthermore, no human feet are preserved in the bottom sector of the relief (still *in situ*) at this position.

⁸⁰ See Schmidt 1953, pl. 42. Members of this group are not preserved above the waist on the north.

at Nineveh.⁸¹ There, the hat has a feather hanging down the back rather than a smooth, pendant lappet. Otherwise, the Assyrian and Achaemenid renderings look very similar. Elamite royalty who wear the domed hat on the Nineveh reliefs do so in combination with a long, elaborate robe with a fringed rosette border (fig. 17).⁸²

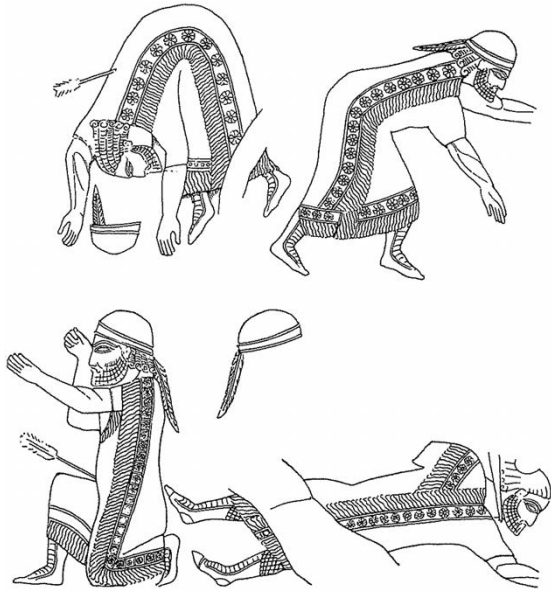


Fig. 17: Reliefs of Aššurbanipal, Nineveh: simplified drawings of King Te-Umman in defeat (adapted from Sarre & Herzfeld 1910, fig. 78 after Álvarez-Mon 2010, fig. 28).

None of the Elamites on Wing B wears this domed hat, which is so clearly associated with their royal house on the reliefs of Aššurbanipal. Instead, they wear a flat band tied around the head. A similar tied flat band is worn by the many non-royal Elamites depicted on the Nineveh war reliefs. On the Apadana, the domed hat of pre-Achaemenid Elamite royalty is transferred a) to all Persians who wear the tunic-and-leggings across the entire sculptural program and b) very selectively to the lead delegate of the Medes and of Iranian group XVI (Sagartians).

Schmidt sees the lead figure of each delegation as the “envoy” and the rest of the figures in each group – those actually bringing the gifts – as the envoy’s “attendants” (Schmidt 1953: 85, describing group I). If we take the domed hat as a status symbol, this might explain its restriction to two lead delegates. But it does not explain why it would have been transferred away from the (non-Iranian) Elamites to these two specific Iranian peoples.

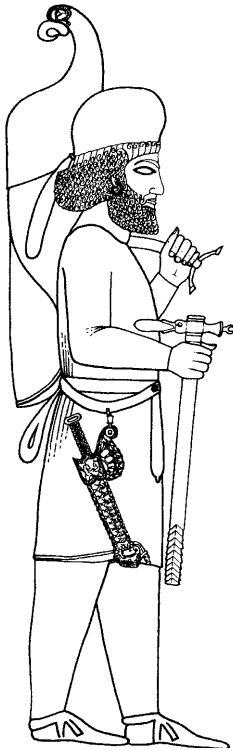
No domed hat (or other headgear) is brought as a gift by any of the 23 delegate groups.

⁸¹ See Walser 1966: 69; Shahbazi 1992: 726; Koch 1993: 117–35; Álvarez-Mon 2010.

⁸² Reade 1999, fig. 7 (king Te-Umman in flight), fig. 101 (Elamite princes in captivity).

6.2. Weapons⁸³

Among all 23 delegate groups, the wearing of a weapon on the person (as opposed to the carrying or bearing of it as a gift), is extremely restricted. We find the phenomenon definitively only among three groups – all of them Iranian: Medes (I), Saka Tigraxauda (XI); and Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII).⁸⁴ Their weapon is the short, sheathed sword (Gk. *akinakes*) that coordinates with the Iranian riding garment. It hangs from the belt at the waist of the tunic, with the tip of the scabbard strapped to the right leg (fig. 18). When it is worn by delegates on Wing B (all of whom stand in profile), it is thus visible only on the east, where the figures' right sides are turned to the viewer.



The ushers on Wing B (all Persian men, as we have now established) uniformly wear a weapon – either the short dagger tucked into the belt of the court robe or the *akinakes* in association with the riding garment.⁸⁵ Because the ushers stand with torsos turned frontally toward the viewer, their weaponry is visible on both north and east facades. Indeed, the universally frontal disposition of the ushers' torsos was certainly intentional and programmatic. It is an assertive patterning of posture within the Wing B scheme, distinguishing the force of the Persian ushers. Simultaneously, it visually emphasizes the fact that these agents of the court are all armed – and are obviously so on both facades.

Fig. 18: Apadana, Original Central Panel North: drawing of the *akinakes* worn by the king's weapon bearer (after Moorey 1985, fig. 3).

⁸³ In this paper, I am not considering chariots, equids, and camels as categories of weaponry *per se*, even though they were used as equipment in warfare and hunting.

⁸⁴ Schmidt 1970: 112 suggests that the lead Elamite may also wear a weapon (in this case, a dagger tucked in the belt of the court robe). I cannot see it in, e.g., Schmidt 1953, pl. 28. Neither have I discerned it through personal scrutiny *in situ* (admittedly, I have not focused on this detail during any visit).

⁸⁵ The ushers of the following groups of the north facade are missing completely or are too damaged for assessment on this point: II, IV, V, VI, X (also east), XIII, XVI, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, and XXIII.

The *akinakes* is part of the Iranian identikit.⁸⁶ It is visibly worn (on the east facade) among the following non-Persian Iranians: the lead Median delegate only, all Saka Tigraxauda (XI), and *all* Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII; Schmidt 1970: 112; Schmidt 1953, pls. 37, 43). While it is clear that the only armed figures among the delegations are a selection of Iranian peoples, it is not clear why the wearing of the *akinakes* is restricted among the Medes to the *lead* delegate. Does this work, along with the domed hat, to establish a special status exclusively for the lead figure specifically among the Medes? Conversely, do these two distinctive attributes of the lead Median delegate serve deliberately to diminish the status of the remaining members of the group for some reason? Consideration of plausible intentionality here should take place in tandem with a related contemplation about the personifications of subject peoples on the royal tomb facades.

In contrast to Wing B of the Apadana, every personification lifting up the king on the royal tombs wears a weapon – all, that is, except the Babylonian. This unique and surely deliberate exclusion may reflect concerns over Babylonian loyalty first expressed on the captioned Tomb of Darius and then faithfully reproduced on the tombs of his successors.⁸⁷ The messaging embedded in the wearing or not wearing of accessories (including weapons) among the non-Persian Iranians on the Apadana is less clear but deserves continued interrogation.

The *akinakes* is also brought as a gift by two of the three Iranian groups that include figures who wear it: the Medes on the east (and probably also on the north),⁸⁸ and the Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII). They also bring multiple battle axes (Schmidt 1953, pl. 43). The Saka Tigraxauda (XI) wear the *akinakes*, but they do not bring it or any other weapon.

Weaponry, or lack thereof, is interesting also in consideration of the Medes-Elamites-Armenians clustering on Wing B (above §5.3). The Median delegation shows the leader alone wearing the *akinakes*; the *akinakes* is also brought as the group's only gifted weapon. The Elamite delegation seems not to include any figure wearing a weapon; but they bring two types of weapons (two daggers and two bows) on each facade. In contrast, the Armenian delegation includes no figure either wearing or carrying any weaponry whatsoever on either facade. Beyond the Medes, Elamites, and Sogdians/Chorasmians, four other groups bring weaponry on one or both facades.

⁸⁶ Moorey 1985: 26–27 discusses its origins and resonances. This is the weapon that Bittner 1987: 199–207 calls a “Reiterdolch.”

⁸⁷ See Schmidt 1970: 116–18; see Root 1979: 75f. on dating the design of Darius's tomb facade in the first half of his reign – and before the original Apadana central panels.

⁸⁸ As noted in n. 79 above, the relief fragment in Tehran depicting an *akinakes*-bearer moving left simply cannot be the missing Mede from the north stair of the Apadana. It must come from one of the several later iterations of the Apadana gift-bearing motif at Persepolis.

Altogether, the Iranians who bring a weapon of any sort are: Medes (I): *akinakes*; Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII): *akinakes* and battle axes; Skudrians (XIX): two lances and round shields; and Drangianans (XXI): one lance and round shield. Non-Iranian peoples who bring weaponry are: Elamites (II): two duck-headed bows and two Persian daggers; Gandharans (XIV): five lances and two round shields; Indians (XVIII): two double-edged battle-axes; Arabians (XX): one lance; and Libyans (XXII): one lance.⁸⁹

Whereas the Medes bring only the *akinakes*, the Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII) bring the *akinakes* and multiple battle axes. Additionally, the members of XVII all wear a bow case slung over the shoulder to rest parallel to the ground at the wearer's side. They are the only figures on the entirety of Wing B (including the Persian ushers) to do so. Many of the Persians on Wing A (in both the court robe and the riding garment) do, however, incorporate this item (Schmidt 1953, pls. 51–53). The strong presence of the bow case on Wing A urges me to interpret it among members of XVII as another element of weaponry depicted as worn on the person, rather than brought as a gift. Either way, the men of Sogdia/Chorasmia – these men of the northeastern frontier – stand out for their much stronger association with weaponry than the Medes.

What was the meaning of portraying delegations specifically *bringing* (or *not* bringing) weapons to the king? The daggers brought by the Elamites have been discussed at length elsewhere as symbolic agents relating to cult and mythical aspects of kingship. The duck-head bows they bring have strong ethnic associations with Elam; and the bow as a weapon takes on deep symbolism within the visual and textual rhetoric of Achaemenid kingship (Root 2011). The myriad specific connections of weaponry on the Apadana suggest careful choices. At the same time, they raise questions about the valence of the gifted weapon as an abstract idea. Does it imply sharing or relinquishing? Honour or ignominy? Or, once again, was a latent ambiguity of meaning intended to enhance the sense of imminent assessment that defines the entire program of the building?

Whatever ambiguities are encoded in the bringing or not bringing of weapons on the Apadana in general, the *akinakes* was a marker not only of Iranian-ness as an ethnic construct: It was also a marker of the prestige associated with the acquisition of equestrian skills as a warrior, which Darius highlights on his tomb inscription (DNb) as a prerequisite of Persian kingship.⁹⁰ Additionally, it was a marker of expertise in fine metal-working. The particular example brought by the

⁸⁹ Group XII (Yauna/‘Greeks’) can be said to bring a weapon only if the spherical objects brought on the north are interpreted as projectiles in the form of sling shots or hurling stones (Root 2007: 203–7).

⁹⁰ For DNb see Kent 1953: 140. Dusinberre 2013: 245–58 explicitly explores the concept of ‘education’ in social practices and norms of privilege-in-empire (which could include acquired skill with specific hunting and warfare apparatus and protocols) as a modality of identity negotiation specifically in Achaemenid Anatolia.

Median delegation on the east has not received its final elaborate decorative detailing in relief.⁹¹ Any added articulation in paint that may once have remedied this is no longer extant. But in its distinctively profiled scabbard, it invokes the lavishly decorated examples depicted elsewhere on many more finished areas of the Persepolis reliefs, as well as in actual examples of such artifacts.⁹²

6.3. Jewellery

Hoop earrings, torques, and bracelets are prominent among figures of Persians wearing both types of garments on Wing A north and east. By contrast, jewellery as a worn accoutrement is remarkably restricted among the Apadana delegate groups.

Only members of three delegations (all Iranian) wear *any* element of jewellery: earrings. The Medes are not among them. On the preserved east facade, the lead Armenian delegate (III) wears the small hoop earring that is so ubiquitous among Persians of Wing A. All members of group XIII (Parthians) on the preserved east facade wear small hoop earrings with a distinctive pendant element. One fragment removed from the north facade and now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts shows that at least the lead delegate of the north also wore this earring.⁹³ All the Cappadocians (IX), north and east, wear something unique to them. Rather than an earring, it is a meticulously detailed Phrygian fibula (Herles 2014).

Although not worn by the Medes or any other of the delegate groups, torques and bracelets do concern us. Achaemenid torques are rings worn around the neck, large enough in circumference to slip over the head and encircle the upper chest. The two ends, spaced apart, are often decorated with animal forms. The Achaemenid bracelet is similarly constructed, but obviously of much smaller size, tending to fit tightly around the wrist. Torques and bracelets could in actuality be of varying materials from solid gold, to mixed precious materials, to bronze and iron depending upon factors such as material availability, status, wealth, and taste.

The torque has strong associations with Iranian identity. Persian ushers, dressed in both garment types on Wing B, consistently wear it – as do the Persians of the original central panels and Wing A.⁹⁴ Curiously, given its Iranian associations, none of the 12 non-Persian Iranian peoples of Wing B wears a torque. There

⁹¹ See Tilia 1968 on parts left unfinished.

⁹² Stronach 1998 studies the actual gold *akinakes* scabbard from the so-called Oxus Treasure. See Tallis 2005: 233f., esp. no. 430 for an unexcavated gold *akinakes* said to have come from Hamadan; Muscarella 1980 on evidentiary problems of unprovenanced artifacts ‘from Hamadan.’

⁹³ Boston Museum of Fine Arts acc.no. 39.586 ([collections.mfa.org/search/objects/*/persepolis relief](http://collections.mfa.org/search/objects/*/persepolis%20relief)). This fragment is included in Roaf 1987 and its acquisition discussed in Allen 2016: 146, fig. 7.2.

⁹⁴ On the Persepolis reliefs, the torque tends to present the appearance of a closed circuit. See Dutz & Matheson 1998: 60 for a beautiful detail from the Apadana, north, Wing A.

seem to have been honorific resonances of the torque as an imperial thing. On the Tomb of Darius, created quite early in the king's reign, none of the personifications – not even the Persian – wears it. Messaging around weapon display among the peoples on the Tomb of Darius does seem to have been strategically calculated to say something pointed by its denial to the Babylonians (§6.2). Thus, the decision not to use the torque as a signifier to be either awarded or withheld was surely also part of the plan on the same monument. That plan – to withhold the torque as a signifier from any of the personifications – remained constant in replications of the tomb imagery by later kings until Artaxerxes III (*r.* 359–38 BCE). On his tomb facade (Tomb VI), the Arabian is singled out alone among all the personifications by wearing the Iranian torque. The torque was evidently added here in acknowledgment of a specific event in this king's reign: the Arabians' role in navigating the desert in aid of the Achaemenids' third conquest of Egypt, largely determined by the Battle of Pelusium in 343 BCE (Schmidt 1970: 111, 116; Björn Anderson 2002: 192).

Torques and animal-terminal bracelets were sometimes used as representational emblems of identity-in-empire by regional subalterns (perhaps depicting actual gifted items of prestige).⁹⁵ This device was obviously not used on the Apadana to link the Medes uniquely to the Persians either within the imperial embrace as a whole or within the Iranian family more narrowly. Nor was it used as a way specifically to single out the lead delegate for this honorific.

The items of jewellery gifted by the Medes (only visible on the east) seem to be bracelets of exaggerated scale rather than torques.⁹⁶ Along with the Medes, bracelets are carried by the Lydians (VI), as well as by two Iranian groups: the Saka Tigraxauda (XI), and the Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII).⁹⁷ Such bracelets are worn by Persians (particularly noticeable on those dressed in the riding garment on Wing A). And we see the form clearly on the Statue of Darius from Susa, where the terminals are in the shape of calves' heads (Perrot 2010: 256–67, esp. 261f.). A fragmentary mould for the casting of similar bracelets with bovine terminals was recovered from the Persepolis Treasury (Schmidt 1957: 79, fig. 16 [PT4 585]). Actual examples of the bracelet type are documented from widespread areas of the empire.⁹⁸ As a gift, the depicted bracelets relate to the intrinsic

⁹⁵ See, e.g., the statue of the Egyptian Ptah-hotep (Cooney 1954; Colburn 2020a: 174–79) and that of the Egyptian Udjahorresnet (Colburn 2020a: 179–87; Colburn 2020b: 66–69).

⁹⁶ Moorey 1985: 32–33 agrees that they are bracelets, as does Curtis 2005b: 132f. The bracelets from the Achaemenid grave at Susa measure only 7.7 and 7.9 cm in diameter respectively, while the torque has a diameter of 20.2 cm (Tallon in Harper, Tallon & Aruz 1992: 245–47 nos. 171–73; Frank in Perrot 2010: 364–71).

⁹⁷ For group VI (which Schmidt identifies as Syrians) see Schmidt 1953, pl. 32.

⁹⁸ See Rehm 1992: 13–70, 78–87 for a survey and catalogue of Achaemenid bracelets and torques, respectively; Rehm 2010b: 168–70 for comments on the bracelet type especially in the Black Sea region during the Achaemenid period. See now also Dusinberre [in press].

value of their materials, to metal-working skill as a value, and to an ethos of personal courtly adornment connected to imperial identity.⁹⁹

6.4. The long-sleeved coat

In its most complete format, the primary components of the garment conventionally and uncritically once called ‘Median’ consisted of three main elements. A long coat (with long, narrow sleeves and straps attached at the neckline) completed the tunic-and-leggings costume.¹⁰⁰ The Greek word for the garment, *kandys*, traces etymological roots to the Iranian linguistic family.¹⁰¹ These three elements of the ensemble invariably appear together whenever the garment is brought as a gift by delegates on Wing B.

When the long coat is worn on the person in Achaemenid art, it is draped as a mantle over the shoulders, with the long sleeves hanging down flat and the neck straps pendant rather than tied together. The patterns of its appearance as a worn garment on the Apadana are revealing. On the original central panels, neither the bowing official nor the weapon bearer wears it. On Wing A, it is, however, worn by about half the Persian nobles wearing the riding costume in the lower two registers. On those who stand in full profile, one pendant sleeve is visible along the side of the body. On those whose torsos are turned frontally, the draped mantle is indicated by its lower aspect spread out from the figure, depicted in low relief against the sculptural background. Often the neckline straps are visible, pendant across the chest.¹⁰²

Turning to Wing B, the coat is extremely restricted as a worn (rather than gifted) garment. *None* of the ushers on Wing B wears it. *None* of the Median delegates wears it on either the north or the east facade. In fact, the only figure among all 23 delegations or on Wing B in its entirety who wears the *kandys* is the lead delegate of one Iranian group: the Areians (IV), on both north and east (Schmidt 1953, pl. 30). Even if we see, with Schmidt, a more elevated status for each lead delegate than for those coming behind him carrying the gifts in each group, I have no suggestion for why this leading Areian alone among those of all 12 groups wearing the Iranian riding costume should be singled out in this way.

In Achaemenid art the coat is a particular gloss on the basic equestrian garment of Iranians – whether on horseback or camelback. It seems to indicate ‘parade dress.’ On Wing A, the elite Persian men in the riding costume connote the military/equestrian functions of court society. But they only wear the *kandys* as they

⁹⁹ Rehm 2013 probes tactics for understanding distinctions and connections between official production and forms within the court and finds from various peripheries.

¹⁰⁰ Schmidt 1953: 85 and *passim* refers to this as an “overcoat” to distinguish it from the tunic, which he calls a “belted coat.”

¹⁰¹ Thompson 1965: 122 n. 13 discusses unpublished correspondence of Geo Widengren on this subject (see also Widengren 1956).

¹⁰² See Schmidt 1953, pls. 57a–58a (north facade), pls. 51b–52b (east facade).

await an imperial performance – as they bear ceremonial witness. As noted already, only about half those ‘awaiting’ Persians who wear the equestrian garment on Wing A also incorporate the *kandys*. It seems to have been an option rather than a requirement based on this variation (§3.3; fig. 6). More telling is the observation that neither the bowing official on the original central panels nor the ushers of Wing B wear it. They are shown actively at work. Similarly, the king’s weapon bearer on each of the original central panels (§2.2; fig. 3) – like the captioned figure of Gobryas as weapon bearer of the king on the Tomb of Darius (§3.3; fig. 8) – is ‘at attention’ at work; thus, the *kandys* does not appear.

In design and formal mode of wearing, the charismatic elegance of the long coat closely resembles the traditional garment associated still today with northern regions of Central Asia.¹⁰³ Clearly, the Achaemenid manifestation of it relates (like the tunic-and-leggings) to actual apparel that was at home in these geocultural ecologies with a reach far back in time (Thompson 1965: 121–23).

Its affective agency in contemporary affairs shone brightly when Hamid Karzai (president of Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014) stepped onto the celebrity world stage at a fraught moment. He wowed the West with what was embraced as the ‘tribal chic’ of his colourful, long-sleeved coat, draped majestically over the shoulders of his Western business suit.¹⁰⁴ TV news-clips of Karzai captured the performative assets of the garment worn as a draped mantle, suggesting the dynamics which the wearing of the mantle exerted on the wearer in Achaemenid Persepolis as well. One does not run, stoop, or make a sudden move in such a garment. It is draped perfectly, but it is not actually tied in place by its neck straps. The garment thus imposes its own regulations of stately decorum on the wearer.¹⁰⁵

Beyond the monumental sculptures of Persepolis, the long coat worn as a mantle became established as a signifier of elegance and social stature. One might wear it (along with the equestrian garment) in representational contexts that were not necessarily designed to allude to equestrian or military prowess – but rather were intended more generally to reference social attributes of the well-situated personage. In Persepolis itself, early in the reign of Darius, the seal of Šalamana demonstrates this point. His cylinder seal (PFS 0535*) is impressed multiply on Fortification tablets. It depicts him seated for ceremonial dining in the riding garment complete with the draped mantle (fig. 19). The texts associated with PFS 0535* inform us that Šalamana served as steward of the extensive estates of Da-

¹⁰³ See an example now in the Textile Research Center of Leiden: TRC 2016.1853 (trc-Leiden.nl/collection/).

¹⁰⁴ On his own terms, Karzai’s sartorial choices for self-presentation to the fragile newly formed state of Afghanistan (as well as to the West) were complex decisions worthy of dress-theory contemplation. See “TRC 3, Hamid Karzai’s dress and Afghan unification” (trc-Leiden.nl/collection/).

¹⁰⁵ In these respects, the *kandys* exemplifies key tenets of dress theory as McFerrin 2017: 147–49 characterizes them.

rius's royal wife Irtašduna.¹⁰⁶ Men of many ethnicities and regional affiliations in Achaemenid elite life self-displayed similarly. One interesting example is provided by the cylinder seal image of Khanatani', a man with a West Semitic name who worked in the service of the grandson of the founding Murašû of the Murašû business firm in Babylonian Nippur.¹⁰⁷ The nature of each of these individual's self-identification with the wearing of the coat – as a performance of what Goffman characterizes as the “off-stage” self – must remain somewhat elusive (Goffman 1959). But associations with the imperial project of belonging and its ethos of equestrian skill as a signifier of accomplished manhood certainly were key.

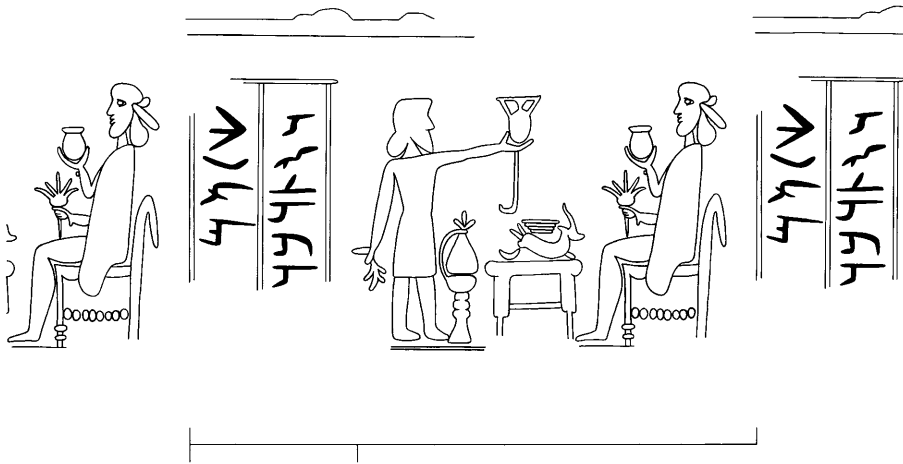


Fig. 19: Composite line drawing of PFS 0535* (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).

The Medes and four other Iranian groups bring the entire tripartite riding costume – including the *kandys* – as a gift to the king: Medes (I), Armenians (III), Cappadocians (IX), Saka Tigraxauda (XI), and Sagartians group XVI.¹⁰⁸ Of these five, the Armenians bring it only on the north. On the east, it is exchanged for a horse.¹⁰⁹ The riding costume takes up significant representational real estate, since

¹⁰⁶ See Henkelman 2010: 698–703 on details of Šalamana's roles gleaned from the entire PFA corpus edited by that date. See Garrison & Root [forthc.] for full catalogue entry of PFS 0535*.

¹⁰⁷ See Root [in press b]. Murašû tablet 12866, bearing one of the extant impressions of the seal of Khanatani', also has an object entry (no. 45) in the same volume.

¹⁰⁸ On the north, where the Medes are mostly destroyed above the waist, the footed ends of the leggings (carried by the last delegate) hang down below the break (Schmidt 1953: 42, pls. 27, 29, 35, 37).

¹⁰⁹ They are also anomalous in presenting the riding costume as the first gift rather than

each element of the ensemble is carefully draped over the extended arms of an individual figure. This spatially ostentatious display may have been enhanced by painted embellishments.¹¹⁰ Surely the king wore this garment in actual life when riding – even though we do not see him wearing it on the Persepolis reliefs.¹¹¹ Differentials in rank may have been encoded in decorative treatments.¹¹² Symbolically, the riding garment was redolent of social prestige, masculine virtue, intrinsic craft value, and Iranian-ness.¹¹³

The gifting of the riding costume on the Apadana may have signified a unique bond between non-Persian Iranians and their Persian Iranian king. Herodotus (III.84) reinforces the idea that this praise offering was among the king's favourites. Bearing this in mind, the multiple iterations of the gifted garment may have symbolized mended relationships with multiple Iranian groups – relationships that had been strained to the breaking point.¹¹⁴ As with other gifts, it is also possible, however, that the presentation of the riding ensemble symbolized a ceding to the king of a particularly precious signifier (or might well have been interpreted this way by those offering it).

the last.

¹¹⁰ Achaemenid glazed brick reliefs from Susa show the look of lavishly embroidered or woven decorations on such garments: Harper, Tallon & Aruz 1992: 22; Daucet in Perrot 2010: 327–42. Guidelines for elaborate painted decoration have been documented on some renderings of the Persian court robe in Persepolis (Tilia 1978). To my knowledge no vestiges of ornamental details in added paint have yet been discerned on the Apadana renderings of the riding costume despite recent investigations on site (see Nagel 2010; Nagel 2013; Nagel 2018; Talebian (ed.) 2004). Geometric decorations in low relief on regional costumes worn in later versions of the gift-bearers are, however, suggestive of polychromatic elaborations that may have embellished the Apadana sculptures (see, e.g., Tilia 1972: 139–41, fig. 8 on the stairway facade of Artaxerxes I). Echoes of the decorated costume appear on Greek painted vessels (see, e.g., Miller 1997, figs. 15, 18). As Dalton noted early on, the rendering of the battle costume of Darius III and his men in the so-called Alexander mosaic from the House of the Faun at Pompeii also serve as an index of the appearance of the garment. The Alexander Mosaic was created after a 4th century BCE painting prototype (see Cohen 1997, *passim*, for context, and pls. 3–4).

¹¹¹ Pace Hinz 1969: 68–74, who follows Herzfeld and some others in a reading that forces art to function only as a literal illustration of actual life practice. He suggests (on this basis) that the lack of representation of the king in the riding garment in Achaemenid monumental art proves that the Persians and their king must have abandoned the wearing of it. The argument is not sustainable on multiple grounds.

¹¹² Dalton 1964: xxx–xxxii discusses the evidence for elaborate decoration of the costume according to the rank of the wearer. It is, however, crucial to understand that what he calls the “Persian garment” is this Iranian riding costume; what he calls the “Median garment” is the sleeved robe.

¹¹³ On the eastern origins and an updated appraisal of numerous aspects earlier discussed by Dalton see Moorey 1985: 22–26.

¹¹⁴ Vogelsang 1998: 221f. discusses this need for “placation” in historical terms.

7. Additional gifted things

7.1. Horses and other animals

On the damaged north facade, the Median delegation includes six human members plus a horse, which is brought by the first gift bearer, who stands in the rear plane of relief, his feet visible between the front and rear legs of the horse. On the east, as noted above, the horse is omitted.

In the Neo-Assyrian annals we hear about horse-rearing Medes in the northern Zagros.¹¹⁵ Deep into the Achaemenid period, Xenophon notes the primacy of Media as horse-breeding territory (Tuplin 2003: 355). The horse seems a most appropriate Median gift. It is also an appropriate *Iranian* gift, resonant with Indo-Iranian mythical traditions (Skjaervø 2008). Altogether, seven Iranian groups bring the horse: Medes (I), north only; Armenians (III), east only; Cappadocians (XI); Saka Tigraxauda (XI); group XVI; Sogdians/Chorasmians (XVII), and Skudrians (XIX).¹¹⁶ Four other Iranian groups bring the two-humped Bactrian camel instead: Arians (IV), Arachosians (VII), Parthians (XIII), and Bactrians (XV).¹¹⁷ Camels were ridden as well as used as pack animals. Finally, the outlier is group XXI (the Drangianans). As noted above (§5.4), they bring an ox – reflecting the region of their habitat that lay in the Helmand River valley.

It is noteworthy that the horse of the Medes on the earlier north facade (fig. 20) is traded off to the Armenians on the east facade (fig. 21). This makes the Medes of the east and the Armenians of the north either extreme rarities or unique among all 23 delegations for bringing no living creature as a gift.¹¹⁸ It makes them definitively unique among Iranian delegations in this regard. Their horse-trading also accentuates the sense of some intended relational dynamic between Medes and Armenians in the planning history of the Apadana. Furthermore, the absence of the horse in the Median delegation on the east creates a striking contrast there within the Medes-Elamites-Armenians cluster. The Elamites' vibrant, complexly evocative lioness and her two cubs enhances the inanimate, even sterile, affect of the Medes (Root 2003; Root 2011; here fig. 22).

¹¹⁵ See, e.g., Sargon's imposition of a yearly tribute of horses upon 24 districts of the Medes (Luckenbill 1989 II: 30) combined with the representations at Khorsabad that emphasize the gifting of horses by the presumed Medes. Radner 2003: 42f. comments on Assyrian characterizations of Medes as horsemen (also Waters 2005: 520).

¹¹⁶ A horse is included as a gift brought by non-Iranians only when it draws a vehicle.

¹¹⁷ See Samuels 2016: 15–18 on camels in the Achaemenid Empire and on the Apadana, noting Indo-Iranian traditions on the high symbolic (as well as practical valuation of the Bactrian camel in mountainous terrains).

¹¹⁸ The only other group that seems not to bring any living creature is that of the Yauna/ 'Greeks' (XII). I have suggested as a possibility that the rounded objects they bring represent populated skep beehives (Root 2007: 207–10). This idea looks most plausible on the east (Schmidt 1953, pl. 38).



Fig. 20. Apadana, Wing B East: simplified drawing of Medes (I)
(adapted from Dutz & Matheson 1998: 59)



Fig. 21. Apadana, Wing B East: simplified drawing of Armenians (III)
(adapted from Dutz & Matheson 1998: 59).

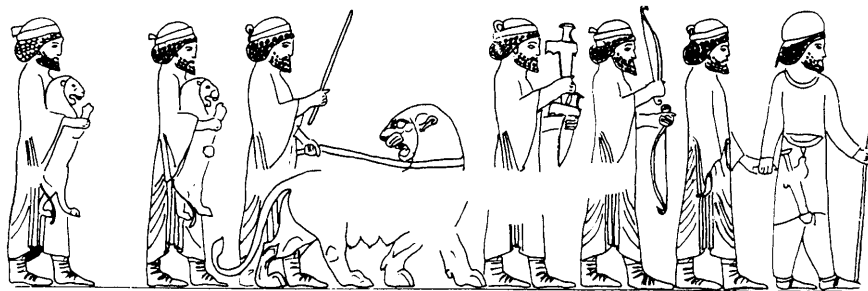


Fig. 22. Apadana, Wing B East: simplified drawing of Elamites (II)
(adapted from Dutz & Matheson 1998: 59).

Among the Medes, the riding garment remained a fixture as a gift on both facades; but the omission of the horse on the east allowed for the inclusion of more vessels. Among the Armenians, there was a direct exchange of the riding costume on the north and the horse and the east: one iconic emblem of Iranian-ness ceded to another.

Horses as gifts to the king were commodities of practical importance to imperial governance as well as being symbolically charged things. Horse-breeding played a crucial role in economies of imperial activity. PFA-based analysis of the

‘pony-express’ relay system of high-speed communication across the empire demonstrates the high value placed on horses in eminently practical terms. The vast empire depended upon them (Colburn 2013a). Interpretation of PFA data now also offers a window onto the technologies of special tending and feeding of these animals bred and nurtured for speed performance (Azzoni & Dusi 2014). This was both a commodity-intensive and a labour-intensive artisanal endeavour. As Samuels has explicated, Bactrian camels were also used for high-speed and long-distance travel and communication – specifically in the mountainous east. Their skilled maintenance by a cadre of specialist professionals charged with their care and deployment is revealed by PFA data (Samuels 2016).

In some traditional societies today, hunting, animal husbandry, and agriculture are considered forms of craftsmanship. Although dealing with living nature, such work entails learned skills, apprenticeships, and accumulated specialist experience. The gifted Iranian horses may be understood in this light as connoting artisanal expertise as well as other attributes among the peoples bringing them to the king.

By the same token, in some traditional societies the mining and the fashioning of metals are thought to involve the craftsman in activities that straddle the line between object production and domains of nature. Metals may, for instance, be mythologically imbued with animal properties. These spiritualized properties give them agency, as man ‘hunts’ for them and then ‘tames’ them by forging them into fabricated things.¹¹⁹

7.2. Vessels of the Medes

On the eastern staircase facade, the first Median gift bearer brings a large vessel to replace the horse brought on the north. Its ovate body is delineated from its tall flaring neck by a ridge (Schmidt 1953, pl. 70E). In addition to two handles anchored at the rim and the neck-shoulder juncture, a third ‘basket’ handle arcs above the opening in the same plane. A prominent beak-like spout projects from the rim (fig. 23). The delegate grasps the pot by one of its jar handles and cradles the base in his other hand. Features of the spouted form relate it to a tradition lying east of the Zagros, which was shared within ceramic as well as metal production of the western Zagros by the early 1st millennium if not earlier still.¹²⁰

This vessel carried by the Mede on the east facade is similar in scale and basic format to a heavily restored fragmentary ceramic spouted pitcher recovered in the excavations at Tepe Nuš-e Jan in Median territory, apparently dating to the 7th century BCE (fig. 24).¹²¹ Ceramics from other excavated sites in the same Median

¹¹⁹ Helms 1993: 153–55 on such fluid meanings of craft.

¹²⁰ See Amandry 1959: 38–48. For one comparandum note the painted ceramic example in Tehran (inv.no. 15531): Piacenti 2001, no. 86; Moorey 1985: 33f.

¹²¹ See Stronach 1969, fig. 1; it measures some 36.83 cm in height. I thank Henry Colburn for bringing this pot to my attention as a holding now of the Ancient Near East Department



Fig. 23: Apadana, Wing B East: detail of group I, showing the three-handled spouted vessel brought by the Medes (photo M.C. Root).

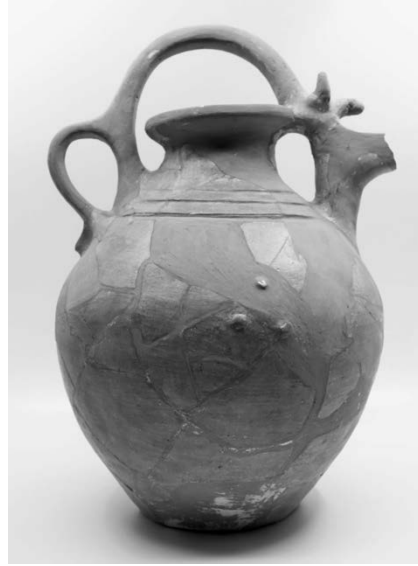


Fig. 24: Spouted three-handled spouted clay vessel from Nuš-e Jan, Iran (restored; photo courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art: H. Dunscombe Colt gift 1974, accession number 1974.105.1).

area, such as Godin Tepe, also include spouted wares (Gopnik & Rothman 2011: 349–62, fig. 7.59). The Nuš-e Jan clay pot has a globular body with an extremely short flaring neck. It has a bridge-spout ornamented at the juncture of rim and basket handle by a crude hand-formed animal face (two upraised ears and a projecting snout). Although the vessel carried by the Mede on the east facade of Wing B is far more elegant in proportions, no animal finial elaborates it.

No specific use can be ascribed to the Nuš-e Jan pot based on its archaeological context to give clues to the potential functional connotations of the form as we see it on the Apadana. But the site is, of course, noted for its ritual fire temple installation (Stronach & Roaf 2007). A basket handle is useful for carrying a large, filled amphora and for tipping such an amphora when pouring liquid from it (with or without a spout) is required.

of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 1974.105.1; purchase: H. Dunscombe Colt Gift, 1974).

Glyptic evidence from the PFA does point to ritual usages of forms similar to the Nuš-e Jan pot and to the vessel brought by the Medes on the Apadana. On one seal (PFS 1431), a large three-handled vessel with narrow base is carried by a figure who grasps it by the basket handle and appears to be removing it from a footed stand as he proceeds forward (fig. 25). This rendering is preserved through only one faint rolling of the matrix. We simply cannot discern a spout on the pot (Garrison 2017: 283, fig. 4.24; Garrison & Root [forthc.]). Another seal (PFUTS 0091), known on uninscribed tablets of the PFA corpus, shows a three-handled vessel brought in a solemn procession toward a stepped ritual structure (Garrison 2017: 236f., cat.no.ST8; here fig. 26). Here, the shape of the vessel is very close to that brought by the Medes, except that again, no spout is discernible.

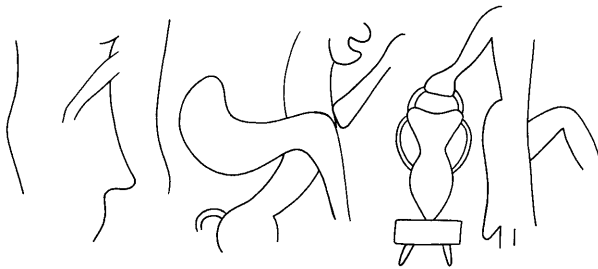


Fig. 25: Composite line drawing of PFS 1431 (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).

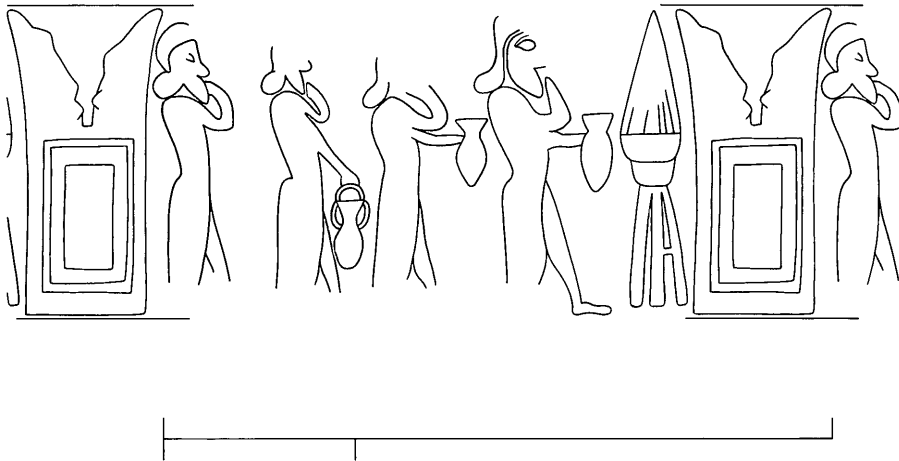


Fig. 26: Composite line drawing of PFUTS 0091 (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).

Spouted vessels *per se* within the PFA glyptic corpus are few; but they, too, are associated with ritual activities. PFS 0075, for instance, shows a figure pouring liquid out of a long-spouted pitcher onto a fire which is blazing atop a stepped structure (Garrison 2017: 222–24, cat.no.ST1; Garrison & Root [forthc.]; here fig. 27). Altogether, the PFA evidence supports an association with ritual functions for the three-handled, spouted vessel brought by the lead Median delegate on the east facade.

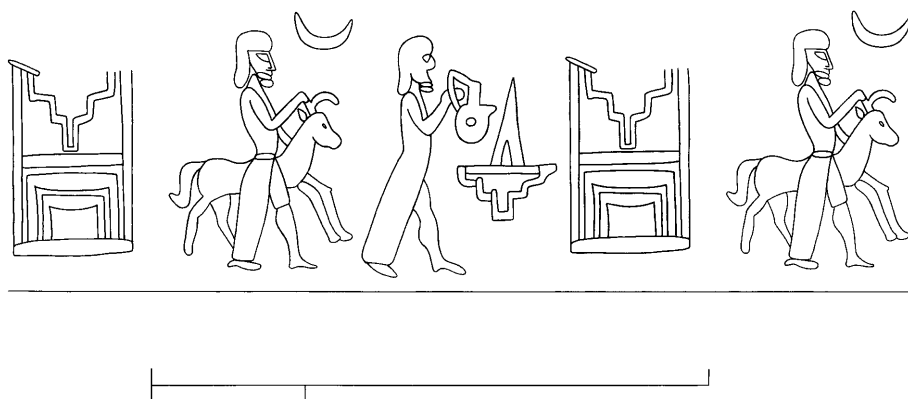


Fig. 27: Composite line drawing of PFS 0075 (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).

The large vessel brought by the Medes on the east is typologically unique on the Apadana in its combination of three distinctive traits: (two-handled) amphora, plus an added basket handle, plus a pouring spout. The Armenian delegation on the east does, however, bring a very large, spouted amphora – although it does not also have a basket handle.¹²² The Armenian gift is a magnificent specimen, with intricately carved renderings of finials in the form of winged lion creatures (Schmidt 1953, pl. 170F; here fig. 28). It is ostentatious in its detailing and its scale. These two objects, with their unique qualities as well as their shared features, reinforce the dynamic of the positioning and interrelationship between the Medes and Armenians as Iranian peoples. But while the Median vessel seems to suggest Iranian ritual observances, the Armenian one may instead symbolize conspicuous wealth in metal consumption and crafting. Khatchadourian argues that it represents a silver vessel invoking the dense relationship between silver vessels valued by their weight in metal of the king's standard and silver as a medium of both exchange and bulk payment (Khatchadourian 2016: 127–36).

¹²² Rehm 2010b: 168 sees this spouted amphora type as typical in the Black Sea region during the Achaemenid period, but not persisting afterward.



Fig. 28: Apadana, Wing B East: detail of group III (Armenians), showing spouted amphorae (photo M.C. Root).

The large vessel brought by the Medes on the east is typologically unique on the Apadana with regard to its basket handle. The Armenian amphora conjoins with it partially – in scale, amphora form, and spout. Two very small-scale amphorae brought by the first Lydian (VI) gift-bearer of the east facade only, exhibit high-level detailing especially in their handle finials – similar to the Armenian pot.¹²³ In this indexing of exquisite metal-crafting, the Armenian delegation of the east facade connects with the famed Lydian traditions in gold extraction and fabrication, also highlighted specifically on the east facade.

This brings us to the so-called Susa Foundation Charter (DSf). Composed in the reign of Darius, it is a statement of imperial reach and resources – not a literal list of contracted labour and materiel for the construction of the palace there. The inscription was displayed for ongoing consumption above ground in multiple it-

¹²³ See Schmidt 1953, pl. 170D (calling the group Syrians).

erations.¹²⁴ DSf, like other Achaemenid inscriptions, served particular rhetorical purposes in its moment and context. Here, the Medes are specifically characterized as skilled craftsmen who, along with the Egyptians, serve as goldsmiths and wall decorators (Kent 1953: 142–44; Lecoq 1997: 234–37). No other Iranian peoples at all (including the Armenians) are named as craftsmen-contributors to the building of the palace at Susa. The Medes are not listed among a small number of Iranian peoples who bring precious raw materials to the site: Bactrians bring gold (along with the Lydians); Sogdians bring lapis lazuli and carnelian; Chorasmians bring turquoise; and Arachosians bring ivory (along with the Kushites and Indians). The Armenians are not mentioned in DSf as craftsmen or bringers of value in any way.



The beakers brought by the Medes on the east are, in contrast to the three-handled spouted vessel, representative of a broad western Asiatic cultural spectrum (fig. 29). In this, they perform similarly to the deep bowls brought by numerous groups on the Apadana (Moorey 1985: 33). Indeed, their significance here resides in the very fact that they unite the Medes to a network of craft production and dining practice shared across a vast arena. The beakers symbolize family ties-in-empire rather than a quality of uniqueness, or of ethnic or geographic exoticness.¹²⁵

Fig. 29: Apadana, Wing B East: detail of group I (Medes), showing beakers (photo M.C. Root).

¹²⁴ See Root 1979: 7–11 and Root 2010 on the importance of interpreting the text as an imperial statement aligning with an ancient tradition and current symbolic agendas.

¹²⁵ Root 2007: 187 discusses this representational strategy in connection with the bowls brought by the Yauna and numerous other seemingly disparate groups on the Apadana. See Calmeyer 1993: 160 on the portrayal of a notion of commonality of culture through the frequency of depiction of this gift of the so-called Achaemenid bowl. See Dusinberre 2003: 172–95; Miller 2007; Miller 2010 for in-depth specialist commentaries on Achaemenid bowls in Anatolia – made of clay and metal.

8. Concluding thoughts

8.1. Medes in a web of ambiguities

This study of the Medes on the Apadana has situated them within a social imaginary where they occupy a special place and space. But despite the extended length of their group as they press first toward centre, the Medes are contained and framed within Wing B nonetheless.

The Medes participate in a braided visual dialogue that involves the Persians and *all* the peoples of the empire in various crisscrossing ways. The richness of this dialogue is clear when we combine observations about costume and affect with observations on the symbolic agencies (and ambiguities) of the gifts brought by the Medes in relation to those of other delegations.

In all this, the Medes play a critical role as frontline members of a large Iranian community of non-Persian peoples. Since the Medes are the first group in the entire display on the Apadana, they are *de facto* also the first in the group of twelve to be shown in the equestrian/military garment that invokes by its origins an ethnic relationship of Iranianism. They are also first to bring a horse; and first to bring a complete ensemble of the Iranian garment as a gift to the Persian king. Thus, the Medes set a template for all the non-Persian Iranian peoples of the empire, who are interspersed with eleven non-Iranian peoples across Wing B. By variations in many representational elements of their Iranian-ness, the twelve Iranian peoples ‘mix and match’ features of their imaginal selves. Overarching commonalities interweave with differences. The assertive dynamic of a pan-Iranian identity on the Apadana fits nicely with the titular rhetoric of Darius, which emphasizes his Persian-ness *and* his Iranian-ness.¹²⁶

Frequently, findings in our exploration here have led to overarching ambiguities between, e.g., wary panoptic scrutiny on the one hand, and welcoming embrace by the king on the other hand; or between a ceding of identity and autonomy on the one hand, and a sharing of valued attributes and wealth on the part of the delegate groups on the other hand. The best response to these ambiguities we detect in the visualization of hegemonic contingencies performed by the Achaemenid social imaginary here lies in Darius’s own words on his tomb facade (DNb §8c): “The man who cooperates, him according to his cooperative action, him thus do I reward ...” (Kent 1953: 140). Darius succinctly expresses verbally the negotiating principle for a being-in-empire. The Apadana imaginary, with its essential liminality and imminence around presentation for transformative assessment, depicts an offering *from* the king outward as much as it depicts offerings *to* the king from the outer worlds of his empire. The king’s offering is this bargaining chip he has put on the table in DNb. This, then, moves us to a final two-part question.

¹²⁶ Herrenschildt 1976: 59; Gnoli 1989; Waters 2004: 98.

8.2. Reception: royal intentions

How did the king intend the Apadana imaginary to be received by the non-Persian peoples generally and by the ten peoples singled out as Iranians more specifically? The answer is, I think, that the Apadana program was intended to be received thoughtfully and with awareness of what the king has put on the table. With thoughtfulness comes curiosity. Although the Apadana sculptures do not bear carved name captions, it is possible – even plausible – that labels were originally added in paint. Vestiges of painted captions have been retrieved from the 6th century BCE reliefs of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi in Greece (Brinkmann 1985). Shared uses of polychromy across the Greater Mediterranean world of international labour and technological exchange in this era may well have encouraged painted captions in Persepolis as well.¹²⁷ Significant evidence of polychromy and gilding exists at Persepolis and Naqš-e Rostam, no traces of painted freehand captions have, however, been recovered.¹²⁸ We have noted above, for example, that some passages on the Apadana reliefs were left in an unfinished state in terms of carved details. Many details were certainly finished off in paint and probably re-touched periodically.¹²⁹

Aesthetically, the look of freehand painted captions on Wing B (on analogy with the Siphnian Treasury) would have resembled what we see on some inscribed seals applied to the Fortification tablets and on archives of tablets and bullae from later in the Achaemenid period. PFS 0009*, inscribed in Aramaic, was owned by Parnakka, chief administrator of Persepolis and perhaps an uncle of Darius (fig. 30).¹³⁰ A more formal look appears on PTS 20*, also inscribed freehand in Aramaic, which was owned by Datames and used on undated tablets of the Persepolis Treasury archive perhaps as late as the reign of Artaxerxes I (fig. 31).¹³¹

It would be revealing to know for a fact (perhaps through notes of early travellers) that painted captions originally specified identifications of the 23 delegate groups on Wing B – even if none of them remain legible to us. This knowledge

¹²⁷ On this environment of technical exchange see Brinkmann & Wünsche 2004. They do not explicitly suggest this idea – but they do lay evidentiary groundwork for my thought on the point.

¹²⁸ This is the case despite efforts by the Italian restoration team in the 1960s–1970s (Tilia 1978: 31–69), the comprehensive historiographical, archival, and on-site work of Alex Nagel (Nagel 2010; Nagel 2013; Nagel 2018), and recent Iranian projects to document physical evidence from the reliefs (Talebian ed. 2004).

¹²⁹ Nagel 2013 notes the significance of the paint pots recovered from in front of the Apadana east facade.

¹³⁰ He used PFS 0009* until June of 500 BCE, when he switched to a new seal (PFS 0016*); Garrison & Root 2001: 92–94 (PFS 0016*, cat.no. 22), 404–6 (PFS 0009*, cat.no. 288).

¹³¹ PTS 20*: Schmidt 1957: 26, pl. 7; Garrison 2017: 128f., cat.no. S4). A similarly sombre image preserved on Daskyleion bullae (DS 100) also incorporates a vertical freehand Aramaic caption; see Kaptan 2002 I: 117f.



Fig. 30: Composite line drawing of PFS 0009* (courtesy M.B. Garrison, M.C. Root, and the Persepolis Seal Project).



Fig. 31: Composite line drawing of PTS 020* (courtesy M.B. Garrison).

would further our understanding of the definitive intentions of the Wing B representations – both indexically and symbolically. This in turn would invite more focused discussion of their reception – intended or unintended.

The carved captioned personifications appearing on the facade of the Tomb of Darius at Naqš-e Rostam loom high above the spectator (fig. 32). The sculptures of the Apadana exist, instead, at ground level. Anyone who has visited the Persepolis Takht will appreciate the wonderment with which people linger over details of the delegate groups on Wing B (fig. 33). Ancient participants in the built environment of the Takht came from around the empire (and beyond). They experienced an imaginal version of themselves depicted on the Apadana facades in close spatial relation to their own bodies, garments, and accoutrements.



Fig. 32: Naqš-e Rostam: view of the tomb of Darius I (photo M.C. Root).

Under these circumstances, what would have been the affective agency of *uncaptioned* delegate groups? Might there have been a special power in the uncaptioned aspect? Might this power have resided in the creation of a magnetic discursive field inviting visitors to contemplate for themselves the significance of details in apparel and gifts as identifiers?¹³² Might the assertive *lack* of captions in this particular representational context at ground level have been intended to liberate the representations from the restrictive frame of labelling? Would this tactic have enabled yet another layer of ambiguity, thereby reinforcing the notion of a world empire of both infinite variety and infinite cohesiveness?

¹³² See Root 2015 and Root 2018 on various dialogic mechanisms embedded in the Persepolis reliefs.

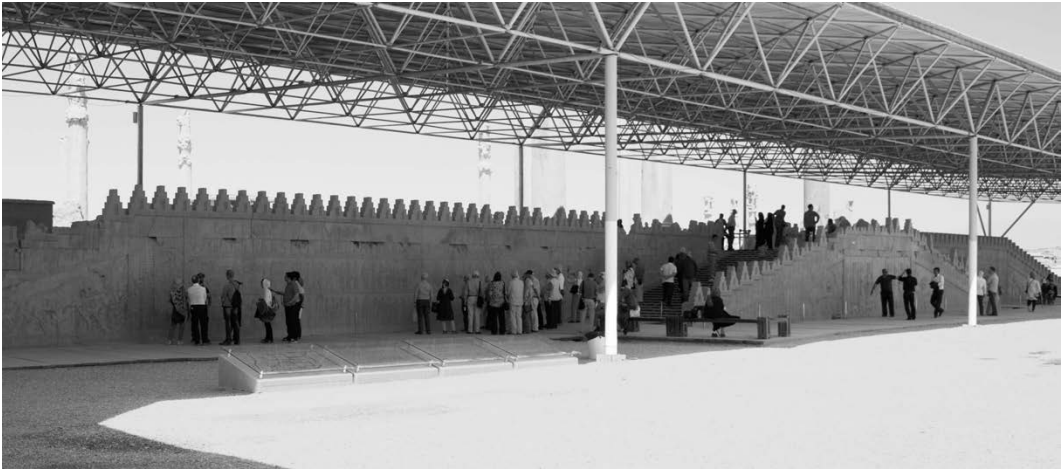


Fig. 33: Visitors lingering over reliefs of the Apadana, East
(photo courtesy J. Deyck).

Conversely, would the definitive *inclusion* of captions on Wing B have created an extremely proscriptive dynamic – even coercive in its tagging? These questions are important, not least because they beckon us into the sociological spheres of dramaturgical analysis, labelling theory, and frame analysis. Consideration of the applicability of such models to a deeper appreciation of levels of intention, reception, and contingency in relation to identity on the Apadana deserve further thought. I think especially of Erving Goffman’s work on the complex registers of performative presentation and reception in everyday life.¹³³ His subsequent explorations of naming and of not naming as social tactics exemplify a major branch of labelling theory, which has direct relevance to this discussion of the identity on the Apadana (Goffman 1963).

8.3. Reception: Medes and others

How would actual emissaries representing the Medes and other Iranian peoples have been likely to receive the Apadana reliefs? I have experimented with interpreting the Apadana reliefs through the eyes of an Athenian visitor – exploring ambiguities of the iconography as these might have been received by a particular resistant reader (Root 2007). Unfortunately, we still lack the primary sources (textual and material) with which to structure a parallel thought-experiment for a Median visitor to Persepolis. At this point, such an idea seems impossible in part because of the burdened elusiveness of the Medes historically. We are also stymied by the persistent paucity of archaeologically-retrieved evidence either on how they identified and represented themselves as a people or on how individual

¹³³ See Goffman 1959; Jacobsen & Kristiansen 2015. Perspectives on Goffman’s frame analysis and the “organization of experience” are explored and critiqued in Persson 2019.

personages among them may have negotiated their identities-in-empire as autonomous Medes and/or as Medes who saw themselves within a larger Iranian world. Where, in other words, is our Median Udjahorresnet (Colburn 2020b)? Medes were probably routinely present in Parsa. Paradoxically and frustratingly, however, there are very few citations of a Median ethnonym attached to a person engaged in activity within the Persepolis disbursement region documented by the PFA. This has been explained by the idea that Medes (like Persians and Elamites) were so commonplace in the environment that there was no reason to tag them (Henkelman & Stolper 2009: 274–75, 305).

It is, however, possible now experimentally to consider Armenian and Cappadocian reactions as members of the Iranian peoples portrayed on the Apadana. Khatchadourian's deeply theorized analyses of Achaemenid Tsaghkahovit suggest a curated Armenian ambivalence about participation in the realities of the imperial project – detectable within manifestations of ostensible emulation of courtly forms, materials, and practices (Khatchadourian 2016). A corpus of vessels excavated at the site has opened up interpretive potentials that for her subvert assumptions about mimesis and emulation in empire. Local products may mimic courtly prototypes and the social practices these vessels implicate their subjects in, while also subtly evading the control of those imperial models through purposeful alterations. Khatchadourian sees such purposeful alterations as having been a means of creating slight evasions of total conformity-in-empire, allowing “escape without leaving” (Khatchadourian 2020: 629).

Dusinberre probes a range of Cappadocian archaeological evidence. One of many relevant dossiers demonstrates allegiances to Iranian fire-related cults manifest in the visual record there, with survival well after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire. These consistencies across the social landscape and persisting across time suggest cultural ties with Iranian ritual practice that became firmly rooted in diverse local Cappadocian mores (Dusinberre 2013: 235–38). Attempting to understand ‘being Cappadocian’ under Achaemenid rule has also engaged historians, coming at the issues through Classical sources. Within this tradition, it is frequently perforce the regional testimony of the post-Achaemenid era that becomes most telling.¹³⁴ Evidence from elite cremation-burial tumuli excavated at Achaemenid Gordion now offers Dusinberre opportunities to discern registers of emulative artisanal training in the fabrication of locally produced items which, on the Apadana, are signifiers of Achaemenid imperial association. Contextually, these things exist within a complexly layered elite funerary practice that simultaneously invokes a distant past (Dusinberre [in press]).

In sum: The effectiveness of the Apadana depended upon two paradoxically collusive factors. First, its schema affirmed the grandeur of an imperial project

¹³⁴ See, e.g., Eddy 1961: 163–76; Briant 2002: 51–54. Shayegan 2016 makes a related point with reference to Commagene.

visualized as a myriad of differentiated peoples stretching across an expansive architectural space to evoke a vast geographical and cultural landscape. Second, this schema of high differentiation simultaneously offered the prospect of collapsed differentiation toward an ideal of cooperative belonging – replete with benefits.

The Apadana's social imaginary world, with its deliberations of shared and not-shared signatures of identity-in-empire, both reflects and inflects the real Achaemenid world as we can trace its structures and networks through PFA texts and as we can see those glossed by seals that were used by real individuals who expressed their own referential imaginaries. Samuels notes a major implication of the 'small-world' network analysis he performed as part of his larger social network exploration of a camel driver and his associates within the PFA:

While the efficient and well documented flow of goods is the obvious pragmatic goal of an imperial disbursement network such as this, the small-world network structure also points to something equally important: a mechanism of the diffusion of non-material culture (ideas, trends, political control) that may highlight how the Achaemenid system of hegemonic management worked over such a large geographic extent (Samuels 2016: 13).

Within the large framework of inclusivity-in-difference represented on the Apadana, the Medes and nine other Iranian peoples display features of their own collective, which bristles with imbricated sets of inter-relationships and identities-in-negotiation that we need to appreciate better as more data are available. The Medes, for all their historiographic burdens and archaeological unknowns that continue to frustrate us, were (for the court of Darius) key players in the kinetic process of Iranian-ness within an ambitious multivalent social imaginary.

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