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STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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ANABASIS 14–15 (2023–2024)
STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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THE NEW "PISAN-DUB-BA" TABLET FROM THE TIME OF THE UR III DYNASTY, IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WROCŁAW (POLAND)[1]

Keywords: Sumer, Ur III Dynasty, Neo-Sumerian administration, cuneiform archives, *pisan-dub-ba*, settlement accounts, Mesopotamian economy

The cuneiform text, written in Sumerian and published below, belongs to the group of relatively seldom confirmed documents of the **pisan-dub-ba** type, which are present in the otherwise abundant source material from Neo-Sumerian times (ca. 2110-2005 BC). These small-sized tablets were used as tags attached to baskets containing administrative and business documents. They were widely used in the archives or chancelleries of various business entities, state or temple stores, and offices across the entire kingdom of the Ur III Dynasty.[2] The role of these tags was to itemize tablets kept in the particular basket. They carried information about the content of the stored documents (indicating to which goods, actions, and works they referred) and about their administrative type, which was usually indicated by a keyword of the document form and, sometimes, also information about persons to whom those documents referred or,

[1] At this point I want to give my greatest thanks to Mr. Jakub Maciej Łubocki from the Department of Publishing Art, National Museum in Wrocław, for his assistance in studying this historical object and for his priceless explanation of how it was acquired by the Museum.

[2] The baskets, usually stored on large wooden shelves or brick platforms were, in ancient Sumer and Babylonia, the main equipment used for keeping documents in archives, as well as in temple and state chancelleries. Large crocks or leather bags were less frequently used for this purpose. The former were usually found in private and family archives where the number of stored documents would obviously be smaller, while leather bags were typically used in transporting documents.

more precisely, persons whose business activity was represented by these documents. Apart from that, the tags usually carried the date or period of time when the documents were made. The meaning of the Sumerian term **pisan-dub-ba,** written in the first line of the text and standing for the name of the whole document, is "a basket of tablets, a basket with tablets."[3]

1. Basic information about "tags" (labels, markers) pisan-dub-ba[4]

As mentioned above, the tablets of the **pisan-dub-ba** type comprise only a small portion of a vast documentation of over 100,000 published administrative and business texts from the Ur III Dynasty era.[5] This may seem pretty obvious since each single tag was being attached to mark a basket full of dozens or even hundreds of tablets. It is like comparing the number of thematic sections in an archive, museum, or chancellery versus the total number of files in the whole resource stored. Therefore, each newly-found text of this type, whatever information it carries, is a source of great value.

Little over 800 **pisan-dub-ba** tablets are known today and most of them have been published.[6] They represent a little more than 0.8% of all Neo-Sumerian texts and often less than 0.5% of the individual archives. The only exception is a collection of texts from Ĝirsu, where this rate is more than three times higher, that is, over 1.8%.[7]

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[3] Sum. **pisan-dub-ba**, other readings Sum. **ĜA$_2$-dub-ba**, **pisaĝ-dub-ba**, **bešeĝ-dub-ba**, **gašam-dub-ba** (Akkad. *pisandubbu*, *pisanduppu*) – see Attinger 2021, 206-207 n. 399 (**bešeĝ-dub-ba**); Sallaberger 2006, 555, 605 (**pisan-dub-ba**); CAD P, 420 (*pisandubbu*), 422 (*pisannu* Ab).

[4] Literature uses the following names for those documents in the languages of the key works: (Eng.): "basket tags," "archive labels," "**pisan-dub-ba**-labels," "tablet box/tablet basket" (meaning of the term), or simply "etiquettes," or "tags," and even "filing tags;" (Germ.): "Etiketten," "Tafelkorbetiketten," but also "Urkundenbehälter;" (French): most frequently "etiquettes de panier."

[5] The CDLI digital platform contains more than 100,000 Neo-Sumerian documents (their exact number cannot be determined because the platform's sorting system cannot handle more than 100,000 objects) while the BDTSN platform which focuses only on sources from the Ur III Dynasty contains 104,570 objects.

[6] The CDLI digital platform contains at least 810 such texts, while the BDTSN platform – at least 665. The quoted numbers represent minimum values because both data bases contain some small number of **pisan-dub-ba** tablets which have been recorded but not yet published, or their content has not been fed into the translitaration data base.

[7] M. Molina in 2008 counted up – based on data from BDTNS data base he was editing himself, which contained over 87,200 Neo-Sumerian texts at the time – the following frequency of **pisan-dub-ba** documents appearing in the following archives: Ĝirsu = 1.87%, Ur = 0.61%, Umma = 0.59%, Drehem = 0.45%, Nippur = 0.13% – see Molina 2008, 44. These rates do not seem to have changed very much so far.

A great majority of the "tags" (labels) **pisan-dub-ba** are very short texts carrying fairly standardised, yet diversified contents. The tags focus either on defining the type of texts present in the baskets they marked, on the kind of documented activities, or they name the persons whose activities were represented on the tablets. This is, among other things, the reason why efforts to reconstruct the damaged parts of some "tags" are somewhat risky because who knows what kind of information had been written and lost from such tablets.[8] In physical terms, these tablets are consistently small, measuring several centimeters or having an almost square shape (usually a bit longer than wide) with slightly rounded corners.[9]

A very characteristic feature of each "tag" is two small openings on its left side, through which a string was pushed to tie it up to the basket it "marked."[10] As M. Fitzgerald was right to observe, this fact may also be an essential argument in the decades-long debate over the orientation of the cuneiform signs and the direction of writing at those times.[11] For if we attach our **pisan-dub-ba** tablet with a string running through its left edge, its orientation will automatically turn the same 90 ° clockwise and, in that case, we would have to read the text as if it were made in the "vertical orientation," that is, from top downwards, and we would go column by column from right to left. Otherwise, we would have to accept that Sumerian scribes deliberately made their lives more complicated by tying up the **pisan-dub-ba** "tags" to the baskets in a way forcing people to keep their heads tilted to the right while reading the text. In that case, would it not be a more practical solution for them to put the string through the upper edge of the tablet, which, when fastened to the basket, could be comfortably read in the "horizontal orientation," that is, in horizontal lines read from left to right?

The structure of **pisan-dub-ba** documents roughly resembles phrase 1, which reads, schematically: "*A basket with tablets*,... (followed by a thematic description of those tablets, which is usually only initiated or was confined to a definition of their archival type by a keyword)…, (such tablets) *are to be found* (in it)." The entire text also includes an indication of the time period when the documents were produced, and that period is often identical to the date of the tag. As can be seen, two terms are the key phrases of these schematic texts: one which begins the text of the document, our key phrase: **pisan-dub-ba** ("a basket

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[8] Unfortunately, this comment in a painful way applies to the hereby published tablet from the National Museum in Wrocław; I will come back to it below.

[9] As has already been observed by R.C. Nelson, the average size of **pisan-dub-ba** tablets was: ca. 40 mm long and 35-37 mm wide, where the smallest ones measured, respectively: 22 mm by 21 mm, and the largest: 58 mm by 55 mm – see Nelson 1979, 45.

[10] See, e.g., Fitzgerald 2003, 1.

[11] See, e.g., Fitzgerald 2003, 1-2; see, also, Picchioni 1980, 225-251; Picchioni 1984, 48-54; Picchioni 1984-1985, 11-26.

of tablets, a basket with tablets") and the one which usually ends the text and, in a way, plays the role of a predicate in the whole record: **i$_3$-ĝal$_2$** – "(here) are," meaning "(in it) they are." However, it often happened, and it did in our text too, that the predicate (**i$_3$-ĝal$_2$**), which should close the main part of the **pisan-dub-ba**-type document, was often skipped by scribes as an obvious, implied phrase. The absence of the final formula **i$_3$-ĝal$_2$** can be determined in approximately 20% of all known tags, **pisan-dub-ba**.[12]

The most elaborate findings concering the **pisan-dub-ba** documents so far are those published by R.C. Nelson in the 1970s and almost all of them are valid today, despite the fact that the number of "tags" published afterwards has tripled.[13] Before that, these sources were studied by such outstanding investigators as: F. Thureau-Dangin,[14] L. Legrain,[15] C.E. Keiser,[16] and T. Fish.[17] However, the first author who ventured to make a more fundamental and systematic description of **pisan-dub-ba** tablets was N. Schneider.[18] He proposed the first division of all "tags" known to him into 18 different thematic categories and this division was later adopted and developed by R.C. Nelson.[19] As a rule, this division relied on distinguishing the types of documents sitting in the baskets marked by the "tags" according to a classification based on the "key words" which defined the chancellery type of the document." It is worth stressing that the "tags" or, in fact, "markers" which were intended to organise the whole administrative and business documentation kept in the archives reflect the organisation system of all that documentation being an original system introduced by Sumerian scribes and archivists.[20] A smaller group of documents of **pisan-dub-ba** type distinguished by Sumerian scribes and recognized also today by both authors (N. Schneider and R.C. Nelson) concerned the operations on economically most important goods which were frequently recorded in documents, such as, e.g., **še-ba** (grain allocations), **še ĝiš e$_3$-a** (threshing grains, threshing) and other operations related to animal husbandry and distribution of its products.

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[12] According to data in the digital platform BDTNS, the final formula (**i$_3$-ĝal$_2$**) is found in 512 texts out of all the 655 documents of **pisan-dub-ba** type which makes 0.80% of the whole; meanwhile, the digital platform CDLI contains 820 **pisan-dub-ba** tablets among which 625 contain the formula **i$_3$-ĝal$_2$**, and this makes, respectively, 0.76% of the whole set.

[13] See Nelson 1976 and Nelson 1979. See also a brief presentation of **pisan-dub-ba** texts by W. Sallaberger (1999), 214-216.

[14] See Thureau-Dangin 1907, 444-446.

[15] See Legrain 1912, 22.

[16] See Keiser 1914, 10-11, 14-15.

[17] See Fish 1951, 20-26.

[18] See Schneider 1940, 1-16.

[19] See Schneider 1940, 8-15; Nelson 1979, 46-52 (Nelson distinguishes 29 different categories of **pisan-dub-ba**).

[20] See Stępień 2006, 27.

2. The pisan-dub-ba tablet from the National Museum in Wrocław (MNWr XXI-90)

The text under study is now part of the National Museum in Wrocław's resource, the Department of Publishing Art, as item code-numbered MNWr XXI-90. The Museum came into its possession in 1974 when it was donated by Mrs. Zofia Kuglin, then widow of a collector, bibliophile, and owner of the tablet, Mr. Jan Kuglin, who had received it a dozen or so years earlier from Mr. Władysław Jan Grabski as a special and "heartfelt gift" for Easter.[21]

According to the thematic classification of **pisan-dub-ba** "tags" proposed by R.C. Nelson, this tablet should be included in group 10[22] (but to group 6 according to the earlier classification of N. Schneider),[23] which refers to the "settlement balances" (**niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-ak**).[24] At the present moment, about 130[25] of such **pisan-dub-ba niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-ak** are known, and only 5 of those come from the same 9th year of the rule of king Šu-Suen (ŠS.9).[26]

3. External description and physical condition of tablet MNWr XXI-90

The tablet is in poor condition. It shows two types of damage. First, the right-hand edge of the tablet is crumbled off so that the surface and the inscription that used to be on it no longer exist. Although this damage does not significantly affect the reverse side, a large portion of the inscription on the other side of the tablet is superficially disintegrated and filled with foreign material. The loss of inscription caused by that material is even greater than that caused by crumbling off on the right side of the tablet's obverse.

The lines of the inscription are clearly separated by continuous lines, which quite often overlap with the horizontal, exceptionally long, wedge-shaped impressions, which are part of the proper signs.

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[21] This information comes from an original note by the donor (Władysław Jan Grabski) which is now kept together with the object. It is worth to note that the Sumerian tablet is described in the note by a sweet phrase: "the oldest little cuneiform book."

[22] Nelson 1979, 48.

[23] Schneider 1940, 10-11.

[24] Sum. **niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-ak**, **niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-d/r**, **niĝ$_2$-kas$_7$-ak**, **ni$_3$-ŠID-ak**, **ni$_3$-kas$_x$-ak** (Akkad. *nikkassum*) – "account, settlement, balance sheet, settlement balance; balance account" but also a full predicative meaning "do the settlement, make the settlement of accounts" (Akkad. *nikkassa epēšu*) – see Attinger 2021, 792-793 n. 2357 (**niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-d/r**); Sallaberger 2006, 497 (**niĝ$_2$-kas$_7$-ak**); CAD N2, 223-230 (*nikassu* A); SANTAG 5, 253; AHw, 789 (*nikkassum*).

[25] The resource of digital platforms CDLI and BDTNS contains, respectively, 130 and 123 such documents.

[26] See BPOA 1, 1069; BPOA 1, 1310; CUSAS 40, 827; ITT 5, 8215; Nisaba 15, 554.

On the left side of the tablet, we can see an irregular pit, apparently a remnant of the two holes so typical of these documents – the ”(archival) tags” **pisan-dub-ba**. As I have mentioned earlier, these two holes were made to hold the string that attached the ”tags” to the basket full of tablets to which the ”tag” belonged. It is possible that the thin lines on the left side, next to the pit, are impressions of the string.[27]

The dimensions of the tablet are: length, 40 mm; width, 33 mm; and maximum thickness, 18 mm.

4. Dating and provenance of tablet MNWr XXI-90

The text contains a yearly date given in the form of the name of the year, which reads: ”Year: the temple of god Šara / has been built” (**mu e$_2$ ^{d}Šara$_2$ / ba-du$_3$**), which means the 9th year of the rule of king Šu-Suen, the ruler of Ur III Dynasty in the period 2038-2030 BC according to middle chronology. Thus, the object was produced around the year 2030 BC.

Yet, determining the precise provenance of this object is not as easy because the text does not mention its monthly date (the name of the month). There is no doubt that the tablet comes from one of the two provincial archives of the Ur III Dynasty kingdom, from its central provinces (Sumer is southern Iraq today). These provinces could be Ĝirsu (modern Tello) and Umma (modern Jokha). The other archives from sites at Ur (modern Tell Muqajjar), Nippur (modern Nuffar), and Puzriš-Dagan (modern Drehem) should not be considered here. Preserved fragments of personal names rather indicate the origin of the tablet from the Ĝirsu archive, and such a proposal should be accepted (see discussion below in section 5).

5. Content and meaning of inscription on tablet MNWr XXI-90

Alas, the poor condition of the tablet described above prevents the reconstruction of the entire inscription, especially since I have tried to avoid any overly risky supplements or reconstructions of the missing fragments. Although the **pisan-dub-ba** texts are usually very short and made according to a simple pattern, some important elements of the text may not only be very different from one another, but they may also come in a random order.

Having said that, we can be absolutely sure of the transliteration and translation of only lines 1, 2, and 6 of the text on the obverse, and lines 7 and 11 on the reverse of the tablet. Correct reading of the beginning of the text (lines 1-2)

[27] See photo No. 3.

allows us to say that our "tag" was marking a tablet basket (**pisan-dub-ba**) containing "settlement balances" *nikkassum* (**niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-ak**). Similarly, the fully preserved last line of the text (line 11) tells us the precise date – the 9th year of the rule of king Šu-Suen (ca. 2030 BC) which – considering the specific functions of **pisan-dub-ba** documents – is most probably not only the date when the tag was made but also the date of all the documents once kept in the basket marked by this tag. Other lines, which allow a reliable reading (lines 6 and 7), contain personal names, respectively: Lugal-ursaĝ (**Lugal-ur-saĝ**) and Lu-Nanna (**Lu$_2$-^{d}Nanna**). Sorry to say, but this is all that can be absolutely reliably deciphered from this tablet, although at least one of these names (**Lugal-ur-saĝ**) seems to confirm that this tablet belongs to the provincial archive of Ĝirsu.[28]

Regarding the other part of the inscription on the tablet, we can only propose several supplements, ranging from the most likely ones to those that are merely variants or hypotheses. At the well-preserved beginning of line 2, we can clearly see two signs: **UR** and **AB**, which should quite probably be interpreted as the beginning of a personal name: **Ur-ab-[…],** supposedly: Ur-abba or Ur-abzu. The former name is much more likely to have appeared on this tablet because it is seen 11 times in other texts dated to the 9th year of the rule of King Šu-Suen, and all these texts are found on documents from Ĝirsu, where they recorded food product transactions.[29]

It can therefore be assumed that the name Ur-abba opens, as early as in line 3, a list of names of people whose settlement balances *nikkassum* (**niĝ$_2$-ka$_9$-ak**) were stored in a basket marked with the "tag" under study. Consequently, we should expect that further lines of the text (exactly, in lines 4 and 5) had once carried the names of persons or names of administration units/offices.[30] This concept appears to be supported by the visible writing in verse 5, which includes the personal name Nammah-Baba (**Nam-mah-^{d}Ba-ba$_6$**), a local name typical of the province of Ĝirsu.

Somewhat less obvious is a possible interpretation of the record in line 4. There can be no doubt that it begins with the sign **KA,** followed by a visible fragment of a strongly damaged large sign that apparently consisted of many

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[28] According to data from the digital platform BDTNS, 52 appearances of the name Lugal-ursaĝ were found in Ĝirsu texts, while in the whole Neo-Sumerian documentation it appeared 64 times (and only 12 times in all the other archives). These numbers for the digital base CDLI are, respectively: 60 (all appearances) up to 50 (Ĝirsu) and up to 10 (all the other archives).

[29] Here the numbers are almost convergent in both digital platforms (CDLI and BDTNS). This applies to the following texts: BM 29783 (missing from BDTNS); DAS 234 (missing from BDTNS); FT 2, pl. 50 AO 12933 = RA 54, 128, 35; MVN 22, 206; PPAC 5, 715; RA 58, 106, 93; RA 58, 106, 94; RA 58, 106, 95; RA 58, 106, 96; RA 62, 7, 9 (missing from CDLI); RIAA 200.

[30] The Neo-Sumerian documentation very often substitutes the names of various offices or work positions with the personal names of particular officers, whenever the scribe was sure of who was currently performing the function or office. Example: the position of "grain silo supervisor" (**ka-guru$_7$**).

separate wedge-shaped impressions. The rest of the record in line 4 is totally damaged. This complex and strongly damaged sign could be tentatively interpreted as either the sign **SA$_6$** or the sign **GUR$_7$**. This, in turn, would allow two respective readings: either a personal name **Inim-sa$_6$-[sa$_6$]** or the position of a "grain silo supervisor" (**ka-guru$_7$**).[31]

A correct reading of the heavily damaged records on the reverse of the tablet – lines 9-10 – poses even more problems. The name Lu-Nanna (**Lu$_2$-^{d}Nanna**) in the first line of text on the reverse (line 7) and in the next line (line 8) is most certainly followed by another personal name: Nabasa ((**N[a]-b[a]-⌈sa$_6$⌋**). A potentially acceptable reading of the other lines in the text, that is, lines 9 and 10, is even more hypothetical. All signs in line 9 are damaged but with some hesitation we might assume that the first sign was **UR**, and the last but one – **LAM**. Suspecting that a personal name had been written in this place too, after much hesitation, I assumed that it could have been a fairly popular Sumerian name Ur-Šugalama (record: **Ur-Šu-ga-lam-ma**), especially as similarly to the previous names, it again most frequently appears in the Ĝirsu texts.[32]

Nevertheless, we face the biggest reading and interpretation problems in the text's line 10, which was written in two rows.[33] It seems most likely that the record in the first row consists of 3 signs with the clearly visible sign **LUGAL** in the centre. While the first sign preceding **LUGAL** seems to be sign **U$_3$**, the last sign in this row is totally illegible. The second row is indented (it begins a bit further away from the tablet's edge), which indicates that it is a continuation of the record in the first row, and it probably consisted of three signs, of which we can easily read the first two as **DUMU** and **ZI**. The last sign is totally illegible, just like the sign in the row above. So, we most likely have a write sequence "**u$_3$** PN1 **dumu** PN2" (**u$_3$ Lugal-**[x], **dumu Zi-**[**zi?**]), but any attempt to complete the damaged personal names is very risky.

This is, perhaps, all related to the result of analyzing the text of the document under study. I wish to stress at this point that the prosopographic data, in most cases, are established reliably and, more or less hypothetically, seem to confirm the tablet's provenance from the Ĝirsu archives.

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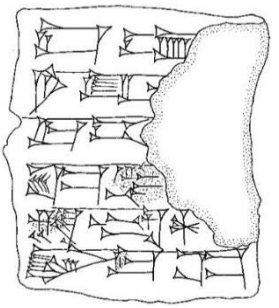
[31] Sum. **ka-guru$_7$** (akad. *kagurrûm, kugrum,kugurum*) – "grain silo supervisor" – see Attinger 2021, 588 (**ka-kuru$_{13}$k**); Sallaberger 2006, 326 (**ka-guru$_7$k**); CAD K, 35 (*kagurrû, kugurrû, kakurrû, kakurrû*); SANTAG 5, 165 (*kug*(*u*)*rum*); AHw, 500 (*kug*(*u*)*rûm*).

[32] A search for the frequency of name Ur- Šugalama (**Ur-šu-ga-lam-ma**) in both data bases (CDLI and BDTNS) produces similar result (in brackets – data from BDTNS). Among 527 (591) appearances of the name Ur-Šugalama in the whole Neo-Sumerian documentation, as many as 337 (396) were found in texts from Ĝirsu. It is worth noting that like in the case of the name Nabasa, the proportion of Ĝirsu texts grows in documents dated as the 9th year of the rule of king Šu-Suen – respectively: 34 (37) documents from all the archives with a clear majority – 24 (27) from Ĝirsu.

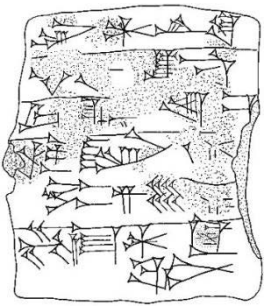
[33] The clearly impressed horizontal lines indicate that between line 9 and the date written in the last line (line 11) should be considered as one whole, hence it has been numbered as one line No. 10.

6. Autography

Obverse



Reverse



7. Transliteration and translation

Transliteration

Obverse

1. pisan-dub-[ba]
2. niĝ$_2$-[ka$_9$]-a[k]
3. Ur-ab-[ba]
4. ka-[gu][ru$_7$]$^{?}$
5. [Nam]-mah- ^{d}[Ba-ba$_6$]
6. Lugal-ur-saĝ

Revers

7. Lu$_2$-^{d}Nanna (AN.ŠEŠ.KI)
8. [Na]-[ba]-[sa$_6$]
9. U[r]-[š]u-[ga]$^{?}$-[lam]-[ma]
10. [u$_3$] Lugal-[x] / dumu Zi-[zi]$^{?}$
11. mu e$_2$ ^{d}Šara$_2$ / ba-du$_3$

Translation

[1](Tag) for a basket with tablets, [2](containing) settlement balances [3](of officers): Ur-ab[ba], [4]"the silo supervisor,"$^{(?)}$ [5]Nammah-[Baba], [6]Lugal-ursaĝ, [R.7]Lu-Nanna, [8]Nabasa, [9]Ur-Šugalama [10]and$^{(?)}$ Lugal-[x] / dumu Zi-[zi].$^{?}$
[11]Year: temple of god Šara / was built (= 9th year of the rule of king Šu-Suen)

8. Photographs

Object in the resource of the National Museum in Wrocław (museum number MNWr XXI-90).

Source of illustrations: Photo Lab, National Museum in Wrocław. Photo by Arkadiusz Podstawka.

Photo 1. Front of the tablet

Photo 2. Back of the tablet

Photo 3. Left side of the tablet

Abbreviations

AHw	Von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden 1959-1981).
AOAT	*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969 ff.).
AOAT 203	see Powell / Sack (eds.) 1979.
ArOr	"Archiv Orientální" (Prague)
ArOr 17	see Fish 1949.
BDTSN	Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts – digital platform, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales – Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, led by Manuela Molina (http://bdtns.filol.csic.es/index.php?p=home#).
BM	British Museum, London (museum number).
BPOA	*Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo* (Madrid 2006 ff.).
BPOA 1	see Ozaki / Sigrist 2006, *Ur III Administrative Tablets*.
BPOA 5	see Garfinkle / Johnson (eds.) 2008, *The Growth of an Early State in Mesopotamia*.
BRM	*Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan* (New Haven 1917 ff.).
BRM 3	see Keiser 1914.
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago*, M.T. Roth et al. (eds.), vol. 1-21 (A-Z), Chicago 1956-2010.

CBCY	*Catalogue of the Babylonian Collections at Yale* (Bethesda 1994 ff.).
CBCY 3	see Sigrist 2001, *Neo-Sumerian Archival Texts*.
CDLI	Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative – international digital platform coordinated by the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (https://cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de).
CST	see Fish 1932, *Catalogue of the Sumerian Tablets*.
CUSAS	*Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology* (Bethesda 2007 ff.).
CUSAS 40	see Sigrist / Ozaki 2019, *Tablets from Iri-Saĝrig Archive*.
DAS	see Lafont 1985, *Documents administratifs sumériens*.
FT 2	see de Genouillac 1936, *Fouilles de Telloh*, vol. II.
ITT	*Inventaire des tablettes de Tello conservées au Musée Imperial Ottoman* (Paris 1910 ff.).
ITT 4	see Delaporte 1912, *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello*.
ITT 5	see de Genouillac 1921, *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello*.
JMEOS	"Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society" (Manchester 1912-1933/1934).
JMEOS 12	see Fish 1926.
MCS	Manchester Cuneiform Studies (Manchester 1951 ff.).
MCS 1	see Fish 1951.
MVN	*Materiali per il vocabulario neosumerico* (Rom 1974 ff.).
MVN 7	see Pettinato / Picchioni 1978, *Testi economici di Lagaš*.
MVN 16	see Waetzoldt / Yildiz 1994, *Die Umma-Texte*.
MVN 22	see Molina 2003, *Testi amministrativi neosumerici*.
NBC	Nies Babylonian Collection (museum number. Yale Babylonian Collection, New Haven).
Nisaba	*Studi Assiriologici Messinesi* (Messina 2002 ff.).
Nisaba 15	see Owen 2013, *Cuneiform Texts Primarily from Iri-Saĝrig*.
Nisaba 32	see Notizia 2019, *Neo-Sumerian Administrative Texts*.
OBO	*Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* (Fribourg / Göttingen 1973 ff.).
OBO 160/3	see Sallaberger 1993, *Ur III-Zeit*.
OLZ	"Orientalistische Literaturzeitung. Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft vom ganzen Orient und seine Beziehungen zu den angrenzenden Kulturkreisen" (Berlin 1898 ff.).

OLZ 10	see Thureau-Dangin 1907.
OrNS	*Orientalia*, Nova Series (Roma 1932 ff.).
OrNS 9	see Schneider 1940.
PPAC	*Periodic publications on ancient civilisations* (Changchun Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations, 1989 ff.).
PPAC 5	see Sigrist / Ozaki 2013, *Administrative Ur III Texts*.
RA	*Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* (Paris 1886 ff.).
RA 54	see Lambert 1960.
RA 58	see Lambert / Figulla 1964.
RIAA	see Speleers 1925, *Recueil des inscriptions*.
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie (und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie)* (Berlin / Leipzig 1928-1938, Berlin / New York 1957 ff.).
SANTAG	*SANTAG - Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde*, K. Hecker / H. Neumann / W. Sommerfeld (eds.), Wiesbaden 1990 ff.
SANTAG 5	see Blake, J. / George, A. / Postgate, N. (eds.) 2000.
SOL	*Studi Orientali e Linguistici. Quaderni Istituto Glottologia Università degli Studi di Bologna* (Bologna 1983 ff.).
SOL 2	see Picchioni 1984-1985.
Sumer	*Sumer. Journal of Archaeology and History in Iraq* (Baghdad 1945 ff.).
Sumer 42	see Picchioni 1984.
TRU	see Legrain, 1912, *Le temps des rois d'Ur*.
UET	*Ur Excavations. Texts* (Londyn 1928 ff.).
UET 3	see Legrain 1937, 1947, *Ur Excavations, Texts*, vol. 3.
WUW	Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (Warsaw).

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Abstract

This article presents the publication and analysis of a previously unpublished Neo-Sumerian cuneiform tablet from the Ur III period (ca. 2110-2005 BC) held in the collection of the National Museum in Wrocław, Poland (museum number MNWr XXI-90). The tablet belongs to the rare category of administrative documents known as *pisan-dub-ba* ("basket with tablets"), which served as archival tags attached to baskets containing collections of administrative and business records in Mesopotamian archives. The study provides a comprehensive examination of this small clay tablet measuring 40 × 33 × 18 mm, which is dated to the 9th year of King Šu-Suen’s reign (ca. 2030 BC) of the Ur III Dynasty. Despite significant damage to the tablet’s surface, the author successfully identifies it as belonging to the subcategory of settlement balance documents (*niĝ₂-ka₉-ak* or *nikkassum*), representing one of only five known examples from this specific regnal year.

The article begins with an extensive introduction to *pisan-dub-ba* documents, explaining their function as organizational tools in ancient Mesopotamian archival systems. These tags, representing less than 0.8% of all known Neo-Sumerian texts (approximately 800 out of over 100,000 published documents), provided crucial information about the contents of document baskets, including the types of records stored, relevant personnel, and dating information. Through careful epigraphic analysis, the author reconstructs portions of the damaged text, identifying several personal names, including Ur-abba, Lugal-ursaĝ, Lu-Nanna, and others, whose activities were documented in the settlement balances contained within the marked basket. The prosopographic evidence strongly suggests the tablet's provenance from the Ĝirsu archive, one of the major provincial administrative centers of the Ur III kingdom. The author also discusses the tablet's acquisition history, noting its donation to the museum in 1974 and its previous ownership by collector Jan Kuglin.

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CYRUS THE YOUNGER IN SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA, ABROKOMAS, AND THE GREAT KING'S DEFENSIVE STRATEGY (401 BC)*

Keywords: Abrokomas, Artaxerxes II, Cyrus' expedition, strategy

In 401 BC, a revolt broke out in the Achaemenid Empire against the Great King Artaxerxes II (404-359 BC). It was led by Artaxerxes' younger brother Cyrus, known to history as Cyrus the Younger, who exercised supreme power (Old Persian **kārana-*, Greek κάρανος) over Achaemenid Anatolia. In the spring of 401 BC, Cyrus set out from his Anatolian dominion with an army of Asiatic troops and mainly Greek mercenaries to fight Artaxerxes for the royal throne. The result was the Battle of Cunaxa on the Euphrates in northern Babylonia in the late summer/early autumn of 401 BC. Artaxerxes was victorious, while Cyrus fell in the heat of battle.[1] During Cyrus' invasion, Abrokomas, the King's commander in Syria, played a significant role. His actions and routes are worth examining as part of the defensive strategy employed by the Great King's forces against Cyrus' invasion.

Information about Abrokomas appears in Xenophon's *Anabasis* in connection with Cyrus' expedition against Artaxerxes in 401 BC. According to the Athenian historian, while Cyrus and his army were in Cilician capital of Tarsus

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the several reviewers of this article for their valuable remarks and comments, which resulted in substantial improvements, changes and additions. The responsibility for its present content lies, of course, with me.

[1] For more information on Cyrus' position in Anatolia in 401 BC, his expedition against Artaxerxes and the Battle of Cunaxa, including further references, see Lee 2016; Podrazik 2017, 278-286; Podrazik 2019; Rop 2019; Głogowski 2020; Podrazik 2021, 38-43, 50-51; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 10 (Map 1.2.10), 12 (Map 1.2.13), 21 (Map 1.4.1), 27 (Map 1.5.1), 38-39 (Diagram 1.8); Thomas 2021, 461-462; Thomas 2021a; Podrazik 2022; Podrazik 2023.

in the summer 401 BC,[2] the Greeks in his army were informed that he was leading his forces against Abrokomas, his enemy, who was staying near the Euphrates.[3] This information was Cyrus' response to the reluctance of the Greeks to continue the expedition, as they were suspecting that its goal was to confront the Great King and his forces.[4] In fact, from the beginning of the expedition, including the gathering of his troops, Cyrus had been concealing its real objective in order not to arouse the suspicion of the Great King and his followers. This was part of Cyrus' strategy to keep Ataxerxes unaware that his actions were actually directed against him. The element of surprise would give Artaxerxes as little time as possible to gather his forces.[5]

The Persian commanders in Cyrus' army probably knew the real goal of his expedition from its beginning.[6] Among the Greek commanders the Spartan Clearchus, one of Cyrus' closest companions,[7] was in the know from the start of the expedition.[8] The other Greek commanders, according to Xenophon, caught wind of the true objective during their stay in Cilicia.[9] The expedition against the Great King meant marching deep into his vast empire and facing his numerous forces. These were worrying factors, especially among the Greek soldiers, that could have led to desertion.[10] It was therefore needful to conceal Cyrus' intentions for as long as possible.

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[2] Cyrus and his army's stay at Tarsus: Xen. *Anab*. 1.2.23-1.3.21, also 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.20.2-5. See also Roy 1967, 313; Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21; Lendle 1995, 20, 28-33, 150-151; Shannahan 2015, 39, 46; Dandamaev 1989, 277-278; Briant 2002, 623-624, 627; Braun 2004, 100-101, 110, 116; Stylianou 2004, 90; Lee 2007, 50; Lee 2016, 107, 112, 113, 114, 117-118; Podrazik 2017, 282; Głogowski 2018, 13 note 13, 14-15 notes 23-27; Rop 2019a, 73-74; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 22 note 1.4.5a.

[3] Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.20.

[4] Reluctance of the Greeks to continue the march: Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.1-21, also 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.20.4-5.

[5] Regarding the concealment of Cyrus' actions, see Xen. *Anab*. 1.1.6-8, 1.1.11, 1.2.1, 1.2.4, 3.1.8-10; Diod. 14.19.3, 14.19.6; Plut. *Art*. 4.2; also Podrazik 2021, 38-41, 50-51. Otherwise Briant 2002, 616-620, 987, who suggests that Artaxerxes was aware of Cyrus' revolt earlier (404-403 BC) and had taken some preventive measures (see also Głogowski 2020, 167, 182-189, 190-191). However, this suggestion is difficult to reconcile with most of the sources (see Rop 2019).

[6] See Diod. 14.19.9; Briant 2002, 625 (writes about: 'the Persian high command').

[7] Xen. *Anab*. 3.1.10; see also Dandamaev 1989, 277; Lendle 1995, 150; Lee 2007, 47; Flower 2012, 15; Thomas 2021, 468. See also Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.1-21 (Clearchus' attitude towards the Greek soldiers during their stay at Tarsus); also Lendle 1995, 30-33; Braun 2004, 100-101.

[8] Regarding Clearchus' position in Cyrus' entourage, see Schmitt 1992; Podrazik 2019a, 101-104; cf. Thomas 2021, 468-469, 471.

[9] Xen. *Anab*. 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.19.8-9, 14.20.4-5; Roy 1967, 313; Cawkwell 2004, 54; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 83 note 3.1.10a; Thomas 2021, 468. See also Lendle 1995, 18; Lee 2016, 106.

[10] See Xen. *Anab*. 3.1.10, also 1.3.1, 1.3.7, 1.3.13-21, 1.4.11-14; Diod. 14.19.3, 14.19.6, 14.19.9, 14.20.4-5; Roy 1967, 313; Briant 2002, 625-626; Stylianou 2004, 87-88; Głogowski 2020, 188.

Cyrus and his troops remained in Tarsus for twenty days.[11] Suspecting that the expedition was against the Great King, the Greeks discussed the matter[12] and sent an embassy to Cyrus, led by Clearchus. They learned from Cyrus that Abrokomas, an enemy of his, was near the Euphrates, twelve days' march away, and that it was against him that the expedition was directed. Having received this news, as well as the promise of increased pay, and despite the lingering suspicion that the expedition's target was the Great King, the Greeks decided to continue marching.[13]

After five days of march from Tarsus, Cyrus and his army arrived at Issus.[14] They stayed there for three days,[15] during which 400 Greek mercenary hoplites, after deserting Abrokomas,[16] joined them.[17] The purpose behind the stay at Issus was to bolster Cyrus' army with reinforcements brought by sea by Tamos, one of his companions.[18] They arrived from Ephesus in dozens of ships along with additional land forces.[19]

Leaving Cilicia and heading towards Syria, after a day's march Cyrus and his army reached the Syrian-Cilician Gates, a pass between the two lands. A narrow passage surrounded by steep mountains, it was well suited to defensive operations and, manned by garrison troops, was very difficult for an enemy army to penetrate.[20] Cyrus therefore planned to use his fleet to transport the Greek

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[11] Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.1; Diod. 14.20.4.

[12] Discussion in the Greeks' camp: Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.1-20.

[13] Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.20-21, also 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.20.4-5. See also Roy 1967, 313; Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21; Lendle 1995, 32-33, 150-151; Braun 2004, 100-101, 110, 116; Shannahan 2015, 46; Lee 2016, 114 and 116 (suggests negotiations between Cyrus and Abrokomas (or his subordinates) that did not result in an agreement); Głogowski 2020, 167, 168; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5a; Rop 2023, 119-120, 122 (suggests negotiations between Cyrus and Abrokomas).

[14] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.1.

[15] Cyrus and his army's stay at Issus: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.1-3, also 1.2.21; cf. Xen. *Hell*. 3.1.1; Diod. 14.21.1-2, also 14.19.4-5. See also Roy 1967, 300, 301 with note 67, 302; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 33-35; Lee 2007, 47-48; Podrazik 2017, 282; Głogowski 2018, 15 notes 28-29; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 20 note 1.4.2a, 21 (Map 1.4.1).

[16] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.3.

[17] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.3. Regarding these 400 Greek mercenary hoplites joining Cyrus, see also Roy 1967, 301 with note 67, 302; Cook 1983, 212 with note 11; Tuplin 1987, 231; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 32-33, 34-35, 37, 58; Briant 2002, 623; Cawkwell 2004, 49-50; Lee 2007, 47-48, 51; Shannahan 2015, 39, 46-47; Lee 2016, 113, 114; Rop 2019a, 68 with note 15, 72 note 30, 85 with note 72 (suggests that Cyrus persuaded Abrokomas to be neutral); Głogowski 2020, 168-169; Rop 2023, 102-104, 112-116, 118-121, 122.

[18] For general information on Tamos, see Podrazik 2017, 282; Podrazik 2019a, 102; Thomas 2021, 480-481; Tuplin 2021, 290.

[19] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.2-3, also 1.2.21; cf. Xen. *Hell*. 3.1.1; Diod. 14.21.1-2, also 14.19.4-5. See also Podrazik 2017, 282.

[20] March of Cyrus and his army form Cilicia to Syria and the characteristics of the Syrian-Cilician Gates: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.4-5; Diod. 14.21.2-5; see also Cook 1983, 212 with note 10; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 35-37; Stylianou 2004, 89; Shannahan 2015, 46-47; Głogowski 2018, 16 notes 30-32; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 22 note 1.4.4a.

hoplites to the other side of the gates, who would then crush the forces defending the passage. He reckoned with the possibility that Abrokomas, with a large army of 300,000 men according to Xenophon,[21] would put up stiff resistance on the Syrian side of the gates. However, when Abrokomas learned that Cyrus and his forces were in Cilicia, he moved his army from Phoenicia likely towards the Euphrates Valley and Upper Mesopotamia.[22]

As a result, Cyrus and his forces passed through the gates unhindered[23] and then, after a day's march and a seven-day stay at the coastal city of Myriandros,[24] advanced towards the Euphrates and, after a twelve-day march, reached the city of Thapsakos on the west bank of the river, encountering no resistance along the way.[25] Thapsakos has long been a subject of scholarly debate, with numerous experts suggesting varied locations for this ancient city. Some scholars posit that Thapsakos was situated in proximity to the historically significant cities of Carchemish and Zeugma,[26] while others assert that it may have been located near the city of Dausara.[27]

Thapsakos was the place where Cyrus and his army crossed the Euphrates.[28] They did this by foot, as the boats there had been burned by Abrokomas, who had passed through earlier, to prevent them from crossing.[29] Cyrus and his army

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[21] The given figure should be considered as overstated. See Heckel 2020, 103; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5b; also Podrazik 2017, 284 with note 58.

[22] See Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.5; cf. Diod. 14.21.2-5. See also Cook 1983, 212 with note 11; Dandamayev 1983; Dandamaev 1989, 278 ('Abrocomas, however, whose duty it was to guard the gates, heard about Cyrus' advance, and cowardly decided not to put up any resistance, and to lead his troops to the Persian king'); Lendle 1995, 32-33, 37, 59; Briant 2002, 626-627 (suggests that Cyrus made contact with Abrokomas, but the latter sided with the Great King), 628; Shannahan 2015, 39, 46-47, 48; Lee 2016, 114-115, 116; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5a-b.

[23] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.5; cf. Diod. 14.21.3, 14.21.5.

[24] March to and stay at Myriandros: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.6-9; see also Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 37-38; Lee 2016, 114; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1).

[25] March from Myriandros to Thapsakos: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.9-11; Diod. 14.21.5 (writes about a twenty-day march, but does not mention arrival and stay at Myriandros); see also Farrell 1961, 153, 154; Dandamaev 1989, 278-279; Lendle 1995, 38-41; Stylianou 2004, 78 with note 28, 91; Lee 2007, 22-23; Lee 2016, 114; Głogowski 2018, 16 note 33; Brennan 2021, 395, 396 (Map P.1); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 23-24 notes 1.4.9b-1.4.11b.

[26] See Farrell 1961, 153-154; Engels 1978, 64-65 with note 61; Cook 1983, 212 with note 11; Lendle 1995, 36, 40-41; Gawlikowski 1996; Briant 2002, 375-376, 928; Kuhrt 2007, 744 note 4; Lee 2016, 115; Monerie 2019, 158-159, 160 (Fig. 3); Marciak et al. 2022, 63. See also Comfort et al. 2000; Fuensanta / Crivelli 2010.

[27] See Brennan 2021, 395-397 (argues for this location by comparing classical sources informing about days of marches from the eastern Mediterranean coast to Thapsakos covered by Cyrus and Alexander of Macedon (336-323 BC)); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 20 note 1.3.20a, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 24 note 1.4.11b.

[28] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.16-18; see also Diod. 14.21.5-7.

[29] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.17-18; see also Cook 1983, 212; Lendle 1995, 42-43; Briant 2002, 362, 621-622, 626-627; Shannahan 2015, 48; Lee 2016, 114-115, 116; Monerie 2019, 162; Rop 2019, 82-83; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5a, 24 note 1.4.11b, 25 note 1.4.19a; Rop 2023,

met no resistance from the King's forces while crossing. It is worth noting that before crossing the Euphrates, while still at Thapsakos, Cyrus instructed the Greek commanders of his army to inform their soldiers that the purpose of the expedition was to confront the Great King and that the chosen direction of the march was the city of Babylon.[30]

In connection with Cyrus and his army's stay at Tarsus, Diodorus states[31] that the soldiers had heard from Cyrus that he was leading his army '(...) not against Artaxerxes, but against a certain satrap of Syria (...).'[32] Xenophon claims that the purpose of Cyrus' expedition was not the Great King but Abrokomas, who was staying near the Euphrates.[33] It may thus be believed that the satrap of Syria Diodorus refers to is actually Abrokomas. It would then follow that Abrokomas was satrap of Syria in 401 BC.[34] It is more likely, however, that Diodorus is not referring to Abrokomas, but to the official known as Belesys (in Babylonian Bēlšunu).

Belesys is mentioned by Xenophon in his account of the march of Cyrus and his army from Myriandros towards Thapsakos. Passing through the northern regions of Syria,[35] they came to the location of '(…) the palace of Belesys, the late governor of Syria, and a very large and beautiful park containing all the products of the seasons.'[36] This palace (βασίλεια) and park (παράδεισος) were probably Belesys' satrapal residence.[37] Both palace and park were destroyed

117, 120, 122; cf. Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21, who suggests that Abrokomas and his troops crossed the Euphrates after Cyrus and his army, and that it was not Abrokomas who caused the burning of the boats on the Euphrates, but men sent from the King's camp; similarly Głogowski 2020, 168-169, 171-172, 190. Regarding the crossing of the Euphrates at Thapsakos, see also Monerie 2019, 156-158, 159, 160 (Fig. 3), 162.

[30] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.11-13; see also Diod. 14.21.6. Cyrus and his army's stay at Thapsakos: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.11-18; Diod. 14.21.5-6; see also Farrell 1961, 154-155 (suggests that during the stay at Thapsakos Cyrus may have been secretly negotiating with Abrokomas); Roy 1967, 313 with note 104, 314; Dandamaev 1989, 279; Lendle 1995, 40-43; Gawlikowski 1996, 126; Briant 2002, 624; Stylianou 2004, 91; Shannahan 2015, 47-48; Głogowski 2018, 13 note 13, 16 notes 34-35; Rop 2019a, 74; Głogowski 2020, 178; Brennan 2021, 396 (Map P.1); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 24 notes 1.4.11a-1.4.13b, 25 note 1.4.18a; Rop 2023, 117.

[31] Diod. 14.20.4-5.

[32] Diod. 14.20.5: (…) οὐκ ἐπ᾽ Ἀρταξέρξην, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπί τινα σατράπην τῆς Συρίας (…) (trans. by C.H. Oldfather).

[33] Xen. *Anab*. 1.3.20-21.

[34] Abrokomas as satrap of Syria at the time of Cyrus' expedition: Olmstead 1948, 374, see also 398; Roy 1967, 301; Tuplin 1987, 231 (with question mark); Shahbazi 1993; Cawkwell 2004, 54. See also Bivar 1961, 123; Dandamayev 1983; Tuplin 2004, 163; Tuplin 2021, 290; cf. Thomas 2021, 453.

[35] See Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.9-11; also Farrell 1961, 153, 154; Lendle 1995, 38-41; Stolper 1987, 389.

[36] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.10: (…) τὰ Βελέσυος βασίλεια τοῦ Συρίας ἄρξαντος, καὶ παράδεισος πάνυ μέγας καὶ καλός, ἔχων πάντα ὅσα ὧραι φύουσι (trans. by C.L. Brownson, slightly modified).

[37] See Stolper 1987, 389-390; Briant 2002, 627; Kaelin 2021, 588; Jacobs 2021, 1026; cf. Elayi / Sapin 1998, 18-19.

by Cyrus on his arrival.[38] Belesys, as may be assumed, was not in his residence at the time.

There seems to be no doubt that Xenophon's Belesys is identical to Bēlšunu, a dignitary known from Babylonian cuneiform texts dated from 407 to 401 BC. Texts from this period refer to him as governor of Ebir Nāri (Across the River, or Transeuphratea), the area west of the Euphrates,[39] from which it can be inferred that he was governor of Syria at the time.[40] In what is probably an interpolated fragment of Xenophon's *Anabasis* – which lists the governors (ἄρχοντες) of the various lands through which Cyrus and his army passed in 401 BC, and then, after the Battle of Cunaxa, Cyrus' Greek mercenaries during the so-called Retreat of the Ten Thousand – Belesys, not Abrokomas, is listed as the governor of Syria and Assyria.[41] Abrokomas does not appear in this fragment at all. The mention of Belesys in this passage as the governor of Syria and Assyria at the time of Cyrus' expedition reinforces the idea that Belesys was then in charge of Syria. This implies that the satrap of Syria mentioned by Diodorus was Belesys.[42]

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[38] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.10. See also Stolper 1990, 202-203; Shannahan 2015, 42; cf. Parpola 2003, 345-349, who proposes a different view of Bēlšunu/Belesys' origins. See also Lee 2016, 111.

[39] For more information on this area during the Achaemenid period, see Elayi / Sapin 1998, in particular 13-19, 145-158; cf. Jigoulov 2010, 24-32, 37-38. See also Elayi 1980, 25-26; Dandamayev 1987; Dandamayev 1996; Briant 2002, 49, 392-393, 487-490, 492, 544, 601, 627, 709, 713-717, 837, 951, 952, 988; Klinkott 2005, 456-458; Jacobs 2011; Kaelin 2021, 583-591. The scarcity of sources and administrative changes make it difficult to determine more precisely the structure of this area in late 5th and early 4th centuries BC (see Elayi 1980, 25; Dandamayev 1996; Elayi / Sapin 1998, 15-19, 145-146, 149-150, 154-156; Briant 2002, 487, 601, 627, 713-714, 951, 952, 988; Jigoulov 2010, 27-29, 38; Jacobs 2011; Kaelin 2021, 585-586, 587-589).

[40] See Stolper 1987, 389-392, 393-395, 397-398, 399-400; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Stolper 1990, 199-200, 202-203; Stolper 1994, 238-240; Stolper 1995, 217, 219; also Briant 2002, 601, 614, 626-627, 988; Parpola 2003, 345-349; Braun 2004, 120; Tuplin 2004, 163; Jigoulov 2010, 28; Ruzicka 2012, 244 with note 9; Shannahan 2015, 42; Lee 2016, 111, 112; Głogowski 2018, 15 note 26; Rop 2019a, 68 with note 13; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 23 note 1.4.10b; Tuplin 2021, 290. For more information on the dignitary in question, and the Babylonian texts pertaining him, see Stolper 1987; Stolper 1990; Stopler 1995; Dandamayev 1996; Briant 2002, 601-602, 724-725, 981, 988; Klinkott 2005, 268-270; Jacobs 2011; cf. Parpola 2003, 345-349 (a different view of Bēlšunu/Belesys' origins).

[41] Xen. *Anab*. 7.8.25. For this fragment as a relevant source of information, see Bivar 1961, 121-123, 125, 127; Stolper 1987, 389-390; Lendle 1995, 486-487; Brownson / Dillery 2001, 651 note 63; Jigoulov 2010, 28-29; Rop 2019a, 68 note 16; Jacobs 2011; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 261 note 7.8.25d; Thomas 2021, 453; Tuplin 2021, 292 with note C.16b; cf. Briant 2002, 988, whose approach is skeptical. Regarding this fragment as an interpolation to Xenophon's *Anabasis*, see Bivar 1961, 121, 123, 125, 127; Stolper 1987, 389; Brownson / Dillery 2001, 650 note 15; Klinkott 2005, 440-441, 475; Lee 2016, 111; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 261 note 7.8.25d ('The material presumably comes from another forth-century historian'); Thomas 2021, 453 (writes about: 'the unknown scribe who added a note at 7.8.25'); Tuplin 2021, 292 with note C.16b; cf. Lendle 1995, 486-487 (regards this fragment as Xenophon's notes, which he did not intend to be an integral part of the *Anabasis*); Rop 2019a, 68 note 16 (attributes this fragment to Xenophon). See also Schmitt 2004; Jigoulov 2010, 28-29 with note 58.

[42] Diod. 14.20.5.

Suggestions have been made, based on Xenophon's references to Abrokomas' presence in Phoenicia at the time of Cyrus' expedition,[43] that Abrokomas was exercising authority over Phoenicia at that time.[44] The boundaries of the area referred to in Greek as Phoenicia (Φοινίκη) during the Achaemenid period are not entirely clear. However, we do know that it comprised the eastern Mediterranean coast, probably reaching as far north as the area around the Gulf of Myriandros and as far south as the city of Ashkelon,[45] including important Phoenician cities such as Sidon, Tyre, Arvad (Greek Arados) and Byblos.[46] According to Xen. *Anab*. 7.8.25, it was Dernes who was in charge of Phoenicia, and Arabia, at the time of Cyrus' expedition.[47] There is no other information about him, but according to this fragment he, and not Abrokomas, ruled Phoenicia at the time.

Another view concerning the position held by Abrokomas in 401 BC in the area between the Euphrates and the eastern Mediterranean is that he was the King's military commander, appointed by Artaxerxes to quell the revolt in Egypt, ongoing since ca. 404 BC.[48] The activities of Abrokamas with a large

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[43] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.5, 1.7.12.

[44] Abrokomas exercising authority over Phoenicia at the time of Cyrus' expedition: Dandamaev 1989, 277-278, also 273; Brownson / Dillery 2001, 82-83 note 38; Parpola 2003, 348 note 51; Braun 2004, 120-121; Klinkott 2005, 300, 457-458 with note 72, 475 with note 118; Lee 2007, 47; Jigoulov 2010, 28 ('Whether he was a satrap or a general, Abrocomas appears to have been in charge of the territory of Phoenicia at the time of Artaxerxes II (*ca*. 405/4–359/8 BCE)').

[45] For more information, see Elayi 1982, 83-86, 87, 103-104, 105-108; Graf 1994, 181; also Elayi 1980, 14-17, 18, 25, 27-28; Lipiński 2004, 267-272; Jigoulov 2010, 25-27, 30-33, 36; Lee 2016, 113; Głogowski 2020, 169-171; Heckel 2020, 100-101; Kaelin 2021, 586.

[46] For more information on individual Phoenician cities in the years ca. 450-350 BC, see Elayi 2018, 241-275.

[47] Xen. *Anab*. 7.8.25; see also Thomas 2021, 453; otherwise Klinkott 2005, 475, who rejects this information, but does not explain why it refers specifically to Dernes and makes no mention of Abrokomas.

[48] Regarding this view, see Dandamayev 1983; Ruzicka 1985, 210-211 with note 21; Briant 2002, 619 (writes about: 'the *strategos* Abrocomas' and that: 'Artaxerxes assembled an army in Phoenicia under the command of Abrocomas'), 626 (Abrokomas as 'having been entrusted with the expedition to Egypt'); Lane Fox 2004, 15-16 ('Xenophon does mention that Abrocomas, a Persian commander, marched up from Phoenicia while Cyrus was marching into Syria in summer 401. Abrocomas had a large army and it is an attractive guess that he had initially been sent to Phoenicia to conduct an invasion of the rebellious Egypt'), 18-19; Olbrycht 2010, 93; Ruzicka 2012, 37-38 ('the fact that there was a Persian army in Phoenicia under the command of the Persian general Abrocomas poised to attack Egypt in 401 indicates that (…) Artaxerxes II initiated preparations soon – perhaps immediately – after he became king' (38)) with note 9 ('Most likely, Abrocomas was a specially appointed commander'), 39, 42, 64, 72, 194; Shannahan 2015, 38-39 ('It is generally accepted that a force under Abrocomas was mustered and dispatched in 401: the movement of Abrocomas from the Euphrates into Phoenicia with a substantial army suggests an impending assault on Egypt' (38)), 151-152; Rop 2019a, 68 note 15, 85 with note 71, 88, 98; Głogowski 2020, 167, 171-172, 190; Quack 2021, 560 ('A Persian army under the command of Abrocomas, camped in Phoenicia and poised for countermeasures in 401 BCE, never really set out for Egypt because

army in Phoenicia,[49] may be linked to Achaemenid military actions against Egypt.[50]

Yet another viewpoint holds that the reason for Abrokomas' presence with a large army in this area was to oppose Cyrus and his forces.[51] However, assuming that this was Abrokomas' mission entrusted to him by the Great King, it should be stated that he did not carry it out, despite the favorable terrain conditions created by factors such as the Syrian-Cilician Gates. He could have also used the eastern bank of the Euphrates to oppose Cyrus and his forces, as they would have had to cross the river from the west. However, Abrokomas confined himself to burning the boats on the Euphrates at Thapsakos to prevent them from crossing the river, an action of little use regardless, as it could be crossed by foot at the time.[52] It has been suggested that Abrokomas was deliberately avoiding a confrontation with Cyrus and his forces, playing a double game while waiting for the struggle between the Achaemenid brothers to resolve itself.[53] Such an attitude, however, would have been a clear act of disloyalty and disobedience to the Great King. At stake in this struggle was the royal throne. Artaxerxes would thus have certainly assigned the mission of confronting Cyrus and his forces to a person

of the inner-Persian conflict between Artaxerxes II and his younger brother Cyrus'); Thomas 2021, 453 ('A quite attractive alternate theory is that the reason Abrokomas had a large army under his control in 401 was that he was supposed to be organizing the reconquest of Egypt (…); if that was the case, perhaps he was not in charge of any other specific satrapy'); Rop 2023, 103, 113, 114, 115-117, 120. See also Cook 1983, 84 (Abrokomas 'appointed by the King as commander-in-chief for a war, whether to resist Cyrus or (…) to recover the newly-revolted Egypt'). For more information on the Egyptian revolt in question, see Olmstead 1948, 373-374; Ruzicka 1985, 208-209, 210-211 with note 21; Dandamaev 1989, 272-273; Briant 2002, 619, 987, 989-990; Lane Fox 2004, 15; Olbrycht 2010, 93; Ruzicka 2012, 37-42 with notes, 64; Shannahan 2015, 2, 38-39, 152; Lee 2016, 106; Rop 2019a, 85 with note 71, 88, 98; Heckel 2020, 103; Quack 2021, 560-561; Thomas 2021, 453; Rop 2023, 115.

[49] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.5, 1.7.12.

[50] Achaemenid military actions against Egypt launched from Phoenicia: Cook 1983, 84; Briant 2002, 619; Ruzicka 2012, 67 with notes; Głogowski 2020, 167, 172; Quack 2021, 559 (Cilicia and Phoenicia).

[51] Regarding this viewpoint, see Jigoulov 2010, 28 (writes about: 'Abrocomas, who was sent by Artaxerxes II Mnemon with a company of 300,000 men to defeat the rebellious Prince Cyrus'); Lee 2016, 106, 112-116 ('More likely Abrocomas' position was as a general appointed for war. Abrocomas allegedly led an army of some 300,000 men and 50 scythed chariots. (…) It is often inferred from the sequence Euphrates-Phoenicia that Abrocomas was en route to quell the revolt in Egypt. On general strategic grounds, however, it seems more likely that Abrocomas' mission was to confront Cyrus' (112-113)). See also Cook 1983, 84 (Abrokomas 'appointed by the King as commander-in-chief for a war, whether to resist Cyrus or (…) to recover the newly-revolted Egypt'), 212 ('Abrocomas, who had an army in Phoenicia conventionally estimated at 300,000 men and was responsible for safeguarding it [the Syrian-Cilician Gates]').

[52] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.17-18.

[53] See Lee 2016, 112-116; cf. Rop 2023, 113, 114, 115-118, 119-120, 122.

of his utmost trust, and he seems to have held Abrokomas in such regard. The sources provide no information that might explain any reason for Abrokomas' alleged disloyalty to Artaxerxes.

Based on the above, it is hard to see Abrokomas' actions in the face of the struggle between Artaxerxes and Cyrus in terms of any duplicity tantamount to disloyalty to the Great King. Consequently, it is also hard to see him as the King's military commander with the mission of opposing Cyrus and his forces in the area between the Euphrates and the eastern Mediterranean, a mission which he did not undertake. It seems most likely, therefore, that he was then acting as the King's military commander tasked with putting down the revolt in Egypt. In the face of Cyrus' invasion, however, he and his troops were ordered to abandon this mission and engage in the war against the King's younger brother.

Abrokomas and his troops did not take part in the Battle of Cunaxa because they arrived from Phoenicia five days late.[54] This information seems surprising, since after leaving Phoenicia they reached the Euphrates and crossed the river before Cyrus and his army,[55] so one would expect them to have taken part in the battle along with the rest of the King's forces. S. Ruzicka has suggested that Abrokomas and his troops, on their way from Phoenicia to the Great King, crossed the Euphrates later than Cyrus and his army, and thus arrived too late to take part in the battle.[56] This suggestion, however, clearly contradicts Xenophon's claim that Abrokomas arrived at the Euphrates before Cyrus and then burned the boats to prevent the rebel from crossing.[57] According to S. Ruzicka, the burning could have been carried out by men sent from Artaxerxes' camp, which would not have required Abrokomas' presence on the Euphrates before Cyrus, and Xenophon's information on this point is incorrect.[58] However, this assumption does not explain why Xenophon attributes the act of arson precisely to Abrokomas and not to someone else, such as Belesys. Elsewhere, the Athenian historian states that Cyrus expected Abrokomas (and not someone else) to put up strong resistance on the Syrian side of the Syrian-Cilician Gates, but the latter, having learned of Cyrus' presence in Cilicia, moved from Phoenicia to join the Great King.[59] Both of these accounts of Xenophon show that Abrokomas moved before Cyrus, which does not allow the interpretation that it was Cyrus who preceded Abrokomas.[60]

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[54] Xen. *Anab*. 1.7.12, see also 1.4.5, 1.5.18.

[55] Xen. *Anab*. 1.5.18.

[56] Ruzicka 1985, 210-211 with note 21; Ruzicka 2012, 39, 42; similarly Głogowski 2020, 168-169, 171-172 ('It is unlikely (…) that Abrocomas could have outrun Cyrus not only in encountering Artaxerxes in Babylonia but even in crossing the Euphrates' (172)), 190.

[57] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.18, see also 1.3.20.

[58] Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21; similarly Głogowski 2020, 168-169.

[59] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.5.

[60] As for counter-arguments to this interpretation, see also Lee 2016, 114-115.

The sources do not specify which way Abrokomas and his troops traversed after crossing the Euphrates to Cunaxa. Probably the destination of their march was Arbela, through which ran the main route from Syria to Babylonia. According to Diodorus (following Ephorus), Artaxerxes had pointed out Ekbatana as the gathering point for the King's forces for the war against Cyrus.[61] These must have been only forces from Iran and satrapies further east. Plutarch, on the other hand, reports that during the march of Cyrus and his army news reached him that Artaxerxes was gathering his forces in Persis.[62] These reports were probably false, however, planted in the enemy camp to spread disinformation.[63]

In order to reach Babylonia after crossing the Euphrates, Abrokomas and his troops may have followed the route soon taken by Cyrus and his army, which led south down the Euphrates along its eastern bank. This route led to the Araxes River (an eastern tributary of the Euphrates, identified with the modern Khabur[64] or Balich[65]), with many villages with supplies nearby, and from the Araxes through barren desert areas to the Maskas River (another eastern tributary of the Euphrates[66]) and the city of Korsote, then on to the city of Pylai[67] and finally to Cunaxa in northern Babylonia. Traversing this route it took Cyrus and his army, moving by forceful march, thirty-nine days.[68] However, Abrokomas and his troops certainly did not follow this route, since after crossing the Euphrates at Thapsakos before Cyrus and his army they arrived at Cunaxa five days after the end of the battle.

Another option for Abrokomas and his troops after crossing the Euphrates was a route through Upper Mesopotamia towards the Tigris, via the so-called royal road connecting Sardis and Susa[69] described by Herodotus.[70] According to his account, this road crossed the Euphrates near the border between Cilicia and Armenia and then ran towards the Tigris, covering fifteen stages (σταθμοί),

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[61] Diod. 14.22.1; see also Briant 2002, 629, 739.

[62] Plut. *Art*. 7.1.

[63] Podrazik 2022, 27-28.

[64] See Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 25 note 1.4.19a.

[65] Farrell 1961; Lendle 1995, 43-45, 46; Monerie 2019, 166.

[66] Farrell 1961 identifies this river with the Khabur; similarly Lendle 1995, 45, 46; Kuhrt 2007, 742 with note 1 (p. 743 ad loc.).

[67] The Arakses: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.19, the Maskas: Xen. *Anab*. 1.5.4, Korsote: Xen. *Anab*. 1.5.4, Pylai: Xen. *Anab*. 1.5.5.

[68] March of Cyrus and his army from the Euphrates crossing to Cunaxa: Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.19-1.8.1; see also Diod. 14.21.7.

[69] See Lendle 1995, 43-44, 59; Briant 2002, 628-629; Lee 2016, 115; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 25 note 1.4.19a; Thomas 2021, 453; Rop 2023, 117-118, 120, 122.

[70] Hdt. 5.52-54. For more information on this road, see Oates 1968, 7; Graf 1994, 167, 168, 171, 175, 177-180; Lendle 1995, 117-119; Briant 2002, 357-359, 362, 364, 366 (Map 2), 368, 374, 375, 376, 377, 380, 739, 927; Kuhrt 2007, 730, 731, 732, 738, 739; Huitink / Rood 2019, 188; Almagor 2020, 147-160 (a rather skeptical approach to Herodotus' description); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 107 (Map 3.5.15); Marciak et al. 2022, 74-76.

which can be understood as a fifteen-day march,[71] with a watchtower (φυλακτήριον) at each stage. It then crossed rivers such as the Tigris, the Great Zab, the Little Zab[72] and the Gyndes (modern Dijala[73]), the eastern tributaries of the Tigris. Then it passed through the land of the Matienoi (a people living in the Zagros Mountains, between Lake Urmia and the sources of the Little Zab[74]), covering thirty-four stages, and then through the Kissian land, covering eleven stages, where it reached Susa. There were also other routes beyond the Tigris, not described by Herodotus. One of them ran towards Babylon.

On the eastern bank of the Tigris River, close to the southern border of the Kardouchoi territory and bordering Armenia to the north, there was a junction on the aforementioned royal road. This road led in several directions: eastward to Ekbatana, southeastward to Susa, southward to Babylon, westward to Sardis, and northward through the land of the Kardouchoi to Armenia.[75] It may be assumed that the route south to Babylon followed the eastern bank of the Tigris, crossing successively the Great Zab, the Little Zab and the Gyndes/Dijala, then across the Tigris and finally to Babylon. Going in the opposite direction, it probably coincided in part with the route of the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus (the so-called Cyreians or Ten Thousand) who, after the Battle of Cunaxa, were led by the King's forces from Cunaxa towards the Tigris and, after crossing the river, along its eastern bank to the north towards the land of the Kardouchoi, in 401/400 BC.[76] They first crossed the Tigris near the city of Opis, and then the Physkos River (possibly the same as the Dijala[77]), an eastern tributary of the Tigris, which joined it near the city of Sittake.[78] Cyrus II (550-530 BC) and his forces had also crossed the Tigris near Opis, after crossing the Gyndes/Dijala from the north shortly before their conquest of Babylon in 539 BC.[79] It can be assumed that they partly followed the same route along the eastern bank of the Tigris, but from north to south, as did the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus the Younger.

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[71] See Almagor 2020, 153 (one σταθμός (stage) equals about one marching day).

[72] Regarding the Great Zab and the Little Zab, see Marciak et al. 2022, 74 (there also further references).

[73] Kuhrt 2007, 85 and 86 (note 4).

[74] See Briant 2002, 927; Kuhrt 2007, 993; otherwise Almagor 2020, 158 ('It [Matiene] is thus made to be a huge area, which covers Assyria and Media, two names that are absent in Herodotus' account. (…) Herodotus' portrayal of the terrain of Persia (beyond the Zagros) appears to be imaginary, and this may apply as well to the territory of Matiene alongside the Zagros foothills').

[75] Xen. *Anab*. 3.5.14-17; see also Diod. 14.27.3-4; also Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 107 (Map 3.5.15), 108 (Figure 3.5.15). See also Briant 2002, 366 (Map 2); Huitink / Rood 2019, 188-189.

[76] See Briant 2002, 380.

[77] See Landle 1995, 117-118.

[78] See Xen. *Anab*. 2.4.13-25, with Lendle 1995, 115 and 117-118 (indicates that Xenophon most likely confused Sittake with Opis and Opis with Sittake); Monerie 2019, 161 with note 28; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 65-67 with notes 2.4.13b, 2.4.25b, and 59 (Map 2.3.14).

[79] Hdt. 1.189-192.

According to Diodorus, after leaving Babylon in order to reach Arbela in 331 BC, Darius III (336-330 BC) and his army were marching with the Tigris on their right and the Euphrates on their left.[80] Curtius writes similarly, with more about their crossing of the Tigris and then, after their arrival at Arbela, the Lycus River,[81] the same as the Great Zab.[82] He does not specify, however, where they crossed the Tigris. It is likely the same place where the river was crossed by the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus the Younger, and earlier by Cyrus II and his forces advancing in the opposite direction, that is, near Opis. When Diodorus and Curtius write that Darius III and his army had the Tigris on their right and the Euphrates on their left after leaving Babylon, they may have been referring only to the section of the route between Babylon and Opis. Indeed, Darius III and his army had the Tigris on their right and the Euphrates on their left while traversing this section. However, they might have crossed the Tigris near the Opis and then continued their march to the north along the eastern bank of the river towards Arbela, which was not reported by Diodorus and Curtius.[83] It can be supposed, therefore, that Darius III and his army crossed the Tigris near Opis on their way from Babylon to Arbela in 331 BC and then on to Gaugamela, where the famous battle soon took place. The Greek mercenaries of Cyrus the Younger had done the same, and still earlier Cyrus II and his forces, only in the opposite direction. Presumably, at the same place, near Opis, the forces of Artaxerxes II crossed the Tigris, advancing from their gathering point at Ekbatana towards Babylon and finally Cunaxa. From Ekbatana, they probably followed the royal road connecting Susa and Sardis to the junction, and then to the south along the eastern bank of the Tigris to its crossing near Opis. In this way they probably traversed along the Great Khorasan Road, which passed through Ekbatana and Babylon, among other places.[84]

Xenophon does not record a crossing of the Little Zab by the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus, but he does recount a crossing of the Zapatas River,[85] likely the same as the Great Zab,[86] which suggests that the Little Zab must have been crossed as well.[87] The march continued from the Zapatas/Great Zab north along the eastern

[80] Diod. 17.53.3-4.

[81] Curt. 4.9.6-9.

[82] The Lycus the same as the Great Zab: Nawotka 2004, 323; Monerie 2019, 182; Marciak et al. 2022, 63.

[83] Otherwise Nawotka 2004, 303-304 (does not specify, however, where Darius and his army crossed the Tigris).

[84] Regarding this road, see Oates 1968, 7; Graf 1994, 179, 186; Briant 2002, 39, 358, 366 (Map 2), 739; Almagor 2020, 165-166; also Kuhrt 2007, 738.

[85] Xen. *Anab*. 3.3.6.

[86] The Zapatas the same as the Great Zab: Oates 1968, 60; Lendle 1995, 165-167; Huitink / Rood 2019, 42-43; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 94 note 3.3.6a.

[87] The reason why Xenophon does not record a crossing of the Little Zab might have been the low level of its waters (Huitink / Rood 2019, 42-43).

bank of the Tigris, passing cities such as Larissa (identified with the Assyrian Kalhu, also known as Nimrud) and Mespila (identified with the Assyrian Nineveh),[88] as well as the junction on the royal road connecting Susa and Sardis.[89] Then it led to the land of the Kardouchoi and subsequently to Armenia.[90] It took them twenty-nine days of marching (plus eight days of rest[91]) to cover this route, from the point where they crossed the Tigris near Opis to the junction. Part of the route, however, beginning with the crossing of the Zapatas/Great Zab, involved fighting which slowed their progress.[92] Traversing the route from Cunaxa to the Tigris crossing near Opis, in turn, took eight days of marching (and twenty-six days of rest).[93]

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the route between the junction on the royal road and Cunaxa could have been covered in about thirty-seven days, and this is probably the time Abrokomas and his troops needed to do so. Adding to this the approximately fifteen days needed to cover the section of the royal road running between the Euphrates and the junction gives a total of about fifty-two days. As mentioned above, Cyrus and his army reached Cunaxa in thirty-nine days after crossing the Euphrates at Thapsakos, forcefully marching along the eastern bank of the river. If Abrokomas' aim was to join the King's forces before the fight with Cyrus, he would probably have taken the faster route, down the Euphrates. The fact that he did not suggests he had a different orders.

It is most likely that neither Artaxerxes nor Abrokomas knew which way Cyrus would go after crossing the Euphrates, especially as he was very concerned about keeping his actions undercover. Most likely, he was considering the direction of the march would be to the east after crossing the Euphrates. In this case, the route might have run via Upper Mesopotamia. However, this route would probably have presented difficulties in the form of the watchtowers (φυλακτήρια) that Herodotus refers to, that is of course if they were still there in 401 BC. On the other hand, Cyrus' status and knowledge as a member of the royal family, and the support of the queen mother Parysatis for him,[94] may have to some extent facilitated his passage with his army past these watchtowers.

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[88] Xen. *Anab*. 3.4.6-12, with Oates 1968, 60-61; Lendle 1995, 165-166, 172-177; Huitink / Rood 2019, 43, 147-153; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 98 notes 3.4.7a-3.4.7c, 3.4.10a-3.4.11a and 97 (Figure 3.4.7), 101 (Map 3.4.24).

[89] Xen. *Anab*. 3.5.15.

[90] Xen. *Anab*. 3.5.17.

[91] Days of rest: Xen. *Anab*. 2.5.1, 3.4.1, 3.4.18, 3.4.31.

[92] Xen. *Anab*. 2.4.13-2.5.42, 3.1.2-4, 3.1.11-3.5.15, with Lendle 1995, 115 and 117-118 (Xenophon most likely confused Sittake with Opis and Opis with Sittake); Monerie 2019, 161 with note 28; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 65-67 with notes 2.4.13b, 2.4.25b, and 59 (Map 2.3.14).

[93] Xen. *Anab*. 2.2.4-2.4.13, with Lendle 1995, 115 and 117-118 (Xenophon most likely confused Sittake with Opis and Opis with Sittake); Monerie 2019, 161 with note 28; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 65-67 with notes 2.4.13b, 2.4.25b, and 59 (Map 2.3.14). Days of rest: Xen. *Anab*. 2.3.17, 2.3.25-2.4.1 (three days mentioned, and also more than twenty).

[94] Parysatis' support for Cyrus: Xen. *Anab*. 1.1.4; Plut. *Art*. 2.2-3.

It is known that a route via Upper Mesopotamia was taken by Alexander of Macedon and his forces in 331 BC, shortly before the Battle of Arbela/Gaugamela. Coming from the Levant, they crossed the Euphrates at Thapsakos,[95] as Cyrus and his army did, and then headed towards the Tigris. There is no precise information in the sources about the route they took.[96] It is possible, however, that it coincided with the Persian royal road running via Upper Mesopotamia.[97] Once they reached the Tigris, a major challenge for them was to ford it by foot.[98] The location of this ford has not been specified by the sources. Perhaps it was in the vicinity of modern Mosul.[99] Having crossed to the other side of the Tigris, they proceeded down this river along its eastern bank to finally reach Gaugamela,[100] situated between the eastern bank of the Tigris and the western bank of the Great Zab.[101]

In connection with the war between Artaxerxes and Cyrus, Diodorus (following Ephorus) mentions Indian troops, as well as other unspecified peoples who were too far away to reach the gathering point at Ekbatana in time.[102] There seems to be no doubt that this refers to peoples from the eastern parts of the Achaemenid Empire.[103] Ultimately, these eastern forces did not take part in the confrontation between Artaxerxes and Cyrus.

Taking into account the prospect of Cyrus and his army marching east after crossing the Euphrates, the use of the route via Upper Mesopotamia by Abrokomas and his troops can be perceived as an integral part of the King's strategy in the war against Cyrus. The point was to block Cyrus' potential march east of the Euphrates in Upper Mesopotamia, probably along the Tigris.[104] It is known that shortly before the Battle of Arbela/Gaugamela (331 BC), Darius III's forces were to take actions against Alexander and his army approaching the Tigris from

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[95] Arr. *Anab*. 3.7.1-2.

[96] See Curt. 4.9.12-14; Arr. *Anab*. 3.7.3-5; also Plut. *Alex*. 31.1-2 (following Eratosthenes); also Olmstead 1948, 514; Nawotka 2004, 301-302, 312-313; Marciak et al. 2022, 62, 63. Broader discussion and possible course of the route: Engels 1978, 64-70, Map 8.

[97] See Monerie 2019, 160-161 with Fig. 3, 164-166 with notes 38 and 43, 173.

[98] Diod. 17.55.1-6; Curt. 4.9.15-24; see also Arr. *Anab*. 3.7.5; also Nawotka 2004, 313; Monerie 2019, 160-161, 173.

[99] See Engels 1978, Map 8; Nawotka 2004, 313; Monerie 2019, 160 with note 21; cf. Marciak et al. 2022, 63 with note 10, 75 with note 80, 78-79, 81.

[100] Arr. *Anab*. 3.7.6-3.9.5; see also Curt. 4.9.24-4.12.5; also Diod. 17.55.6; Plut. *Alex*. 31.3-5.

[101] Regarding the location of Gaugamela, see Arr. *Anab*. 3.8.7, 6.11.5-6; Plut. *Alex*. 31.3-5; also Curt. 4.9.9-10 (the name of Gaugamela is not mentioned); also Olmstead 1948, 514-515; Oates 1968, 61 (the name of Gaugamela does not appear); Nawotka 2004, 313-315. Broader discussion: Marciak et al. 2022.

[102] Diod. 14.22.1-2.

[103] Olbrycht 2010, 93.

[104] Cf. Farrell 1961, 154-155, who suggests a possible manoeuvre by Cyrus after crossing the Euphrates to confuse Abrokomas.

the west to hinder their river crossing.[105] Given the whereabouts of Abrokomas and his troops after their leaving Phoenicia and crossing the Euphrates, they were in good position to be directed by Artaxerxes towards the Tigris for such a task. The forces gathered by Artaxerxes, in turn, were to come out to face the rebel from the south, blocking the way to Babylon, which is known to have happened, resulting in the Battle of Cunaxa.

Xenophon's account suggests that the decision on the direction of Cyrus and his army's march beyond the Euphrates was made during their five-day stay at Thapsakos, just before they crossed the river.[106] It can be presumed that if Abrokomas and his troops followed to the south after crossing the Euphrates, Cyrus and his army would have taken the northern route, via Upper Mesopotamia. Given that the northern route was taken by Abrokomas and his troops, where Cyrus was expecting to encounter resistance, the latter followed the southern route.[107] On the one hand, this circumstances favored Cyrus by postponing Abrokomas and his troops joining Ataxerxes and their late arrival at Cunaxa. On the other, it gave the Great King an advantage by determining the direction of the rebels' march beyond the Euphrates (to the south), allowing him to better anticipate their further movements and prepare for the battle accordingly. After Cyrus and his army had crossed the Euphrates and taken the southern route, Abrokomas and his troops moved towards the Great King (presumably along the eastern bank of the Tigris) to support him in his fight with Cyrus. They were late, however, arriving on the battlefield five days after the battle had ended. According to Xenophon and Diodorus, after crossing the Euphrates Cyrus accelerated his march,[108] presumably aiming to prevent Abrokomas and his troops from joining the Great King.[109] In this point Cyrus succeeded, but ultimately at the Battle of Cunaxa Artaxerxes and his accordingly prepared army were the victors.[110]

Concerning the Battle of Cunaxa, Xenophon mentions Abrokomas as one of the commanders of the King's forces, as well as Tissaphernes, Gobryas and Arbakes.[111]

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[105] See Diod. 17.55.1-6; Curt. 4.9.7, 4.9.14-24; cf. Arr. *Anab*. 3.7.4-5.

[106] Xen. *Anab*. 1.4.11-13; see also Diod. 14.21.5-6.

[107] Cf. Rop 2023, 117, who indicates that Abrokomas' actions '(…) forced Cyrus to march along a faster but more precarious route (…).' He does not, however, fit these actions into the King's strategy in the war against Cyrus, including Abrokomas' expected resistance to Cyrus in Upper Mesopotamia, seeing Abrokomas' actions in terms of playing a double game.

[108] Xen. *Anab*. 1.5.7-9; Diod. 14.21.7.

[109] Cf. Briant 2002, 628, 629, who indicates that Cyrus accelerated his march to prevent Abrokomas and his troops from joining Artaxerxes, but does not perceive Abrokomas' actions as part of the King's strategy, which was to block Cyrus' possible march in Upper Mesopotamia.

[110] Artaxerxes' army at Cunaxa accordingly prepared: Xen. *Anab*. 1.8.1-2, 1.8.11, 1.8.14; Diod. 14.22.3-4; Plut. *Art*. 7.3-4.

[111] Xen. *Anab*. 1.7.12. For more information on Tissaphernes, Gobryas and Arbakes in the Battle of Cunaxa, with further references, see Lee 2016, 110-112; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 34 notes 1.7.12a-b; Podrazik 2022, 28-29 with notes 8-10; Podrazik 2023, 752, 757-758, 759-763.

With regard to Abrokomas, however, he states that he and his troops did not take part in the battle, as they arrived from Phoenicia five days after the battle had ended.[112] Abrokomas' role as commander was to block Cyrus' possible march in Upper Mesopotamia, probably along the Tigris.

The actions of Abrokomas and his troops presented in this article provide a better understanding of the King's strategy in the war against Cyrus in 401 BC. The essential point of this strategy was to face the rebel and his army between the Euphrates and the Tigris. It is most likely that neither Ataxerxes nor Abrokomas knew where Cyrus and his army would march after crossing the Euphrates – south towards Babylon or east towards the Tigris. The King's strategy took both options into account. The effect of this was to divert Abrokomas and his troops from Phoenicia, where they were currently operating against rebellious Egypt, towards the Tigris, where they would oppose Cyrus and his army should they choose to march in that direction. The forces gathered by Artaxerxes, in turn, secured the southern direction, leading to Babylonia along the Euphrates. Thus, the actions of Abrokomas and his troops in 401 BC were not opportunistic acts of a duplicitous game of waiting for the resolution of the war between the Achaemenid brothers, but an integral part of the King's strategy, taking into account the different directions Cyrus and his army could have taken after crossing the Euphrates. It is known *post-factum* that they moved down this river, culminating in the Battle of Cunaxa and the victory of the Great King and his forces. However, the situation leading up to this battle was dynamic, with many variables, and events could have been very different had Cyrus and his army moved east towards the Tigris after crossing the Euphrates. This direction, however, was blocked by Abrokomas and his troops, forcing the rebel and his army to march south, where they were met by Artaxerxes and his forces.

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[112] Xen. *Anab*. 1.7.12-13.

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Abstract

This article analyzes the strategic role of Abrokomas, a commander in the service of Artaxerxes II (404-359 BC), during the revolt of Cyrus the Younger in 401 BC and the subsequent campaign in Syria and Mesopotamia. Focusing on the movement and actions of Abrokomas and his forces, the study re-examines ancient literary sources (notably Xenophon, Diodorus, and others) alongside recent scholarship and epigraphic data to clarify his position and function within the Achaemenid defense. The article challenges earlier views that saw Abrokomas as a disloyal or opportunistic actor and instead situates him as part of a deliberate royal strategy. Initially tasked

with military operations in Phoenicia and possibly Egypt, Abrokomas was redirected to Mesopotamia to anticipate and block potential routes of Cyrus and his army. The article reconstructs the routes taken by Persian forces, evaluates the debated positions of key satraps (notably the identification and role of Belesys versus Abrokomas as satrap of Syria), and situates these military maneuvers within the wider logistical framework of the Achaemenid Empire, including the use of the royal road network. Ultimately, the article argues that Abrokomas' movements were not marked by hesitation, but reflect the King's flexible and multi-directional strategy to contain Cyrus' advance, culminating in the confrontation at Cunaxa (401 BC). The actions and misdirections of Abrokomas contributed to shaping the campaign's outcome, and the article provides a reassessment of his reputation and of Persian defensive planning in the face of internal rebellion.

Map

The map illustrates the route taken by Cyrus and his army from Sardis to Cunaxa in 401 BC. It also details the path followed by Cyrus' Greek mercenaries after the Battle of Cunaxa, as they traveled north along the eastern bank of the Tigris toward the southern shores of the Black Sea, ultimately reaching western Anatolia from 401 to 399 BC. This map is based on F.G. Sorof's edition of Xenophon's *Anabasis* (Teubner), published in Berlin in 1898.

ANABASIS 14–15 (2023–2024)
STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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ALEXANDER AND THE AMAZON QUEEN

Keywords: Alexander of Macedon, Amazons, Thalestris

The meeting of the great conqueror with the queen of the Amazons, is perhaps the best-known non-event in the works of the Alexander historians.[1] As Justin (42.3.7) notes, the story was told by multiple (now lost) authors. Plutarch (*Alex.* 46.1–2) names those who treated the episode as if it were historical (Kleitarchos, Polykleitos, Onesikritos, Antigenes and Istros), adding that Aristoboulos, Chares, Ptolemy, Antikleides, Philon of Thebes, Philip of Theangela, Hekataios of Eretria, Philip the Chalkidian, and Douris of Samos either rejected or omitted it.[2] Justin (12.3.5–7), Curtius (6.5.25–32), and Diodorus (17.77.1–3) follow Kleitarchos (who may, in turn, have found the story in either Polykleitos or Onesikritos).[3] In 2001, Elizabeth Baynham published an excellent paper on "Alexander and the Amazons," which must now be regarded as the starting-point for all future discussions.[4] There are, however, some problems that have yet to be resolved, and in this paper I attempt to fine-tune some issues and offer suggestions on the origin and development of the Thalestris episode.

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[1] Curt. 6.5.25–32; Diod. 17.77.1–3; Justin 2.4.33; 12.3.5–7; 42.3.7 (cf. Oros. 3.18.5); Plut. *Alex.* 46; Strabo 11.5.4 C505.

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[2] See Hamilton 1969, 123–6 for discussion of the individual lost sources. Cf. Strabo 11.5.4 C505.

[3] For Kleitarchos' probable use of Onesikritos see Pearson 1960, 225, 231; Heckel 2007, 270.

[4] Baynham 2001. Roisman 2017 provides a useful study of how the episode was treated by the extant historians.

Thalestris and Alexander

The story goes that, while Alexander was in Hyrkania, he was visited by Thalestris, the queen of the Amazons, who had traveled for 35 days in order to reach him (cf. Strabo 11.5.4 C505 = Kleitarchos, *FGrH* 137 F16).[5] She was accompanied by 300 warriors, having left the rest of her army – its total strength is not given – behind at some point in the journey. When she arrived in Alexander's camp, she leapt from her horse and approached Alexander, telling him that she had come to have sexual congress with him in the hope of producing an heir: a male child would be returned to Alexander; a female would remain with her and become the next Amazon queen. Alexander was agreeable and the two devoted thirteen days to love-making, after which Thalestris was satisfied that she had conceived and returned home. Only Justin (2.4.33), probably from a different source, adds that she died soon after returning home.

Although the episode is part of the description of Alexander's moral decline and his assumption of oriental practices – the Amazons serve as a symbol of the dangers of the exotic East[6] – it also serves the purpose of highlighting the king's role as world-conqueror by bringing him into contact with mythical elements on the fringes of the world, while at the same time reasserting his heroic stature.[7] As Walcott notes: "Wherever the Amazons are located by the Greeks, … it is always beyond the confines of the civilized world."[8]

Alexander and Herakles

Though both had encounters with Amazons, Herakles serves as a better model than Achilles.[9] Herakles was famous for traveling to the ends of the world (including the western edges: the cattle of Geryon and the apples of the Hesperides),

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[5] Cf. Strabo 11.5.4 C505 (Κλείταρχος δέ φησι τὴν Θαληστρίαν ἀπὸ Κασπίων πυλῶν καὶ Θερμώδοντος ὁρμηθεῖσαν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον, εἰσὶ δ' ἀπὸ Κασπίας εἰς Θερμώδοντα στάδιοι πλείους ἑκακισχιλίων), discussed at greater length below.

[6] Daumas 1992.

[7] Baynham 2001, 122: "his meeting with an Amazon was an inevitable part of … contemporary *mythopoiesis*. Both Heracles and Achilles had encounters with Amazons; therefore Alexander must have one." See also Heckel 2003, 155 n. 18. Cf. Arr. 5.3.1–4, citing Eratosthenes; Curt. 3.4.10; Diod. 17.83.1. Cf. Strootman 2022 for physical "boundaries." See also Brown 1950, 150: "It was natural for a Greek to interpret Alexander for the Greek world in terms of these old stories. Alexander had gone beyond the bounds of geographical knowledge and entered the realm of fable. It was inevitable that there should be curiosity about the Amazons, and quite fitting that Alexander, like Theseus, should meet them. The Greek world would have been indignant not to find confirmation of the legends." Similarly, Lane Fox 1973, 276: "certainly, the Amazons were too famous for romantics to admit that Alexander had not received them."

[8] Walcott 1984, 42.

[9] See Heckel 2015.

and Alexander could be (and was) said to have followed in his footsteps in Libya (Arr. 3.3.1), at Aornos (12.7.12–13), and in the Punjab, where he encountered the Siboi (12.9.2), descendants of Herakles.[10] An encounter with an Amazon queen should not come as a surprise. Amongst the famous labors of Herakles was the securing of the girdle (belt: ζωστήρ) of the Amazon Hippolyte for King Eurystheus in order that he might give it to his daughter, Admete. Like all myths, the storyline of Herakles' ninth labor changed over time, but the version given by Apollodorus (2.5.9), who gave reasonably faithful accounts of stories taken from earlier mythographers, such as Pherecydes of Leros,[11] contains elements that are similar to Alexander's encounter with Thalestris. When Herakles arrived at Themiskyra, Hippolyte came to his camp to determine the purpose of his visit. Their interaction was friendly and she agreed to give him the girdle. Unfortunately, Hera intervened and roused the Amazons to battle, after which Herakles suspected betrayal and killed Hippolyte and took the belt. But the acquisition of the Amazon's belt was originally not intended to involve combat, which came about only as a result of the machinations of Hera, who harbored an implacable hatred for the hero. As Walcott states, "to defeat an Amazon by itself was insufficient to re-establish the supremacy of the male, for such a creature had to be sexually humiliated, which is why the ninth labour of Heracles was to secure the girdle of queen Hippolyte, the loss of this garment symbolizing her sexual submission…."[12] In another version, Melanippe, who was captured by Herakles, gave him her belt in exchange for her life (Diod. 4.16.4; cf. Justin 2.4.25, where he receives "the arms of the queen," presumably Antiope). Alexander, by contrast, had a sexual relationship with Thalestris (who had come to Alexander for this very purpose) – the undoing of a woman's girdle (ζώνη) was, of course, a symbol of sexual possession – and the union of the two most powerful warriors, male and female (Diod. 17.77.3; cf. Curt. 6.5.30), was both an experiment in eugenics and a symbol of the attempt to merge eastern and western cultures. Thus Baynham regards it as "an early romantic expression of an aspiration, namely reconciliation between the conquerors and the barbarians ... that was to prove ... fleeting and illusory."[13]

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[10] For scepticism see Strabo 15.1.8 C688; Arr. 4.28.1–2; 5.3.1–4.

[11] See J. G. Frazier's introduction to the Loeb *Apollodorus*, vol. 1, pp. xviii-xx.

[12] Walcott 1984, 42. Mayor 2014, 254–5 notes that the *zoster* is a war-belt and not the same as the *zone* or girdle. But it is clear that removing (or having the Amazon queen surrender) the *zoster* is tantamount to "unmanning" her and there is at least a perception of seduction in the process. As Mayor 2014, 255 observes: "In many literary accounts, the encounter between Heracles and Hippolyte began amicably, then turned brutal through a misunderstanding. Some versions even promise love between equals before the battle erupts."

[13] Baynham 2001, 126. Cf. Albaladejo Viveros 2005, 226 speaks of "una unión que además tendría el carácter propagandístico de presentar un acercamiento a los bárbaros y así hacer de Alejandro el soberano de un mundo mestizo, donde todas las etnias y demás elementos diferenciadores quedarían diluidos bajo su poder universal."

Finally, Ogden compares Alexander's encounter with Thalestris (which was said to have occurred just after the theft and return of Bucephalas) with the legend of Hercules and the Echidna (Hdt. 4.8–10).[14] This mythical creature, half-woman and half-viper stole the mares yoked to Hercules' chariot while the hero slept. She refused to return the horses unless Hercules had sex with her, a demand with which the hero complied, and their liaison continued for some time. The Echidna – in a situation similar to that of Calypso and Odysseus – wished to keep Hercules with her. In the end, she declared that she was pregnant and asked Hercules what she should do with child (or, rather, children: she gave birth to three, though only one proved worthy of his father). Whether this in any way influenced the transfer of Amazon story from Central Asia to Hyrcania is uncertain.

The historical event(s) that inspired the Amazon story

In 329/8 at the Iaxartes (Syr-darya) River, according to Arr. 4.15.1–3; Curt. 8.1.9 (cf. Plut. *Alex.* 46.1, 3), envoys from the king of the European Skythians – so called because they lived beyond the river (which the Alexander historians equated with the Tanais and regarded as the boundary between Europe and Asia[15]) – offered Alexander his daughter's hand in marriage. Alexander declined (Arr. 4.15.5), an eventuality the ambassadors were prepared for (Arr. 4.15.3: εἰ δὲ ἀπαξιοῖ τὴν Σκυθῶν βασίλισσαν γῆμαι Ἀλέξανδρος),[16] but the Skythian king was nevertheless accepted as an ally. At the same time, Pharasmanes, ruler of Chorasmians,[17] arrived and entered into friendship with Alexander, adding that he would aid the Macedonians, if they wished to attack the Kolchians and the Amazons, whose territories bordered on his (Arr. 4.15.4–5), an offer that Alexander also declined, since he was committed to the campaign in India. The geographical confusion can be traced to Polykleitos of Larisa (Strabo 11.7.4 = *FGrH* 128 F7), one of the authors who gave credence to the Amazon story. Pharasmanes would certainly have known better.[18]

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[14] Ogden 2021, 149–52. Cf. Stoneman 2008, 130.

[15] It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate further Alexander's contemporaries' conception of geography and the location of the Amazons (on which see Hamilton 1971; Bosworth 1980, 377–9; Atkinson 1994, 185–9, all with additional literature; cf. Bowden 2021, 143 n. 51). Suffice it to say that confusion of the Iaxartes and the Tanais, on the one hand, and the placing of the Amazons north of Hyrkania and Parthia (as well as near the kingdom of the Chorasmians) contributed to view that Alexander could have encountered Thalestris in Central Asia.

[16] Βασίλισσα, like *regina*, can of course mean "queen" or "princess." Hence, we cannot read too much into the term, though Tarn 1948, II 327 uses it as one of the underpinnings of his argument linking the Skythian *basilissa* with the Amazon queen.

[17] Heckel 2021, no. 887.

[18] Albaladejo Viveros 2005, 224 claims that Pharasmenes merely used the Amazon myth in order to gain Macedonian aid for his own expansion plans: "Farásmanes ...sabedor de algunas

Either of these events could have had some impact on the story of Alexander and Thalestris, though it is striking that in both cases Alexander had rejected the offers.

Tarn claims that the connection between the offer of the Skythian bride and the Amazon story "seems certain enough," noting what he considered four points of similarity, which I quote in full:

> (1) the Queen of the Amazons came to Alexander παιδοποιίας χάριν, as a foreign bride married for political reasons would; (2) Arrian calls the girl βασίλισσα, queen; (3) Pharasmanes' reference to the Amazons as being his neighbours; (4) the original place of meeting of the Amazon Queen and Alexander was beyond the Jaxartes.[19]

This is far too rigid and simplistic. A. B. Bosworth doubts any such connection. "The most probable explanation is that Alexander was visited in Hyrcania by a native princess, probably of Dahan stock, with an entourage of female warriors.[20] The existence of such women among the Saca peoples of the east seems an established fact…. Onesicritus (*FGrH* 134 F1) was probably the first to identify them with the Amazons, and Cleitarchus followed the tradition…".[21] I do not see, however, why one should replace an attested Skythian princess with an imagined one "of Dahan stock," except to restore Hyrkania as the location of the visit (on which, see below). Furthermore, although it has become clear that female warriors were common among the peoples of the steppes, it is as unlikely that a native princess would have been accompanied by an all-female band of attendants as it is that the Amazons existed in Alexander's day.[22]

Diodorus, Curtius, and Justin, as we have seen, followed Kleitarchos in locating the Thalestris episode in Hyrkania, to the southeast of the Caspian. But, although Kleitarchos is generally regarded as one of the earlier Alexander historians,

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tradiciones griegas, utilizó el mito de las mujeres guerreras como señuelo al objeto de poner a su disposición el ejército macedonio y así poder ampliar sus dominios territoriales a costa de sus vecinos."

[19] Tarn 1948, II 327.

[20] So Lane Fox 1973, 276.

[21] Bosworth 1995, 103, followed by Baynham 2001, 122; Mayor 2014, 327–8; cf. Winiarczyk 2007, 235. On the location of the Dahai see Olbrycht 2015, 270, 272; Minardi 2023, 786, Fig. 62.2. Those who fought at Gaugamela (Arr. 3.11.3; Curt. 4.12.6) had fled with Bessos (3.28.8–9; Curt. 7.4.6; cf. 6.3.9), and Alexander's first encounter with them was in Sogdiana. It seems more likely that Alexander would have contacted them at the Iaxartes or in Sogdiana than in Hyrkania. See Olbrycht 2022, 227–89 for the Dahai in the reign of Alexander, and their later migration in the direction of Hyrkania and Parthia.

[22] The Greeks (and even some modern writers) simply could not resist the fantasy of organized bands of warrior women or wars between women (Douris of Samos, *FGH* 76 F52). Mayor 2014, 329, under the heading "Alexander's Amazon Sister," reports as if it were factual, Polyaenus' story (8.60) that Kynnane slew in hand-to-hand combat an Illyrian queen, adding that she did this in 343 BC – when she was only fifteen!

he did not accompany the expedition, nor did he even begin to write his account until after the king's death. Instead, he relied on earlier published works and eyewitness sources. Plutarch, *Alex.* 46.1, however, after referring to Alexander's wounds in Sogdiana and his pursuit of the Skythians beyond the Orexartes (thus Aristoboulos' form of the name[23]), writes:

> Here (ἐνταῦθα), most writers, among whom are Kleitarchos, Polykleitos, Onesikritos, Antigenes and Istros say, the Amazon [queen] came to to Alexander, but Aristoboulos, Chares the usher, Ptolemy, Antikleides, Philon the Theban, and Philip of Theangela, in addition to Hekataios of Eretria, Philip the Chalkidian and Douris of Samos say this is a fiction.
>
> Ἐνταῦθα δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀφικέσθαι τὴν Ἀμαζόνα οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν, ὧν καὶ Κλείταρχος ἐστι καὶ Πολύκλειτος καὶ Ὀνησίκριτος καὶ Ἀντιγένης καὶ Ἴστρος. Ἀριστόβουλος δὲ καὶ Χάρης ὁ εἰσαγγελεὺς καὶ Πτολεμαῖος καὶ Ἀντικείδης καὶ Φίλων ὁ Θηβαῖος καὶ Φίλιππος ὁ Θεαγγελεύς, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις Ἑκαταῖος ὁ Ἐρετριεὺς καὶ Φίλιππος ὁ Χαλκιδεὺς καὶ Δοῦρις ὁ Σάμιος πλάσμα φασι γεγονέναι τοῦτο.

There is considerable debate concerning whether ἐνταῦθα ("here") means "at the Iaxartes," or "in Parthia," since Plutarch's last comment on Alexander's itinerary was that he had moved to Parthia (*Alex.* 45.1). C. B. Welles[24] (thus also Bosworth and Roisman)[25] argues that Plutarch (*Alex.* 46.1) refers back to events in Parthia: his chronological narrative generally coincides well with that of the Vulgate authors and is probably based on Kleitarchos; in Chap. 45 he begins to discuss the king's degeneration (of which his orientalism is an example) and, in his thematic arrangement, temporarily muddles the order of events. Welles points out that Chap. 48 goes back to the Philotas affair, which took place well before the Skythian campaign at the Iaxartes. Thus ἐνταῦθα brings us back to events in Parthia. But Hamilton[26] appears to be correct in taking Plutarch to mean that the alleged meeting of Alexander and Thalestris occurred at the Iaxartes,[27] since the mention of the river provides an antecedent

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[23] Since Plutarch was following Aristoboulos at this point, he probably found in that author a reference to the fictitious Amazon episode, which he then expanded with references to other authors.

[24] Welles 1963, 338 n.2. Cf. F. Gisinger 1952, 1705 who writes: "So wird ἐνταῦθα…nicht etwa auf den kurz vorher…genannten Ὀρεξάρτης-Τάναις sich beziehen, sondern auf εἰς Ὑρκανίαν in c. 44." But Gisinger himself noted that that Plutarch, *Alex.* 45 "beginnt mit Ἐντεῦθεν εἰς τὴν Παρθικὴν ἀναζεύξας κτλ." Hence, it makes no sense that ἐνταῦθα would refer to Hyrkania rather than Parthia, if we accept his argument. Gisinger has at least hinted at the obvious, that the word would normally refer to the previously mentioned place.

[25] Bosworth 1995, 102; Roisman 2016, 256.

[26] Hamilton 1969, 123. Cf. Tarn 1948, II 328; Pearson 1960, 77.

[27] Albaladejo Viveros 2005, 219 takes Plut. *Alex.* 46.1 to mean that Onesikritos placed the Amazon episode at the Iaxartes ("diversos autores—entre los que se encontraba el propio Onesícrito—situaron la entrevista ... en la región ubicada al norte del río Yaxarte"). Tarn believes

for ἐνταῦθα.[28] Plutarch (*Alex.* 46.3) uses a letter to Antipatros that related the offer of a Skythian bride[29] *but did not mention the Amazon*, as proof that the latter story was false. Hence, it was clear in Plutarch's mind that there was a link between the Skythian bride and the Amazon queen in the development of the Thalestris story; in much the same way, he uses a letter of Alexander to disprove the story that the sea withdrew before Alexander in Pamphylia.[30]

Most recently, Pelling has reasserted the view that ἐνταῦθα refers to Parthia – which Alexander had just reached in Plutarch's narrative (45.1) before the digression on his wounding and illness at the Iaxartes – and he argues that "for P[lutarch] the meeting did not take place at all, in any of these places; he is referring to the location given by most authors."[31] It is certainly correct that Plutarch did not believe the Amazon story; indeed, he omitted it in the course of his earlier narrative. The vulgate authors agree that two episodes occurred in Hyrkania, and they report them in the same sequence: (1) the theft and recovery of Boukephalas (Diod. 17.76.3–8; Curt. 6.5.17–20; cf. Justin 12.3.4, doubtless in Trogus); (2) the visit of the Amazon queen (Diod. 17.77.1–3; Curt. 6.5.24–32; Justin 12.3.5–7); and then a third, the king's adoption of Persian dress and practices (Diod. 17.77.4–7; Curt. 6.6.1–11; Justin 12.3.8–12) when the army reached Parthia. Plutarch, who also followed the Kleitarchan tradition in many places, records the king's entry into Hyrkania (*Alex.* 44.1) and then the theft of Boukephalas (44.3–5); after this he says that Alexander moved to Parthia (45.1; cf. Curt. 6.5.32), where the adoption of oriental ways occurred (45.1–2), thus omitting the Amazon episode entirely. If ἐνταῦθα refers back to his earlier narrative (which had Alexander adopting Persian dress in Parthia), the episode, which Plutarch gave no credence to, would have come out of chronological and geographical sequence.[32] Instead, Plutarch (at 45.5) began a digression on Alexander's wounds and other tribulations.

it was Kleitarchos who "moved" the encounter to Hyrkania (Strabo 11.5.4 C505). If this is true, Kleitarchos may have been "correcting" the version he found in Polykleitos or Onesikritos. Curtius 6.5.24–32 and 8.1.9 shows that shows that Kleitarchos did not connect the Amazon and Skythian princess episodes.

[28] Just as ἐνταῦθα at *Alex.* 44.3 refers to the last place mentioned, i.e. Hyrkania (44.1) and the Hyrkanian sea (44.2); cf. *Alex.* 37.3, referring to Persis, which occurs at 37.1.

[29] Monti 2023, 172–4.

[30] Plut. *Alex.* 17.6–8; cf. Monti 2023, 137ff.

[31] Pelling 2025, 343. I am grateful to Professor Pelling for sending me a copy of his commentary on Plutarch's *Alexander* in advance of publication. This has been an immense help to me in the preparation of the revision and expansion of my commentary on Justin's account of Alexander (Yardley / Heckel 1997). On this particular point I respectfully disagree with his conclusions.

[32] Alexander passed the Caspian Gates in his pursuit of Darius, eventually (after that king's death) he entered Parthia (Curt. 6.2.12); from there he left the main road and invaded Hyrkania (Curt. 6.4.2), where the theft of Boukephalas and the Amazon episode occurred, and thereafter re-entered Parthia farther to the east (Curt. 6.5.32; at 6.5.1 he had already reached the farthest part of Hyrkania: *ultima Hyrcaniae intraverat*).

Chapter 46 is a continuation of this digression, and only at 47.1 does Plutarch return to the discussion of the king's relationship with his troops. And, even at this point, his narrative is utterly confused as he speaks of leaving the greater part of his army behind, as he made his way into Hyrkania.

If Pelling's argument is correct, the fact that Kleitarchos is known to have located the Amazon episode in Hyrkania (*FGrH* 137 F16) would appear to suggest that the other four historians who were said to have believed the story (Onesikritos, Polykleitos, Antigenes, and Istros) agreed with him. But Strabo (11.5.4) disagrees, noting that:

> As to where they are now, only a few declare it – without proof and unbelievably – such as in the matter of Thalestria, who was the leader of the Amazons and with whom, they say, Alexander associated in Hyrkania, and had intercourse with her for the sake of offspring, but this is not agreed to. The historical writers who are most careful about the truth do not say this, those whose are most trustworthy do not record it, *and those who do speak about it do not say the same thing.* Kleitarchos says that Thalestria set forth from the Kaspian Gates and Thermodon, and came to Alexander, but from the Kaspian to Thermodon is more than 6,000 stadia. (Roller 2014, 487–8).

> ὅπου δὲ νῦν εἰσίν, ὀλίγοι τε καὶ ἀναποδείκτως καὶ ἀπίστως ἀποφαίνονται. καθάπερ καὶ περὶ Θαληστρίας, ἣν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ συμμῖξαι φασιν ἐν τῇ Ὑρκανίᾳ καὶ συγγενέσθαι τεκνοποιίας χάριν, δυναστεύουσαν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων. οὐ γὰρ ὁμολογεῖται τοῦτο. ἀλλὰ τῶν συγγραφέων τοσούτων ὄντων, οἱ μάλιστα τῆς ἀληθείας φροντίσαντες οὐκ εἰρήκασιν, οὐδ' οἱ πιστευόμενοι μάλιστα οὐδενὸς μέμνηται τοιούτου, οὐδ' οἱ εἰπόντες τὰ αὐτὰ εἰρήκασι. ὁ Κλείταρχος δέ φησι τὴν Θαληστρίαν ἀπὸ Κασπίων πυλῶν καὶ Θερμώδοντος ὁρμηθεῖσαν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον, εἰσὶ δ' ἀπὸ Κασπίας εἰς Θερμώδοντα στάδιοι πλείους ἑκακισχιλίων.

While it is true that Kleitarchos underestimated the width of the "isthmus" dividing the Caspian and Black Sea (see *FGrH* 137 F13 = Strabo 11.1.5 C491), Strabo's point, I believe, is not to debunk the Amazon episode by stressing the great distance Thalestris would have had to travel; 6,000 stadia is hardly an impossible distance for mounted steppe warriors to cover in 35 days. What Strabo was attempting to establish was he homeland of the Amazons, both in his own time and during Alexander's campaign. He says that, according to Kleitarchos, Thalestris traveled "from the Caspian Gates *and* Thermodon" (ἀπὸ Κασπίων πυλῶν καὶ Θερμώδοντος ὁρμηθεῖσαν) which should not be taken to mean "from Thermodon *via* the Caspian Gates." Instead Strabo criticizes Kleitarchos for locating the Amazons in two different places, which he noted were 6,000 stades apart. There is support for this view in Curtius, who says (6.4.16–17) that they lived near the Caspian and the Leukosyrians, although he later (6.5.24) says they came from Themiskyra and the Thermodon river.[33]

[33] See Atkinson 1994, 189.

When Plutarch wrote his digression on Alexander's wounds in Sogdiana and the pursuit of the Skythians beyond the Iaxartes, he was following Aristoboulos' account, as is clear from his use the variant Orexartes.[34] And it may have been Aristoboulos who introduced the fact that it was in this place that Alexander's meeting was thought to have occurred (though he himself did not believe it). At any rate, if Plutarch really did mean to say that it was in Parthia that the alleged meeting of Alexander and Thalestris took place, he was wrong on at least two counts: Kleitarchos did not say that event occurred in Parthia (cf. Curt. 6.5.32: *tum illa regnum suum, rex Parthienen petiverunt*); nor, as Strabo tells us, was there unanimous agreement among those who treated the story as historical.

The Amazon story and the intellectual culture at Alexander's court

The story seems to have been created around 329–328 BC for the sake of flattering the king and entertaining the troops, especially, though not exclusively, during one of the times spent in winter quarters. Certainly poetry that amounted to abject flattery circulated in the camp throughout Alexander's expedition; for we know of the execrable poet Choirilos of Iasos, who composed an epic poem in which Alexander appeared as Achilles. The king's reaction was blunt and dismissive: "I would rather be Homer's Thersites than the Achilles of Choirilos."[35] In fact, there was no shortage of men who made a living (as parasites) entertaining audiences at symposia and exaggerating the deeds of their royal patron.[36] The philosopher (or sophist) Anaxarchos belonged to this group, as did Agis of Argos and Kleon of Syracuse;[37] Anaxarchos compared Alexander with Herakles and Dionysos, sons of Zeus who had become gods (Arr. 4.10.6–7), as did others (Arr. 4.8.3). Kleon, who rivaled Choirilos in the poor quality of his verses, and Agis were involved in orchestrating the the attempt to introduce *proskynesis* at Alexander's court (Curt. 8.5.10–21). Plutarch speaks of "other sophists and flatterers" (*Alex.* 53.1: ἄλλους σοφιστὰς καὶ κόλακας).[38]

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[34] *FGrH* 139 F25 = Arr. 3.30.7, where Ἰαξάρτην is Palmer's emendation; MSS Ὀρξάντην. Arr. 7.16.3 has Ὀξυάρτης. Both may be corruptions of Ὀρεξάρτης. Aristoboulos was probably also responsible for the name Zariaspa, which was the same place as Baktra.

[35] As Anson 2021, 26 n.13 shows, this must be taken to mean that it was the quality of Choirilos' work that Alexander objected to, not the comparison with Achilles.

[36] Arr. 4.8.3 calls them οἷοι δὴ ἄνδρες διέφθειράν τε ἀεὶ καὶ οὔποτε παύσονται ἐπιτρίβοντες τὰ τῶν ἀεὶ βασιλέων πράγματα.

[37] See Heckel 2021, nos. 28, 92, 604.

[38] Among these we may include the pankratiast, Dioxippos (Aristoboulos, *FGrH* 139 F47; further references in Heckel 2021, no. 398). For artists and actors in Alexander's entourage see Tritle 2009, 122–9; Pownall 2021; Tarn 1948, II 55–61 regards virtually all the stories linking Alexander with heroes and mythical characters as originating with the poetasters, which is probably an exaggeration.

Nikoboule (*FGrH* 127 F2 = Athen. 13.537d) claims that "all the actors strove to keep Alexander entertained at dinner" (παρὰ τὸ δεῖπνον πάντες οἱ ἀγωνισταὶ ἐσπούδαζον τέρπειν τὸν βασιλέα), something that is echoed in Curt. 6.2.5 (*non contentus artificum quos e Graecia exciverat turba*). These performers offered the usual fare of Greek tragedy, comedy, and epic poetry, but like others of their ilk they understood the financial benefits flattering the king. Ephippos (*FGrH* 126 F5) adds that Alexander regularly wore the purple robe of Ammon or appeared in a lion-skin, carrying the club of Herakles.[39] In 328, at Marakanda, Pranichos (or Pierion) recited a poem about a Macedonian defeat at the hands of barbarians,[40] prompting Kleitos to upbraid the king for allowing such criticism of Macedonians, especially in the presence of other barbarians (Plut. *Alex.* 50.8–9). The majority of scholars believe that the subject of this poem is the defeat of the forces of Andromachos, Karanos, and Menedemos (as well as Pharnouches, who appears to have been the scape-goat, at least in some versions) at the hands of Spitamenes at the Polytimetos river (Arr. 4.5.2–6.3; Curt. 7.7.31–9, 9.21; *Metz Epit.* 13).[41] This was, however, a serious setback in the campaign to subdue Baktria-Sogdiana, and Alexander, who took the news hard (ἤλγησέ τε τῷ πάθει), had honored the Macedonian dead (Curt. 7.9.12; *Metz Epit.* 13). Despite the feeling among some of troops that his orientalizing policies were elevating the barbarians at their expense, it is inconceivable that Alexander would have allowed a poet at his court to make a mockery of that defeat. It is far more likely that the poem referred to the death of a small contingent of Macedonians, including some of the *paides basilikoi*, in the vicinity of Baktra (Zariaspa), and that it regaled the heroic last stand of the harpist Aristonikos.

> In the city of Zariaspa, there were a few of the Companion cavalry, left there as invalids with Pithon son of Sosicles, who had been put in charge of the royal retinue at Zariaspa, and Aristonicus the harpist. On learning of the Scythian raid, as they had now recovered and could bear arms and mount horseback, they assembled about eighty mercenary cavalry, who had been left behind to garrison Zariaspa, and some of the King's pages, and sallied out against the Massagetae. … Spitamenes and the Scythians caught them in an ambush, where they lost seven Companions, and sixty mercenary cavalry. Aristonicus the harpist died there, with more courage than a harpist might have. Pithon was wounded and taken alive by the Scythians (Arr. 4.16.6–7; Loeb tr.).
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> ἦσαν δὲ ἐν τοῖς Ζαριάσποις νόσῳ ὑπολελειμμένοι τῶν ἑταίρων ἱππέων οὐ πολλοὶ καὶ ξὺν τούτοις Πείθων τε ὁ Σωσικλέους, ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλικῆς θεραπείας τῆς ἐν Ζαριάσποις τεταγμένος, καὶ Ἀριστόνικος ὁ κιθαρῳδός. Καὶ οὗτοι αἰσθόμενοι τῶν Σκυθῶν τὴν καταδρομήν (ἤδη γὰρ ἐκ τῆς νόσου ἀναρρωσθέντες ὅπλα τε ἔφερον καὶ τῶν ἵππων

[39] Doubted by Anson 2021, 17.

[40] Plut. *Alex.* 50.8: ᾄδετο ποιήματα Πρανίχου τινός, ὡς δέ φασιν ἔνιοι, Πιερίωνος. "The verses of a certain Pranichos, or as some say, Pierion, were sung." This does not mean that composer himself recited his work.

[41] For example, Schachermeyr 1949, 299; Hamilton 1969, 141; Carney 1981, 155–7 (speculative); Bosworth 1995, 57.

> ἐπέβαινον) ξυναγαγόντες τούς τε μισθοφόρους ἱππέας ἐς ὀγδοήκοντα, οἳ ἐπὶ φυλακῇ τῶν Ζαριάσπων ὑπολελειμμένοι ἦσαν, καὶ τῶν παίδων τινὰς τῶν βασιλικῶν ἐκβοηθοῦσιν ἐπὶ τοὺς Μασσαγέτας. … ἐνεδρευθέντες πρὸς Σπιταμένους καὶ τῶν Σκυθῶν τῶν μὲν ἑταίρων ἀποβάλλουσιν ἑπτά, τῶν δὲ μισθοφόρων ἱππέων ἑξήκοντα. Καὶ Ἀριστόνικος ὁ κιθαρῳδὸς αὐτοῦ ἀποθνήσκει, οὐ κατὰ κιθαρῳδὸν ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γενόμενος. Πείθων δὲ τρωθεὶς ζῶν λαμβάνεται πρὸς τῶν Σκυθῶν.

Arrian emphasizes the *arete* of the harpist; Plutarch (*Mor.* 334e–f) says that Aristonikos died fighting gallantly (ἔπεσε λαμπρῶς ἀγωνισάμενος) and that Alexander had a bronze statue of him erected at Delphi, depicting the man with a harp in one hand and a spear in the other. The poem, a kind of mock epic, must have focused on the virtue of Aristonikos, and only an over-sensitive person, as Kleitos was at the time, could have found fault with it because it came in the context of a defeat at the hands of the barbarians. Many "war heroes" died in losing causes. Furthermore, either in India (unlikely) or at Ekbatana (probably), a certain Python was supposed to have produced a play titled *Agen* (in which Agen was a pseudonym for Alexander, and Harpalos appeared as Pallides) which dealt with Harpalos' malfeasance and his flight to Athens. Contrary to his disbelief upon learning of Harpalos' first flight, Alexander was later prepared to allow the ridiculing of his faithless friend in the Macedonian camp.[42]

Nor was the entertainment confined to the works of poets and sophists. Historians also made a habit of reading their works in advance of publication. It is virtually certain that Alexander heard (or read) Kallisthenes' work in advance of publication, and that he allowed flattering untruths to go unchallenged.[43] Several in the king's entourage were preparing first drafts of histories that would be published after Alexander's death. Plutarch (*Alex.* 76.3) tells us that in his final days, Alexander listened to Nearchos' report of his voyage (presumably what formed the basis of his *Indike*), just as he had done in Karmania (Plut. *Alex.* 68.1). These were clearly records kept by Nearchos during his voyages, though they undoubtedly include some sensational elements. Lucian (*How to Write History* 12 = *FGrH* 139 T4) alleges that, as they were sailing down the Hydaspes River, Aristoboulos read Alexander a passage from the history he was compiling, in which Alexander and Poros engaged in single combat. The king is said to have grabbed his "book" and thrown it into the river, chastising him for this untruth and also for claiming that an elephant could be killed by a single throw of the javelin.[44] Plutarch (*Alex.* 46.4–5)

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[42] For Python's *Agen* see Snell 1964; Sutton 1980a-b; for the historical context see Heckel 2016, 226. But Tritle 2009, 128 suggests the play was performed in Athens.

[43] Plut. *Alex.* 17.8 uses a letter of Alexander (Monti 2023, F2) to show that the sea did not miraculously recede for Alexander in Pamphylia, though this should not be taken as a deliberate correction of Kallisthenes. See also Pelling 2025, 212 on Plut. *Alex.* 17.6.

[44] Albaladejo Viveros 2020, 108 n.12 remarks: "This event never took place, because Aristobulus' writings date from long after the death of Alexander." The story is probably apocryphal, but it may support the view that those who published after Alexander's death were already working on their histories (and reading early drafts) during the king's lifetime.

mentions that, when Onesikritos read his account of the Amazon queen to Lysimachos, who was by now king of Thrace, the latter remarked: "where was I when this happened?"[45] But Onesikritos' history was published much earlier; for it is virtually certain that Kleitarchos (who wrote *c.*310, if not earlier) used it, and, indeed, early versions were composed "on the fly," so to speak, during Alexander's lifetime. Thus Pearson comments:

> Lucian, in his essay on "How to write history," takes him as an example of the flatterer who writes to please the great man of the hour. "The historian who writes with an eye only to immediate success," says Lucian, "must be reckoned among the flatterers; and history rejected them a long time ago." To illustrate his meaning he goes on: "They tell this story too of Alexander, that he said: 'How pleasant it would be, Onesicritus, if I could come back to life for a little while after death, so asd to se the reactions of people then they read these things. Do no be surprised if, for the present, they praise and accept them, because they think, each one of them, that by this means they have an attractive bait to hook and land our favour'.[46]

Alexander was both familiar with Onesikritos' work and recognized it as flattery. Nearchos apparently attempted to correct Onesikritos' lies about being admiral of the fleet, when he was merely the chief helmsman (cf. Strabo 15.1.28 = *FGrH* 134 T10: τῶν παραδόξων ἀρχικυβερνήτην).[47] How many lies Onesikritos told during the king's lifetime (and in the presence of others) is, of course, unknowable.[48] We might add the Thessalians, Medios and Polykleitos (one of those who reported the story of the Amazon queen) to the list of flatterers who doubtless voiced exalted the deeds of Alexander at court.[49] Plut. *Mor.* 65c–d (= *FGrH* 129 T5) says of the former: ἦν δ' ὁ Μήδιος τοῦ περὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον χοροῦ τῶν κολάκων οἷον ἔξαρχος καὶ σοφιστὴς κορυφαῖος ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀρίστους συντεταμένων.

Most of the stories about flatterers of all stripes involve the rejection of their claims. Thus Monti remarks: "From Plutarch it might be inferred that the figure of Alexander as mythicized already within his court, if the geographical area in which he was at that time had led some historians to invent the visit of the queen of the Amazons… But it is indeed the king who corrects the invented rumour by telling Antipater he had received the vist of the king of Scythians."[50] I agree with the first sentence, and indeed this is an inference supported by other examples noted

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[45] Lysimachos took the title of king no earlier than 305, and Onesikritos may no longer have been alive at that time (see the doubts of Pearson 1960, 84–5). But Lysimachos and Onesikritos are linked, as "philosophers," with the Indian Kalanos (*FGrH* 132 F17; also Arr. 7.3.4), and if Lysimachos heard Oneskritos' account of the Amazons, it may have been during Alexander's lifetime.

[46] Pearson 1960, 86.

[47] For the relationship of Onesikritos, Nearchos, and Kleitarchos, see Heckel 2007, 267–71.

[48] On Onesikritos see Brown 1949; Müller 2014, 58–65. For other "historians" who reported gossip and flattered the king see Pearson 1960, 50–77.

[49] Pearson 1960, 68–77.

[50] Monti 2023, 173.

above. But the claim that "it is … the king who corrects the invented rumour" is Plutarch's inference. Alexander merely fails to mention the Amazon episode. Claims that certain sensational stories or comments were rejected – intended to both discredit the flatterers themselves and demonstrate that Alexander remained level-headed – were made by literary opponents, and often ascribed to Alexander himself. But their very existence shows that lies and exaggerations were staples of conversation and performance at the Macedonian court, and actually welcomed by the king and many of his courtiers.[51] Kallisthenes, one of the worst offenders in the early stages, had an epiphany and, paradoxically, became the voice of the "conscientious objectors,"[52] only to meet an unhappy end. But, again, his objections demonstrate the extent of Alexander-idolatry. Alexander himself, who was pleased to hear himself addressed as the son of Ammon, compared with Herakles and Dionysos, was doubtless not averse to rumors that he impregnated the Amazon queen, or indeed that she sought him out for this very purpose.[53]

It is, therefore, not unlikely that the story of the Amazon queen was another creation of Alexander's sycophants, whatever genre they employed in the service of their flattery. The news of the proffered Skythian bride and of Pharasmanes' proposed expedition against the Amazons gave rise to a story that both entertained the troops and flattered the king. The fiction that Thalestris was desirous of meeting the greatest of all living men for the purpose of mating with him, that her appearance was both exotic and provocative, and that she engaged in a sexual marathon lasting thirteen days (being more eager for sex than Alexander), must have had great appeal for both the soldiers and their commanders.[54]

Atropates and his Amazons

This brings us to a much later episode, which at first sight looks as if it may have provided the blueprint for the Amazon story. In the autumn of 324, Atropates,

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[51] Arr. 4.12.1 says that Kallisthenes, by opposing the views of the flatterers (in this case, Anaxarchos) "greatly annoyed" Alexander.

[52] See Heckel 2020, 210–11. For rivalry among intellectuals at the court see Borza 1981.

[53] Bosworth 1996, 98–132 shows that Alexander was favorably disposed to such flattery, noting that "the most important element of the flattery is the comparison between Alexander and the divine. It centred on the figures of Heracles and the Dioscouri…" (1996, 101). I would go so far as to suggest that Kallisthenes, who was one of "Alexander's staff," as Bosworth 1996, 130 calls his propagandists and *kolakes*, would have mentioned the Amazon episode, if it had occurred in Hyrkania, when he was still creating the king's image. But, by 329/8, Kallisthenes was already at odds with his patron, and his account of events in Baktria/Sogdiana may never have been circulated.

[54] Cf. Pelling 2025, 342, who suggests at a visit from some local queen "with an armed retinue" … "would certainly make an impression, and very likely generate good-natured salacious imaginings among the men."

the satrap of the Medes, brought one hundred women, mounted on horseback and dressed as warriors, to Alexander at Ecbatana, telling him that they were Amazons.

> They say that there Atropates, the satrap of Media, gave him a hundred women, saying that they were Amazons; they were equipped like cavalry troopers, except that they carried axes instead of spears, and small targets instead of shields. Some say their right breast was smaller, and was uncovered in battle. According to the story Alexander sent them away from the army, in case they suffered any outrage from the Macedonians or the barbarians troops, but he told them to inform their queen that he would come to see her to get children by her. This, however, neither Aristobulus nor Ptolemy nor any other reliable author on such matters has attested (Arr. 7.13.2–3; Loeb tr.).
>
> ἐνταῦθα λέγουσιν ὅτι Ἀρτοπάτης ὁ τῆς Μηδίας σατράπης γυναῖκας ἑκατὸν αὐτῷ ἔδωκεν, ταύτας φάσκων εἶναι τῶν Ἀμαζόνων, καὶ ταύτας σκευῇ ἀνδρῶν ἱππέων ἐσταλμένας, πλήν γε δὴ ὅτι πελέκεις ἀντὶ δοράτων ἐφόρουν καὶ ἀντὶ ἀσπίδων πέλτας. Οἱ δὲ καὶ τὸν μαστὸν λέγουσιν ὅτι μείονα εἶχον τὸν δεξιόν, ὃν δὴ καὶ ἔξω εἶχον ἐν ταῖς μάχαις. Ταύτας μὲν δὴ ἀπαλλάξαι τῆς στρατιᾶς Ἀλέξανδρον, μή τι νεωτερισθείη κατ᾽ αὐτὰς ἐς ὕβριν πρὸς τῶν Μακεδόνων ἢ βαρβάρων. Κελεῦσαι δὲ ἀπαγγεῖλαι πρὸς τὴν βασίλισσαν σφῶν ὅτι αὐτὸς ἥξει πρὸς αὐτὴν παιδοποιησόμενος. Ταῦτα δὲ οὔτε Ἀριστόβουλος οὔτε Πολεμαῖος οὔτε τις ἄλλος ἀνέγραψεν ὅστις ἱκανὸς ὑπὲρ τῶν τηλικούτων τεκμηριῶσαι.

Clearly this story has a number of similarities with that of Alexander and Thalestris, and it too has no support in the reputable primary historians.[55] On its face value, the story is implausible: could Atropates actually have tried to pass off these women as real Amazons? Would Alexander not have been insulted by this attempt to dupe him? And, if they were at least genuine warrior women, perhaps Skythians, though clearly not real Amazons, it is surprising that Alexander would have been concerned about keeping them safe from sexual abuse (ὕβρις) by the troops. Arrian (7.13.6) goes on to say: "If Atropates did show Alexander any women riders on horseback, I think they were some other barbarian women, taught to ride, whom he exhibited, dressed in the traditional Amazon fashion" (εἰ δὲ ἱππικὰς δή τινας γυναῖκας Ἀτροπάτης ἔδειξεν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, βαρβάρους τινὰς ἄλλας γυναῖκας ἱππεύειν ἠσκημένας δοκῶ ὅτι ἔδειξεν ἐς τὸν λεγόμενον δὴ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων κόσμον ἐσταλμένας). Baynham goes a little further and suggests that "these women were … intended for sexual gratification—prostitutes who had been taught to ride and who were playing out a contrived

[55] On this passage, Tarn 1948, II 329 comments: "It is, as Arrian suspected, a true story which has had an Amazonian λόγος tacked on to it; Atropates sent Alexander 100 armed girls on horseback, and Alexander sent them home again 'lest they should be violated by the soldiery'." There is, of course, the possibility that Atropates' display of Amazon women is a later invention, aimed at debunking the famous story of Thalestris and Alexander, but if that were the case, why choose Atropates and Media as the story's focus?

fantasy." In that case, Alexander was probably more concerned about their corrupting influence on his army. But if they were prostitutes or actresses, they were probably part of the entertainment when Alexander put on games and shows in Ecbatana.[56] Nevertheless, I do not believe this "spectacle" was what *inspired* the Amazon episode. Rather, it is an indication that the story was already in circulation in one form or another.[57] Atropates had clearly brought the women for the sake of pageantry[58] (rather than with the intention of deceiving Alexander; cf. Arr. 7.13.6), and it is likely that this was deliberate parody. What lends particular support to this view is that Alexander is said to have dismissed the Amazons and told them to inform their queen that he would visit her in order to beget children by her, a tongue-in-cheek reversal of the Thalestris episode.[59] If the story of the king's encounter with Thalestris originated in Alexander's camp in Baktria-Sogdiana in 329–328, Atropates would have known about it (perhaps with Artabazos or some other Persian sufficiently fluent in Greek acting as a translator), since he had spent those very years in Alexander's entourage. Only in winter of 328/7 was he sent from Nautaka to Media to replace Oxydates as satrap of the Medes.[60]

Events	Source(s)	Atropates' "Amazons" (Arr. 7.13.2–3)
In Hyrcania	Justin 12.3.4–5; Diod. 17.77.1; cf. Curt. 6.4.17, 5.24	At Ecbatana
At the Iaxartes	Plut. *Alex.* 46.1	
The Amazon queen was named Thalestris	Justin 12.3.5; Curt. 6.5.25; Diod. 17.77.2 (Thallestris); Strabo 11.5.4	No queen is present

[56] Baynham 2001, 120–1. For games in Ecbatana see Arr. 7.14.1; Plut. *Alex.* 72.1; cf. Diod. 17.110.7. For Atropates entertaining Alexander in Ecbatana see also Athen. 13.538a ('Satrabates'). I see no reason for suspecting that Atropates was trying to avoid punishment at the hands of Alexander. The so-called reign of terror (thus Badian 1961) was in fact the just punishment of officials guilty of malfeasance and other crimes, and Atropates did not fit into that category (see Heckel 2008, 135–6).

[57] Baynham 2001, 121 allows for the possibility that "tales of the king's earlier alleged liaison with an Amazon queen were already in circulation," though I suspect she means the story of a Dahan or Sakan warrior who met Alexander in Hyrkania. Because of Alexander's dismissal of the women, Baynham argues that "Alexander's reaction was the opposite of the satrap's expectation."

[58] Cf. the legend that, during the Second Crusade, Eleanor of Aquitaine and her female attendants dressed as Amazons (Runciman 1951–4, II 262 n. 1).

[59] Cf. Roisman 2017, 259–60.

[60] Arr. 4.18.3; cf. Curt. 8.3.17 (confused). For Atropates and Oxydates see Heckel 2021, nos. 261, 835; see also Hyland 2013; Obrycht 2023, 129.

Events	Source(s)	Atropates' "Amazons" (Arr. 7.13.2–3)
Sends a message asking for permission to come to Alexander, which the king grants	Curt. 6.5.25 only	Alexander tells the "Amazons" to inform their queen, when they return home, that he is willing to come to her in order to beget a child
Travels 6,000 stades from Themiscyra to Hyrcania	Strabo 11.5.4 C505 = Cleitarchus (*FGrH* 137 F16); Justin 12.3.5 (she travels for 35 days)	
Arrives with 300 attendants	Justin 12.3.5; Diod. 17.77.1; Curt. 3.5.26	100 "Amazons" exhibited by Atropates
Leaps from her horse brandishing two lances	Curt. 6.5.26	
Her dress	Justin 12.3.6 (strange); Curt. 6.5.27 (a robe that did not cover her entire body, tied in a knot so it did not reach to the knee).	Dress like cavalrymen but armed with axes and small shields
Her breasts	Curtius 6.5.27 (left breast is exposed)	Some said the right breast was smaller and it was exposed, as it would have been in battle
Reference to the cauterized right breast of the Amazons	Curt. 6.5.28	No mention of cauterizaton
Thalestris is disappointed by Alexander's appearance	Curt. 6.5.29	Alexander is clearly thinks little of the fighting qualities of the "Amazons" and so he dismisses them
Her purpose is to have sex with Alexander;	Justin 12.3.6 (her purpose causes general surprise); Strabo 11.5.4 C505; Diod. 17.77.2; Curt. 6.5.30	Alexander sends the "Amazons" away lest they be sexually violated by the Macedonian or barbarian troops
She thought that the greatest of men and women should produce an heir	Diod. 17.77.3; Curt. 6.5.30	
Alexander asks her if she would like to serve in his campaign	Curt. 6.5.31	Atropates has brought the "Amazons" to serve with Alexander's forces
Thalestris enjoys sex more than Alexander did	Curt. 6.5.31	
Thirteen days spent in love-making	Justin 12.3.7; Curt. 6.4.31; Diod. 17.77.3	

Events	Source(s)	Atropates' "Amazons" (Arr. 7.13.2–3)
Thalestris satisfied she is pregnant	Justin 12.3.7	
She returns to her kingdom	Justin 12.3.7; Curt. 6.4.31; Diod. 17.77.3	Sent back to their kingdom by Alexander
Alexander gives her gifts before she leaves	Diod. 17.77.3	

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Abstract

This article by Waldemar Heckel critically examines the famous episode of Alexander the Great's meeting with the Amazon queen Thalestris, a story recounted by some ancient historians but rejected by others. Heckel reviews the ancient sources – such as Justin, Plutarch, Diodorus, and Curtius – and evaluates their reliability, noting the division between those who treated the episode as historical (Kleitarchos, Polykleitos, Onesikritos) and those who omitted or repudiated it (Aristoboulos, Ptolemy, Chares, among others). The paper explores how the Alexander-Thalestris encounter drew on earlier mythological motifs, particularly Herakles' association with the Amazons, and how the episode may have served as both entertainment and flattery at Alexander's court, feeding into poetic and rhetorical traditions that likened Alexander to legendary heroes. Heckel discusses the historical plausibility of the event, referencing geographic confusions among the sources, and assesses hypotheses that the story originated from actual contacts with steppe warrior women. The article further contextualizes the Amazon narrative by comparing it to other stories from Alexander's campaign, including Atropates' presentation of so-called "Amazons" and related diplomatic episodes. Heckel ultimately suggests that the Thalestris story was a literary creation that emerged from the intellectual milieu of Alexander's entourage to enhance his legend and entertain his followers, rather than a reflection of a genuine historical encounter.

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ZARIASPA AND THE "KUNDUZ" HOARDS

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I. Faults in Ptolemy's *Geography*

Ptolemy (Klaudios Ptolemaios, ca. AD 100–180), was the author of works on astronomy (*Almagest*), geography (*Geographike Hyphegesis*), and other sciences. He was accused of dilettantism early on. In 1817, J.B.J. Delambre demonstrated the inadequacy of the geographical methods used and the unreliability of the positions given, even for places near Alexandria.[1] In 1977, R.R. Newton published the book "The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy," in which he tore Ptolemy's astronomical work to shreds, partly based on Delambre.[2] W. Ekschmitt quotes other modern authors in this vein, most of whom disparage the *Almagest* rather than the *Geography*, which has gained some respect for its wealth of geographical names, many of which have since fallen into oblivion.[3]

However, this leniency soon came to an end when members of the Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (DAFA) began searching for the ancient name of the formerly magnificent city of Ai Khanum, which it

[1] Delambre 1817, II, 520–543.

[2] Newton 1977.

[3] Ekschmitt 1989, 174. For the sixth book on Bactria, Humbach / Faiss 1998 created a critical edition. The maps are topographically retraced in Humbach / Ziegler / Faiss 2002. For most references and the other chapters, the new complete edition by Stückelberger / Graßhoff 2025 was used.

had started to document. Despite careful excavations and excellent reports (*Mémoires*, MAFA), no clear solution regarding the ancient name could be found. Ptolemy's *Geographike*, with its related maps, covered Bactria, but to decide which one of the names it contained relates to Ai Khanum was all but clear. P. Bernard and H.-P. Francfort opted for Oxiana *or* Alexandria Oxiane (cf. map, fig. 4), admitting that the latter could also refer to Termez.[4] They are only decided that neither term can stand for Takht-i Sangin. In contrast, Ptolemy's map allows for only Oxiana. It was F. Grenet and C. Rapin who, in 1998, tried to understand how the seeming disorder can be explained.[5] Since a place termed "*Baktra basileon*" was found in the south-east instead of the south-west of Baktria, and Samarkand (*Marakanda*) south instead of north of the Oxus, the map of Ptolemy was declared to be "incomprehensible"[6] and his work was called "distorted", "une source de confusion plutôt que de progress."[7] Ten years later, É. de la Vaissière (2009) demonstrated that a similar chaos prevailed in the map east of the Pamir, which could be attributed to the work of an author who did not realize that the lists of sites he received contained duplicate entries with divergent geodata.[8] Such duplicates are also found in India, where we find Ujjain-Ujjayinī twice[9] as well as Paithan-Pratisthāna.[10] The differences in diction and position prove that several informants with variant linguistic and geotechnical skills were at work. All this is granted and occurs more often the farther away the site is from the Roman Empire.

Bactria was the penultimate region before the Chinese trading posts that could be reached from Rome. The country benefited from Greek settlements for around three centuries. During the Hellenistic period, there was an intense exchange between Greece and Bactria. There were diligent geographers, foremost among them Marinus of Tyre, who worked with merchants who knew precisely how many days it took to travel from one station to the next based on the tariffs for pack animals. This intensive long-distance trade with Bactria may have actually prevented many of the errors for which Ptolemy is criticized today.

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[4] Bernard / Francfort 1978, 5.

[5] Grenet / Rapin 1998.

[6] Rapin 1998, *passim*.

[7] Gorshenina in Gorshenina / Rapin 2015, 114.

[8] De la Vaissière 2009.

[9] *Geogr*. 7.1.60 Oxoamis at 115°30E, 22°20N; 7.1.63 Ozēnē at 117E, 20N.

[10] *Geogr*. 7.1.64 Patistama at 121E, 25N; 7.1.82 Baithana at 117E, 18°10'N.

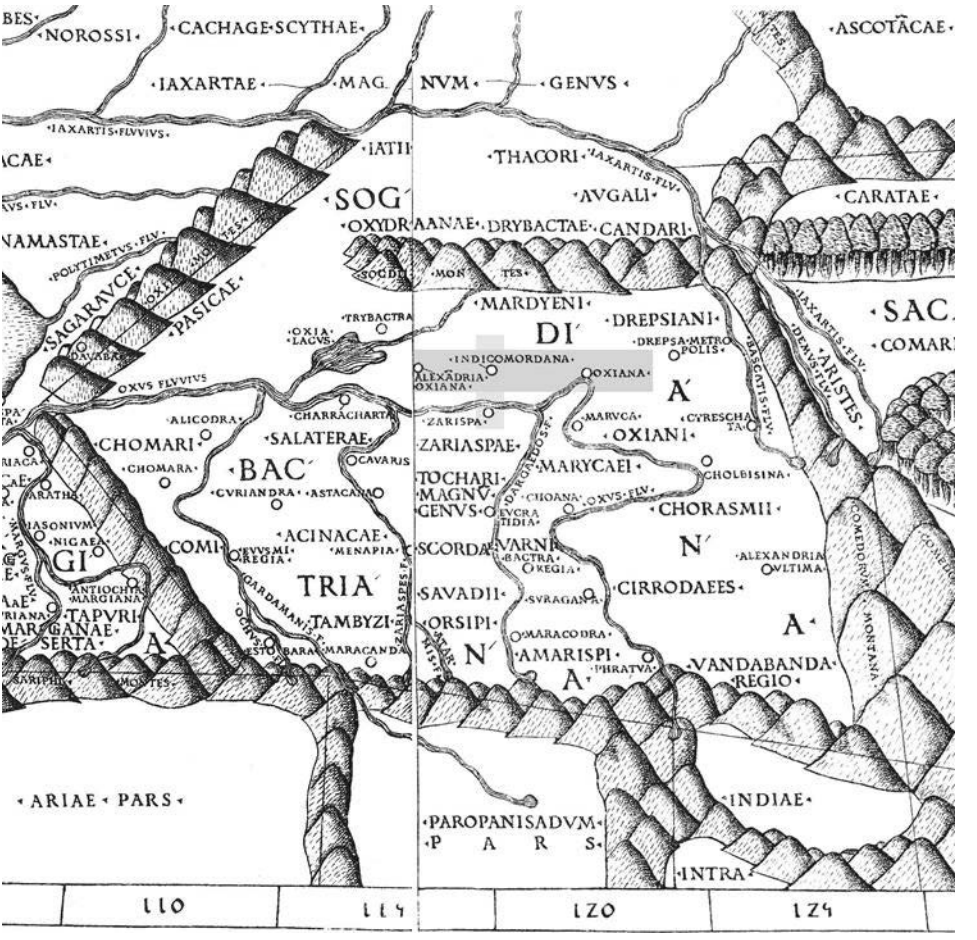

Fig. 1. Pamir: Map "7 of Asia", illustrating Bactria in the *Geography* of Ptolemy. It was fashioned in the early 15th century, preserving traits of the original (Nordenskiöld 1889). Running north from the Hindu Kush (Paropamisad), four rivers drain Baktria: 1) the Balkhāb (Ochus), 2) the Zariaspes (Khulmāb), 3) the Dargaedos (Kunduzāb), and 4) the Oxus (Warduj, Kokcha, Amu Darya). Note the gray crossed section containing Alexandria Oxiana (Kampyr Tepe?), Indicomordana (Kobardan), Zariaspa (Khisht Tepe), and Oxiana (Ai Khanum).

Frantz Grenet and Claude Rapin, who are most eagerly engaged in rearranging Ptolemy's map of Bactria, assume that some modern authors do not understand these processes, having therefore fallen into a trap of credulity.[11] As a remedy, they mirror some locations on the map from top to bottom and others from left to right to approximate the ancient realities they have in mind.

[11] Grenet / Rapin (1998, 81a) imagine a "prison of a 'conservative' interpretation of Ptolemy's map", as if a revolutionary interpretation were by its own nature flawless.

Ptolemy certainly made mistakes, as the two scholars suspect, but not all of their examples withstand closer scrutiny. In other words, I am voluntarily falling into the trap of credulity and would like to show that many of the relocated places are better off where Ptolemy saw them.

Regarding the historical aspects that depend on the relocated sites and rivers, the reconstructions of my French author friends and colleagues are mentioned occasionally in the following. However, a detailed comparison and discussion of the historical events would extend the essay to the length of a book, which would not serve anyone. Methodologically, Jeffrey D. Lerner's assessment seems accurate in that Rapin "anticipated the result and constructed it from the desired rotation."[12] Lerner's essay contains all the points of reference that I omit here.

In my opinion, very few of the new allocations made by French scholars are acceptable. In many cases, my concept of leaving a place where Ptolemy had positioned it led to alternative solutions or reconfirmed traditional identification. My view is based on the consideration that three centuries of personal contact between Greeks and Macedonians with Bactria cannot result in a completely unusable map. A work as enormous as Ptolemy's can never be free of errors, whether trivial or gross. Every modern commentator must also take this risk, hopefully with a lower error rate.

II. The Ochus Problem

When Alexander invaded Bactriane in 329 BC he was accustomed to considering the Oxus river, the modern Amu Darya, as the northern border of this country. The land north of the river belonged to Sogdiane. Within Bactria, three rivers were known to approach the Oxus (Ωξος)[13] from the Hindu Kush range in its south. From west to east, these are the Balkhāb, the Khulmāb, and the Kunduzāb, to use modern equivalents derived from the essential northern terminus points of Balkh, Khulm, and Kunduz. The ancient names are less clear. The Alexander historians never list them systematically. The geographer Ptolemy identifies the Balkhāb as Ochus (Ωχος), the Khulmāb as Zariaspes (Ζαριασπης), and the Kunduzāb as Dargoitos (Δαργοιτος).

A serious problem arose from Alexander's second campaign against the Sogdians. After an only partially successful first attack on Sogdiana in 329 BC, he spent the winter in Zariaspa, allegedly a second name for Bactra, today's Balkh. He left

[12] Lerner 2016, 134.

[13] The Greek terms are given without accents, but otherwise follow the partial edition of Humbach / Ziegler (1998), which lists the *variae lectiones* found in older editions. The complete edition of Stückelberg / Graßhoff (2017) is nowhere more precise.

Zariaspa with his troops, disappeared from view for eleven days, then crossed first the Ochus and then the Oxus and set out to invade and attack the Samarkand region again. If Balkh were called Zariaspa, it would have taken him eleven days to cross the river that flows just outside the city. This is unlikely. How can this confusing statement be explained? There are two solutions based on the same operation: Either Zariaspa or the Oxus must be separated from Bactra = Balkh. Some scholars who conducted archaeological work in Ai Khanum on the Panj = Amu Darya decided to consider Zariaspa and Balkh as identical, while moving the Ochus eleven days' march to the east, where this river flowed north past Ai Khanum. Its sources were in the Wakhan Valley, where the name comes from: Wakh-an→ Ωχ-ος.

The alternative solution would leave the Ochus where Ptolemy placed it, but separate Zariaspa from Balkh. Initially, this solution was proposed only by F. von Schwarz (1893), who placed Zariaspa far to the west, on the Amu Darya below Bukhara.[14] Recently, Cl. Rapin from the French scholarly group adopted parts of this argument, but placed Zariaspa near Samarkand.

A third solution is presented below: In the list of geographical data in Ptolemy's *Geographica* and correspondingly in the accompanying maps, Balkh and Zariaspa are located far apart. F. von Schwarz[15] saw that Balkh would have been completely unsuitable for Alexander's military needs. He used the difference in the geographical data, while ignoring the data itself, to relocate Zariaspa to a location north of the Oxus and below Bukhara.[16] Markwart was prepared to attribute "incredible blunders" ("unglaubliche Schnitzer") to the geographer in every respect,[17] followed by Grenet and Rapin (1998) in many aspects. Grenet[18] identified Zariaspa with "Maracanda, the capital of upper Zerafshan", as cited by Rapin.[19] Rapin was followed by Rtveladze, who located Zariaspa in Mirzabek-Kala south of Samarkand.[20]

However, Ptolemy's Zariaspa is not located south of Bukhara (v. Schwarz), nor at Balkh (Grenet and Rapin, among others) or near Samarkand (Rapin, Rtveladze), but on the southern, left bank of the Oxus between the confluences of Khulmāb and Kunduzāb (No. 38).[21] The consequences are far-reaching.

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[14] Schwarz 1893.

[15] Schwarz 1893, 42, 65-6. Rapin (1893, 62, note 83) seems to have confused Schwarz with Tomaschek. While the former considers Balkh and Zariaspa to be separate places, the latter never does.

[16] See von Schwarz (1893, 42): "Wenn z. B. Arrian sagt, dass Alexander den Winter von 329 auf 328 in Zariaspa verbrachte, während Curtius erzählt, dass dies in Baktra geschehen sei, so ist dies in Wirklichkeit kein Widerspruch und beweist auch nicht, dass die Städte Baktra und Zariaspa identisch sind; Arrian hat einfach den Namen der Stadt angegeben, Curtius dagegen den Namen des Landes, in dem Zariaspa lag."

[17] Markwart 1938, 29.

[18] Grenet and Rapin in Gorshenina / Rapin 2015, 115.

[19] Rapin 2018.

[20] Rtveladze 2021.

[21] In Humbach / Ziegler 1998, the geographical units are numbered according to their order in the text. These numbers are reused for the mechanically produced maps in Humbach / Ziegler /

1. *What Is Meant by Bactra?*

There must be a reason why no scholar has suggested anything similar before. If our approach is correct, where is the crucial error that made Ptolemy look ridiculous? The culprit can be found in almost all works on this subject and is cited as the principal witness for the equation Zariaspa = Bactra, as noted by Strabo (ca. 63 BC–23 AD). In his *Geography* 11.11.2, he says of the Bactrians: "Their cities were Bactra, also called Zariaspa, through which flows a river bearing the same name and emptying into the Oxus."[22] However, the river that flows through Balkh never reached the Oxus and therefore does not flow "into the Oxus." This statement suggests that Strabo is referring to Bactra, also known as Zariaspa, or vice versa. Still, it does not compel us to believe that he is exclusively referring to Balkh. On the contrary, if "emptying into the Oxus" is taken literally, this proves that the river Zariaspa mentioned by Strabo cannot be the river of Balkh. A similar ambiguity arises in the case of Pliny (Gaius Plinius Secundus, AD 23/24–79), who in his *Natural History* (6.17/45) lists several distances. One of these measures the distance from the border of India to "Bactra, the *oppidum* they call Zariasta [sic]"[23], as if there were two Bactras, one of which is called Zariasta and the other obviously not. His most important statement for us follows in *NH* 6.18/48, where it says that the *oppidum* Zariasta was named after the river on which it lies, but "later" (*postea*) the name was changed to Bactra.[24] There are two ways to understand this text: either Zariaspa was the original name of Balkh and was later changed to Baktra, or Zariaspa was the original name of Baktra. However, this is quite unlikely, as the oldest sources are Iranian and Indian sacred texts,[25] none of which contain any references to a city called Zariaspa.[26] On the other hand, no source mentions Zariaspa before Alexander's arrival in the region. The earliest mention comes from Eratosthenes (ca. 276–194 BC) in a calculation of distances ending in Zariaspa (Strab. 11.8.9). Eratosthenes based his calculations on Patroclus, who was active under Seleucus I (Strab. 11.7.3).

Faiss 2002, whereby straight connecting lines must not be confused with the straight form of a road or river. The map shown here, fig. 4b, connects three adjacent "Humbach" maps, each taken from a different paragraph of the *Geography*.

[22] πόλεις δ' εἶχον τά τε Βάκτρα ἥνπερ καὶ Ζαριάσπαν καλοῦσιν, ἣν διαρρεῖ ὁμώνυμος ποταμὸς ἐκβάλλων εἰς τὸν Ὦξον, καὶ Ἄδραψα καὶ ἄλλας πλείους: τούτων δ' ἦν καὶ ἡ Εὐκρατίδεια τοῦ ἄρξαντος ἐπώνυμος.

[23] (...) inde ad Bactra oppidum, quod appellant Zariasta.

[24] Bactri quoram oppidum Zariastes, quod postea Bactrum a flumine appellatum est. Gens haec optinet aversa montis Paropanisi exadversus fontes Indi, includitur flumine Ocho. Detlefsen 1904, 138; Olbrycht 2010, 308.

[25] Collected in Witzel 1980.

[26] The term as such is known from the Vedas on as *haryaśva*, "bay horse", a term usually applied to Indra in a possessive sense, "having a bay-coloured horse", which brings down the waters in spring. Rapin (in Gorshenina / Rapin 2015, 115) understands *Zarapša as "pourvoyeur d'or."

If we take the classical sources seriously, we must assume that there were at least two Bactras, one that was called that from the beginning, then Zariaspa, which was named that "later," and possibly a third, which appears on Ptolemy's map at the southern end of the Kunduzāb as Βακτρα βασιλειον, *Bactra reagia.* The locations of the later capitals shifted from west to east. The first marked the border of Iran proper with Bactria during the Achaemenid period; the second was located in the center, from where Alexander controlled the Bactrians to the south and the Sogdians to the north of the Oxus. And the third clear case is Andarab, the ancient Drapsa, on the border between the Graeco-Bactrians and the Indo-Greeks.

2. Αλικοδρα–Αλιχοδρα is Alik Rabat near Balkh (42)

Based on the position on the map where Ptolemy places his river Ochus, we would expect to meet the Balkhāb with Balkh at its delta. However, instead of Balkh, the *Geography* and its maps show a settlement called Alikodra (Αλικοδρα) or Alikhodra (Αλιχοδρα). There is a certain phonetic similarity between Αλιχοδρα and Balkh, but it is not sufficient to dispel all doubts. If our Alikodra goes back to Baktra, then it would have lost at least an initial labial vowel. However, such a shortening is not necessary, if we imagine that a merchant, after crossing the Iranian desert, reaches the Balkhāb fan of channels. Coming from Merw or another eastern Parthian city, he would first arrive at a place called Alik Rabat (36° 49' 7" N, 66° 5' 2" E). The settlement is not large, but the second part of the name indicates that it houses a walled caravansarai (*rabāt*). Located on the edge of the desert, it will always be remembered as the welcome end of a long journey, where the reporting merchant first encountered the (lowest) waters of the Balkhab. This will have prompted him to note Alik Rabat at the end of the river concerned.

There is no difference between Alik Rabat and Αλικοδρα in the first part, and names have a long life in Bactria. But what about the second part of the compound? Rabāt refers to a caravansarai. Should *-o-dra* be interpreted similarly?[27] We have another *-o-dra* to come, in Marakodra. Kuriandra could be another example, and the Chinese hi-mo-ta-lo will add a final one. In all cases, a walled resting place makes sense.

Balkh itself is not mentioned by name on Ptolemy's map and may have appeared to the merchant as just another settlement along the same river. As a trading site, the old city was often outdone by other nearby markets. The military and implicit political significance of the city of Balkh/Baktra should not be overestimated. Alexander was probably not impressed by its Achaemenid fortifications. If Strabo (11.11.3) is to be believed, Alexander found everything clean outside the walls of the *megapolis* of the Bactrians, but inside the walls, "most of the

[27] It could be related to Bactrian *dranga* "fortress", see Humbach / Faiss (2012, 42) on the people of 'Οξυδράνκαι.

space was littered with human bones. Alexander put an end to this custom." The description suggests that corpses had been deposited in the abandoned citadel for a long time. The same behavior can be observed in the city of Ai Khanum, where the theater seats were filled with skeletons of about a hundred people,[28] with no signs of violence that could have led to their death after the city was abandoned around 145 BC. As for Balkh, centuries later, Xuanzang found even the lowland city of Balkh sparsely populated,[29] possibly because Balkh is known for its unhealthy living conditions,[30] where Malaria is rampant. Coins from the Hellenistic period have been found, from Euthydemus (not Diodotus!) to Apollodotus. However, from Eucratides onwards, there is again a void until the Yuezhi repopulated the area.[31] In summary, given the temporary political insignificance of Balkh, the absence of a clear term for "Bactra" should not lead us to criticize Ptolemy. Given the border site of Alik Rabat at the end of the Balkhāb waters, he was not wrong after all.

3. *Ochus is the Western River, the Balkhāb (R1)*

If the undisputed river Zariaspes flows into the Oxus at Zariaspa, then the Zariaspes cannot flow past Balkh at the same time. What, then, is the name of the river next to the Achaemenid Bakhtri? In nature, we find the Balkhāb on the left side, on the western border of the country. It dries up at all observable times in the desert, probably for thousands of years before Alexander marched from Balkh to the Oxus under the starlight over nothing but sand.[32] Ptolemy gives the coordinates of a confluence, but his geodata often mark nothing more than the point where a traveler starting from Balkh meets the great river to cross it, since Ptolemy's informants, in many cases, describe their itinerary without specifying whether their route follows a river or not.

The borders of Bactria are clearly defined by Pliny (*NH* 6.48): "This nation resides on the opposite side of Mount Paropanisus, opposite the sources of the Indus, and is enclosed by the river Ocho."[33] The northern border is not mentioned, as it was assumed that the Oxus separated Bactria from Sogdiana (cf. Strab. 11.8.8). The southern border is referred to as the ridge of the Hindu Kush, i.e., the Paropanisus. The eastern border is marked by the Pamir and Karakorum, where the

[28] Bernard 1978, 439f. For similar conditions in Kampyr Tepe on the Oxus, see Rtveladze 2008, 129b.

[29] Watters 1904, I, 108.

[30] Barrow 1893, 27.

[31] Bordeaux et al. 2019, 19. It would be essential to know whether the coins were found in the sprawling city or in the walled citadel.

[32] See the illustration in Fouache et al., 2012, 3426, beginning with the Bronze Age. On Alexander's pursuit of Bessus, see Curtius Rufus 7.5.1; von Schwarz 1893.

[33] Gens haec optinet aversa montis Paropanisi exadversus fontes Indi, includitur flumine Ocho.

sources of the Indus are located. The western border is formed by a river called Ochus, also known as Ωχος in Greek. This fits well with the fact that Apollodorus (ca. 100 BC) frequently mentions the Ochus as a river flowing near the Parthians.[34] The Parthians are located immediately west of Bactria.

Due to the similarity of the terms Ochus and Wakhan, the French historians assume that the Wakhan Valley with its river Panj bore the name Ochus as far as Takht-i Sangin, where it flows into the Wakhsh and both together form the Oxus.[35]

This statement can be compared with what Strabo (11.11.5) compiled as descriptions of the disputed river Ochus. Despite all the differences, the quotations do not contradict each other, but rather complement each other:

– "*According to some, the Ochus flows through Bactriana."*

This must be seen in the context of the general rule that "the Oxus separates Bactria and Sogdiana." Bactria is the land south of the Oxus, which determines the location of the Ochus, namely somewhere in the southern land. For the alternative view that Ochus refers to any part of the Amu Darya-Panj east of Takht-i Sangin, this definition seems inappropriate.

– *"According to others, alongside it."*

This definition places the Ochus at one of the borders of Bactria, south of the Oxus. This corresponds to the information cited above from Pliny and Apollodorus. It must be the western border, as the other three are fixed.

– *"And according to some, it is a different river from the Oxus as far as its mouths."*

This means that not even the delta of the Oxus touches the Oxus. This is also a correct observation.

– *"Being more to the south than the Oxus*."

The delta of the Ochus is meant, which is in the south of the Oxus line.[36] If Ochus was only the Amu-Darya east of Takht-i Sangin, "in the east" was to be expected rather than "in the south".

It follows that both rivers flow into the Caspian Sea, which is only true if Strabo drew on sources that refer to the second Ochus, a completely different river in Hyrcania that branches off from the Oxus or flows into it, meaning that both once ended in the Caspian Sea. Humbach et al.[37] show this on a map, while

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[34] Strab. 11.7.3 = *FGrHist* 779 F 4. I cannot follow Olbrycht (2010, 309), who searches for a river somewhere between Parthia and Bactria and finds an insignificant Āb-e Qaysar that "crosses the districts of Maymana and Andhkūy" west of Balkh. After crossing the desert from the west and reaching the Balkhāb, its sight alone would be enough to be sure that one has now left Parthia.

[35] Grenet / Rapin 1998, 80–81; Rapin 2005, 144; 2014, 182.

[36] Cf. the latest translation by Radt 2004: "Der Ochos soll nach Manchen durch die Baktriane fließen, nach Anderen an ihr entlang, und nach Manchen ist er bis zu seiner Mündung verschieden von dem Oxos - sein Lauf sei südlicher (…)."

[37] Humbach et al. 2002, 34, fig. 27.

Olbrycht identifies it with the Uzboi, which flowed into the southeastern part of the Caspian Sea.[38]

The first part of these definitions can, in their entirety, refer to the Balkhāb, which lies within Bactria on the (western) border of Bactria and is independent of the Oxus. If the river had a name derived from the largest city on its course, then Greek Ωχος would have to be derived from the local *bāxδī.* Sanskrit *vāhli* shows that the initial labial was transformed by lenition. Just as *vakṣu* turned to Ωξος, so *bāxδi, vāhli* could have become Ωχος.[39]

Along the course of the Ochus, as defined by Ptolemy, there is nothing that even remotely resembles the course of the Panj or Amu Darya in any of its sections. Even if you turn the map upside down, the Panj has no tributary that is twice as long as itself. Ptolemy's Ochus-Balkhāb begins with a much longer tributary called Dargomanēs[40] and remains Ochus from the confluence onwards, while the term Dargomanēs is not used for the lower, northern section. This change of name is also reflected in today's usage. The long river is the Rud-i Band-i Amir, which flows from near Bamiyan for about 200 km to Dahānah,[41] where it meets the Balkhāb, which at this point has only traveled 30 km. From the confluence onwards, only the name Balkhāb is used.[42] The route from Bamiyan down to Balkh through the Band-i Amīr Valley is famous for its natural beauty, but for a long time it was not a popular trade route.[43] There may have been difficulties, the nature of which is currently unclear.[44]

If we look at Ptolemy's map, we see that along the extended course of the Dargomanes / Rud-i Band-i Amir, which comes from the south, there is not a single settlement marked on the map, in contrast to the initial and southern part of the Balkhāb, where we come across Οστοβαρα, Latin *Estobara*, in the middle of the first

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[38] Olbrycht 2010.

[39] With the /l/ of Balkh lost as in Ptolemy's Αστακάνα, known as Hastilgān in Kushan times. Different Grenet / Rapin 1998, 80–81.

[40] The mss vary in reading Darga/Dargo+manēs/manis in Ptol. *Geogr.* 6.11.2, and Garda/Darga+manis/manios in 6.18.2 (Humbach / Ziegler 1998, 154 fn. 7, 224 fn. 3).

[41] 35°29'41" N, 66°32'28" E in Google Earth, literally the "mouth of a river". On some maps it is called Darrah-e Maghzār, below the Kuh-e Mazar, and Tay-e Mazar as one of the first villages.

[42] This is the convention used in modern maps. At the time of the Muslim geographers, the Rud-i Band-i Amir was better known and its course was used for travel to Bamiyan. Since the destination had changed, the entire watercourse was referred to as Balkhāb (Minorsky 1937, 73 §24, 108 §67) and the provisional Dargomanes was long forgotten. With the modern roads, the entire river can be referred to as Rud-i Band-i Amir. Adamec (IV, 1979) lists the short beginning of Ptolemy's Ochus as Dara-i-duldul, "river of the heavenly horse."

[43] Often the river side has to be left for longdrawn detours, cf. Barrow (1893, 21): " It must be distinctly recollected that there is no military route down the valley of the Band-i Amir.", where "military" means "fit for the transport of guns."

[44] Adamec (1979, IV, 113) speaks of "gorges between Sar-i-pul (Balkh-Ab) and Ak Kupruk, [which] are quite impassable."

short 30 km section.[45] This difference in familiarity could be due to Ptolemy's informant, who traveled from Balkh along the Ochus-Balkhāb to Ostobara. At least he knew that the confluent Dargomanes is much longer and comes from a hill in a southeasterly direction. Why would anyone march from Balkh to Ostobara and then return to their original destination without taking this detour?

The nature of the area can explain the seemingly limited knowledge of an informant: in these first 30 km of the Balkhāb, there are extensive copper mines, whose exploitation dates back to the late 2nd millennium BC. Many people working in metal processing will have only reached this point. Even today, the ore remains one of the largest copper deposits on Earth.[46] After transporting the ore, the carrier ends his journey in Balkh. The easy availability of copper and coal made Balkh an ideal place for coin minting in ancient times.

In addition to copper, the area is also rich in oil and natural gas. Pliny (*NH* 11.11.5) reports that an oil spring was discovered near the Ochus, a finding confirmed by recent investigations.[47] Although further oil deposits have been discovered east of Balkhab in the desert, extending as far as Taluqan, there are no reports of finds near the Amu Darya.

On Ptolemy's map downstream from Ostobara, the next town is called Ebusmu Anassa, which Humbach / Faiss interpret as simply the Greek ευοσμου ανασσα, "Queen of the Fragrant."[48]

In short, the sequence of the long Dargomanes, which meets the relatively short Ochus, perfectly reflects the long Band-i Amīr River, which meets the Balkhāb and continues to flow under its name. The settlement of Ostobara may have been a center of ore or coal mining.[49]

The definition of Zariaspa and Ochus sheds new light on a controversial event. In the spring of 329 BC, Alexander disappeared from Zariaspa. He and his army were not seen for eleven days. Then, as two texts (Curt. 7.10.15; *Metz Ep*. 14) say, "he first crossed the Ochus and the Oxus" and then went to Margania,[50]

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[45] Humbach / Faiss (2012, 38) think of NP "*ustuwār* 'firm, strong'". There are few serious works on Ostobara / Estabara. One exception is Rapin (2005,146 with fn. 15; 2021, 315), who suggests identifying the place as Ai Khanum. He refers to the medieval Peutinger map as a reference, on which we find 'Scobaru' that is hardly comparable to Ostobara. Scobaru is located south of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya, near *Damirice* = Dravidian India and directly near *Andre Indi* = Andhra. Since the name and location are so different, a relationship is more than doubtful.

[46] Peters et al. 2011.

[47] Cf. the map (Fig. 1) in Mehrad et al. 2020.

[48] Humbach / Faiss 2012, 37. Ronca (1971, 29) understands *anassa* as an attribute of a city and *ebousmou* as a personal name; cf. note on p. 30.

[49] Due to the eastward shift of the Ochus River by French scholars, the location of Ostobara on the Ochus also had to be shifted, so that Ostobara was considered by Rapin (e.g., 2005, 146f.) to be the old name of today's Ai Khanum.

[50] Apart from Schwarz, most researchers assumed that the city of Margania (*ad urbem Marganiam*) was a mistake for the country Margiana. Von Schwarz (1893, 66) pointed out the military

a region assumedly in Sogdiana, where, for unknown reasons, he founded six settlements on hills.

If one agrees with the penultimate solution proposed by the scholars following Rapin, considers Balkh to be Zariaspa, and assumes that the Ochus rises east of and ends at Takht-i Sangin, Alexander would have led his army eastward from Balkh for eleven days to attack Sogdiana in the north. With our new assignments, the picture appears much more straightforward and coherent: After Alexander left Zariaspa on the Oxus, he remained hidden for eleven days while the Sogdians did not know from which direction he was approaching. The sources say that he first crossed the Ochus, i.e., the Balkh River near the mountains, and then crossed the Oxus at a point west of Kalf, where it was easier to pass than at his daring first crossing. He invaded from the south, while the Sogdians were most likely waiting for him at the Iron Gate.[51]

In summary, it can be said that the composite nature of Dargomanes cum Ochus perfectly reflects the duality of Rud-i Band-i Amir and Balkhāb. Leaving the city of Zariaspa on the middle Oxus and the Ochus River south of Balkh after eleven days makes sense both geographically and militarily.

4. *Kouriandra (44) on the Ochus?*

The Ochus has a straight riverbed, and its bends are easy to follow. On Ptolemy's map, however, it ends at Alikodra after two wide swings to the left and right, first to the east, towards Kuriandra, then back to the west, towards Chomara. On the oldest printed Ptolemian map with its origins in the early 15th century, the river flows at a distance between them, thus presenting a relatively straight picture, while Kuriandra lies far to the east. The location is important to us, as its name ends in *-dra*, just like Alikh-o-dra. This makes it possible to ignore the suffix and search for a place that could be called *Kurian. There is a Khurram, not on the Balkhāb-Ochus, but on the Khulmāb, at about the same latitude as in Ptolemy, between Aibak and Rob, 14 km south of the now better-known Sarbagh. It is a "caravan stage" to Yule, but also a place where one turns off onto an east-west road. General Ferrier came from Aybak and turned here directly to the Balkhāb valley and from there to Sar-i Pul (in the direction of Shabergan).[52]

nonsense and geographical inconsistency of a march to Merv. For the reading, see Atkinson 2000, 164 with fn. 47, comment on p. 478. Most editions and translations silently "correct" this to Margiana. The city of Margania remains undefined; the name is similar in structure to Menapia. Both appear only once in the literature. The plot requires Alexander to appear in a city in Sogdiana, which he enters from the south.

[51] Such a deception was the basis of his attack on Porus on the Jhelum, as analysed in the best book on the subject by B. Breloer (1933).

[52] Ferrier 1857, 215 and map.

If this assignment is correct, Kuriandra (also Chomara?) would be attributable to an informant who was probably able to determine the latitude but fell slightly short on the longitude. The Ochus would then also run on Ptolemy's map as it does in nature.

5. *The Eastern River Dargoites (R3)*

Seemingly irrefutable proof of Ptolemy's unreliability is his silence on Samarkand. Since the map shows a Marakanda near the ridge of the Hindu Kush in the south, while the former Marakanda = Samarkand[53] was located in the north, some scholars[54] assume that the entire map of Bactria, including some river courses, was misplaced and rotated by 180 degrees. The name of the river is given in the *Geography*[55] as Dargoidos, a river "that has traveled a long way." This term lives on in Rūdh-i Darghām, as Muslim historians later referred to it.[56] A visitor traveling to Bactria would cross the Hindu Kush ridge and first encounter a mysterious place called Marakodra. This place can be reached from the Kabul plain via a road to the northwest through the Ghorband Valley. At Marakodra, the direction changes to the northeast. The next stop is called "royal Bactra" (Βακτρα βασιλειον). This epithet led some scholars to believe that Ptolemy's cartographer had mistakenly located Balkh here in the mountains, 260 km from its actual location. Since Balkh is definitely not located in the Hindu Kush mountains and Samarkand cannot be found there either, the representation of this river course would be completely wrong, and Ptolemy would be rightly criticized. However, we have already seen that there were at least two places called *Baktra*, so a third should not be ruled out lightly.

At this point, we leave Ptolemy and return to Alexander. In search of Bessus, he entered the territory of Bactria in 329 BC, on the trail of the murderer of the last Achaemenid ruler. A few of the places in Bactria mentioned in the narrative are named: Descending from the mountain pass in 329 BC, Alexander first reaches Drapsa, continues to Aornos, and then arrives in Bactra. From there, he crosses the Oxus north of Bactra at an unnamed location and continues toward the center of Sogdiana. After his not very successful first campaign in Sogdiana, he returns from the north across the Oxus and spends the winter break in Zariaspa.

Of these few places, Bactra, here Balkh, and the ford north of it give no cause for dispute, but Drapsa and Aornos are disputed, while Zariaspa was considered

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[53] According to Strabo 11.11.4, Alexander completely destroyed Marakanda. There may have been good reasons why this city was not mentioned at all for a long time.

[54] Humbach / Ziegler 2002, 87; Rapin 1998, *passim.*

[55] The manuscripts read Dargoidos or Dargidos in Ptol. *Geogr.* 6.11.1 (Humbach / Ziegler 1998, 154 n. 16).

[56] Minorsky 1937, 71.

to be Bactra. According to one view,[57] Drapsa, the first settlement in Bactria reached by Alexander's army, is identified with present-day Kunduz, while the next stop, Aornos, is probably Khulm. Opponents argue that Aornos must be Kunduz and that Drapsa must therefore be located upstream and closer to the Hindu Kush, preferably somewhere near Baghlan or Surkh Kotal.

The understanding of Aornos is crucial in this debate. The Aornos = Kunduz faction[58] bases its argument on phonology and accepts Αορνος as the Greek rendering of the Achaemenid Varnu, which is itself mentioned in an Aramaic document from the time of Bessus[59] and a millennium later in a letter from 602 AD.[60] In both cases, the location is mentioned without any reference to its specific place. The connection to the people of the *varnoi*, who live somewhere between the Zariaspes and the Dargoites on Ptolemy's map, is more or less arbitrary.[61] Due to the alliteration, these *varnoi* were first associated with a place called Varvalīz.[62] This city is unknown to Ptolemy, but it is assumed that this place name remained in the memory of the Varnoi for centuries.[63]

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[57] E.g., Bernard / Francfort 1978, 75 fn. 57: „l'indentification de 'Αδραπσα . . . avec Qunduz est sure."

[58] Rapin (2018, 262 fig. 3) is a good example of this and illustrates the detour via Kunduz in his map.

[59] Naveh / Shaked 2006, 18.

[60] Sims-Williams 2012, 58, Doc. L.

[61] Arab geographers frequently mention a city called Warwāliz, which most researchers believe to be Qunduz. The classic explanation is based on the route Balkh-Khulm-Warwaliz-Taluqan, three stages each comprising two days of travel, and five more to Faizabad (Barthold 1968, 67). Since three places are precisely defined, Warwaliz must be sought halfway between Khulm and Taluqan. The only city in this position known today is Kunduz. But does this rule out other explanations? The Arab geographer Idrisi presents in his map from 1156 (Miller 1927; s. fig. 2) a sequence of Bamiyan-Kah-Malr (= *madad*)-Khulm (= *hulm*)-Warwaliz (= *uarualin*), all in a line, and after a bend and crossing of a river Taluqan(= *ṭa'lan*). It is important to note that the last Taluqan is not reached in a straight line, but after a right angle turn, and that Warwaliz touches the Oxus River. Considering that the first two stages pass through sandy wasteland and the last through cultivated land, the third stage may seem longer, although the effort remains the same. I suggest taking the mighty fortress of Qila Zal as Warwaliz, a real and huge fortress from the post-Kushan period. According to the *Ḥudūd* (Minorsky 1937, 109 § 73), it served as the capital (*qaṣaba*) of Tokharistan, 25 km east of the former Zariaspa, and was probably abandoned when the desert advanced to the borders of the fortress. Al Biruni connects the fortress with the Hephtalites (Minorsky 1937, 340 §73), which is consistent with initial archaeological finds. Qila Zal is located near the Oxus-Amu Darya, as recorded by Idrisi, and requires a right turn towards Taluqan. Its southwestern corner is located at 36°58'55.75"N, 68°21'37.95"E. Occasionally, the fortress of Qila-i Zal, 28 km east on the Kunduz River, is considered relevant in connection with Alexander's activities in Bactria. Judging by the remains, it was built in the early Kushan period and abandoned in the Hephthalite period; cf. Ball 1982, 215a, No. 892 "Qal'a-i Zāl". Staviskij (1986, 96, 109, 274) emphasizes its importance due to its size and concludes that it is not mentioned by classical authors.

[62] Markwart 1938, 45.

[63] One of the witnesses is Minorsky, (1937, 340 §73), who confused the two rivers Ṭālaqān and Doshī with Khulmāb and Doshī, both of which "flow from the borders of Ṭukhāristān" near

The Aornos = Khulm fraction disputes the validity of this circular argument and points to several places named Aornos in Alexander's vast Empire, all of which are located on high rock formations.[64] Khulm is unique in southern Bactria in that, unlike the circular hills in the Achaemenid style in Balkh or Kunduz, it has a remarkable stone fortress high above the city. Thus, a linguistic equation (Aornos = Varnoi = Varvalīz = Kunduz) contrasts with a more circumstantial one (Aornos = Tashkurgan = Khulm).

Both explanations of the term Aornos have some advantages, and the different perspectives have consequences for the location of Drapsa, which is either Kunduz (if Aornos = Khulm) or a place further south (if Aornos = Kunduz), i.e., upstream. Drapsa was the first city Alexander encountered after crossing the Hindu Kush, and thus the definition of Drapsa determines how the army's march in search of Bessus can be reconstructed. We learn that Bessus had already ravaged places south of the Hindu Kush, and to an even greater extent on the route leading through the Panjshir Valley to the Khawad Pass. We can be sure that places at the end of the passage were also devastated and robbed of their supplies.

Where would a Macedonian army pursuing Bessus feel that the end of the pass was reached after having seen nothing but rock walls on both sides, with a peak of 3,848 meters in the middle of winter? The soldiers came down the mountain with frostbitten toes, freezing and hungry, after paying enormous sums just for body oil to protect themselves from the cold. The first place with a good agricultural tradition is not Baghlan, let alone Kunduz, but the valley of Andarab, which appears again on most modern maps as Banu. Usually, without sabotage units, Andarab is rich in grain[65] and has a defensible fortress called Banu.[66] Silver mines are located halfway up the Khawad Pass. For this reason, it was the place where silver coins were minted and stored for many centuries.[67] Alexander's troops climbed the Khawad Pass from the Kabul side when the mountains were covered with snow. There were no supplies, no firewood, and soldiers died immediately when they fell to the ground, so they had to be lifted

Kah and Madr, bypass Valvālij (the Dōshī) and Khulm (the Khulm R.) and flow into the Jayḥūn-Oxus-Amu Darya after they have (once) joined near Zariaspa-Khisht Tepe. The reference to Khulm in Minorsky's understanding makes no sense.

[64] For discussion, see Naveh / Shaked 2012, 20.

[65] In 1922 (Koshkaki translated by Reut 1979, 33): "all kinds of grain, fruit trees, wet and dry agriculture, good livestock breeding and hunting grounds."

[66] Koshkaki transl. by Reut 1979, 30-31: "Andarâb est très bien situé pour établir l'autorité gouvernementale. S'il s'avérait nécessaire pour le gouvernement afghan d'installer une seconde capitale dans le pays, il n'y aurait pas de meilleur endroit pour cela, car une armée limitée serait capable d'empêcher l'invasion d'une grande armée. c'est une région protégée par la nature, n'ayant qu'une voie d'accès". This was written by a local in 1922. Cf. Ball (1982, 52b s.v. Banu): "An easily defensible, strategic site of an ancient town, consisting of rubble foundations covering a semi-isolated alluvial plateau."

[67] Minorsky 1937, 109 §77, 341.

and forced to move to keep the blood circulating. To stave off starvation, they killed pack animals and ate their flesh raw, as they had no firewood. This army came down the Andarab Valley, decimated by nature and in a pitiful condition. A large number of horses had died on the pass or would die on the way to the Oxus and beyond (Arr. 3.30.6). The assumption that these troops, after two weeks of fighting against snow, cold, and hunger, with frozen feet, some of them being carried, marched another 100 km to Kunduz, shows ignorance of military necessities and possibilities. Andarab is clearly the end of the rocky Khawad Pass, as Wood confirms: "At the bottom of the pass lay the secluded valley of Inderab [Andarab HF], beyond which the snowy mountains rose like a wall, without any intervening ridge to veil their majesty."[68] In Andarab, vegetation comes into view, and the people were accustomed to a pleasant life. Andarab could have supplied Alexander's troops with provisions had it not been sabotaged beforehand by Bessus's marauding troops.

According to a list of provisions published in Maithanaka,[69] Bessus had planned to march from Balkh to Varnu. The place name Varnu may live on in today's Banu, the naturally fortified site of Andarab. Bessus may have expected Alexander to wait for more favorable weather conditions. When he heard of the march through the Khawad Pass into the Andarab Valley, he may have considered receiving Alexander there, but he soon realized it was too late. His own scorched-earth policy would have necessitated taking up supplies at a larger location along the way. When he changed his mind and wanted to flee north across the Oxus, the list of provisions had already been sent to Maithanaka and could no longer serve its purpose.

Anyone who identifies Varnu, Aornos, or Drapsa with Kunduz[70] must be able to answer the question of why Bessus, in his distress, would lead his army to Kunduz. Certainly not to confront Alexander, because Alexander's army would have had time on its way from the Hindu Kush to Kunduz to stock up on supplies and recover to a certain extent. Since they would have arrived there first, they could even have occupied the fortress. If Bessus had been in Kunduz first, no Achaemenid-style fortress could have withstood Alexander's engineers with their ballistic machines and the experienced storm troops following them. Alternatively, if Bessus' Varnu is Banu in the Andarab region, an early attack by Bessus on the Macedonians there could have taken advantage of the poor condition of Alexander's army at its arrival. Despite the plans evident from the provision

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[68] Wood 1872, 270.

[69] Naveh / Shaked 2006, 178: This place Maithanaka has not been located so far. It is certainly "on the way from Bactra to Varnu" (Naveh / Shaked 2012, 18) if Varnu is Banu in Andarab. On Ptolemy's map, on the way from Balkh to Andarab (Baktra basileion) there is the town of Menapia on the second river, the Zariaspēs-Khulmāb, certainly close to where Rob is today.

[70] Several theories are listed and discussed in Naveh / Shaked (2012, 20), none of which take Anderab into account, but instead argue whether Aornos refers to Kunduz or Khulm.

list, Bessus may never have gone to Maithanaka to fetch provisions and march to Varnu-Andarab, and for good reasons. On the other hand, all Alexander historians have Alexander march from Drapsa to Aornos and from there to Bactra without encountering any significant resistance.

If Andarab is definitely the first place at the end of the Khawad Pass, could its name have something to do with Δραψα-Drapsa? The order of /d/, /r/, and labials is the same in both. The spelling varies: in Darapsa there is a vowel after the /d/ (Strab. 11.11.2), in Adrapsa (Strab. 15.2.10) there is an /a/ at the beginning, and there is a modern form of Drapsaka used by Arrian and also known from the *Metz Epitome* (§32), where – in the description of the return journey to India – it is the last station mentioned before reaching the Kabul River from the north.[71]

The name *Drapsa* appears 400 years later as Lraf (ΛΡΑΦΟ) after the usual sound shifts in an inscription by Kaniṣka from Surkh Kotal (SK4, §4), which tells us that statues of deities "have been brought to Lraf, to Andēz," ΑΒΟ ΛΡΑΦΟ ΟΑCΤΙΝΔΟ ΑΒΟ ΑΝΔΗΖΟ, where the otherwise unknown Andēz appears as an apposition to Lraf, as a second name used in a second language group: Lraf has lost the final sibilant of Drapsa, while Andēz, short for Adrapsa, has retained it. A combination of the two forms, Lraf and Andēz, is the present-day Andarab, also known as Wood's Inderab, located 130 km southeast of Surkh Kotal. As in so many other cases, a place in this region[72] can have several names in different language groups, which have either developed from a common prototype, a simple translation, or a loan translation, or are completely independent traditional or newly created formations.

There may be a further argument, coming from the Chinese side. The Han time annals mention a capital city of Tocharistan named Lanshi, written 藍市 or 藍氏, a town that the Kushans later utilized in the same capacity. Could Lan-shi be a Chinese version of a local name derived from *dra-psa*? In East-Iranian languages, word-initial /l/ develops regularly from /d/, as in Lraf<Drapsa.[73] In a Chinese transcription of a local name, a nasal often renders a final /r/ in the foreign language.[74] And the closing *psa* may well have induced the *shi* or *si* (as pronounced in Cantonese). Ergo: /lansi/ would perfectly render MP *darsi, which is no long way from Drapsa. Support comes from the much younger Xien Tang shu 43b,

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[71] Different is another town called Drepsa known to Ptolemy in Khottalān.

[72] The need to mention variants is therefore as old as the text from Surkh Kotal. Throughout Afghanistan, the worst conditions prevail in Badakhshan, the land between the Kunduz River and the Kokcha, where Turki, Dard, and Tajik-speaking people live side by side. Cartographers seem to focus on the vocabulary of only one ethnic group, so that Google Earth, for example, provides completely different names than the Freytag/Berndt map of Afghanistan on a scale of 1:100,000, which uses terms that are closest to those used by Xuanzang.

[73] Cf. the Aśokan parallel forms *dipi* and *lipi*, "writing, inscription", with *dipi* being the older.

[74] Cf. Āḷāra kālāma阿藍迦藍, where *ḷār* and *lām* are both heard as 藍 *lan*; Darkot became 坦駒 *tan-ko*; Mirkan 嘗健 (MC) mi̯uŋ, (HC) kan/gan. This latter place is commonly equated with Munjan on Xuanzang's return trip to China. But Munjan is out of his way and the term refers to a place called Mirkan or Ambadarreh on the Andarab–Faizabad route [36°27'48.33"N, 70°11'9.07"E].

新唐書/卷043下: 藍氏州以缽勃城置。where 藍氏 is used for the department, having *bōbó* 缽勃 as its city. HC produces *pa-bu* instead, which looks like a misheard *ba-nu*, the Banu or Banow of modern maps.

Suppose the capital Lan-shi of the Chinese explorer corresponds to Drapsa of the Alexander historians in the land of the Warnu, today Banu, the varnoi. In that case, *Lan-shi* is also Lraf, alias Andēz, the two local versions known to the Kushans, and then Drapsa-Andarab can also be seen, where Ptolemy has his *Bactra basileion*. This equation would end two discussions: a) Where is the capital of the Bactrians that the Chinese found in 130 BC? and b) Why did Ptolemy not call Balkh *Baktra*? Andarab, as the capital *lan-shi*, is Drapsa and functions as *Bactra basileion*, while Balkh had long since lost its significance. Is this too simple to be true?[75]

Andarab/Banu already played an essential political role in the Greco-Bactrian period, before the Chinese ambassador visited the "capital" south of the Oxus. Its function was maintained until the Eukratidides, Yuezhi, and Kushans. The reason for this is not only its control of the Khavad Pass, but there is also a second important road which branches off from the Andarab plain through the mountains to the northeast, leading directly to the modern Tokhar region with its connections to Taluqan, Ai Khanum, and Faizabad on the Kokcha River, disregarding the much longer and dusty road to Kunduz. Xuanzang used this road to Faizabad in Badakhshan on his return journey to China, while Babur came the opposite way to Andarab. If necessary, the bottleneck through the mountains can be easily defended.[76]

In any case, Kunduz can be ruled out as one of Alexander's possible first destinations in Bactria, as the conqueror followed the usual route from Drapsa-Andarab to Aornos-Khulm (Arrian 3.21.1) and from there on to Bactra. It is unlikely that Kunduz was ever called Drapsa or Aornos. It was completely insignificant for a long time to come.

There is only one other place on this highest part of the river, called Marakodra. It lies west and south of the "Royal Bactra." According to Ptolemy's map, a road leads south from there to the ridge of the Hindu Kush. As a term, Marakodra is unique, but it ends in *-dra* again. It has a relative in Marakanda on the middle river. As I will show below, the two are not only phonetically related but also refer to an identical traffic hub. The terms stand for a place that can be reached from both rivers, a fact that may not have been known to all of our Greek geographer's informants.

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[75] The priority of Andarab for Drapsa is too obvious to have gone unnoticed. Beal (1884, II, 328b) was the first to mention this possibility: "Andarâb (...) in Badakshân, perhaps the ʾΑδραπσα of the Greeks." Without giving any reasons, Tomaschek (1905, 1698-9) follows suit: "Drapsaka, das heutige Anderâb."

[76] Reut 1922, 31: "A proximité d'Andarâb est situé Khôst, qui est également un lieu sûr, car il n'y a qu' une seule route et si dix personnes étaient installées là, même mille personnes ne pourraient pas passer."

6. *The Middle River, Zariaspes (R2)*

Ptolemy calls the river that reaches Zariaspa "Zariaspes", following the habit that rivers can legitimately be given a name to a place they come from or go to, depending on the traveller's destination. The Alexander historians never mention this river by name; only geographers preserve its memory. Today, it is called Khulmāb, as Zariaspa no longer exists, and the river only flows into the Oxus north of Khulm in cases of severe flooding. As early as the 19th century, its water was used up by farmers in a fan of canals along its entire course through the desert.[77]

The Zariaspes River, today's Khulmāb, is therefore crucial in leading us to the disputed Zariaspa. Here, too, we will see that Ptolemy describes this river in such a way that no doubt remains. He mentions only a few places along its course. According to his information, it has two source rivers on the ridge of the Hindu Kush, one of which touches a place called Marakanda, which reminds us of Marakodra on the third river. Below Marakanda, the Zariaspes then joins a short river called Atarmēs. The main course then continues northward, passing a place called Menapia, turning northwest to Astakana, meeting the Kauaris shortly thereafter, and then flowing northeast into the Oxus. Menapia only appears here, but lies on the route from Balkh to Andarab and could therefore be identical to the place Maithanaka of the Bessus period (cf. fn. 69). It is not far from the place called Rob–Rui, which is known from Bactrian documents.[78]

I equate Astakana with Aibak and Kauaris with Khulm. The equation of Astakana and Aibak is inspired by the large inscription in Surkh Kotal (located only 20 km from Pul-i Khumri and 60 km from Aybak), where we learn towards the end that the well in Surkh Kotal was built by a Burzmihr who came from the city of Hastilgān, presumably a nearby place. With or without initial aspiration, the place name Hastilgan near Surkh Kotal can be compared with the form Αστακάνα from Ptolemy (*Geogr.* 6.18.8), a similarity that is too great to be coincidental. Caravans or troops coming from the Pul-i Khumri or Surkh Kotal area had to march through a short stretch of riverless terrain until they reached the Khulm River at Hastilgan (SK4) or Astakana (Ptolemy).

Once Astakana has been defined, Ptolemy's Kavaris can only be Khulm. There are many reading errors in Ptolemy's collection, and I suspect that Kavaris (KAVAPIC, Καυαρις) is nothing more than a misreading of KAMPIC or KAΛMIC. The oldest written form of the name is the Aramaic *ḫlmy*, which is found in one of the earliest letters (A8:3) of the Khalili collection[79] and is rendered as Khulm(i),

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[77] Yule 1872a *apud* Wood 1872, lxviii. In the five years it took me to complete this work, I tracked all the rivers on Google Earth and similar devices. Around 2020, there was a narrow green strip running westward from Khulm toward Khisht Tepe, a remnant of an original watercourse. In new images from 2025, this strip has completely disappeared halfway along its course, with the northeastern part now filled with sand.

[78] Sims-Williams 2007, 260 ρωβο; 2012, documents A,C,N,P, etc.

[79] Shaked 2003, 1522.

while Ptolemy's KAVAPIC shows that the final *-i* should not be omitted. It may even have been preserved in Pul-i Khumri, if this means "bridge to Khulm.".[80]

Back to Alexander. After recovering in Drapsa-Andarab, he set off for Balkh, using this busy road, bypassing Rabatak and Aybak, reaching Aornos-Khulm, and from there Balkh. The reason for the Greek term Aornos was, as had been suspected long ago, the stone fortress on the mountain peak, which led to its second name today, Tash Kurgan, "stone building." This means that the city of Khulm was given a Greek epithet.

The interesting thing about this river is that it originates in Marakanda, a term used in other cases for the former and present-day Samarkand. The important city of Sogdiana should certainly not be located in the Hindu Kush, but there is a solution that clarifies this seemingly glaring error. One of Ptolemy's informants may have inquired about the locations that could be found further upstream. If Menapia is indeed Rob-Rui, there are only two places further upstream that are better known, namely the two places Malr/Madr/Madar and Kah/Kamarda, which are already mentioned in the Bactrian letters. Together they form a contact zone between two watercourses, one being the Khulmāb, which rises in Malr and flows north, and the Surkhab-Dargamanes, which rises in Kah-Kamarda and flows east, joining the Doshi, where it merges with the Andarab River and continues on to Kunduz.

Fig. 2. Excerpt from the map of Idrisi presenting Bamian (*bamīān*)–Kah–Madr (*madad*)–Khulm (*ḫulm*)–Warwaliz (*varvalin*) in a row and Taluqan (*ṭa'lan*) at an angle, with the transliteration of K. Miller (1927).
Note that Andarab (*indarab*) is reached through Takhar, not along the Kunduz River. Sakalkand should be Ishkamish, with Bakiān being Borkeh.

[80] Dupree (1977, 368) presents the local view of "a bridge built by the lady Qumri", but "ladies" are a common accessory in popular explanations, as in the modern names of Ai Khanum or Kampyr Tepe. Cf. the women waters, *mainā āp*, seen as the basis of Menapia by Humbach / Faiss 2012, 77.

Although Malr is small,[81] the two inhabited places, Malr and Kah, between the barren rocks must have served as trading centers for an important commercial hub. The valleys are separated by a steep but short gorge called Bajgah, also known as Madr tangi.[82] Idrisi's map (Fig. 2) shows a straight line from Bamiyan to Madad (Malr), to Kah, and on to Khulm (and Varvaliz). Rui (alias Menapia?) cannot be found on Idrisi's map, nor can Qunduz.[83] I suspect that the two economically linked places Malr/Madr/Madad and Kah/Kamard/Kahmanda were combined to form Malr-kamanda and this was mistakenly understood as a single place called Mara-kanda, the name of the city Samarkand still in the ear of Ptolemy's informants.

According to Ptolemy's records, the northward-flowing river system of the Khulm River begins in the south with two short tributaries. The western tributary branches off at a place called Marakanda, while the eastern one has its own name, Atarmēs. The two probably flow together at a place today called Rui do Ab, "Rui of the two rivers," located less than 30 km upstream from Rui, the Rob mentioned in the documents, and approximately 20 km downstream from their two sources. How is it that such a short stream as the Atarmēs is mentioned by Ptolemy? There must be a reason for this, and I suspect that a traveler hiking uphill from the Kabul plain was very excited to finally reach a river flowing downhill and heard that it was called *atarmēs* or *atarmis*. Could this reflect **āb-e tarmīs*, "the river that leads to Termez"? In fact, it could lead there, depending on which side you leave Khulm, but the morphological[84] and linguistic[85] differences would still need to be confirmed.

This explanation assumes that the traveling reporter came from the south, from Charikar and the Ghorband Valley. He crossed the point where he could decide to either take the Atarmis route north or head west to Kah/Kahmard to get some rest. At least, the informant mentioned both options, which were also included on the map. If Atarmis is understood correctly, the trek in the first century would no longer lead to Zariaspa, but to Termez. A similar shift from Indikomardana-Kobadian to Termez is confirmed by Chinese historians who deal with the fifth Yabghu.[86]

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[81] Adamec (1979, IV, 377) s.v. *Madar* lists 15 houses and "the ground is all on a slope"; s.v. *Kamard* or *Kahmard* (IV, 301) we learn that the place is much larger with close to five thousand inhabitants.

[82] 35°20'54.0"N 67°48'07.6"E.

[83] Qunduz is often overlooked by authors. According to Montgomerie (1871, 191), it is a "town proverbally known to be unhealthy."

[84] Ptolemy does not seem to mention Termez, but shows Alexandreia Ōxeiane (Kampyr Tepe?) not far from it. The oldest forms are Tarmita, Tarmidha, HC *tumit* (都密). Rapin (in Gorshenina / Rapin 2015, 115 fn. 6) relocates Zariaspa to Samarkand and connects Artamis with the Ak-darya, "White River," "l'une des branches du Zerafshan."

[85] The spirantisation of an aspirate dental is common in the first century in Swat valley, e.g. with *tasa<tathā*, *prasamu<prathamaṃ* in the Senavarma donation record. Merchants from Swat or Gandhara certainly visited Bactria frequently and may have brought their speech habits with them.

[86] The shift from Gaofu to Termez is reflected in Chinese chronicles (Falk ed. 2015, 73). I equate the location of Gaofu with Kobadian, the partner town of Khisht Tepe.

What Ptolemy lists as Marakanda on the second river and Marakodra on the third river is nothing more than the linkage between the two places, which was too important and too well known to be misunderstood. Today, the site marks the natural border between Tocharestan and Balkh.[87] Of the two sites, Kah is by far the more important. Perhaps because of its caravansarai, the name of the city can be extended by the suffix *-dra* (Ka-[o]-dra), just as Kahmard is as common today as Kah.

Thus, Ptolemy's (middle) Khulm River is perfectly depicted from its source to its mouth in or near the Oxus. Instead of a doubly misplaced Samarkand in the Hindu Kush, we encountered two related terms referring to the same source area of both the Zariaspes and the Dargaitos.

In summary, Ptolemy was correct in many respects regarding the three north-flowing rivers of Bactria. He presents Alik Rabat-Alikodra on the Ochus; he has the Khulm River in mind when he speaks of the Zariaspes, and he has a *Bactra metropolis* where it makes sense, in Andarab, the Drapsa of the Alexander historians and probably also the Lanshi of the Chinese.

7. *Zariaspa is Khisht Tepe (38)*

Ptolemy locates Zariaspa at the southern bank of the Oxus, somewhere between the deltas of the Khulmāb and Kunduzāb. Just north of this, on the same 115th parallel, less than one (Ptolemaic) degree of latitude away, is another place called Indikomardana (44). This is where we find Kobadian today, a place already known to Chinese historians of the Han period. There can be no doubt: if we travel straight south for 54 km from Kobadian along the Kafirnighan River, we arrive at a ferry landing, and the corresponding place on the southern bank is called Khisht Tepe (38), literally "brick hill."[88]

Why did Alexander choose this location to allow his army to rest during the winter months? Firstly, it lies in the middle of Bactria, on its northern border. The location itself signals how far Alexander had expanded his new possessions to the north: as far as the Oxus. Wherever rebellions broke out south of Zariaspa, he could march there with equal ease. The camp consists of a triangular headland measuring approximately 300 × 250 m, which forces the Oxus to flow around it on three sides. This makes it impregnable from the north and easy to defend on the fourth, southern side. It is also an ideal starting point for the planned second attack on Sogdiana: the river is 500 m wide here and should be navigable by ships. Inside the promontory, a hill[89] rises more than 10 m, which is ideal for a "citadel" where the leader could reside.

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[87] Minorsky (1937, 64, 73, 109, 336) and his texts imply, in sum, that Madr was also governed from Surkhāb and Andarab, not from Balkh.

[88] On the name cf. Curiel / Fussman 1965, 9 with fn. 3; modern map services introduce Khosh Tepa or Khvash Tappeh,

[89] 36°56'38.25"N, 68° 5'10.43"E; cf. fig. 12.1 in Gardin 1998, with a top view and cut through the citadel in fig. 13.3 .

According to Alexander historians, Zariaspa was large and had a fortress, which today appears as a "fortin ruiné", as noted in the caption to Fig. LVI in Curiel / Fussman 1965, which shows Khisht Tepe. Arrian (*An.* 4.16.5) distinguishes between a barbican (φρούριον) and the actual city (πόλις) of Zariaspa.

After the winter of 329/328 BC, Alexander left Zariaspa and continued his conquests in the north. Zariaspa was left under the care of Craterus and a few emergency troops, who guarded the city and a large number of sick or mutilated soldiers. Taking advantage of this weakness, the supposed renegade Spitamenes raided a Macedonian fortress nearby in 329 BC and then moved on to Zariaspa (Arr. 4.16.5), where he did not kill any of the inhabitants but took plenty of booty and then set off again. Some Macedonian cavalry troops stationed there took some time to learn of this raid and then pursued Spitamenes and the Massagetae. A sparsely populated city guarded (in principle) by eighty horsemen explains the delayed response. This is the last we hear of Zariaspa during Alexander's time.

F. von Schwarz, who knew the country well, claimed that the winter quarters in Zariaspa could not have been at Balkh for military reasons and transport problems.[90] For over a hundred years, he was the only scholar who questioned the equation Balkh = Zariaspa. C. Rapin contradicted von Schwarz and publicly declared his intention to separate the two places into Bactra = Balkh and Zariaspa = Samarkand, "ce qui offre une reconstitution très différente de la genèse de la conquête" (which offers a very different reconstruction of the genesis of the conquest).[91] However, he did not provide details of his hypothesis until 2018.[92] Here, Rapin listed all relevant texts, with the exception of those concerning the river Zariaspes. Rapin also mentions Ptolemy, but without going into detail.[93] He argued that the new location of the winter camp in Samarkand would have helped to keep Alexander in Sogdiana during his second campaign against the Sogdians, and that moving his "guests" to Zariaspa = Balkh would have been too arduous, involving a journey of about a thousand kilometers in both directions. However, these figures are exaggerated. From Samarkand to Balkh and likewise to Zariaspa, it is only about 300 km, a few days on horseback, nothing that would have made Alexander or his guests hesitate.[94] But at least Rapin finally recognized that identifying Zariaspa with Balkh was not an irrefutable necessity.

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[90] Schwarz 1893, 67. His own incorrect assumption was Chardzhou, Türkmenabad, southwest of Bukhara on the left bank of the Amu Darya.

[91] Rapin 2014, 157.

[92] Maintained in Rapin 2021, 314.

[93] Rapin 2018, 265.

[94] To increase the value of Marakanda, Rapin (2018, 465) only counts guests from the north, but in fact they come from Parthyaea, Araia, "the sea," and Syria, cf. Arr. *An.* 4.7.1–2.

To support his thesis, Rapin connects Zariaspa with Zerafshan east of Samarkand, claiming that one is the capital and the other is the "homonymous plain."[95] I prefer to stick to Ptolemy's map, which shows Zariaspa on the Oxus between the deltas of two rivers that flow into the Oxus on the left and right.

8. *The Upper "Oxus" = the Kokcha (R5)*

Ptolemy omits all tributaries of his Oxus from its source to where it receives the Dargoites = Qunduz River (s. Fig. 4). For us, the Oxus = Panj = Amu Darya is only shown from Oxeiana to the mouth of the Qunduz River, while the upper course of Ptolemy's river in the east, which ends its northern course in Oxeiana with a sharp bend to the west, resembles the Kokcha and Warduj. These two rivers define the important road to the ridge of the "Caucasus" on the way to India or China. This means that Ptolemy shows no trace of the Panj=Amu Darya east of Oxeiana, because he primarily describes roads.

If the river flowing south is the Kokcha, then Oxeiana must be Ai Khanum.[96] If the Kokcha-Warduj path is what Ptolemy understood as part of the Oxus, then the highest point called Phratrua should be found at the end of the Warduj river, which is known to be near Ishkashim, where the Oxus leaves the Wakhan Valley and begins to flow north.

Phratrua has not yet been identified, but our expectations are met by the fact that several modern maps show a place called Fotur[97] nine kilometers southeast of Ishkashim at the location determined. The village has its own entry in Adamec (1972), "apparently the same as Paltu," the lowest village belonging to Wakhan, separated from Ishkashim by a broad, down-like spur."[98] On the Mirza's map (Montgomerie 1871), it is entered as Patore, a few miles before the "road to Chitral" branches off. Faiz Buksh, a Munshee who spied for the British, visited the place and reported: "The border of Wakhán begins at Potar."[99] Undoubtedly, all modern variants of the place name reflect something similar to Phratrua.[100] As tiny as the place may be, it allowed travel in six directions: first back north and down the Warduj-Kokcha to Ai-Khanum, or straight north along the Oxus-Panj to Shighnan, or Darwaza, or east along the Wakhan either to China or south via the Khatinza Pass to Chitral or, more conveniently, via the Darkot Pass to Bolor,

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[95] Rapin 2018, 265. This idea is considered probable by Iliakis 2021, 38f. fn. 11, and Minardi 2023, 814.

[96] Both Alexandreia Ōxeianē and simply Ōxeianē are considered by Bernard / Francfort (1978, 5), as candidates for Ai Khanum. Following Ptolemy, I prefer the latter.

[97] 36°41'9.22"N 71°38'52.18"E.

[98] Adamec 1972, I, 134 s.v. Pātūr Futūr.

[99] Yule 1872, 462.

[100] Humbach / Faiss (2012, 38) derive it from "OIr. fra-tarva/nt- 'to advance/victoriously pursue one's path', primarily the name of a river and/or attribute of its deity."

into the Gilgit Valley, or straight south to the Doha Pass to Chitral and Nangarhar. With Ai Khanum and Phratrua as cornerstones, our definition of Ptolemy's "upper Oxus" as a road along the Kokcha and Warduj seems reliable.

South of Ōxeiana = Ai Khanum, the map shows two places called Cholbisina and Maruka. Their order suggests an S-bend, with Maruka being mentioned first even though it is further south. For this and other reasons, it has been suggested since Tomaschek that Cholbisina is a Greek version of today's Hulbuk, a place in Khottalān, 70 kilometers further north, with no connection to the Kokcha River. The longitude is more or less correct east of Ai Khanum, but the latitude is too low. Cholbisina seems to have been shifted together with the next place, Maruka. The modern equivalent is usually given as Munk in upper Khottalān, the old name for today's Baljuwān north of Hulbuk. Hulbuk was a royal residence during many phases, including under the Kushana, and Munk is a station on many trade routes known to Arab geographers. But was ancient Munk also Ptolemy's Maruka? The authors[101] described the equation as "less obvious, but possible." A phonetic change should not be ruled out, but the location on the map south of Hulbuk argues against it. Munk-Baldjuwān is located further north than Hulbuk, while Maruka is located further south than Cholbesina on Ptolemy's map. Grenet and Rapin believe that this is a horizontal mirror image. However, it appears easier to assume that a single informant gave the wrong latitude for both cities. If we measure the difference between the two locations, we get 0.66 degrees (0.33×2) in Ptolemy. If we apply this difference to Hulbuk in a southerly direction, we arrive near Parkhar on the Oxus, and there, only 5 km north of Parkhar, is a site called Mehrovar.[102] The same river connects Munk, Hulbuk, and Mehrovar-Parkhar in that order, with Munk in the north and Mehrovar-Maruka in the south.[103] It is entirely possible to link Ptolemy's Maruka with today's Mehrovar: the distance between the two places in nature and on Ptolemy's map is the same, while Munk is distant twice as far from Hulbuk. Today's Parkhar appears in the works of Arab geographers[104] under the same name, but is located on the eastern side of the river, while Mehrovar is positioned on the western side and apparently formed the counterpart in a ferry system. The difference in latitude suggests that these two cities have been confused, with the lengths remaining correct, as Maruka = Mehrovar-Parkhar lies west of Ōxeiana = Ai Khanum[105] and Cholbēsina-Hulbug east of it. Instead of a horizontal mirror image, an incorrectly measured latitude would therefore suffice.

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[101] Grenet / Rapin 1998, 85.

[102] 237°31'50"N 69°20'30"E.

[103] The connection between Munk, Hulbuk, and Parkhar is also highlighted in the Ḥudūd (Minorsky 1937, 91 §8).

[104] Barthold 1968, 69.

[105] Grenet / Rapin (1998, 85) assumed that doubts about the location of Ōxeiana were "no longer possible" since it was Takht-i Sangin. This famous place was violently destroyed during the reign of Heliocles I.

There are two more places left, Choana (No. 39) and Zorachana/Suragana (No. 40) on the Kokcha-Warduj trek. The first, Choana (Χοανα), is located at the site of present-day Faizabad, exactly at an angle of 45° northeast of Andarab, the modern capital of Badakhshan on the lower Kokcha. Xuanzang knew it as 呬摩呾羅, HC hi-ma-ta-ra, commonly linked with the Indic *himatala*.[106] In a forthcoming paper the hi-ma will be linked to Ptolemy's Χοανα, the old city name Kham-chān, and the Arabic river name of the Kokcha, Khan-āb. The remaining ta-ra can be nothing but the -dra used in case of caravansarais. The second place called Zorachana (Ζοραχανα) probably corresponds to today's Chākarān,[107] the "main village of the Warduj area."[108]

In searching for errors in Ptolemy, we found at most two incorrectly placed locations in this easternmost section of the Oxus = Kokcha-Warduj (R4), in contrast to four proven or at least acceptable settlements in locations that correspond to the map.

The name "Oxus" for the Kokcha-Warduj Valley is also not an error on Ptolemy's part. The map compiled by Tomaschek[109] from ancient Chinese geographical works justifies the rule I referred to in 2023c, 2b regarding the Indus: In these mountains, all rivers in the upper reaches of a mighty river can be counted as parts of its own body and bear the same name. There are cases where the Kabul River, the Kunar or the Gilgit River are meant when Indus or *sindhu* is read. They all flow into today's Indus. It took Muslim geographers to put an end to this laxity.[110] In Chinese maps, the term 縛芻 *fúchú*[111] is used for *vakṣu*-Oxus. It is used for the Amu Darya, for the Kokcha and also for the Wakhsh = Kisilsu, in accordance with Ptolemy's custom.[112]

If we give Ptolemy at least some credence, his description of the upper course of the "Oxus" shows that it led travelers to a crossing at Phratrua with

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[106] Watters 1905, II, 175.

[107] The Mirza (Montgomerie 1871, 191; map) knew it as Chokaran.

[108] Adamec 1972, I, 49. Google Earth shows a fortified acropolis (36°53'32"N 71°4'33.50"E).

[109] Tomaschek 1877, (map "Khang-kiü").

[110] Not everyone was satisfied with the new principles. The author of Ḥudūd al-'Ālam (Minorsky 1937, 91, §7) complains that the Panj = Jayḥūn is called Jayḥūn only because it is longer, while this honor belongs to the Kokcha = Khanāb, as it is much stronger.

[111] Tomaschek "Fa-tsu", HC va/ba-chu/ṣu.

[112] Yule correctly recognized that Wakhsh and Wakhan should be derived from an identical root. He assumed that "-sh" and "-an" were distinguishing suffixes meaning "smaller/larger" or "north/south," and had the Greeks change Wakhsh to Oxus and (somewhat hesitantly) Wakhan to Ochus. Yule's identification of Wakhan and Ochus was regarded by Grenet / Rapin (1998, 89b, "Additional note") as confirmation of their own model. However, repetition does not make speculation proof. The problem was analyzed by Lerner (2016, 215f.) with the same conclusions. We differ only in our understanding of what is meant by Ochus. We see that the Chinese in the east still hear the first syllable of *vakṣu* as *va*, while in the west the Greeks and Macedonians changed *va-* to *ō-*: *vakṣu-ōkṣu-ωξος* and *bāxδi-*valkhi-*ōlkh-ωχος*.

connections to Chitral and Nangarhar or Bolor and Taxila. Ptolemy's only serious and misleading error was to mistake the northern course of the Amu Darya for the southern part of the Iaxartes and to overlook the east-west connection between this northern course and Ōxeiana = Ai Khanum. This is an old error, much older than Ptolemy, and it implies that no one in Ai Khanum was interested in marching eastward from that city along the Panj = Amu Darya. Compared to the narrow gorges of the winding Oxus,[113] any trek from Ai Khanum to Cholbesina (Hulbuk) or Drepsa mētropolis (Kulob?) in the north or along the Kokcha to Phratrua in the south is child's play.

9. *The Mistaken Iaxartes and East of It (R5)*

Much ink has been spilled in attempts to determine the location of a "stone tower" found on a road through the Pamir Mountains on the way to China. I have shown recently that the decisive "stone tower" cannot have stood in the Karategin Valley, as those who rely on Sir Aurel Stein's combinations took for granted, but that the term must refer to Tashkurgan, literally "stone building," as earlier research claimed.[114] Sir Aurel Stein was a diligent researcher with unique achievements, but he was repeatedly mistaken in identifying historical sites on Earth.[115]

To salvage Ptolemy's reputation at least in part, we can examine how he depicts the Pamir (Fig. 1), east of his Iaxartes, and admire the accuracy of his source.[116]

In *Geogr*. 6.13.3, Ptolemy lists several Scythian tribes in the valleys from north to south. To understand the location of these peoples, the lists in his prose without geographical references or a "Ptolemaic" map that is more recent than the oldest one are not helpful. Only the map with its source in the early 15th century provides clear information. The rapid decline in accuracy can be observed in just three of the many versions of Ptolemy's map "Asia 7":

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[113] Aptly described in Bernard / Francfort 1978, 8.

[114] Falk 2018, 15–25.

[115] He saw Alexander fighting Porus near Jalālpur instead of near the Jhelum, cf. Breloer (1933, 194–204): he found Aornos on Pir Sai instead of on Mount Ilam, cf. Olivieri (2015, 59); he took the rock on which Buddha dried his robe to be on the right side of the Swat River instead of on the left, cf. Falk (2016, 45b–46b); He sought the "hanging bridge" in the gorge of the Indus between Darel/Chilas and the plain, instead of at the southern end of the Yasin Valley, cf. Falk (2023b, 5b).

[116] This raises the question of the extent to which the maps were part of Ptolemy's book and whether they were produced by one or two authors. For an early summary, see Tudeer 1917. At the very least, the maps may have been part of the original concept, even if they were not completed for the market until a later date. The Pamir section (Fig. 3) differs graphically from most other parts in that the valleys are lined with trees, but this stylistic device is also found on maps of Europe and Africa.

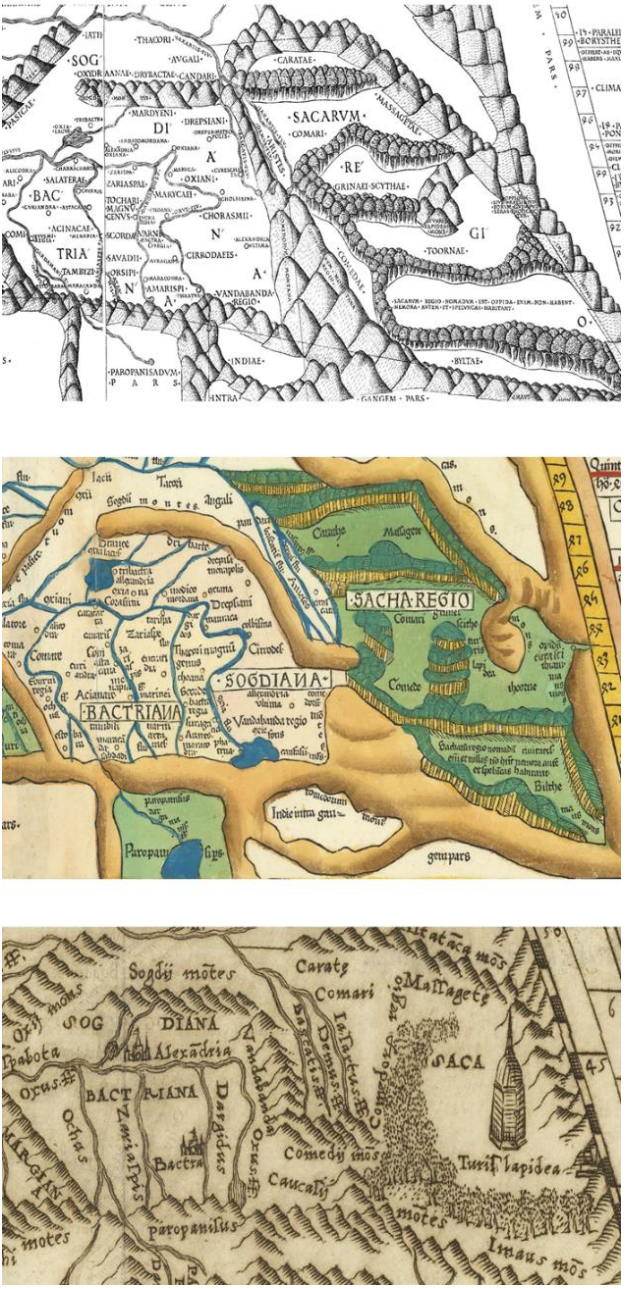

Fig. 3. Ptolemy's depiction of the Pamir region in three phases.
Note the position of the "stone tower" in the Ghunt Valley on the oldest map with its sources in the early 15th century (Nordenskköld 1889). On the middle map, which was made by Lienhart Holle in Ulm in 1482, the details are blurred. On the third map by Giacomo Gastaldi, Venice 1548, the valleys have entirely disappeared.

Because every cartographer copied and simplified his predecessors' work, the valleys in this part of the map were already shapeless or had even entirely disappeared by the end of the 15th century (Fig. 3c). The location of the tribes living there was mostly undefined by geodata in the *Geography*,[117] which suggests that the map is necessary to understand much of Ptolemy's prose.[118]

The representation on the oldest surviving map, completed in Rome before 1478 AD (Fig. 3a), is quite different.[119] The Pamir valleys follow one another from top to bottom, leading us to suspect that someone, possibly Maes Titianus, had a sketch of the wider surroundings made by a local. It begins at the northern end of the Pamir with a wooded valley running from west to east, in which he settles a people called Καράται/Caratae. This valley still is today known as Karateghin, the modern name being remarkably similar to that of its ancient inhabitants. The Κόμαροι/Comari live in the next valley to the south. The curved shape of the valley bears a resemblance to the lower reaches of the Bartang River before it flows into the Oxus. The next valley to the south is inhabited by the Γριναῖοι Σκύθαι/Grinaei Scythae.[120] This is the Ghand[121] Valley, a term that has also retained some of its ancient sounds. This valley leads directly to the Λίθινος Πύργος/Turris lapidea mons, the mountain with the famous stone tower. On the oldest map, this stone tower is beautifully depicted following at the end of the road along the Ghand Valley. The tower is accompanied by a legend describing its function. From the stone tower, a mountain range continues in a quarter circle to the northeast, representing the usual route from Tashkurgan (No. 10) to Igizyar or Yengi hissar.[122] From there, travelers must turn south toward Yarkand (No. 5), which is described on the map as "'Ορμητήριον/Oppidum, from where trade to China begins." Whoever drew this map must have marched as far as Hormeterion near Yarkand.

In the Pamir section of Ptolemy's map, south of the Ghand Valley is the Wakhan, inhabited by the Τοόρναι/Toornae, an enigmatic ethnonym.[123] The next valley must be the valley of the Gilgit River, as it is home to the Βύλται/Byltae. This is a Greek form of the people of Bolor, who are ruled by the family of the Palolas. Beyond the next mountain range of the *Imaus mons* lies the *Intra-Gangem pars* in the Indian lowlands.

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[117] Humbach / Faiss 2002, fig. 31.

[118] On this controversial topic, see Polaschek (1959, 17–18), who comes to the same conclusion.

[119] Nordenskiöld 1889, Plate XXII, Septima Asiae Tabula; for his material, see p. viii, Introduction.

[120] Etymology from Humbach / Faiss 2012, 43.

[121] In Falk 2018, I used the English form "Ghunt," but a more accurate pronunciation can be found in Persian *ghand* (Koshkaki trad. Reut 1979, 194).

[122] See map in Falk 2018, 8, fig. 4.

[123] Xuanzang uses 達摩悉鐵帝 da-mo-xi-tie-di HC: da/dha/d/dh-ma-s/si-?-ti/di, for Wakhan, sanskritized by Watters (1905, II, 280) to *dharmasthiti*.

The accuracy of this part of the world in this oldest version of Ptolemy's map is remarkable. It lists five parallel valleys running east-west in a rather inaccessible part of the earth: Karategin, Bartang, Ghand, Wakhan, and Gilgit, three of which still bear names that can be linked to their classical precursors. For the creator of this map, the middle path along the Ghand Valley undoubtedly leads to the stone tower, i.e. to Tashkurgan.[124]

Ptolemy had great difficulty connecting this Pamir block of valleys with his Oxus, our Kokcha-Warduj. The Amu Darya, flowing northward, was known to him, or rather to his informant. Anyone familiar with Phratrua-Patur is also aware of the Amu Darya, which bends around Ishkashim. His problem only becomes apparent when one connects his multi-part descriptions as I did for Fig. 4b. How can his Iaxartes reach Ferghana from Phratrua? He had to move its source southward and, to do so, shifted the southeastward migration of his informant Maes Titianus downward by 5 degrees, so that now the "Gorge of the Comedes" begins at point (8), whereas in Maes' account it ended there. The southern source of the Iaxartes belongs to an old model according to which four great rivers flow from the roof of the world in the four cardinal directions. In Strabo's view (11.7.4), this leads to the view that "From the same Indian mountains, where the Ochus and the Oxus and several other rivers rise, flows also the Iaxartes." The sequence is from west to east, Balkh River (R1, "Ochus"), Kokcha-Warduj (R4, "Oxus") and Iaxartes (R5, northward running "Iaxartes" in Shighnan).

A side note concerns Maes. For his journey to Yarkand, he set off from Bactra and marched north. In my 2018 work, I assumed without question that Bactra must mean Balkh. However, from there, a march "north" to Dushanbe is incorrect. Starting from Zariaspa, the second Bactra, the first section leads through the Kafirnighan Valley, and this route actually points north.

In summary, I agree with Bernard / Francfort (1972, 8) that Ptolemy's work does not accurately reflect the course of the upper Oxus. The continuation east of Ai Khanum is missing, as is the long section within the Wakhan. Apart from that, however, there no "grande confusion règne dans le système ptoléméen." Instead, there is a slight "confusion dans la hypothèse français". On a positive note, five river valleys of the Pamir and Karakorum are listed in perfect order, and the names of the Scythian tribes, known since Herodotus for not having permanent settlements, are repeated on the Ptolemaic map itself.

We can complain that the mighty Wakhsh is missing, as are Samarkand and the Panj, which connects Ai Khanum with Darwaza and Roshan. But Ptolemy's material consisted of travel reports from merchants, not surveys by geographers. And a number of places that they did not visit for various reasons were not mentioned.

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[124] Compared with the Ghand route, the alternatively discussed Karategin offers no advantages. For a discussion see Falk 2018, 21.

III. Applying Geo-Data to Numismatics

Back to the beginning, to Zariaspa, Khisht Tepe. Now we can locate the place at a precisely defined spot on the Oxus. Balkh is not Zariaspa, nor is Samarkand. We know that Alexander was on the Oxus in the winter of 329/328 BC. According to the *Metz Epitome* (14), Bessus was executed in Zariaspa after being brought to Alexander's camp by some collaborators in chains, naked, with his ears and nose cut off.[125] Zariaspa thus represents the final end of the Achaemenids and the legitimate acquisition of Bactria as a whole. From a military point of view, Zariaspa was well chosen as a winter quarter. According to Arrian (*An*. 4.1.5), the city of Zariaspa was for a time the "largest" settlement in Bactria. Who lived there after Alexander's departure? We have no information about the Diodotoi. Of the following kings, at least Euthydemus I seems to have lived in Zariaspa. This is evident from Polybius who (10.49.15) describes how Antiochus III attempted to recapture Bactria from the Graeco-Bactrians in 207 BC after Euthydemus I had seized power from the Diodotoi. Antiochus III succeeded in crossing the Arius (today Tejen) and, through a cunning maneuver, invading Bactria, so that the Bactrian king fled to the city of Zariaspa (εἰς πόλιν Ζαριάσπαν τῆς Βακτριανῆς), most likely his capital.

Euthydemus sent his son to negotiate with Antiochus III, and the two agreed to grant Bactria independence. Euthydemus son may have been the last Greek-Bactrian king with a strong power center in Zariaspa. The next ruler, the usurper Eucratides I, seems to have moved the center of power closer to Andarab in order to control the mountainous access to his empire in the south, where he had driven the supporters of the former dynasty. They now lived exclusively south of the Hindu Kush.

The Kunduz Hoards and the Attic Standard Weight

The (first) Kunduz treasure was discovered in Khisht Tepe = Zariaspa (38), where 627 silver coins, mainly from the 2nd century BC, were initially found. This collection of coins tells a story about how power passed from the Euthydemids to Eucratides I and from the Eucratids to the Yuezhi, the founders of the Kushan Empire. To understand this process, we require a brief introduction to the metrology of the collected coins.

As long as the Greco-Bactrian kings resided north of the Hindu Kush, in Bactria and beyond, their coinage followed a single standard that also prevailed in other parts of the Hellenistic world. The basis was the Attic weight standard,

[125] The place where Bessus ended his life is given as the country of Bactria (*Metz Ep.* 14) or the city of Bactra (Arr. *An*. 4.7.3); a brother of Darius III is involved (Just. 12.5.11, and possibly Diod. 17.83.9), and wooden execution devices are used (*Metz Ep.*, Plut. *Alex*. 43.6; opaque Diod. 17.83.9). An execution in Ecbatana seems to be one of Curtius' "scholarly" additions (7.5.40-43). The timing in winter makes Zariaspa the most likely location.

which was almost 16.8 grams of silver for the tetradrachm, corresponding to about 4.2 grams for the drachma.[126] Apart from its use in the eponymous region of Attica and on the Greek mainland, it was also adopted by all the Diadochi.

The Graeco-Bactrian rulers after Alexander and the first Seleucids had no reason to change this international habits regarding coin standards. From Diodotos I to the last kings of the Eucratides family all issued staters and drachmas in that standard. The period of the Eucratides family can be subdivided into three phases: a) Eucratides I from about 174 BC onwards dispelled all members of the Euthydemos clan and made them shift across the Hindu Kush into the Kabul area, Nangahar, and even beyond the Indus into Jammu, where they installed diverse "Indo-Greek" kingdoms. b) After the murder of Eucratides, his widow withdraws into the former Sogdian parts north of the Oxus, with the support of the freshly arrived Yuezhi nomads. The Bactrian parts of Tocharistan and Bactriane south of the Oxus are divided among sons of Eucratides I, at least with Eucratides II and Platon. Both issued silver coinage in nothing but the Attic standard. Around 100 BC, these sons disappear from Tocharistan and the Yuezhi penetrate and rule the lands south of the Oxus as well. Initially, the old Attic coinage was produced further, but its artistic and technical standards declined, as did the weight. The Indo-Greek families south of the Hindu Kush thought it necessary to introduce a new standard to facilitate commerce with the Indian states, which had their own weight systems.

The so-called Kunduz treasure was found in 1946 and first published by Bivar in 1955. Its location is known to the nearest square meter within the triangle of the Khistht Tepe headland, the ancient Zariaspa. The treasure contained of great numbers of silver staters, collected in large pots. These coins could be ferry tariffs, or rather donations to a religious entity like a river god Oxus. This second possibility gains weight in light of another nearby river deity. Takht-i Sangin features a river sanctuary on the right side of the Wakhsh at a place where the Amu Darya joins in. This temple was rebuilt and extended several times. At certain places, the responsible priests hid golden and other donations in holes sunk into the floor. Building activities did not disturb the hidden treasures, which were left in place and covered over with plaster. Similar regard for religious donations could have prevented the hidden treasure at Khisht Tepe from being looted in antiquity.

The coins found at Khisht Tepe had been minted in the name of 19 Greek kings, which belonged to the two groups of a) those ruling exclusively in Bactria north of the Hindu Kush and also b) of the expelled ones, ruling south of the mountain range. In the north, we have Diodotus, Euthydemus I and II, Demetrius I and II.

Of the dispelled Euthydemide kings, Agathokles and Antimachus I continued with the Attic standard south of the Hindu Kush and issued commemorative coins

[126] Like any other standard, the Attic weight also exhibits a certain flexibility and a tendency to lose weight. For the relative stability of the Attic standard in Bactria, see Holt 2000.

showing rulers from Alexander, Antiochus I or II up to Pantaleon, thus demonstrating who they considered to be legal rulers. Agathokles adds a *dikaiou* to the reverse of all his commemorative issues, stressing the difference between each one of them and the usurper Eucratides and his lot, who were not considered "legal, justified" rulers.

In the Kabul plain, in Nangarhar and Jammu, many rulers are found who had adopted an Indian nominal weight of approximately 9.8 g, abandoning the Attic standard. They are Theophil, Lysias, Antialkidas, Philoxenos, Amyntas, Hermaios, and Archebios. According to the presently favoured chronology, they ruled successively and in part jointly from about 130 to 75 BC. Although all of these ruled outside Bactria and issued coins in the Indian standard, all of them also produced the heavier Attic coins in small numbers, often struck from superbly designed dies. Almost all of these rare versions are only found at Khisht Tepe, and never south of the Hindu Kush. Since this practice was followed for approximately 60 years by the aforementioned kings, with no Indic standard silver coins found at Khisht Tepe and no contemporary Attic standard coins discovered in India, there must be a reason.

There are several explanations still current:

a) Some authors start with the idea that coins are made for people in their own land. And so some land on the Oxus where the Qunduz hoard was found should have still been, temporarily, in the hands of those Indo-Greek kings living in the south.[127] The basic assumption was refuted by several specialists.[128] As a variant, Fussman envisaged the same kings from Menander to Hermaios as believing that they still owned some isolated parts of Bactria, for which they minted coins in the old style, while the actual owners, the Yuezhi, simply did not care about what was going on or did not understand this sort of Indo-Greek self-deception.[129] This we could call the enclave solution.

b) Many authors[130] start with the serious idea that coins are made to facilitate the exchange of valuables, be they merchandise or manual services. If coins from the south are found in the north, then there must have been goods or services that found their way from the north to the south. This is the commerce solution.

c) Bopearachchi reported an alternative idea, orally communicated to him by G. Le Rider, who, however, never published this view personally.[131] The idea was that the coinage in question was forwarded as a tribute to the nomads, to ward off the threat of their attacks. If we examine Mesopotamia and the sums the Romans had to pay to deter the Parthians and Sasanians from attacking, we see that those millions of dinars hardly compare to the few Attic tetradrachms

[127] Bivar 1955, 45; Jenkins 1968a, 247.
[128] Bernard firm 1974, 308, undecided 1985, 104; Bopearachchi 1993, 39.
[129] Fussman 1993, 128f.
[130] E.g. Bernard 1985, 104f.; Bopearachchi 1990, 99–101.
[131] Bopearachchi 1993, 40.

on the Oxus. It is difficult to imagine Indo-Greek kings paying tribute to nomads, but certain aspects of this general idea will recur in my conclusion at the end. I call this the armistice solution.

d) The Attic weight tetradrachms are very particular, in that they are fashioned according to the highest artistic standard, made to express a certain prestige. Bopearachchi names H. Nicolet-Pierre as referring to the tetradrachms as "objects of prestige."[132] At least one specimen minted by Amyntas, found only within the Qunduz hoard, is considerably larger than other silver pieces. The few attested find-places in and around Khisht Tepe show that the receiving locals lived outside the Indo-Greek borders.[133] Art and size, absence of wear and tear, rarity in number and distant location are classical characteristics of medallions.[134] In our case, we can add centrality of the dies on the flan: in most cases the ring of dots or bead-and-reel is fully preserved on the flan, testimony of particular care while hitting the die into the flan. Some authors, beginning with Lahiri[135] and Bivar, therefore saw no coins, but medallions, presented for extraordinary feats or at an extraordinary point in time. Such medallions may, but need not, go into monetary circulation. This is the medallion solution.

Most of these proposals met counterarguments. The enclave solution was unconvincing, at least if the initial conquest of Bactriane by the Yuezhi is taken for total. The commerce solution hurts itself due to the rarity of finds over a relatively long time span. The commerce would have been more than marginal, not deserving the artistic effort. The medallion solution is quite self-imposing, but so far lacks the necessary extraordinary feat or point in time for the presentation.[136]

My proposal starts from the importance apparent in Zariaspa as a temporary center of power south of the Oxus. The place was called the "largest town" by Arrian (*An*. 4.1.5: Ζαριάσρα, τὲν μέγιστεν πόλιν), a term that does not impose itself today when visiting the vast brick hills of Khisht Tepe, despite its unexplored citadel. A temple for Oxus can be safely presupposed, a conjoint altar installed by Alexander would be no surprise.[137]

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[132] Bopearachchi 1990, 99.

[133] There are not many sites that have been reliably documented. The find from Khisht Tepe provides most of the evidence, supplemented by a coin of Philoxenos and Archebios, both found "in the Mazar-i Sharif region" (Bopearachchi 1990, 87, 92, 100). Even less clear is the coin of Menander from "Iran" (Jenkins 1968b, 109).

[134] Lorenz 2018.

[135] Lahiri (1965, 61): "(...) the monolingual Attic coins (...) were most probably 'extraordinary' issues - stuck once and for a specific purpose. They were a sort of 'commemorative medallions' brought out for some special occasion like the 'coronation ceremony' or the celebration of victory."

[136] Bivar (1955, 42) speaks of victory medallions, without naming the defeated party.

[137] On the *Peutinger Map*, south of the "fl. Oxus," an *Ara.Alexandri* is marked together with its symbol. However, this document should not be given much significance.

The sacred site, which received pious donations in the form of valuable coins, may have already been active during Alexander's time. The first treasure contained only one of his coinage, while the second container contained more of them.[138]

After Alexander, two coins from the Seleucids were found, spaced far apart, probably regarded as obsolete in the time of the Diodotoi, who introduced five pieces of their own. With the Euthydemids, the donation of coins seems to become an established habit. Their standard types occur regularly. Most of these are from Demetrius II (50 pieces).

An altogether different phase begins with Eucratides I, the usurper, eliminating the Euthydemids in Bactria. The ensuing warlike time leaves 144 coins of Eucratides I. Eucratides II leaves 130, and Heliocles I leaves 204. The bellicose founder of the Eucratides dynasty left many coins at Khisht Tepe, as if a raging war had been one of the reasons for his visits. The second treasure came to light only recently, but it contained older issues, such as tridrachms and pentadrachms of Eucratides I, which are singular for Bactria. All show the king without a helmet and without the addition of ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ to his name. Instead, they are marked with Α, Γ, Δ, Ε to indicate that they are drachmas, tridrachmas, tetradrachmas, and pentadrachmas, with extra sizes and markings that he soon abandoned. All of these singular types he issued at the beginning of his reign and may have ordered the tridrachmas and pentadrachmas with nothing but Khisht Tepe in view. This idea of an "additional weight for Alexander" may later also have appealed to the kings of the "Indian" south.

The Eucratids were outmaneuvered by the Yuezhi, who began to rule both lands, north and south of the Oxus, around the same time when the southern Indo-Greeks started to visit Khisht Tepe, beginning with Lysias around 120 BC. Their donations are few, only one to four pieces per king. While the Eucratid kings frequently came to Alexander's famous site, possibly to seek his help, the southern kings had different intentions. They came, brought specially minted coins with them, and left again. This phase lasted until Hermaeus around 90 BC, the last Indo-Greek to hold power south of the Hindu Kush.

Thus, the Attic tetradrachms of the southern kings found in Khisht Tepe, the Zariaspa of old, could point to an "Alexander solution": kings from the south came to honor a local deity, Alexander, who had proven at this very place that he had the right to rule Bactria.[139] It seems that anything that did not conform to the classical Attic standard was considered unworthy of Alexander's greatness, while the portraits on the obverse gave the recipient an impression of what his legitimate successors looked like.

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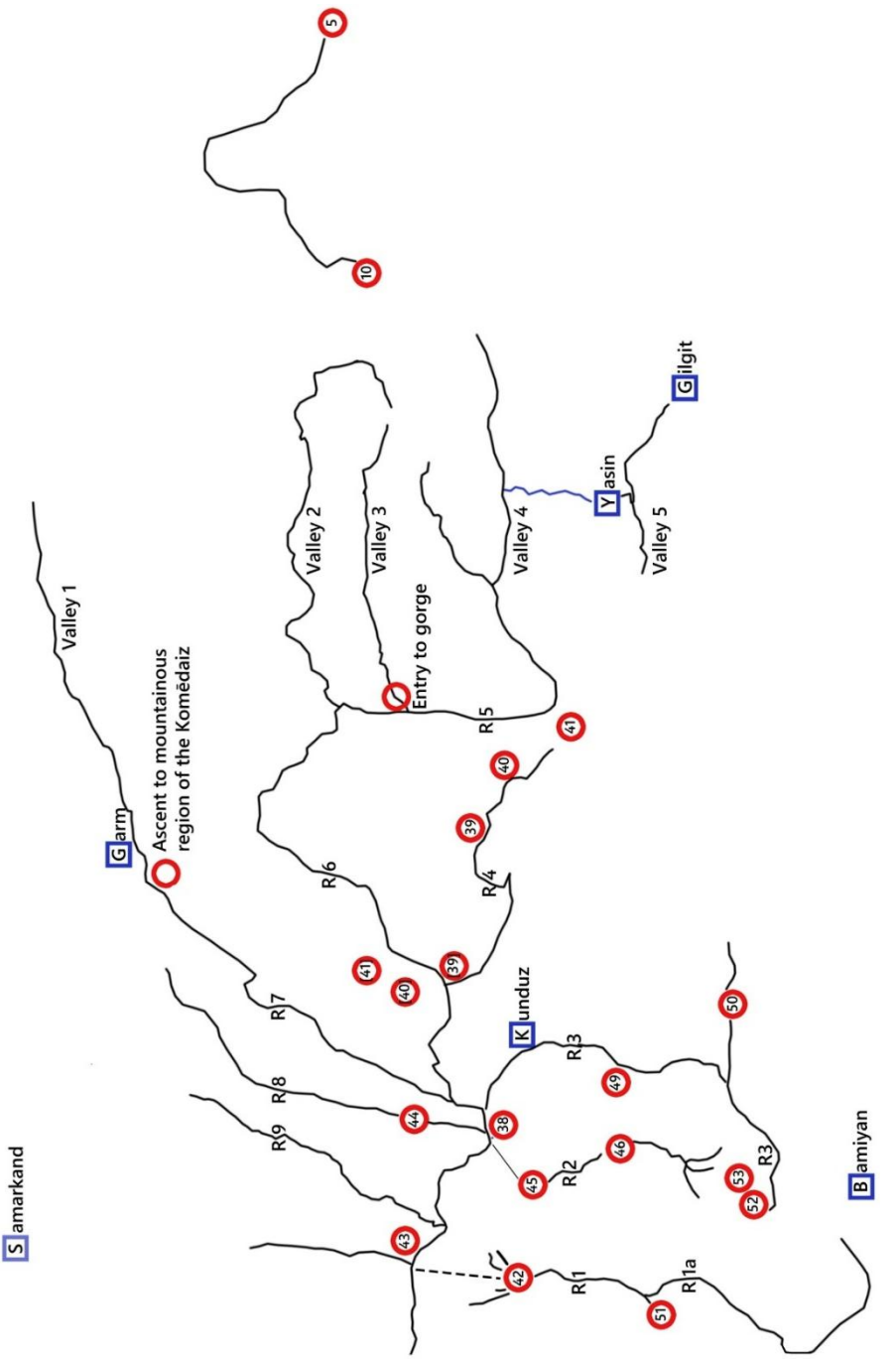
[138] Zeng 2022.

[139] A similar veneration of Alexander seems to have been expressed by Indo-Greek rulers, who show a horseman on a horned horse on the reverse, who can only be Bucephalus, cf. Glenn 2023.

Map


S amarkand
G arm
Ascent to mountainous region of the Komēdaiz
Valley 1
Valley 2
Valley 3
Entry to gorge
Valley 4
Y asin
Valley 5
G ilgit
K unduz
B amiyan
R/1
R/1a
R/2
R/3
R/4
R/5
R/6
R/7
R/8
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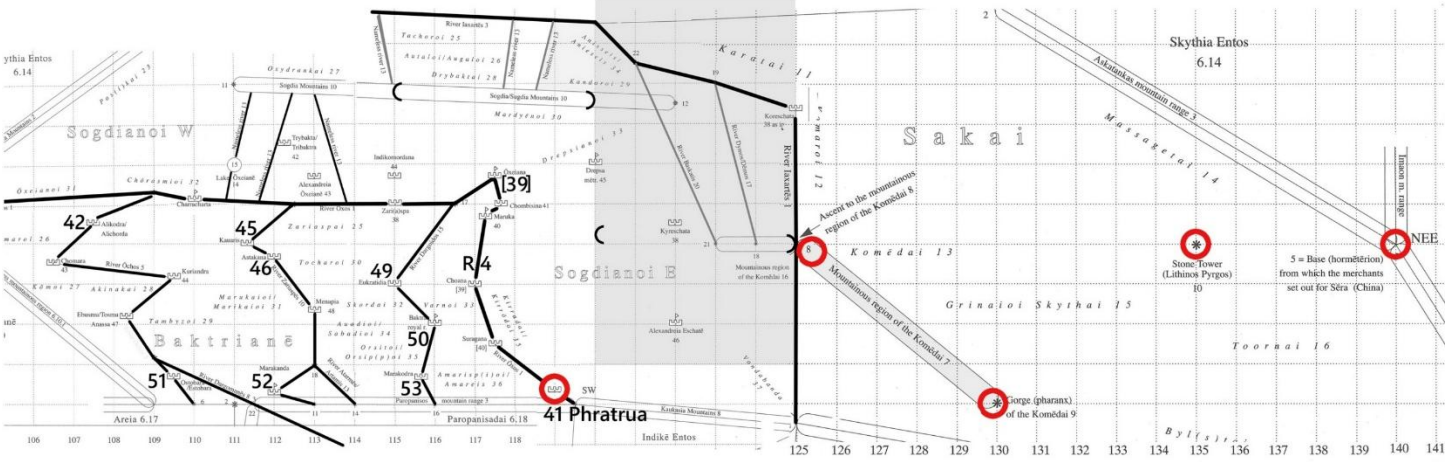

Fig. 4. Maps: Comparison of a numerical arrangement of Ptolemy' s data by Humbach et al. (1998; 2002) (below) and the concerned cities and rivers on a modern map (above).

River 1/1a: *Dargomanes* & *Ochus* = Rud-i Band-e Amir & Balkhab. River 2: *Atarmes* & *Zariaspes* = Khulmāb. River 3: *Dargoites* = Doshi, Kunduzāb. River 4: *Oxus* = Warduj & Kokcha. River 5: *Yaxartes* = Amu Darya; upper part = Syr Darya. (38) *Zariaspa* = Khisht Tepe. (39) Faizabad? (40) *Suragana* = Charakān. (41) *Phratrua* = Patur. (42) *Alikodra* = Alik Rabat. (44) *Kuriandra* = Khurram. (45) *Kauaris* = Khulm. (46) *Astakana* = Aibak. (49) *Eukratidia* = Surkh Kotal? (50) *Baktra basileion* = Andarab. (51) *Ostobara* = upper part of Balkhāb. (52+53) *Marakanda*= *Marakodra* = Madr/ Malr + Kah/ Kamard. (48) *Menapia=Maithanaka*? = Rui/Rui do āb? [39] *Oxiana* = Ai Khanum. [40] *Maruka* = Mehrovar. [41] *Cholbisina* = Hulbuk. [43] *Alexandria Oxiane* = Kampyr Tepe?. [44] *Indikomordana* = Kobardian. (5) *Hormeterion* = Yarkand. (8): Access to the Komedai Mountains. (9): *Pharanx*: beginning of the Gorge = Chorugh. (10) *Stone tower* = Tashkurgan. Move the gray part about 4 degrees up and 5 degrees west until the lower area marked (—) is positioned on top of the upper one. Then the ascent to the Komedai Mountains begins near Gharm (gray 8), and the entrance to the gorge follows near Chorugh, at the same altitude as Tashkurgan. This correctly identifies Baskatis and Dymos in the upper part with the two " nameless rivers 13" above the " Sugdia Mountains 10." The shift of the entire block was necessary for Ptolemy to leave the source of the Yaxartes in the Caucasus.

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Abstract

Ptolemy's *Geography* contains extensive data on Bactria, the land above the Hindu Kush and south of the Oxus (Amu Darya). A comparison of his data with the events surrounding Alexander's Anabasis has revealed contradictions regarding the locations of rivers and cities. The most significant difficulty concerned the location of a river called Ochus (Ωχος). We propose leaving the Ochus where Ptolemy knew it, namely as Balkhāb near Balkh. Furthermore, the city of Zariaspa is not considered a second name for Balkh, but is placed on the Oxus, south of Kobadian, following Ptolemy. A review of other places and rivers reinforces the impression that Ptolemy's map of Bactria and the surrounding countries must be taken more seriously. If Zariaspa is located on the Oxus, then Alexander spent the winter of 329/328 BC there for military reasons. The imprisonment and possible execution of the last Achaemenid king, Bessus (Artaxerxes), at this location adds to the mythical character of the place where Alexander demonstrated his final conquest of the country.

It appears that Zariaspa, or a temple within it, represented Alexander's presence, and that donations to the temple conferred legitimacy on all subsequent rulers throughout the Bactrian region. Under the controversial rulers Eucratides I, II, and Heliocles I, particularly large donations were made to the temple treasury. After the Yuezhi also conquered Bactria south of the Oxus, the non-Bactrian Indo-Greek rulers minted special coins with their portrait in the Attic style, which were donated almost exclusively in Zariaspa. A connection to Alexander could explain the rarity and numismatic peculiarity of the donations.

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MORE ABOUT NWT/NŌD AND ADIABENE

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The recent publication of a detailed and thorough study by M. Marciak on Adiabene, in combination with other similar small kingdoms like Sophene and Gordyene, provides a fresh starting point for topographical and linguistic considerations regarding the name of Adiabene in sources from Parthian and Sasanian times. Not only does it cover the political history of Adiabene from the Hellenistic period until the end of the Sasanian empire, but also the historical geography of this area, its cultural landscape with the included onomastics and its archaeological heritage. This study replaces a lot of former work done on Adiabene,[1] including articles by the author himself beginning in 2011.[2] The relatively abundant Greek and Latin reports of classical writers form, by necessity, the main core of his argument, but they view Adiabene from a Western perspective, mostly during the conflicts between the Roman and later Byzantine emperors, and the Parthian and Sasanian Kings of Kings. The remains from sources of the Near Eastern realm are extremely scanty. Apart from some *Acts of the Martyrs*, we possess almost no longer textual references directly from the area of Adiabene itself. The classical sources refer to the entire region under the Greek designation Ἀδιαβηνή, which was rendered into Aramaic as Bēt Ḥadhyb/Ḥdyb, primarily by Syriac-Aramaic sources, such as the *Synodicon* of the Nestorian Church (from

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[1] Though numerous articles on single subjects exist, Adiabene as whole was never studied before apart from some smaller lexical entries. The latest was written by Harrak 2018 in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*. The article Adiabene by Sellwood (1985) seems to be outdated. Also see Luther 2015.

[2] See Marciak 2011, 179–208 and also Marciak 2013, 160–178. See also Marciak / Wojcikowski 2016, 79–101.

410 CE onward), alongside a few Talmudic expressions. There are also glimpses of ecclesiastical sources until the end of the 9th century, and some titles of certain metropolitan bishops up to the 14th century.[3] The etymology of both names is rather unclear: some earlier proposals are not convincing to every scholar, while the rendering of Adiabene from Parthian and Sasanian sources presents even more problems. For Gyselen, who at first followed Gignoux in this point, the Aramaic name for the region was officially changed with Šābuhr I as Nōd-Ardaxšīragān; judging by some Sasanian seals, this designation was used until the 7th century.[4] Yet, Marciak[5] argued against it because the version Nōd-Ardaxšīragān for Adiabene must be a later phenomenon, eventually going back to Ardāšir II, when he was king of Adiabene (*malkā ḏ-Ḥadyab*) before following his brother as 'King of Kings' in 379 CE. At least for the Later Sasanian period, we can be sure that it was a province (*šahr*) of the Sasanian Empire in its own right.[6] Considered by Gyselen as 'a generic name', which consists of an unknown Iranian element Nōd plus the name of the reigning king, the translated version in Greek SKZ 30 leaves no doubt that Adiabene is meant here. But what is going on with the Parthian and Sasanian rendering under Šābuhr I in the Ka'ba-i Zardušt in the Parthian version *ntwšrkn* SKZ 24 and as *nwtḥštrkn* SKZ 30, cf. also the similar, but only partially preserved inscriptions [*nw*]*tḥštrkn* KSM 16 (Sar Mešhad) and [*nw*]*tḥ*[*štrkn*] KNRm 35 (Naqš-e Rustam). In her work of the *La géographie administrative de l'Empire Sassanide* from 2019 Gyselen came to the conclusion that in the 3rd century there existed a possible Iranian province Nōdšīragān, eventually transfered about 379 CE to Nōd-Ardašīragān.[7] Unfortunately she wrote this without any considerations of the articles written by Lipiński and Marciak. Marciak is following the linguistic explanations provided by Lipiński contained in two articles; the first appeared in 1982[8] and the second in 2015.[9] Hence there is only one conceivable solution for Marciak that in the later Sasanian period, possibly after 379 CE, name changes took place for the territory of Adiabene, which would guide us to a completely different linguistic field, to an Iranian Nōd combined with an Iranian personal name Arda(x)šīr. Lipiński refers to the Hatra-inscription on a royal statue beginning with (H 21) *ṣlm' dy 'tlw mlk' ntwn'šry'* 'statue of Attalos, king of Natūn-Issar', and with statues of magnates using Natūn-Issar as ancestor (H 113/14) *ṣlm' dy 'lkwd br 'stnq br ntwn'šr*

[3] The church province Adiabene/Hadhyb was newly installed as the Eparchy Adiabene by the Catholic Church 2019; see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eparchie_Adiabene.

[4] See Gyselen 1989, 56.78–79 and Gignoux 1986, 695.

[5] Marciak 2017, 414.

[6] See Gyselen 2019, 166.

[7] See Gyselen 2019, 165, but the geographical connex between an own small kingdom and the later provincial designation stays unclear.

[8] Lipiński 1982, 119–20 who turns at that time only to the Hatra references.

[9] Lipiński 2015, 205.

'statue of Alkud/r, son of Ustanaq, son of Natūn-Issar.' According to his interpretation, the name of Adiabene should be rendered as Semitic 'given by Issar', even if the first element denotes a more archaic participle with *nat*(*t*)*un*. Also the few Greek inscribed bronze coins for the city of Natounissarokerta, dated to the 1st century CE, should be identical with this name, but more often we find the shortened version Natounia.[10] Based on those Hatraean personal names, Lipiński wanted to observe a clear Semitic background also in the versions of the Kirdīr inscriptions under Šābuhr I. For him, *nwtḥštrkn* SKZ 30 refers to a Natūn-hištarkana 'moat of Natūn-Ištar', in the Parthian version SKZ 24 *ntwšrkn* with the same meaning, only with the different spelling of Issar. To accomplish his idea, he had to intervene twice in the text. The spelling with w should be a scribal mistake for n; he also had to accept a metathesis t/n. He concluded that in the Parthian age this would amount to a new name 'moat of Natūn-Issar,' as seat for the government and the name of the whole country.[11]

To expand the discussion, we can now rely on three further references for *nwt*. Two of them appear in unpublished Mandaean lead rolls, the other in a magic bowl known since 1993, written in Babylonian Aramaic square script. Altogether, they cast doubt on the current interpretation.

A) Nwʾt in the Mandaean lead roll 1Ba (BM 132956+)

We may cite a further reference for Nwt found in a lead roll belonging to the archive of Pīr Nukrāya son of Abandūxt. After enrolling, a lead sheet emerged with over 320 lines. The archive is currently housed in the British Museum and is being published by Ch. Müller-Kessler. It is cited in an incantation, which is characterized by a significant number of Mandaean demons, often accompanied by additional details, sometimes including real geographical names, and sometimes by designations taken from the Mandaean magic world. Due to a lack of archaeological data, I can only assume a date range of the 5th to 7th centuries CE for the entire archive. However, many of the demonized gods and their cults are likely much older and were probably often miscopied or completely misunderstood.

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[10] The location of the city Natounissarokerta or Natounia is still unknown, though the archaeologists of the ongoing investigation of Rabana-Merquly in the Zagros mountains suspect this as designation of this site; see Brown / Raheem / Abdulla 2022. Personally I would look more for a Parthian fortress, for example Bdīgar (*bdygr*); see Marciak 2017, 304-5. For Natounissarokerta I would rather assume a settlement on the Lesser Zāb between Arbela and Kirkuk, at least lying on a major road. Because of the Greek coin inscriptions one could imagine that Demetrias, probably founded as polis in the 2nd century BC by the Seleukids, was renamed by Natūn-Issar, the ancestor of a new dynasty of Adiabene. But there is no ground for another city than Arbela as seat for the administration of Adiabene. For Demetrias, see Cohen 2013, 122 and Marciak 2017, 317.

[11] Lipiński 2015, 205. See Marciak 2017, 315.

1Ba 179–181 *ʿsyrʾ lylytʾ ḏ-ʾl tylʾ ḏ-nwʾt yʾtybʾ wqryʾ lnpšʾ nʾnʾy ḏ-qyʾ ḏ-nwʾt*
Bound is the Lilith, who sits on the Tell of Nwʾt, and by herself is called Nanay of Nwʾt.

Very informative is the appearance of this demonized Lilit-demon in the Great Mandaean Demon List, as not many demons are listed to such a great extent. Remarkable, next to the special topographical scenario, is that the female demon was sitting on a Tell, and also the citation of her cultic name. The topographical designation of the deity Nanay (Nanāia) is even identical with the name of the Tell.

Nwʾt here means not Adiabene in general, but equally the city with the temple of the deity Nanay/Nanāia, which was situated on top of the Tell and was also called *nwt*. This could be nothing other than the Tell of Arbela, with its deity Issar, the domicile of the Ištar of Arbela, whose cult of Nanay/Nanāia later served the same religious function as the Ištar/Issar from the 9th to the 6th century BC. For the Aramaic-speaking inhabitants of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE Ištar was identical with Nanay/Nanāia. In the Mandaean lead rolls, Ištar is mentioned only in a generic sense as a female deity, never acting as a singular goddess.[12] Nanāia was one of the most essential cults in Adiabene and was also deeply rooted in Zoroastrian beliefs. After Strabo (16.1.3/4), the goddess – unfortunately, the textual passage appears to be garbled – could be emended to Anāhīd or Nanāja.[13] Probably, the deity of Arbela was also worshipped in a religious centre at the Iranian site. When Aitīlāhā, a former priest of the Issar/Nanāia Temple, converted to Christianity, a swift reaction from the Sasanian administration followed, and he was executed by Tām-Šābuhr, the magbed of the province. This might also be one of the reasons why, under Šābuhr II, a persecution of some leading Christians took place in Arbela and entire Adiabene.

The writing *nwʾt* with an aleph in the lead roll is not so unusual; at least a Semitic and softer pronunciation at the end could be explained by the aleph here.

B) Nhwʾtyʾ in the Mandaean lead roll 2Ba (BM 132956+)

A Mandaean lead roll from the same archive as Pīr Nukrāya shows a similar context and contains partly the same demons as 1Ba, but in a different order.

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[12] For Ištar as a generic deity within Mandaean and other texts of the Late Antiquity, see Müller-Kessler 2017-2018, 271-274. See also the short oversight over later syncretisms between Ištar, Nanāja and Anāhīd at the appendix by Drewnowska-Rymarz 2008, 159–167.

[13] See Marciak 2017, 275 who pleads for Nanāja.

2Ba 59/60 *‘syr’ nn’y ḏ-nhw’ty’*
Bound is the Nanay of Nhw’ty’

Apart from the different spellings, the text passages 1Ba 179-181 and 2Ba 59/60 indicate the same geography and cult of the deity Nanay. It is evident that in 2Ba 59/60 we have a shortened variant of 1Ba 179-181, here only with the addition of the affix -y’, indicating the current Semitic *nomen gentilicium* for Adiabene. But is the writing Nhw’t in 2Ba 59/60 actually a reflex of the pronunciation of this term, or is it connected to one of the many inconsistencies in the textual transmission of the Great Demon List over the centuries?

C) Nwt/Nōd in a magic bowl inscribed in Babylonian Aramaic script

In the text of a magic bowl, published years ago by Naveh and Shaked,[14] we unexpectedly reencounter our Nwt, which had hitherto been unnoticed in its geographical context within the research. According to the authors’ description, the bowl belonged to the Geoffrey Cope Collection in Herzlia (Israel).[15] The photo of the bowl on plate 29 demonstrates a rather carelessly written text in Babylonian Aramaic letters, including a fairly clumsy attempt at a great inner circle, without any mark or figure of a demon.

Bowl 24 (1) *mzmn hdyn qm’y’ lḥmryh lbyswmyh wlmnṭrnwth dḥmryh dbwrz bhrm br {dwt’ty} dwt’y {mn} mn rwstq’ dqrbyl* (2) *dbdyzh m’th* … (long insertion of Jewish phrases and magic elements) … (5) *’rq nwt lḥmryh bwrz b’hrm br dwt’y nyh’ {bs} bsym ḥmryh bwrz b’hrm br dwt’y dl’ nyzryg wl’ nystpp wl’ nyḥt* … [long insertion of standard closing formulas] …

(1) This amulet is for his wine, for his good taste and for the protection of the wine of Burz Bahrām son of Dutai of (2) the Rūstaq Qarbil, which is at Diz, his town/land … (5) The land of Nwt (is) for the wine of Burz Bahrām son of Dutai. May the wine of Burz Bahrām son of Dutai, be sweet. May it not be spilled, nor burned, nor go down …

The bowl, adorned with a wine charm and interrupted by more prolonged spells of Hebrew characters, has uncommon features. First, it belongs to a relatively

[14] Naveh / Shaked 1993.
[15] The current whereabouts for this bowl are not clear to me.

small lot of bowls, the content of which is not meant for the health of a man or woman, nor his house and cattle, but for the preservation of certain goods of his owners. Also uncommon is the mention of a precise location for the wine trader Burz Bahrām. Unfortunately, the town with the Iranian designation of Diz, which means 'fortress', and also the Rūstaq (border district) of Qarbil, cannot be located at this time.[16] The decisive line of this charm is the geographical term *'rq nwt* at the beginning of line 5. Here, the authors rely on the existence of NWT from Genesis 4:16, where Cain stayed after the killing of Abel. They combine the Bible verse with the message of the wine charm: 'Its occurrence here is difficult to explain, unless we assume a certain play on words, so *nwt* means also "wine skin", and the expression *'rq nwt* may have been jocularly used for the room where wine jars and skins were kept'. This very carefully balanced attempt of the authors to explain this *nwt* as geographical expression on the basis of a single and very remote and insignificant place name somewhere in Palestine is, of course, more than doubtful. Further, this *nwt*, seen as a wine skin, belongs to a Western Talmud with Hebrew passages; it was not used in bowls originating from the East. Much more likely that it alludes to the origin of this wine by the merchant, and therefore, he praises its sound quality. This *nwt* is nothing other than the landscape of Adiabene, here used in the Sasanian version. Besides the new information that Adiabene or Nwt was a wine-producing country, this Babylonian bowl also confirms that Nōd alone could be in use for the whole region of Adiabene.

The three new references for Nwt confirm that *nwt* or Nōd must be the official designation for Adiabene, at least in the Parthian period, with certainty at the beginning of the Sasanian period with Šābuhr I, and perhaps also later. The Semitic-based explanations given by Lipiński and his attempt to read a participle *Ntwn* instead of *nwt* and his turn to *ntw* are probably not correct. That a letter *waw* was simply replaced by a letter *nun* within three middle-Persian inscriptions belonging to the chief magician Kirdīr, was a priori not very likely; with the new references presented here it is out of the question, apart from the assumption of the methatesis n/t in the Pahlavi version of this text. This is valid also for his interpretation of a toponym 'Natūn-Issar-kana' as 'moat of Natūn-Issar'.[17]

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[16] See for the vain attempts by Naveh / Shaked 1983, 135 to bring together a Persian *diz* 'fortress' with different proposals for Qarbil, so the Nahr Bil or Kār Bēl in Babylonia. I could add to this the bowl edited by Levene / Bohak (2020, 61) l. 8 *Krbl'*. One of the more prominent and earliest Sasanian settlements in Mesopotamia with an Iranian element *diz* is Diz-puhr or arab. Dezful, a town of the Elymais/Susiana region.

[17] For the supposed element *kana*, Lipiński 2015, 204 notes some Old Iranian Persepolis-tablets like Par(r)ikana and Apkana. This sounds strange, as between the *-kana* of the Persepolis area and an Iranian ending *-kn*, interpreted by him as 'moat' or in a 'semantic shift' to 'fort' as the new seat of the government, lay more than 600 years. As a comparison, I could refer to the neighbouring province Garmegān/Garmekan, undoubtedly reflecting Iranian *garm*(*'g*) 'heat', which is called Bēt Garmai/Garmē in Syriac with its capital Karkā ḏ-Selōk/Kirkuk. See Milik 1972, 57 with remarks on the Iranian Suffix -ga+ān.

Theoretically, one may postpone this with the argument that all three new references could be later in time when only Nōd-Ardaxšīragān as a provincial designation was in use. Marciak wants to see in 379 CE as the date for the introduction of this new name when Ardaxšīr, king of the small kingdom of Adiabene who belonged to the family of the Sasanian rulers as the brother of Šābuhr II, took over the central kingship as Ardaxšīr II (379–383 AD).[18] Marciak assumes, and I agree with him, that from this time on, after a radical reform of the government, Adiabene could only function as one of the provinces (*šahr*) of the Sasanian Empire. It may be that the veneration of Issar or Nanāia by the autochthonous population was not apt anymore for the now centralized Sasanian administration of the Empire. Hence, the change in names was somehow cogent. But there is not the slightest evidence that the Great Demon List of the Mandaeans was drafted late in the Sasanian time at the turn of the 4th to 5th century; all geographical arguments speak for the earlier Sasanian, in some cases also to the Late Parthian period.

Is it possible that Late Sasanian Nōd-Ardaxšīragān replaced an earlier Iranian Nōd-Issargān for Adiabene? That would mean that only the byname of Nōd was changed, away from the local dominating deity Issar or Nanāia and transferred to the name of the king, but the official designation for the administrative unit as Nōd for Adiabene stayed the same. An answer to this question affects also the *ntwšīrakan* ŠKZ 24 in the Parthian version because Huyse in his edition favours this and also the reading Nodšīrakan in ŠKZ 30.[19] Still, judging by the geography this seems very unlikely, as Marciak notes.[20] The *-šr-* in the Parthian text for Issar offers not such obvious problems; one can refer to Šar-bēl, i.e. Issar-bēl, for the previous priest of Ištar of Arbela. But what is the origin of Nōd? One has to take into consideration the few personal names on seals of the 6th century with *nwt*, listed by Gignoux,[21] like Nōd-Ādur, Nōd-Ādur-Farrbay, Nōd-Farrbay, Nōd-Gōrak, and seen as hypocoristics Nōd and Nōdag. No Iranian scholar was able to give any explanations for this Nōd on the Sasanian seal inscriptions until now, and the remarks by Gignaux on p. 136 'le 1er membre du nom n´est par analysable' are still valid. This leaves us at least the possibility that the Nōd on seals is identical with the same Iranian Nōd used to name Adiabene of the official administrative texts. It is at least doubtful that *nw't* or *nhw't* of the Mandaean lead rolls provide some answers to the etymology of this name. Going by the bowl text of C that *nwt* is the common rendition for Adiabene, at least in Sasanian times. Thus it may be that here the Aramaic articulation of a rather foreign idiom for Mandaean writers of singular lead sheets plays a role.

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[18] Marciak 2017, 412.

[19] Huyse 1999, 22–23 § 2.

[20] Marciak 2017, 309–10. See also Marciak / Woicikowski 2016, 92.

[21] Gignoux 1989, 136–37 no. 691–697.

The *nwt* of our new reference in A is undoubtedly identical with the city of Arbela. Probably, the city with the Nanāia/Ištar temple on top of this tell was taken over by the provincial designation. For the city of Greek Arbela and later Arbila for Arabic speakers in medieval times, or modern Erbil, it was only an interlude. With the end of Sasanian domination, the nwt for Adiabene disappears completely, but not the Aramaic Ḥydhab and its Greek counterpart.

Ultimately, I am unable to provide a satisfying answer to the question of whence Nōd is derived. It surely does not belong to the vocabulary of any known Iranian language. Still, it cannot be ruled out that Pahlavi or Parthian speakers adopted the Semitic name Natūn-Issar as founders of the dynasty in Adiabene and shortened it to a more familiar-sounding name for their languages. However, this must have occurred in earlier Parthian history, in the 1st century BC. From the Hatrean personal names and the Natounia on the coins, there is no easy way to lead us, via Semitic and philological considerations, to our Nōd or Adiabene.

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Abstract

The classical sources refer to Adiabene as Ἀδιαβηνή, which was rendered into Aramaic as Bēt Ḥadhyb/Ḥdyb, primarily by Syriac-Aramaic sources, such as the *Synodicon* of the Nestorian Church (from 410 CE onward), alongside a few Talmudic expressions. The etymology of both names is unclear. To expand the discussion, one can now rely on three further references for *nwt*. Two of them appear in unpublished Mandaean lead rolls, while the other is found in a magic bowl, known since 1993, written in Babylonian Aramaic square script. The three new references confirm that *nwt* or Nōd must be the official designation for Adiabene, at least in the Parthian period, with certainty at the beginning of the Sasanian period under Šābuhr I, and perhaps also later. The Semitic-based explanations provided by Lipiński, along with his attempt to read a participle *Ntwn* instead of *nwt* and his subsequent shift to *ntw*, are likely incorrect.

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ARTABANOS UND DIE MEDER

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1.

Über die inneren Verhältnisse des Partherreiches um die Zeitenwende und zu Beginn des 1. nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts sind wir – bedingt durch die notorische Quellenarmut – leider nur unzureichend unterrichtet. Daher bleiben manche Aspekte der Ereignisgeschichte ebenso unsicher wie viele Details der Chronologie. Fest steht: die unmittelbar vor Artabanos II.[1] regierenden Könige verloren ihren Thron durch Flucht oder Mord: Phraates IV. war um 3/2 v. Chr. durch seinen Sohn Phraatakes / Phraates V. ermordet worden; letzterer konnte sich selbst nur bis zum Jahre 4 n. Chr. auf dem Thron halten, mußte dann zu Augustus fliehen und kam schließlich um.[2]

[1] Die Numerierung der parthischen Könige des Namens Artabanos in der Forschungsliteratur war seit jeher schwankend (hauptsächlich auf Grund einer Passage bei Iust. *Prol*. 41 [*successores deinde eius Artabanus et Tigranes cognomine Deus, a quo subacta est Media et Mesopotamia*], bei der umstritten war, wie der dort erwähnte Artabanos historisch einzuordnen ist); für den in diesem Beitrag behandelten Artabanos findet man hauptsächlich in älterer Literatur die Bezeichnung „Artabanos III.“, in der jüngeren zumeist „Artabanos II.“; nun bezeichnet ihn Assar 2017, 12 Anm. 7 (nach Assar 2011, 114, 119, 135) als „Artabanos IV.“. Wir bezeichnen ihn hier als „Artabanos II.“.

[2] Ios. *Ant*. 18.43: [Φραατάκης] καὶ δι᾽ ἀμφότερα μισηθεὶς οὐδὲν ἡσσόνως τῆς πατροκτονίας τὸ μῦσος τοῦ μητρὸς ἔρωτος τιθεμένων τῶν ὑπηκόων, στάσει περιελαθεὶς πρότερον ἢ φῦναι μέγας ἐξέπεσε τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ οὕτως θνήσκει. Er floh zu den Römern, RGDA 32: *ad me supplices confugerunt reges Parthorum Tiridates et postea Phrates regis Phratis filius*. Ziegler 1964, 56. Wie Phraatakes/Phraates V. umkam, bleibt offen. Tarn 1932, 834 bezieht allerdings die Erwähnung des geflüchteten Königs Phraates, Sohnes des Phraates, in RGDA 32 nicht auf Phraatakes, sondern auf einen Prinzen mit Königstitel, der im Kontext der Usurpation des Tiridates um 26/25 v.Chr. zu Augustus geflohen sei. Ähnlich nun auch Assar 2011, 129, 132-133. Vgl. Moscovich 1972, 211-212, 228-229 mit Anm. 11. Dies kann kaum zutreffen, denn einerseits ereignete sich die Flucht des Phraates „später“ (*postea* – also nicht im Zusammenhang mit dem Usurpationsversuch

Es folgte Orodes III., der zumindest zwischen 6 und ca. 8 n. Chr. regiert zu haben scheint.[3] Nach seiner Ermordung[4] wurde Vonones, der älteste Sohn Phraates' IV., der bei den Römern als Geisel lebte, durch eine parthische Gesandtschaft bei dem Kaiser Augustus ‚angefordert'.[5] Doch auch Vonones scheiterte; er fand offenbar keine allgemeine Zustimmung und wurde nach längeren Kämpfen mit seinem Konkurrenten Artabanos im Jahre 15 n. Chr. vertrieben.[6]

Der Herrschaftsantritt Artabanos' II. markiert nun – nach einhelliger Ansicht der modernen Forschung – insofern eine Zäsur in der parthischen Geschichte, als mit ihm ein anderer Zweig der Arsakidenfamilie an die Macht gekommen sein soll; Artabanos sei Sproß einer „Nebenlinie der Arsakiden" gewesen.[7] Doch auch Orodes III., der überhaupt nur bei Flavius Iosephus erwähnt wird, gilt der modernen Forschung als „an Arsacid but of unknown lineage".[8] Daß Orodes ein Arsakide war, wird von Iosephus ebenso vermerkt[9] wie der Umstand, daß er von einer Gesandtschaft herbeigeholt wurde; er hielt sich also bei seiner Berufung nicht am großköniglichen Hofe auf, sondern an anderer Stelle, aber ganz offenbar nicht im Römischen Reich; denn von einer Gesandtschaft „nach Rom" – wie später im Falle des Vonones (Ios. *Ant*. 18.46: πρεσβεύσαντες δὲ εἰς Ῥώμην) –

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des Tiridates), andererseits handelte es sich um einen „König", was der von Tiridates verschleppte Prinz wohl nicht war. Ablehnend auch Timpe 1975, 157-158. Iust. 42.5.6-9: der von den Parthern zum König erhobene Tiridates *ad Caesarem in Hispania bellum tunc temporis gerentem profugit, obsidem Caesari minimum Phrahatis filium ferens, quem neglegentius custoditum rapuerat*. Bald darauf *Phrahati filium sine pretio remisit* [*Caesar* = Augustus]. Cassius Dio hingegen weiß nur von einem Sohn, den Phraates selbst schickte, vgl. Cass. Dio 51.18.3 (30 v. Chr.: Augustus erhält von Phraates einen Sohn als Geisel), 53.33.2 (23 v. Chr.: A. schickt Phraates seinen Sohn zurück im Tausch gegen Feldzeichen und römische Gefangene). Eine Liste der bezeugten arsakidischen *obsides* in Rom: Nabel 2017b, 28; Nabel 2025, 17.

[3] Münzen S[ellwood 1980] 59 aus dem Jahr 6 n. Chr. (ZIT ΔΥΣ [Dystros Jahr 317 SÄ = ca. Feb. 6 n. Chr.] und ZIT ΕΜ[ΒΟΛΙΜΟΣ]) werden üblicherweise diesem Orodes zugeordnet. Assar 2011, 135 setzt für Orodes III. eine Regierungszeit „*ca*. AD 6-8" an. Der erste Beleg für den Herrschaftsbeginn seines Nachfolgers Vonones über die Parther ist eine Tetradrachme aus dem Jahr 320 SÄ, also 8/9 n. Chr. (S 60.1).

[4] Ios. *Ant*. 18.44-45 (Ὀρώδην ἐκάλουν πρεσβεύσαντες εἰς δάν, ἄλλως μὲν ἐπίφθονον τῷ πλήθει καὶ ὑπαίτιον καθ' ὑπερβολὰς ὠμότητος, πάνυ γὰρ ἦν σκαιὸς καὶ δυσδιάθετος εἰς ὀργήν, ἕνα δὲ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ γένους. τοῦτον μὲν δὴ συστάντες ἀποκτείνουσιν, ὡς μὲν ἔνιοί φασιν, ἐν σπονδαῖς καὶ τραπέζαις, μαχαιροφορεῖν γὰρ ἔθος ἅπασιν, ὡς δ' ὁ πλείων κατέχει λόγος, εἰς θήραν προαγαγόντες).

[5] Ios. *Ant*. 18.46; Tac. *Ann*. 2.1-4.

[6] Datierung: So – nach Gonnella 2001, 71-73 – nun auch Nabel 2017a, 105-106; Luther 2023, 61-63; Nabel 2025, 157. Vonones' weiteres Schicksal: Ios. *Ant*. 18.48-52; Tac. *Ann*. 2.58, 2.68.

[7] Zuletzt Dąbrowa 2021, 49; Gregoratti 2021, 30 (aus einer arsakidischen Seitenlinie und aus Media Atropatene stammend). Vgl. auch Fabian 2020, 214; Hauser 2016, 448-449 („Bruch"); Börm 2017, 551 und die Diskussionen bei Herzfeld 1932, 74, 86-87; Kahrstedt 1950, 11-23; Dąbrowa 1983, 45; Boyce 2000.

[8] Olbrycht 2014, 92; Schottky 1991, 132 (Orodes III. „vermutlich der Chef einer hyrkanischen Nebenlinie der Arsakiden").

[9] Ios. *Ant*. 18.44 schreibt ausdrücklich: οὐ γὰρ ἑτέροις ἄρχειν νόμιμον.

ist nicht die Rede, außerdem hätte Augustus dies sicher in seinem Tatenbericht vermerkt. Andererseits hat offenbar eine parthische Gesandtschaft um 6 n. Chr. den Kaiser Augustus in Rom aufgesucht, der sie zu Tiberius nach Germanien weiterschickte.[10] Da Strabon davon berichtet, daß die Partherkönige nach Phraates IV. (und bis in die tiberische Zeit, als Strabon seine *Geographika* abschloß[11]) Gesandtschaften zu den Römern schickten und Gespräche führten,[12] um die Beziehungen zu pflegen, mag auch diese Gesandtschaft solchen Zwecken gedient haben. Meine Hypothese: Orodes ließ in Rom und bei Tiberius seine Thronbesteigung anzeigen und die geltenden Abkommen (zuletzt das von 1 n. Chr.) bestätigen.[13]

Im Hinblick auf Artabanos wird jedenfalls üblicherweise vermutet, daß er ‚nur' mütterlicherseits arsakidische Vorfahren gehabt habe und daß sein Vater entweder ein Atropatide gewesen sei, also Angehöriger des Herrscherhauses von Media Atropatene,[14] oder aber ein ‚skythischer Dynast' aus dem ostiranischen Raum.[15] M.J. Olbrycht stellte hingegen vor einigen Jahren die These auf, daß sein Vater Arsakide gewesen sei, allerdings aus einem Seitenzweig, der sich von Mithridates II. herleitete und über die Daher herrschte („prince of the Dahae"); seine Mutter wiederum sei eine Tochter Phraates' IV. gewesen.[16] Tatsächlich kann angesichts der Bedeutung der Zugehörigkeit zur Arsakidenfamilie für die Partherkönige

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[10] Suet. *Tib*. 16: *data rursus potestas tribunicia in quinquennium, delegatus pacandae Germaniae status, Parthorum legati mandatis Augusto Romae redditis eum quoque adire in provincia iussi. sed nuntiata Illyrici defectione transiit ad curam novi belli…* Germanien: Vell. 2.104-110; Cass. Dio 55.13.1a-2 (4 n. Chr.: Germanenkrieg des Tiberius und Adoption), 55.28-30 (6 n. Chr.: zweiter Germanenkrieg des Tiberius, Vordringen bis zur Elbe; Aufstand der Illyrer/Dalmater). Da Sueton suggeriert, daß die Gesandtschaft unmittelbar vor dem Illyrer-Aufstand anreiste, ist sie offenbar in das Jahr 6 n. Chr. zu verlegen.

[11] Olshausen 2022, 13-14 und 35 (Strabon hat „bis etwa 24 [n. Chr.] an den *Geographika* gearbeitet").

[12] Strab. 16.1.28: καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ δὲ βασιλεῖς πρεσβευόμενοι καὶ εἰς συλλόγους ἀφικνούμενοι διατετελέκασιν.

[13] Anders: von Gutschmid 1888, 118 (Gesandtschaft könnte mit der Vertreibung des Phraatakes zu tun haben); Debevoise 1938, 151 (identifiziert die Gesandtschaft mit der, welche Augustus nach dem Tod des Orodes um die Aussendung des Vonones bat).

[14] Marquart 1895, 640-642; Marquart 1901, 111; Herzfeld 1932, 74-75 („von väterlicher Seite Atropatier"); Rostovtzeff 1936, 90; Widengren 1969, 109; Schottky 1991, 73-78, 132. Vgl. Schottky 1998, 444; Schur 1949, 2003. S.u.

[15] Schur 1923, 71 („Schluß, daß er der Sohn einer Arsakidin und eines skythischen Dynasten gewesen ist, der beim Zusammenbruch des alten Reichs zunächst Hyrkanien und dann auch den Westen erobert hat"). Vgl. Schippmann 1980, 49 (Abkunft des Artabanos aus dem Nordosten Irans, „wahrscheinlich aus Hyrkanien"); Schottky 1991, 71 (Artabanos „Begründer der weiblichen Arsakidenlinie"), 133.

[16] Olbrycht 2014, 92 („hypothesis that a branch of the Arsacids which survived the turmoil of the Sinatrukid period lived among the Dahae. It was from this line that Artabanos II was descended"), 95-96. Vgl. auch Olbrycht 1998a, 142; Olbrycht 2013a, 28, 67-68, 228; Olbrycht 2022a, 359 („Artabanos II of Atropatene, who was a grandson of Phraates IV on his mother's side"); Schottky 1991, 132 (Enkel Phraates' IV.).

kein Zweifel daran bestehen, daß Artabanos ein im Partherreich als ‚legitim' anerkannter Arsakide war,[17] auch wenn in der Propaganda seiner Gegner versucht wurde, dies abzustreiten – etwa durch die kolportierte Behauptung, er sei nur mütterlicherseits arsakidischer Abstammung.[18] Daß Artabanos bei den skythischen Dahern im nordöstlichen Iran aufgewachsen war, wie Tacitus weiß,[19] ist hierbei ganz irrelevant; denn derartige Angaben beziehen sich offenbar auf das im iranischen und kaukasischen Raum (aber nicht nur dort) verbreitete Erziehungssystem der ‚Ziehelternschaft' (‚fosterage'), das im spätantiken Armenien praktiziert wurde als „*dayeak*-Institution. Ein solcher *dayeak* war beauftragt, einen Sohn eines Feudalherrn, zumal den Sohn des Königs, bei sich zu erziehen".[20] Dieses System sorgte für enge Beziehungen zwischen zwei Familien unterschiedlicher sozialer Provenienz und schuf auch Allianzen, die machtpolitisch von Bedeutung sein konnten.[21] In ganz ähnlicher Weise darf man sich die Praxis bei den

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[17] Ausdrücklich etwa Ios. *Ant*. 18.48: Ἀρτάβανον Μηδίας βασιλεύοντα γένος Ἀρσακίδην. Tac. *Ann*. 2.3: *Arsacidarum e sanguine*. Vgl. Tac. *Ann*. 6.34.3, 6.41-42. Artabanos' Sohn Dareios galt in Rom als Arsakide (Cass. Dio 59.17.5).

[18] Tac. *Ann*. 6.42, der als Kronzeuge für eine lediglich von mütterlicher Seite herrührende arsakidische Abstammung herangezogen wird (z.B. Schur 1923, 70-71), gibt lediglich die Vorwürfe der Bewohner von Seleukeia am Tigris wieder (*simul probra in Artabanum fundebant, materna origine Arsaciden, cetera degenerem*), offenbar also die des von den Römern unterstützten Prätendenten Tiridates und seiner Partei. Die Angabe hat keinen Wert, denn hier ist ganz klar, daß es sich nur um gegnerische Propaganda handelt – es ging schließlich um die Rechtmäßigkeit des Herrschaftsanspruches des Artabanos, die von den Gegnern verneint werden mußte. In ähnlicher Weise sollen ja auch die Anhänger des Artabanos die Rechtmäßigkeit der Ansprüche seines Konkurrenten Tiridates angezweifelt haben (6.43: *tum Hiero pueritiam Tiridatis increpat, neque penes Arsaciden imperium sed inane nomen apud imbellem externa mollitia*).

[19] Tac. *Ann*. 2.3 (*igitur Artabanus, Arsacidarum e sanguine apud Dahas adultus, excitur*), 6.41.2 (*Scythas inter eductum*).

[20] Widengren 1969, 69. In der modernen Forschung findet sich auch der armenische Begriff *dayeakut'iwn*.

[21] Das System der Ziehelternschaft ist auch im germanisch-keltischen Raum belegt, teilweise bis in die Neuzeit (Schottland; Kaukasus – in der russ. Forschung bezeichnet als аталычество). Anthropologische Parallelen: Bremmer 2021, 234: „The Germanic material in particular, but also the Caucasian evidence collected by Steinmetz, clearly shows that feudal societies used fosterage to bolster ties between the higher and lower strata of society." Grundlegend für die iranischen Verhältnisse: Widengren 1969, 69-82 (81: „Das Band zwischen Erzieher und Zögling ist ein sehr starkes und inniges. Nachdem ein königlicher Zögling den Thron bestiegen hat, versucht er auf jede Weise, seinem Ernährer zu einer hohen Stellung zu verhelfen"). Vgl. Nabel 2017a, 62 („a tool for networking among elite families"). Besonders gut bezeugt sind die Verhältnisse im spätantiken Armenien, das stark arsakidisch geprägt war (Bedrosian 1984; Garsoian 1989, 521; Bedrosian 1996/2020. Für die späteren Verhältnisse und zum Kontext s.a. Preiser-Kapeller 2018, 98-99). Vgl. auch Parkes 2003, 750; Traina 2004, bes. 257-260; Traina 2019, 124-125 („At any rate, this institution is only attested in royal and aristocratic contexts, and we have no evidence of its existence in the rest of the society, as in modern atalyčestvo"). Für Iberien: Schleicher 2021, 267-273 („Ziehelternschaft").

Parthern vorstellen:[22] Artabanos war als jugendlicher Arsakidenprinz offenbar von einem Gefolgsmann seiner Familie erzogen worden, vermutlich am Hofe eines parthischen Vasallenfürsten der Daher im Ostiran. Diese Verbindung, vielleicht auch verstärkt durch Verschwägerung, half ihm in Krisensituationen: im ostiranischen Raum fand Artabanos in Zeiten der Bedrängnis Zuflucht und Unterstützung.[23]

Zwei Dinge sind hier festzuhalten: (1.) Artabanos dürfte väterlicherseits Arsakide gewesen sein. (2.) Daß wir den Namen seines Vaters nicht kennen, kann nicht zwingend als Indiz dafür gewertet werden, daß er aus einer Seitenlinie des Herrscherhauses stammte.

2.

Vielfach ist nun vermutet worden, daß Artabanos vor seiner von Turbulenzen gekennzeichneten Thronbesteigung König in Media Atropatene gewesen sei.[24] Der einzige Beleg hierfür ist jedoch eine Passage bei Flavius Iosephus, wo berichtet wird, daß Artabanos (um 8/9 n. Chr.) König „von Medien" war (Ἀρτάβανον Μηδίας βασιλεύοντα), bevor er im Kampf gegen den bei Teilen der Parther verhaßten

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[22] Bezeugt ist die *dayeak*-Institution im parthischen Raum nur indirekt, etwa in Birecik im parthischen Teilkönigreich Osrhoene, wo ein Gouverneur (?) inschriftlich als Erzieher (MRBYNʾ) einer Person erscheint, die in der Forschung vielfach als Königssohn angesehen wurde (Inschrift As 55 [D1] bei Drijvers/Healey 1999, 140-142, Z. 2-3: ʾNʾ ZRBYN BR ʾB[GR] ŠLYṬʾ DBYRTʾ | MRBYNʾ DʿWYDLT [BR] MʿNW BR MʿNW [vgl. hier auch Luther 2009, 21-22]) sowie in Hatra, wo ein Erzieher des Königs Sanaṭruq erwähnt wird (Inschrift H203 bei Beyer 1998, 68: ṢLMʾ DY ʿBDŠLMʾ BR BRʿY | MRBYNʾ DY SNṬRWQ MLKʾ | [D]ʿRB); vielleicht läßt sich dieses System auch in dem Bericht des Iosephus über die Verschickung des adiabenischen Prinzen Izates an den Hof des Königs von Charax erkennen (Ios. *Ant*. 20.22-23). Vgl. allg. Nabel 2025 (bes. 35); Nabel 2017a, 129-131. Zu den an die Römer übergebenen Söhnen Phraates' IV.: Wheeler 2019, 486 („Phraates IV's sons, *pignora amicitiae*, were not 'hostages' in a legal sense and may reflect the Near Eastern (and especially Iranian) practice of foster-fatherage, although undoubtedly a domestic political motive also intervened.").

[23] Tac. *Ann*. 6.36 (*his adsumptis in longinqua et contermina Scythiae fugam maturavit, spe auxilii, quia Hyrcanis Carmaniisque per adfinitatem innexus erat*). Nach Strab. 11.8.2 lebten dahische Stämme bei Hyrkanien, andere bis hin nach Areia. Tac. *Ann*. 11.8 nennt ebenfalls Daher und Hyrcaner im Verbund als Hilfstruppen des Gotarzes (*Gotarzes Daharum Hyrcanorumque opibus auctus bellum renovat*). Auch Vonones soll mit einem König der Skythen (zu denen die Daher gerechnet wurden) ‚verwandt' gewesen sein (Tac. *Ann*. 2.68).

[24] S.o. von Gutschmid 1888, 119; Marquart 1895, 640-641; Herzfeld 1932, 75; Pani 1972, 86, 251; Schottky 1990, 221; Schottky 1991, 132; Schottky 1997; Sheldon 2010, 90; Olbrycht 2013a, 28 („Frakcja ‚północna' wystawiła na tron partyjski Artabanosa II, króla Medii Atropatene"), 63-68; Olbrycht 2014, 92, 96 („Artabanos came to rule in Media Atropatene in circumstances which have not been clarified yet … . And it was from Media Atropatene that he launched and conducted his struggle for the throne of Parthia against Vonones I."); Gregoratti 2017, 101; Fabian 2020, 214. S.a. Olbrycht 2010, 184 („szczególne związki z Medią Atropatene"); Hartmann 2016, 399-400; Olbrycht 2022a, 359. Vgl. Marquart 1901, 111.

Vonones zum parthischen König erhoben wurde.[25] Tatsächlich gab es aber zu Beginn des 1. nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts ‚zwei Medien': erstens das unter den Nachfahren des Atropates stehende eben erwähnte Königreich Media Atropatene[26] (oder: ἡ Ἀτροπάτιος Μηδία); und zweitens das parthische Territorium Groß-Medien, dessen Hauptort Ekbatana „heute noch" – wie Strabon vermerkt: also zu seinen Lebzeiten – die Sommerresidenz der Parther gewesen sei[27] und das wiederum in verschiedene Distrikte untergliedert war.[28] Während also Groß-Medien unter parthischer Kontrolle stand, wurde Media Atropatene nicht direkt von Parthern regiert, auch wenn die atropatenischen Könige nach Angabe Strabons mit Armeniern und Arsakiden verschwägert waren und sie freundschaftliche Beziehungen zu Römern und Parthern gleichermaßen pflegten.[29]

Der Hinweis des Iosephus auf eine Herrschaft des Artabanos über „Medien" kann sich insofern sowohl auf „Media Atropatene" als auch auf das parthische „Groß-Medien" beziehen; doch da einerseits Iosephus ausdrücklich vermerkt, daß Artabanos ein Arsakide war (und dies auch sonst belegt ist), andererseits Strabon als Zeitgenosse von einem intakten Königreich Media Atropatene spricht, das sich bisher sowohl gegen die Ambitionen der Armenier als auch gegen die der Parther behaupten konnte, und suggeriert, daß die Atropatiden dort seit Atropates regierten,[30] kommt wohl für Artabanos nur eine Herrschaft in Groß-Medien in Frage: Artabanos war wohl als Angehöriger des Arsakidenhauses Regent des ranghohen parthischen Territoriums Groß-Medien und trug den Königstitel.[31] Tatsächlich scheinen die großen parthischen Verwaltungseinheiten als „Königreiche"

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[25] Ios. *Ant*. 18.48: παραχρῆμα δ' ἐκάλουν Ἀρτάβανον Μηδίας βασιλεύοντα γένος Ἀρσακίδην· πείθεται δ' Ἀρτάβανος καὶ μετὰ στρατιᾶς ἔπεισιν.

[26] Einführend zur Geschichte des Königreichs Media Atropatene in parthischer Zeit: Pani 1972; Schottky 1998.

[27] Vgl. Strab. 11.13.1: ἡ δὲ Μηδία δίχα διῄρηται· καλοῦσι δὲ τὴν μὲν μεγάλην, ἧς μητρόπολις τὰ Ἐκβάτανα, μεγάλη πόλις καὶ τὸ βασίλειον ἔχουσα τῆς Μήδων ἀρχῆς· διατελοῦσι δὲ καὶ νῦν οἱ Παρθυαῖοι τούτῳ χρώμενοι βασιλείῳ, καὶ θερίζουσί γε ἐνταῦθα οἱ βασιλεῖς· ψυχρὰ γὰρ ἡ Μηδία· τὸ δὲ χειμάδιόν ἐστιν αὐτοῖς ἐν Σελευκείᾳ τῇ ἐπὶ τῷ Τίγριδι πλησίον Βαβυλῶνος. ἡ δ' ἑτέρα μερίς ἐστιν ἡ Ἀτροπάτιος Μηδία· τοὔνομα δ' ἔσχεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος Ἀτροπάτου, ὃς ἐκώλυσεν ὑπὸ τοῖς Μακεδόσι γίνεσθαι καὶ ταύτην μέρος οὖσαν μεγάλης Μηδίας· καὶ δὴ καὶ βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθεὶς ἰδίᾳ συνέταξε καθ' αὑτὴν τὴν χώραν ταύτην, καὶ ἡ διαδοχὴ σώζεται μέχρι νῦν ἐξ ἐκείνου, πρός τε τοὺς Ἀρμενίων βασιλέας ποιησαμένων ἐπιγαμίας τῶν ὕστερον καὶ Σύρων καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα Παρθυαίων.

[28] Vgl. Isid. *Mans. Parth.* 4-7 (= FGrHist 781 F2). Eine solche Distrikteinteilung spiegelt sich auch in den Avroman-Dokumenten aus dem westlichen Groß-Medien wider (Rougemont 2012, Nr. 73,6, 74,3).

[29] Strab. 11.13.1-2: καὶ ἡ διαδοχὴ σώζεται μέχρι νῦν ἐξ ἐκείνου, πρός τε τοὺς Ἀρμενίων βασιλέας ποιησαμένων ἐπιγαμίας τῶν ὕστερον καὶ Σύρων καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα Παρθυαίων … ἀντέχουσι δ' ὅμως καὶ ἀπολαμβάνουσι τὰ ἀφαιρεθέντα, καθάπερ τὴν Συμβάκην ἀπέλαβον παρὰ τῶν Ἀρμενίων ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίοις γεγονότων, καὶ αὐτοὶ προσεληλύθασι τῇ φιλίᾳ τῇ πρὸς Καίσαρα· θεραπεύουσι δ' ἅμα καὶ τοὺς Παρθυαίους.

[30] S.o. Strab. 11.13.1: καὶ ἡ διαδοχὴ σώζεται μέχρι νῦν ἐξ ἐκείνου …

[31] In diesem Sinne auch Hauser 2016, 477. Vgl. Luther 2023, 62.

bezeichnet worden zu sein.[32] Die bedeutende Stellung Groß-Mediens im parthischen Reichsverbund hat vor einigen Jahren S.R. Hauser hervorgehoben, der von „Medien als zweiter Provinz des Reiches“ spricht: „Entsprechend wurden immer wieder Söhne oder Brüder zum König von Medien ernannt, die als Kronprinzen bzw. potenzielle Nachfolger gelten konnten“.[33] Am ehesten erinnert eine solche Konstruktion wohl an die Fürstentümer, die in mittelalterlichen europäischen Königreichen den jeweils designierten Thronfolgern übertragen wurden.[34] Doch auch in den hellenistischen Königreichen (etwa bei den Seleukiden) ist bezeugt, daß Prinzen zu Lebzeiten des regierenden Königs den Königstitel erhielten und Herrschaftsaufgaben erfüllten.[35] Die präzise staatsrechtliche Position der Regenten/Könige von Groß-Medien bleibt indes schwer greifbar.

Groß-Medien war schon bald nach der Eroberung durch Mithridates I. (ca. 148 v. Chr.) zum ersten Mal unter die Verwaltung eines nahen Familienmitglieds des parthischen Großkönigs gestellt worden. Folgende Personen können wohl nach der dokumentarischen und literarischen Überlieferung als arsakidische Regenten/Könige von Groß-Medien angesehen werden,[36] auch wenn in den Quellen nur von ‚Medien‘ die Rede und der Königstitel nicht in jedem Fall ausdrücklich belegt ist:

- Bacasis/Bagayaša, offenbar ein Bruder oder Sohn Mithridates’ I., bezeugt als erster Regent (der Königstitel ist nicht belegt) im zuvor von den Parthern eroberten Medien für die Jahre 138 (Mai) bis 120 (Mai/Juni) v. Chr.;[37] wenn wir

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[32] Der Ältere Plinius weiß davon, daß die parthischen Provinzen „Königreiche“ genannt wurden (Plin. *Nat*. 6.112: *regna Parthorum duodeviginti sunt omnia; ita enim dividunt provincias circa duo, ut diximus, maria, Rubrum a meridie, Hyrcanium a septentrione. ex his XI, quae superiora dicuntur, incipiunt a confinio Armeniae Caspiisque litoribus, pertinent ad Scythas, cum quibus ex aequo degunt; reliqua VII regna inferiora appellantur*), und zählt auch Groß-Medien um Ekbatana dazu.

[33] Hauser 2016, 451, 477, 483. Hauser postuliert auch die Existenz einer (eigenen) Münzstätte des Königreiches (Groß-)Medien in parthischer Zeit in Ekbatana.

[34] In Frankreich die Dauphiné, in England/Großbritannien (nominell bis heute) Wales, in Kastilien Asturien, in Navarra Viana, in Aragon Girona (die letzten drei bis heute in Spanien).

[35] So Antiochos III. und seine Söhne Antiochos und Seleukos. Vgl. Dreyer 2010, 107. Liv. 33.40: Seleukos erhält Lysimacheia als *sedem regni*. Dreyer verwendet hier den Begriff „Vizekönige“. Vielleicht kann man – faute de mieux – diesen Begriff auch für die arsakidischen Regenten/Könige von Groß-Medien verwenden? S.a. Hackl 2020 (zu Seleukos Nikator und Antiochos I.).

[36] Hauser 2016, 477 bringt selbst mehrere Fälle ins Spiel; von diesen scheidet allerdings Gotarzes I. aus (weil ein eindeutiger Medien-Bezug in den Quellen fehlt), und Bacasis/Bagayaša muß ergänzt werden.

[37] Iust. 41.6.7: *his viribus auctus Mithridates Mediae Bacasin praeponit*. Vgl. die Keilschrifttexte BCHP 18B/A („Chronographic Document concerning Bagayasha“) und BCHP 18C („Astronomical Diary concerning Bagayasha and Timotheus“). Bacasis/Bagayaša wird für 133 v. Chr. als „Bruder des Königs“ bezeichnet und war insofern – je nachdem, wann man den Tod Mithridates’ I. ansetzt – entweder ein Bruder (Assar 2001, 18-20; Assar 2006a, 116; Assar 2011, 117; Overtoom 2020, 179; Olbrycht 2021c, 233 mit Anm. 140) oder ein Sohn Mithridates’ I. (Shayegan 2017, 412 [Bruder Phraates’ II.]. Shayegan 2011, 72-74 mit AD 3 -132 B rev. 21-22; die Ansicht von Shayegan [221], daß die Amtsstellung des Bacasis/Bagayaša „the continuation of the Seleucid ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν

die Angabe im 1. Makkabäerbuch (1Makk 14.1-2) ernst nehmen, daß im Jahre 172 SÄ Ἀρσάκης ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς Περσίδος καὶ Μηδίας war, scheint der Posten eines arsakidischen Regenten/Königs von Medien im Jahre 140 v. Chr. noch nicht geschaffen gewesen zu sein.

– Mithridates[38] (der Sohn Phraates' III.), welcher nach der gemeinsam mit seinem Bruder Orodes' II. in die Tat umgesetzten Ermordung Phraates' III. (58/57 v. Chr.) schließlich von Orodes aus Medien vertrieben wurde, ἧς ἦρχεν.[39] Es handelt sich wohl um denselben aus Medien stammenden Mithridates, der im Jahre 67 v. Chr. als Schwiegersohn Tigranes' des Großen an Kämpfen mit den Römern unter Lucullus beteiligt war.[40] Offenbar hat Mithridates in Groß-Medien (Ekbatana u.a.) auch Münzen geprägt.[41] Er dürfte insofern dort zumindest zwischen ca. 67 und 57 v. Chr. regiert haben – also weitgehend parallel zur Herrschaft seines Vaters Phraates III. über das Gesamtreich (ca. 70-58/57 v. Chr.) –,[42] bevor er mit Orodes um die Herrschaft im Partherreich stritt.[43] Bei dem „Meder Dareios" hingegen, mit dem Pompeius um 65 v. Chr. Krieg führte, handelt es sich offenbar um einen König von Media Atropatene.[44]

ἄνω σατραπειῶν «the one (in charge) of the Upper Satrapies»" sei, erscheint allerdings fraglich; vgl. auch Luther 2018). Nach Assar 2005, 48 und Clancier 2014, 187, 190 sei Bacasis hingegen zum Gouverneur von Media Atropatene (statt korrekt: [Groß-]Medien) gemacht worden. Ob Bacasis/Bagayaša später Großkönig wurde (wie Assar 2006a, 112-116 ins Spiel brachte [„Arsaces VIII"]), ist unsicher (vgl. Assar 2005, 47-48. Assar 2011, 117: „substitute king" für den erkrankten Mithridates I.). S.a. Huijs 2014, 611-612; Melikyan 2020; Olbrycht 2021c, xvii („Vakasis/Bagayasha (floruit in the 140s–130s B.C., not king)"); Olbrycht 2022b, 116.

[38] Vgl. Hauser 2016, 477.

[39] Cass. Dio 39.56.2 (zum J. 55 v. Chr.): τοῦ γὰρ Φραάτου ὑπὸ τῶν παίδων δολοφονηθέντος Ὀρώδης τήν τε βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ διεδέξατο, καὶ Μιθριδάτην τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐκ τῆς Μηδίας, ἧς ἦρχεν, ἐξέβαλε. καὶ ὃς καταφυγὼν πρὸς τὸν Γαβίνιον ἀνέπεισεν αὐτὸν συμπρᾶξαί οἱ τὴν κάθοδον; Iust. 42.4.1–4. S.a. Assar 2011, 126-127.

[40] Cass. Dio 36.14.2: καὶ ὁ Μιθριδάτης ὁ ἕτερος ὁ ἐκ Μηδίας γαμβρὸς τοῦ Τιγράνου ἐσκεδασμένοις τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ἐξαίφνης προσπεσὼν συχνοὺς ἀπέκτεινεν. Die Identität beider Personen wird auch angenommen von Assar 2006b, 94 Anm. 195, 96 Anm. 200. Vgl. Overtoom 2021, 243. S.a. Kobzar 2024, 18-19.

[41] Früheste Münzen (Drachmen) des Mithridates der Serie S 40 stammen aus iranischen Prägestätten, während der Auseinandersetzung mit Orodes scheint er (als „Mithridates III.") auch Münzen in Seleukeia geprägt zu haben (die Tetradrachme S 41.1 mit der Legende ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΠΙΚΑΛΟΥΜΕΝΟΥ ΜΙΘΡΑΔΑΤΟΥ ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝΟΣ).

[42] Olbrycht 2021b („co-regent and ruler of Greater Media during his father's lifetime").

[43] Iust. 42.4.1-4: *igitur Mithridates, rex Parthorum, post bellum Armeniae propter crudelitatem a senatu Parthico regno pellitur. Frater eius Orodes, cum regnum vacans occupasset, Babyloniam, quo Mithridates confugerat, diu obsidet et fame coactos in deditionem oppidanos conpellit. Mithridates autem fiducia cognationis ultro se in potestatem Orodis tradit. Sed Orodes plus hostem quam fratrem cogitans in conspectu suo trucidari iussit*. Olbrycht 2021b datiert seinen Tod in das Jahr 55 v. Chr.

[44] Schmitt 1996; Debevoise 1938, 73-74. Appian. *Mithr*. 106 (ὁ δὲ Πομπήιος καὶ τὸν Ταῦρον ὑπερελθὼν … ἐπολέμησε δὲ καὶ Δαρείῳ τῷ Μήδῳ, μέχρι ἔφυγεν, εἴτε Ἀντιόχῳ συμμαχῶν εἴτε Τιγράνῃ πρότερον), 117 (βασιλεῖς ἐνικήθησαν Τιγράνης Ἀρμένιος, Ἀρτώκης Ἴβηρ, Ὀροίζης Ἀλβανός, Δαρεῖος Μῆδος, …). S.a. Plut. *Pomp*. 45.2 (Triumph auch über „Media").

- Artabanos,[45] König von Medien um 8/9 n. Chr.: παραχρῆμα δ᾽ ἐκάλουν Ἀρτάβανον Μηδίας βασιλεύοντα γένος Ἀρσακίδην (Ios. *Ant*. 18.48, s.o.).
- Vonones[46] (der Vater Vologases' I.), welcher zum Zeitpunkt des Todes Gotarzes' II. 51 n. Chr. in Medien regiert hat (*Medos tum praesidens*),[47] bevor er vielleicht kurzzeitig selbst Großkönig wurde.[48] Über seine Abkunft ist nichts Näheres bekannt; in der modernen Forschung wird bisweilen angenommen, Vonones sei ein Bruder des Artabanos gewesen.[49] Angesichts seines Postens in Medien dürfte er ein nahes Familienmitglied des Großkönigs Gotarzes II. gewesen sein. Möglich ist auch, daß er dessen Bruder und somit ein weiterer Sohn Artabanos' II. war (wie eben auch Gotarzes II.[50] selbst) –

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[45] Vgl. Hauser 2016, 477.

[46] Vgl. Hauser 2016, 477.

[47] Tac. *Ann*. 12.14: *dein Gotarzes morbo obiit, accitusque in regnum Vonones Medos tum praesidens. nulla huic prospera aut adversa, quis memoraretur: brevi et inglorio imperio perfunctus est, resque Parthorum in filium eius Vologaesen translatae*. Kahrstedt 1950, 16-17 (meint zwar, „[a]n sich klingt praesidens Medos durchaus nach einer Statthalterschaft von (Groß-)Medien", verortet Vonones dann aber doch in Media Atropatene und vermutet, er sei der erste bezeugte Arsakide in einer dort neugeschaffenen parth. Sekundogenitur [22-23, 79]). Vgl. Schur 1923, 72, 76; Schottky 1991, 68. Als König hat er offenbar keine Münzen geprägt (Sinisi 2012, 147).

[48] Sinisi 2012, 15 Anm. 15.

[49] von Gutschmid 1888, 128; Herzfeld 1932, 75, 87 (Stammbaum); Kahrstedt 1950, 22-23; Hanslik 1962, 1839; Pani 1972, 251-252; Olbrycht 2013a, 179, 237. Schippmann 1989, 574: „He was a son of Vonones, king of Atropatene (Media), who was a brother of Artabanus II." Vgl. auch das Stemma bei Hartmann 2010, 598.

[50] Die Abstammung Gotarzes' II. ist umstritten, manche moderne Forscher (denen ich mich anschließe) halten ihn (wie Ios. *Ant*. 20.73-74; Tac. *Ann*. 11.9.3 [*Gotarzes fratri* = Vardanes] suggerieren) für einen Sohn des Artabanos (Hartmann 2016, 416 Anm. 77. Vgl. Assar 2017, 23 mit Anm. 76), andere für einen Neffen des Artabanos (so etwa Herzfeld 1932, 87: Sohn einer Schwester; Kahrstedt 1950, 22: Sohn eines Bruders), wieder andere nehmen eine hyrkanische Abstammung an (Debevoise 1938, 166-167). Der Münztypus S 66.4 mit der Legende ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ / ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ / ΑΡΣΑΚΟΣ / ΥΟΣ ΚΕΚΑΛ / ΟΥΜΕΝΟΣ Α / ΡΤΑΒΑΝΟΥ / ΓΩΤΕΡΖΗΣ (Lesung nach Alram 1986, 127) wird gern zusammen mit einer Inschrift aus Bisotun (s.u.) als Beleg dafür gewertet, daß Gotarzes ein Adoptivsohn des Artabanos gewesen sei: von Gutschmid 1888, 123; Olbrycht 1997, 91-94; Olbrycht 2013a, 172; Olbrycht 2013b, 102. Doch es scheint, daß dies nichts anders als den Eigennamen und den Vatersnamen hervorheben sollte: „König der Könige Arsakos, genannt Goterzes, Sohn des Artabanos" (Alram 1986, 122: „Der persönliche Name des Königs ist nur in Ausnahmefällen, so bei Thronstreitigkeiten, wenn mehrere Könige gleichzeitig regieren, genannt (etwa bei Mithradates III. … und Gotarzes II. …). Nach Volagases I. … erscheint der Eigenname des Königs regelmäßig auf den Tetradrachmen." Hartmann 2016, 410). Die Assoziierung Gotarzes' II. mit dem in einem der parthischen Bisotun-Reliefs abgebildeten und in einer kurzen Inschrift (IK Estremo Oriente Nr. 276 = OGIS 431c. Rougemont 2012, Nr. 72) genannten Gotarses Geopothros ist aus der Luft gegriffen (vgl. auch von Gall 1996, 70; Hartmann 2016, 403-410), zumal das entsprechende Relief frühparthisch sein könnte (Mathiesen 1992, 1,24-25). Auch eine Identifizierung des in einer parthischen Inschrift in Sarpol-e Zohab genannten Königs Gotarzes (^{2}gwtrz / ^{3}MLK') mit Gotarzes II. bleibt ganz unsicher (vgl. Chaumont 1979, 169-170. S.a. Haruta 1990. Zustimmend Melikyan 2019). Am meisten hat daher wohl die Ansicht für sich, daß Gotarzes ein Sohn des Artabanos war.

was übrigens auch Folgen für die genealogische Stellung Vologases' I. im Rahmen der Arsakidendynastie hätte.[51]

- Pakoros,[52] der von seinem Bruder Vologases I. bald nach seinem Regierungsantritt 51 n. Chr. als König von Medien eingesetzt wurde, wo er um 72/73 n. Chr. noch herrschte.[53]

Denkbar wäre zudem, daß auch Vardanes I. (ca. 40-45 n. Chr.) vor seiner Thronbesteigung Regent von Groß-Medien gewesen war.[54] Hauser vermutet dies

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[51] Dies würde nämlich bedeuten, daß Vologases I. Nachfahre (und zwar ein Enkel) des Artabanos war. Bemerkenswerterweise berichtet Iosephus aber indirekt davon, Artabanos wäre der Vater des Vologases gewesen; dann könnte Vonones II. ein Bruder des Vologases gewesen sein. Vgl. Ios. *Ant*. 20.69 (μετ᾽ οὐ πολὺν δὲ χρόνον Ἀρταβάνης τελευτᾷ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ παιδὶ Οὐαρδάνῃ καταλιπών), 20.73-74 (μαθόντες γὰρ οἱ Πάρθοι τὴν διάνοιαν τοῦ Οὐαρδάνου καὶ ὡς ἐπὶ Ῥωμαίους στρατεύειν ἔκρινεν, αὐτὸν μὲν ἀναιροῦσιν, τὴν ἀρχὴν δὲ τῷ ἀδελφῷ Κοτάρδῃ παρέδοσαν. καὶ τοῦτον δὲ μετ᾽ οὐ πολὺν χρόνον ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς τελευτήσαντα διαδέχεται Οὐολογέσης ὁ ἀδελφός). S.a. Ios. *Ant*. 20.82 (ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Πάρθος [= Vologases] ἐπήρθη πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον, καὶ προφάσεως δικαίας μηδεμίαν ἀφορμὴν ἔχων τὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῷ [= dem Izates von Adiabene] δοθείσας τιμὰς ἔπεμψεν ἀπαιτῶν, ἀπειθήσαντι δὲ πόλεμον κατήγγελλεν) mit 20.66-68 (Auszeichnung des Adiabenerkönigs Izates durch Ἀρταβάνης). Vgl. daneben Tac. *Ann*. 12.50.

[52] Vgl. Hauser 2016, 477.

[53] Ios. *Ant*. 20.74 (Οὐολογέσης ὁ ἀδελφός, ὃς δὴ καὶ τοῖς ὁμοπατρίοις δυσὶν ἀδελφοῖς δυναστείας ἐπίστευσεν, Πακόρῳ μὲν τῷ καὶ πρεσβυτέρῳ τὴν Μήδων, Τιριδάτῃ δὲ τῷ νεωτέρῳ τὴν Ἀρμενίαν); Tac. *Ann*. 15.2.1 (*Medos Pacorus ante ceperat*), 15.31 (63 n. Chr.). Vgl. Cass. Dio 63.5.2 (Tiridates als Οὐολογαίσου δὲ καὶ Πακόρου τῶν βασιλέων ἀδελφός); Ios. *Bell*. 7.244-251 (Alaneneinfall 72/73 n. Chr. nach Medien, wo Pakoros herrschte, 247: ὁ βασιλεύων τῆς χώρας Πάκορος). Hartmann 2016, 422 Anm. 100 (und Hartmann 2017, 102 Anm. 73) sieht in ihm einen König von Media Atropatene, weil Tacitus berichtet, daß der arsakidische König von Armenien vor seiner Rom-Reise noch seine Brüder besuchte, Pakoros in Medien und Vologases in Ekbatana, das sich ja in Groß-Medien befindet (15.31: *Et digressus Pacorum apud Medos, Vologaesen Ecbatanis reperit*); insofern habe Pakoros andernorts (nämlich in der Atropatene) geherrscht (vgl. auch Nöldeke 1880, 696; Olbrycht 1998b, 126; Sinisi 2012, 16; Marciak 2017, 361; Olbrycht 2022a, 360). Doch daran, daß Tiridates seinen Bruder Vologases in Ekbatana traf, ist nichts verwunderlich, denn Ekbatana war Sommerresidenz des parthischen Großkönigs (Strab. 11.13.1: τὰ Ἐκβάτανα, μεγάλη πόλις καὶ τὸ βασίλειον ἔχουσα τῆς Μήδων ἀρχῆς· διατελοῦσι δὲ καὶ νῦν οἱ Παρθυαῖοι τούτῳ χρώμενοι βασιλείῳ, καὶ θερίζουσί γε ἐνταῦθα οἱ βασιλεῖς· ψυχρὰ γὰρ ἡ Μηδία, 11.13.5, 16.1.16. Curt. 5.8.1: *Caput Mediae urbs haec: nunc tenent Parthi, eaque aestiva agentibus sedes est*). Wo hingegen Pakoros residierte, ist nicht belegt. Auch gab es in Groß-Medien noch andere bedeutende Städte, etwa Rhagai, das die Parther sogar Arsakia nannten (Strab. 11.13.6) und wo auch eine Münzstätte lag. Plin. *Nat*. 6.43 nennt neben Ecbatana noch *reliqua Medorum oppida Phisganzaga, Apamea, Rhagiane cognominata*. Nach Isid. *Mans. Parth.* 7 (= FGrHist 781 F2) war Rhagai die größte Stadt in Media. Isidor erwähnt im übrigen auch eine 12 schoinoi von Ekbatana entfernt gelegene königliche Residenz Adrapana, die der Armenier Tigranes zerstören ließ; dort hätten die Könige gewohnt, die in Ekbatana herrschten (Isid. *Mans. Parth.* 6 [= FGrHist 781 F2]).

[54] Einerseits nennt ihn Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* 1.21 einen Meder (ὁ γὰρ Μῆδος ἄρτι ἐς τὸ ἄρχειν ἥκων [der Name des Königs wird später erwähnt, Οὐαρδάνης]); andererseits soll Vardanes gegenüber seinem Konkurrenten Gotarzes II. besser begründete Ansprüche auf den parthischen Thron gehabt haben: Tac. *Ann*. 11.9 (*potiorque Vardanes visus retinendo regno; at Gotarzes, ne quid aemulationis existeret, penitus in Hyrcaniam abiit*). Manche Forscher vermuten jedoch (m.E. ohne

auch für „Mithridates IV." (um 140 n. Chr.) sowie für andere Arsakiden, die ausschließlich Münzen in Ekbatana geprägt haben,[55] und die Zahl der numismatisch erschließbaren arsakidischen Könige von Groß-Medien ließe sich vielleicht noch erweitern.[56] Hier sind weitere Untersuchungen angebracht;[57] insbesondere sollte aber überlegt werden, ob nicht auch manche derjenigen Fälle, bei denen eine Doppelherrschaft im Partherreich postuliert wurde (z.B. Pakoros als Mitregent Orodes' II., seines Vaters, oder Pakoros II. als Mitregent Vologases' I.), mit einem solchen oder ähnlichen Regentschaftsmodell erklärbar sein könnten.[58] Zumindest ist es naheliegend, daß ein zum Mitregent oder Mitkönig erhobener Prinz auch ein Territorium erhielt, das er verwalten sollte und aus dem er Einkünfte beziehen konnte.

Grund), daß die Machtbasis des späteren Königs Vardanes in Media *Atropatene* lag (Olbrycht 1997, 82; Olbrycht 2013a, 236; Marciak 2017, 357). Hinsichtlich der Regierungszeit des Vardanes als Großkönig schwanken die Ansichten, vgl. Sinisi 2012, 143 (ca. 40-45 n. Chr.); Assar 2011, 139 (ca. 38-Frühjahr 46 n. Chr.); Assar 2017, 29, 31 (41-45 n. Chr.).

[55] Vgl. Hauser 2016 *passim*. Die Drachmen Mithridates' IV. (S 82) tragen die parth. Legende *mtrdt MLK'* („König Mithridates") neben einem kaum mehr lesbaren (pseudo-)griech. Text. Vielleicht ist er zu identifizieren mit dem König Mithridates/Miradates, der in der Bilingue an der Herakles-Statuette aus Seleukeia am Tigris (151 n. Chr.) als Vater des Königs der Könige Vologases genannt wird (IK Estremo Oriente Nr. 86; Hackl / Jacobs / Weber 2010, III.1.3.E.3; III.2.6). Neben Mithridates IV. schlägt Hauser (481) eine Regentschaft von [Groß-]Medien vor für „Osroes II. (Typ S 85; ca. 190 n.Chr.) sowie die Typen S 67 (»Vonones II.«), S 81 (»Parthamaspates«) und S 83 (»Unknown King«)" sowie Vologases III./IV. (S 84). Vgl. auch Börm 2017, 552 Anm. 41.

[56] Vorstellbar wäre auch, daß Artabanos IV., als er sich um 213 n. Chr. gegen seinen Bruder Vologases erhob, Regent von Groß-Medien war, denn er scheint ausschließlich in Ekbatana Münzen geprägt zu haben: Debevoise 1938, 263. Münzen S 89-90 aus Ekbatana (teils namentlich gekennzeichnet: Alram 1986, 136-137).

[57] Möglicherweise war auch der Prinz Orodes, der mit medischen Truppen ausgestattete Sohn des Königs Artabanos, König von Groß-Medien, denn Tacitus schreibt, daß Orodes nach dem Untergang seines Bruders Arsakes in Armenien im Jahre 35 n. Chr. von seinem Vater Artabanos II. *parthische* Truppen erhielt (Tac. *Ann*. 6.33) – dies hätte nicht betont werden müssen, wenn es nicht etwas Besonderes gewesen wäre. Ein wesentlicher Teil seiner Truppen bestand aber vor der Schlacht mit dem Iberer Pharasmanes aus Medern (Tac. *Ann*. 6.34: *simul horridam suorum aciem, picta auro Medorum agmina*). Da es offenbar derselbe Orodes ist, der schon ca. 16-18 n. Chr. als arsakidischer Regent von Armenien auftauchte (Ios. *Ant*. 18.52: τὴν δὲ Ἀρμενίαν Ὀρώδῃ δίδωσιν Ἀρτάβανος ἐνὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ παίδων), bevor Zeno-Artaxias den armenischen Thron erhielt, möchte ich vorschlagen, daß Orodes nach 18 n. Chr. mit dem Posten eines (arsakidischen) Regenten/Königs von Groß-Medien kompensiert wurde.

[58] „Synarchie": Olbrycht 2016, 228 (nennt als Beispiele: „Orodes II appointed Pakoros I his co-regent …, Phraates III was most probably his father Sinatrukes' co-regent …, and Mithradates III was co-regent to Phraates III. Both co-regents struck their own coinage … . Phraates IV probably made Phraatakes his co-regent … . Vologases I continued the tradition, appointing his son Pakoros II a *rex iunior*"). Olbrycht 2021a: „Apparently, he was first acknowledged as his father's co-regent in line with the tradition of the Sinatrucids, who did not practice solitary monarchy, but appointed a junior king (*rex iunior*) alongside the King of Kings (such as Phraates III alongside Sinatruces, Mithradates III alongside Phraates III, and Pacorus I alongside Orodes II; …)". S.a. Hauser 2016, 450 Anm. 54; Gregoratti 2022.

Das besondere ‚staatsrechtliche' Konstrukt des von arsakidischen Prinzen regierten Königreichs von Groß-Medien wurde Vorbild für die Verwaltung eines weiteren Königreichs: Tacitus berichtet für das Jahr 51 n. Chr. (Tac. *Ann*. 12.50), daß Vologases I. seinem Bruder Tiridates die Herrschaft über Armenien übertragen habe: *hunc ego* – Tacitus läßt Vologases (im Jahr 62 n. Chr.) selbst sprechen – *eodem mecum patre genitum, cum mihi per aetatem summo nomine concessisset, in possessionem Armeniae deduxi, qui tertius potentiae gradus habetur: nam Medos Pacorus ante ceperat* (Tac. *Ann*. 15.2.1). Der König von Groß-Medien hatte also den zweiten Rang im Partherreich inne, während der im 1. nachchristlichen Jahrhundert geschaffene und ebenfalls an einen Arsakidenprinzen vergebene Posten des Königs von Armenien den *tertius potentiae gradus* repräsentierte (zumindest zu Lebzeiten des Tiridates[59]). Klar ist: sowohl in Groß-Medien als auch in Armenien waren die Stellen prekär; eine Dynastiegründung war hie wie dort nicht beabsichtigt:[60] eine ‚Dynastie der Könige Groß-Mediens' (etwa in Form einer arsakidischen Sekundogenitur) hat es nicht gegeben.

3.

Die punktuell greifbare, aber offenbar ganz reguläre Besetzung der Königsposten von Groß-Medien (nach 140 v. Chr.) und später Armeniens (ab 51 n. Chr.) mit einem unmittelbaren Verwandten des regierenden Partherkönigs (sei es ein Bruder, sei es ein Sohn) wirft insofern erneut die Frage nach der Abkunft des Königs Artabanos II. auf. Durch seine Herrschaft in Groß-Medien wird geradezu nahegelegt, daß er Bruder oder Sohn eines früheren Großkönigs war. Wessen? Leider ist – wie schon angedeutet – gerade die Periode zwischen dem Ende des Königs Phraatakes/Phraates V. und dem Herrschaftsantritt des Vonones (8/9 n. Chr.) schlecht bezeugt; Tacitus berichtet für die Zeit nach dem Tod Phraates' IV. von *internae caedes* im Partherreich und mehreren aufeinander folgenden Königen, während, wie eingangs dargelegt, Iosephus zwei Könige kennt, nämlich Phraatakes und nach ihm Orodes III.[61] Da Artabanos offenbar schon in der Anfangsphase der Regierung des Vonones in Groß-Medien herrschte, er aber sicher weder Sohn noch Bruder des Vonones gewesen sein kann, wird man annehmen können, daß es

[59] Vgl. hierzu Garsoïan 1976, 196 Anm. 21 (mit Verweisen).

[60] Zu den armenischen Verhältnissen vgl. Toumanoff 1969, 233-234 mit Anm. 4, 243. In Armenien, wo der arsakidische König den Untergang des Partherreiches überlebte, konnte freilich später eine arsakidische Dynastie entstehen, die bis in das 5. Jh. n. Chr. die Geschicke Armeniens bestimmen sollte.

[61] Tac. *Ann*. 2.2 (*Post finem Phraatis et sequentium regum ob internas caedes venere in urbem legati a primoribus Parthis…*); Ios. *Ant*. 18.44 (Ὀρώδην ἐκάλουν πρεσβεύσαντες εἰς δάν, ἄλλως μὲν ἐπίφθονον τῷ πλήθει καὶ ὑπαίτιον καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὰς ὠμότητος, πάνυ γὰρ ἦν σκαιὸς καὶ δυσδιάθετος εἰς ὀργήν, ἕνα δὲ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ γένους).

ein verwandtschaftliches Nahverhältnis zwischen Artabanos und dem zuvor ermordeten Orodes III. gab. Artabanos mag also ein Sohn oder ein Bruder Orodes' III. gewesen sein. Auch wenn ein klarer Beweis bislang fehlt, würde diese Hypothese eine Erklärung dafür liefern, daß gerade Artabanos zum Rivalen des Vonones wurde: Artabanos hatte – als arsakidischer König von Groß-Medien und als naher Verwandter des Orodes – wohl die vermeintlich größten Ansprüche auf die Thronfolge[62] und mußte zudem damit rechnen, von seinem Posten in Medien abberufen zu werden. Leider ist aber letztlich unklar, wer die Vorfahren des Orodes waren; daher wird man sich hier mit weitergehenden Spekulationen zurückhalten müssen. Für die verbreitete Annahme, mit Artabanos würde die Herrschaft einer Nebenlinie des Arsakidenhauses beginnen, gibt es indes keinerlei handfeste Indizien. Wenn aber im Falle des Artabanos eine Herkunft aus Media Atropatene oder eine ostiranisch-nomadische Abstammung weder nachweisbar noch wahrscheinlich sind – denn Artabanos war sicherlich (väterlicherseits) Arsakide –, dann spricht im übrigen auch wenig für die aus diesen Postulaten abgeleitete Ansicht, er wäre Repräsentant einer jeweils entsprechend lokal ausgerichteten Parteiung im Partherreich gewesen.[63]

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[62] Vgl. auch Olbrycht 2013a, 228 („Artabanos II should be regarded as the legitimate successor to Orodes III").

[63] Olbrycht 2018, 396: „In the reign of Phraates IV the conflict within the Parthian elite was already firmly established and in the opening decades of the 1st century AD led to the crystallising out of three main factions: the legitimists along with the Suren and part of the Karin clan, who supported the descendants of Phraates IV; the Median-Atropatenian faction; and the Dahian-Hyrcanian faction. The two latter groups were united for a time, rallying in their support of Artabanos II against the Phraatids including Vonones and Phraates VI, both supported by Rome." Auch der Annahme, daß später Vonones und Vologases Repräsentanten einer „atropatenischen Partei" innerhalb der Arsakidenfamilie gewesen seien, die mit einer „hyrkanisch-dahischen" Gruppierung um Gotarzes II. um die Macht konkurriert hätten (Olbrycht 1997, 95; Olbrycht 2013a, 236, 238; Olbrycht 2022a, 359), kann ich mich nicht anschließen: einerseits ist eine „hyrkanisch-dahische" Hausmacht des Gotarzes nicht positiv nachzuweisen (vgl. Hartmann 2016, 407-410), andererseits spricht nichts dafür, daß Vonones II. in Media Atropatene herrschte. Kritik an diesem Modell auch bei Nabel 2017a, 81.

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Abstract

Artabanos II, before becoming the Parthian Great King, served as regent or king of Greater Media, a key Parthian territory. This post was typically occupied by brothers or sons of the reigning Parthian king, suggesting that Artabanos was likely the brother or son of King Orodes III. The article challenges the frequent assumption in scholarship that Artabanos or Orodes belonged to a secondary branch of the Arsacid family, finding no substantive evidence for this view. It also disputes theories of Artabanos' origins from Media Atropatene or eastern nomadic groups, arguing that he was undoubtedly an Arsacid on his father's side. The article contextualizes the royal office in Greater Media as a customary position for prominent Arsacid princes and not as the basis for a lasting secondary dynasty. Ultimately, the author concludes that Artabanos' right to the throne stemmed from his close kinship with the ruling dynasty and not from any external or secondary lineage, thereby calling into question models of Parthian aristocratic factionalism based on local or regional affiliations found in some modern interpretations.

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PARTHIAN WEAPONS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT: SOME REMARKS*

Keywords: Arsakids, Parthian warfare, bows, four-horned saddles, mounted warfare

Many ancient authors suggest that the "Skythian", i.e., nomadic elements, greatly influenced Parthian military art and contributed to the political power of the Arsakid Empire.[1] The subjugation of Iran by the nomads under Arsakes I and his successors and the establishment of the Arsakid state were linked to substantial changes in the art of war in Parthian Iran and many regions of Western Asia. This development adopted the principle of relying on cavalry as the primary tactical arm, with a main focus on mounted archers and heavily armored horsemen wielding long spears. New combat arms, weapons, armor elements, and equipment were introduced. This breakthrough was noted by several scholars studying Parthia and ancient warfare.[2]

During the reign of the Arsakids, the Parthian Empire's primary fighting force consisted of mounted archers, cataphract cavalry (*kataphraktoi*), and mounted spear-bearers equipped with long spears (*kontophoroi*). Long spears were introduced for use by heavily armored and medium cavalry, while long swords were intended for combat from horseback. Additionally, powerful

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[1] For detailed assessments of "Skythian" factors in Parthia, see Olbrycht 1998a, 253-268; 1998b; 2003; Lerouge-Cohen 2010; Nikonorov 2010a; Olbrycht 2021a; 2022. However, some researchers question the reliability of these ancient sources and the significance of the steppe traditions in Parthia's history. See, e.g., Boyce 1994.

[2] Bivar 1972; Coulston 1985; Herrmann 1989; Nikonorov 1995; 2010a; James 2006; Olbrycht 2003; 2010a; 2010b; 2012; 2015; 2021b.

bows were incorporated into the Parthian arsenal, enabling effective attacks capable of piercing enemy armor. In areas dominated by the Arsakids or closely linked to Parthia, the establishment of Arsakid-style armed forces, which included cataphracts, lancers, and horse archers, occurred quickly during the 2nd and early 1st centuries B.C.[3]

The effective Parthian bow, wielded by mounted soldiers, was a highly powerful military asset that often determined the success of the Parthians in war. Despite the wealth of information available on the remarkable efficacy of the Parthian bow, there is a paucity of detailed accounts regarding the specific types of this weapon. A typical Skythian bow appears on coins of the early Arsakids in a scene with the figure of an archer. It is possible that the symbolic scene did not necessarily depict a bow used in battle but rather a traditional bow as a ritual symbol of power.[4] The bows of the Skythians of the Classical period (5th-4th centuries B.C.) were relatively small, typically measuring 60-80 cm in length.[5] The Skythian bow was whip-ended, and its depictions feature curled ears. Such bows were relatively weak in terms of striking power at long ranges.

As early as the 5th-4th centuries B.C., the peoples of Central Asia were using more effective bows than the common Skythian varieties. This is demonstrated by the effectiveness of the nomadic bow in the battle between Alexander's forces and the Saka on the Iaxartes (Syrdarya) in 329 B.C., in which hundreds of Macedonians were killed or wounded by the arrows of the Sakan mounted archers (*hippotoxotai*).[6] The effectiveness of the mounted archers of the Dahai proven in the battles against Alexander and later when they fought as an elite unit in Alexander's army (327-324 B.C.; a good example is the battle of the Hydaspes River in 326), long before the Arsakid state, must have resulted from the superior quality of their bows and their striking power.[7] The Sakan and Dahan weapons of Alexander's times likely differed significantly from standard Skythian bows. To increase their stiffness, these bows must have been reinforced with horn or bone laths. Various design modifications could have resulted in different types of composite bows, which were in use as early as the middle of the 1st millennium B.C. Evidence of such changes is provided by archaeology. A unique composite bow, measuring approximately 120 cm, was found in Subexi (Chinese Xinjiang, Central Asia) and dates to around 475-220 B.C. (Figure 1).[8]

[3] Olbrycht 2021b.

[4] Khazanov 2008, 76-77.

[5] Coulston (1985, 241) gives 75-100 cm, while Khazanov (2008, 77) gives 60-80 cm.

[6] Arr. 4.4.2-9; Curt. 7.8.8-7.9.16. See Olbrycht 2004, 131-132.

[7] Alexander's Hydaspes campaign: Olbrycht 2004, 158-170.

[8] The exhibition catalog describes this weapon as made of several layers of wood, ox hide, and bone or horn that were glued together ("Der Reflexbogen ist aus mehreren Schichten aufgebaut. Hierzu sind Holzleisten, Rindsleder und Knochen bzw. Horn zusammengeklebt"): Wieczorek / Lind 2007, 67. Cf. Dwyer 2003; Riesch / Rutschke 2009, 60-113.

This asymmetric bow is a variant developed from the smaller Skythian bow. Various Central Asian peoples, including the Dahai, must have used such bows from the 5th-4th centuries B.C.

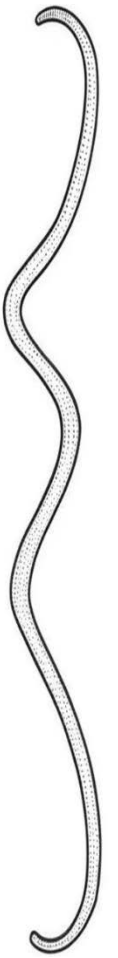

Figure 1. The bow from Subexi. Drawing after photos from Riesch / Rutschke 2009, 60-62.

Another variant is called the Qumdarya-type bow.[9] It is known from the discovery of the original bow dated to the 1st-2nd centuries A.D., at the Han China site at Loulan, at the mouth of the Qumdarya River (Xinjiang). The asymmetric Qumdarya bow (around 130-160 cm in length) had a wooden stave made of several pieces of wood. It was reinforced with horn or bone laths and tendons to stiffen parts of the bow (Figure 2).

[9] The term was introduced by G. Rausing in 1967.

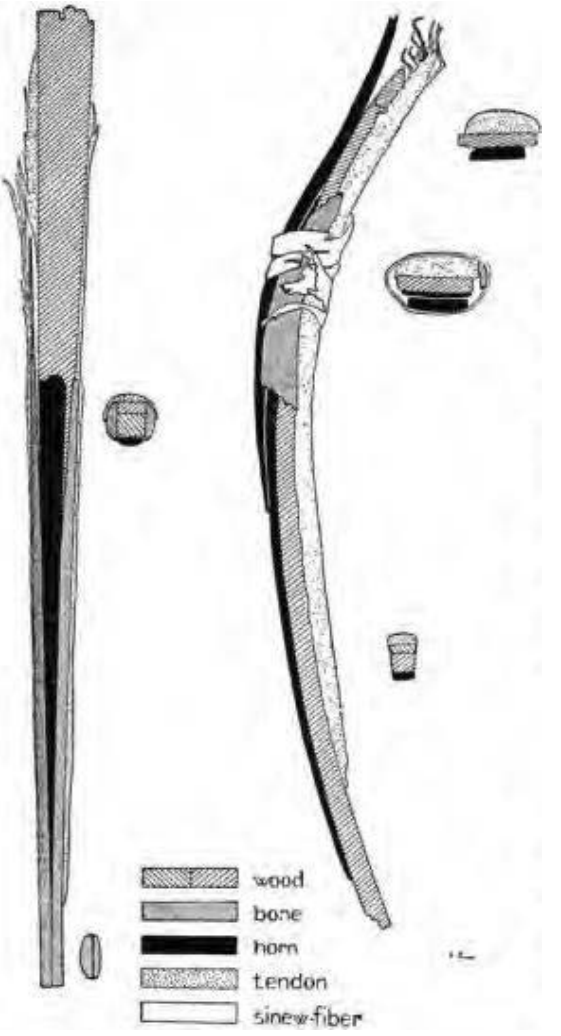

Figure 2. Qumdarya composite bow (tips A and B). After Bergmann 1939, p. 122, Fig. 30.

By and large, composite bows of various variants were used in eastern Central Asia in the second half of the 1st millennium B.C.[10] as improved solutions based on the traditional Skythian bow. These inventions rapidly circulated throughout the steppe regions up to the Caspian-Aral Basin. Thus, it is likely that the Dahai were familiar with composite reinforced bows before the Arsakid period, and this tradition was later developed. As a result, powerful weapons called "Sasanian" bows were created, which should, however, be referred to as Partho-Sasanian

[10] Nikonorov 2010b, 266-267 (he speaks of the "last centuries B.C."). Cf. Rausing 1967, 68-69, 110-111, 115-119, 122-128, 143-144, 150; Coulston 1985, 242-243.

bows. The Partho-Sasanian bow features set-back handles, short, curved working limbs, and long, stiff ears.[11] In some cases, the upper limb was longer than the lower. The ears were stiffened with laths.

J.C. Coulston rightly assesses that the Dahan Aparni/Parni employed composite bows and that "the use of ear laths was introduced by the Parni in the mid 3rd century B.C. because no laths appear in the Achaemenid contexts."[12] The earliest images of a Partho-Sasanian bow come from Central Asia and date to the 4th-2nd centuries B.C.; one of the earliest known depictions of such bows can be seen on a bone artifact from Kalaly Gyr 2 in Chorasmia[13] which is archaeologically dated to the 4th-2nd centuries B.C. Iconographic analysis of the depiction suggests the 2nd-1st centuries B.C.[14] There are depictions of Partho-Sasanian bows on the bone plates from Takht-e Sangin (Bactria) and Orlat (Sogdiana), whose exact dating is debatable but seems to fall within the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.[15] The most detailed depictions of such bows are found in Sasanian royal art on silver vessels.[16]

The Parthians likely used weapons known as Hunnic bows, which typically ranged from 120 to 150 cm in length. Some scholars refer to them as Hunnic-Parthian bows.[17]

The emergence of robust bows in Western and Central Asia was concomitant with the deployment of substantial cavalry forces.[18] During the 4th-3rd centuries B.C., the use of heavily armored cavalry increased in border regions such as Chorasmia and northern Iran. Employing new, robust bows and novel arrow types featuring iron arrowheads became imperative. The efficacy of strong composite bows in combat was demonstrated in distinct historical instances, against the infantry of the Hellenistic states and against Roman legions. In the history of Central and East Asia, the Xiongnu, along with the Arsakid Parthians, belong to the era of the dominance of mounted archers in warfare, according to recent historical classifications.[19]

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[11] A.M. Khazanov argues that the so-called "Sasanian" (or Partho-Sasanian) bow was developed based on an improved Skythian bow (Khazanov 2008, 85-86). For the Partho-Sasanian bow, see: Coulston 1985, 240. Cf. Rausing 1967, 105; Maenchen Helfen 1973, 228-32.

[12] Coulston 1985, 240.

[13] Nikonorov 2010a, 50; Vainberg et al. 2004, 185-187, Fig. 5/24.

[14] Ilyasov 2013; Olbrycht 2015, 341.

[15] Olbrycht 2015, Fig. 3, 4.

[16] Harper / Meyers 1981.

[17] Nikonorov 2010b, 266.

[18] Khazanov 2008, 83-84.

[19] Nefedov (2008, 256-296) writes about the age of horse archers, including the steppe Xiongnu, Parthians, and Sasanians. He emphasizes the importance of steppe traditions and the prominence of the bow in the art of warfare of the time, especially in Parthian Iran (Nefedov 2008, 283-287). Cf. Barfield 1994; Turchin et al. 2016.

Mounted archers formed elite units as the main military force among the nomads of Central Eurasia, and their combat value lay in their excellent training, superb horses, and – in some periods and regions – the outstanding quality of their composite bows. A comparable development of powerful armies of horse archers occurred among the Xiongnu in the steppes of eastern Central Asia in the second half of the 1st millennium B.C. The rulers of nomadic groups capitalized on new technologies to establish strong power bases in the steppe. One of the pivotal factors was composite bows which enhanced their armies of mounted warriors.[20]

Changes in cavalry armament and combat methods necessitated the development of a new type of saddle. In fact, during the Arsakid age, the four-horned saddle emerged, along with other pieces of military equipment.[21] In Achaemenid Persia and early Hellenistic states, the riders used soft blanket saddles. Some attempts were made to introduce saddles with rigid construction, but soft blankets continued to prevail.[22] The advent of advanced body armor for riders and armored trappers for horses must have necessitated modifications in saddlery. Consequently, the Chorasmians, the steppe peoples of the Caspian-Aral basin, and the Parthians introduced a novel type of equipment known as the four-horned saddle, which consisted of a wooden tree with four horns over which a leather cover was extended. The horns provided structural support, maintaining the rider's stability and enabling a wide range of mobility. For instance, he could use a spear with both hands or a bow and arrow.[23]

Early depictions of horned saddles dating to the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. have been discovered in Chorasmia and the Sarykamysh Delta (part of the Uzboi river system). Terracotta figurines depicting two horses from Koi-Krylgan-kala in Chorasmia feature four-horn saddles.[24] The same applies to the figurines of beasts from the Sakar-chaga 3 burial ground in the Sarykamysh Delta, on the borders of Chorasmia, dated to the 1st century B.C.-3rd century A.D. (an earlier date for these items is possible).[25] An early representation of a four-horned saddle comes

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[20] See Barfield 1994; Benjamin 2022; Miller 2024, 27 (he highlights the use of composite bows and metal bridles).

[21] Comprehensive scrutinies of Parthian saddles are provided by Herrmann 1989; Nikonorov 2002a; 2002b and Nikonorov / Arzhantseva 2021.

[22] Goldman 1984; 1993.

[23] Details in Herrmann 1989, 763-769; Nikonorov 2002a; 2002b. The primary rationale for the evolution of horned saddles was to address the pressing need for enhanced stability for heavily armored riders. This was driven by the fact that the Parthians did not utilize stirrups in their riding equipment (Herrmann 1989, 764). Incorrect information is provided by Mielczarek 1993, 61: „The rider who used a long spear sat in a low saddle with low saddle-bows that made it difficult to maintain balance." Mielczarek is unaware of the use of horned saddles in Parthia, which secured the horseman and granted him stability.

[24] Nikonorov / Arzhantseva 2021, Fig. 3, 1a-2b, 4, 1-3.

[25] Nikonorov / Arzhantseva 2021, Fig. 3, 3a, 3b, 4, 4-6.

from a graffito in the Square Hall Building of Old Nisa, dated to the 1st century B.C.[26] Four-horned saddles are depicted in the scenes from Kosika in the Lower Volga basin (first half of the 1st century B.C.).[27] Other artifacts and monuments from Parthia feature such saddles (Figure 3).[28] The four-horned saddle was likely an element of the cataphract equipment from the beginning of the Arsakid age. The Romans and Gauls used four-horned saddles as early as the 1st century B.C., but such saddles originated in Central Asia and Parthia.[29]

Figure 3. Terracotta plaque depicting a Parthian horse archer. The two "horns" of the saddle are visible. Berlin, Museum of Islamic Art. Inv. No. 1.3685. After Sarre 1922.

[26] Nikonorov 2010a, Fig. 4.1.

[27] Olbrycht 2015, Fig. 26.

[28] Herrmann 1989, Fig. 7, b, c, e, pl. V-VIII; Nikonorov 2010a, Fig. 4.4-6.

[29] According to Connolly / van Driel-Murray (1991), the Roman four-horned saddle (attested from the late 1st century B.C.) is most likely of Gallic/Celtic origin, but the evidence is circumstantial rather than conclusive, and alternative origins or parallel developments elsewhere cannot be entirely ruled out.

The primary offensive weapons used by the Parthian cataphracts and medium cavalry (*kontophoroi*) were the long and heavy spears, which may be termed pikes (in Greek *kontos*, Latin *contus*), with which they could penetrate the armor of the enemy soldiers (Plut. *Crass*. 27.2; Dio 40.22.3; Heliod. 9.15.6). Depictions of such pikes are known from Late Parthian monuments and artifacts in Iran (Bisotun, Tang-e Sarvak, Tang-e Ab near Firuzabad) and Mesopotamia (Figure 4).[30] Relevant elements of Macedonian warfare had a direct or indirect impact on late Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid tactics and weaponry in Central Asia. This phenomenon includes the use of long spears. The Achaemenid commanders of Darius III began to use such spears, influenced by the effectiveness of the Macedonian shafted weapons. Achaemenid soldiers received longer lances *(xysta*) and swords (*xyphoi*) because "it was believed that this was the reason for Alexander's advantage at Issos" (Diod. 17.53.1). The idea of using very long spears, borrowed from the Macedonians, was further developed in Central Asia in the border zone between the territories occupied by the Hellenistic states and those of the independent peoples. The zone included Chorasmia and neighboring areas dominated by the Dahai and Massagetai in the Caspian-Aral steppes.

As the Achaemenid Empire declined and fell, and in the decades that followed, some Asian peoples developed a trend toward improving and modifying weapons and armor. The most significant developments in heavily armored cavalry occurred in the borderlands of the Caspian-Aral Basin, particularly in Chorasmia, as well as in neighboring countries. This vast border region between Iran proper and Central Asia was home to the ancient steppe peoples of the Dahai and Massagetai. In this area, Spitamenes, with his formidable troops, operated in 329-328 B.C. The ancient accounts clearly reveal that Spitamenes' main assets were the equestrian nomadic units, including the famous cavalry of the Dahai, the Massagetan horsemen, and Bactrian and Sogdian mounted troops. He employed the tactics of combined fighting arms – horse archers, cavalry with long spears, and probably javelineers.[31]

In discussing Parthian warfare, it is worth recalling the opinions of renowned scholars who recognized the connections between Parthia and the steppe heritage. W.W. Tarn perfectly captured the essence of the changes in Parthian warfare and their impact in Western Asia in his assertion that the "Parthian re-organisation of Iran," based on steppe traditions and including the creation of the cataphracts, was

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[30] See Nikonorov 2010a, Fig. 1, p. 56; Olbrycht 2015, 371-375.

[31] For an analysis of the remarkable victory of Spitamenes and his army over a Macedonian corps at the Polytimetos in Sogdiana, along with a comparison of the tactics used by Spitamenes and the Parthians, see Olbrycht 1998a, 36 and 262. Despite the evidence from sources, some scholars expressed critical assertions denying the existence of steppe elements in Spitamenes' warfare in Central Asia (329-328 B.C.). See Hauser 2006, 298. By downplaying the role of the nomads in Spitamenes' army, Hauser's claim distorts the picture provided by the sources and fails to provide archaeological evidence regarding Central Asian arms and armor.

accomplished by the 1st century B.C.[32] V.P. Nikonorov stresses the comprehensive impact of steppe traditions on the Parthian art of war.[33] J. Coulston speaks of the Partho-Sasanian tactical system, which was cavalry-based, including light horse archers supporting cataphract archers/lancers, and defines it as "essentially a steppe form successfully adopted to the Mesopotamian-Iranian ecological zone."[34] A.D.H. Bivar rightly assesses this phenomenon: "Throughout the period which has been studied here, the main sources of innovation in cavalry warfare were the nomad empires evolving in Central Asia."[35] Despite such evidence and well-founded insights, some researchers overlook the findings related to steppe traditions in Parthia and dismiss the significance of the new developments in Arsakid warfare.[36]

Figure 4. Early Sasanian combat relief depicting the use of long spears by heavily armored riders. Firuzabad: Tang-e Ab, Iran. Around AD 230. (Photo: M.J. Olbrycht ©)

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[32] Tarn 1930, 72: "The Parthian re-organisation of Iran cannot be dated, but doubtless it had some connection with the great nomad invasion; it cannot be later than the beginning of the first century B.C."

[33] Nikonorov 1995; 1997, vol. 1, 21-23, 50-51; 2010a.

[34] Coulston 1986, 71.

[35] Bivar 1972, 290.

[36] For example, one can point to S. Hauser's misconception in decisively "rebuffing" the claim that "the army of Surenas in the battle at Carrhae (53 B.C.) followed 'nomadic traditions' because it was mostly cavalry" (Hauser 2006, 298, with n. 14). This allegation is a typical straw man fallacy as it misrepresents evidence and fabricates an opponent's position to make it easier to attack or refute. Hauser fails to make a distinction between the tribal nomadic armies as contingents in Parthia and the steppe traditions of warfare and, in this way, invalidates his allegations. This applies in particular to the weaponry elements, which he ignores in silence.

In sum, there were mutual contacts and technological exchanges of types of weapons, armor, and horse equipment between the nomadic world of Central Eurasia and the Parthian Empire. The predominant position of the Parthian cavalry, including the heavily armored cataphracts and the mounted archers, can be primarily explained as a result of the persistence of steppe traditions in the Arsakid state and its interrelationship with the steppe world, which profoundly impacted the Parthian art of war.[37] The Parthians enhanced their combat skills and military equipment through close interaction with the steppe peoples of central Eurasia, as well as by adopting various traditions from Western Asia, including elements of the Macedonian art of warfare. The steppe heritage not only included the presence of nomadic troops in the Arsakid armies but also involved significant contributions from these nomads to the development of cavalry tactics, armor, weaponry, and equipment within the Arsakid Parthian military. Consequently, mounted archers, cataphracts, and spear-bearers emerged as the primary combat arms in the Arsakid Empire.

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[37] See Olbrycht 1998a, 262.

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution and distinctiveness of Parthian weapons and military equipment, emphasizing the deep influence of "Skythian" (nomadic steppe) traditions on Arsakid warfare. The study reconstructs the technological transitions that accompanied the Parthian conquest of Iran and the emergence of their unique military art. Special attention is given to the composite bow – its design, innovations, and strategic role – tracing its origins from Skythian prototypes to more advanced, horn-reinforced variants widely used by Parthian mounted archers. The article also analyzes the adoption and spread of the four-horned saddle, a significant development in cavalry equipment that afforded greater stability for heavily armored horsemen (cataphracts), and explores the integration of long spears (kontos) in Parthian tactics, showing direct and indirect borrowings from both nomadic and Hellenistic influences.

Drawing on ancient literary sources, archaeological finds, and modern scholarship, Olbrycht underscores how the predominance of cavalry – particularly elite mounted archers and heavily armored lancers – was rooted in ongoing technological, tactical, and cultural exchanges between the Parthians and Central Eurasian steppe peoples. The article provides a comprehensive synthesis of weapon types, armor, and equestrian equipment, situating Parthian military innovations within the broader context of steppe and Hellenistic warfare. Ultimately, Olbrycht argues that the distinctive character and long-lasting success of the Arsakid military rested on the creative adaptation of steppe traditions, culminating in the rise of the Parthian cataphract and mounted archer as the dominant arms of the Arsakid Empire's forces. Mounted warfare, which involved the extensive use of horse riders in military operations, revolutionized the art of war during ancient and early medieval times.

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VORARBEITEN ZU EINER KÖNIGSLISTE KAUKASISCH-IBERIENS 8. DAS ENDE DES IBERISCHEN KÖNIGTUMS

Keywords: Caucasian history, Georgia (Caucasus), Iberia (Caucasus), Roman Eastern Frontier, Sasanians, Vaxtang I Gorgasali

Vorbemerkung zum achten Teil

Der vorliegende, voraussichtlich letzte Teil unserer Vorarbeiten befasst sich mit der Frage, wie lange nach dem Tode des Wachtang Gorgasal bei den Iberern im Kaukasus noch ein Königtum bestand. Die einheimische Tradition verlegt dessen Ende in die Anfangsjahre des seit 579 regierenden Sasaniden Hormisdas IV. Die zeitgenössische Geschichtsschreibung erweckt dagegen den Eindruck, als sei bereits der gegen Ende der Herrschaft Iustins I. zu den Römern übergetretene Gurgenes der letzte König gewesen. Um eine Entscheidung zwischen diesen beiden Möglichkeiten zu erleichtern, soll hier zunächst wieder eine Übersicht der georgischen Tradition folgen.

Die Darstellung der Chronik

Nach Wachtangs Tod tritt sein Sohn Datschi die Nachfolge an, der die vom Vater begonnene Errichtung der neuen Hauptstadt T´bilisi abschließt. Auf seinen Sohn Bakur II., von dem buchstäblich nichts berichtet wird, folgt dessen Sohn Parsman V., danach ein Neffe Parsman VI. Unter dessen Sohn Bakur III. haben die Chroniken, worauf noch zurückzukommen sein wird, anachronistisch den

Untergang des Dynasten Vazgēn der Gogarene verlegt. Er selbst gilt diesem Teil der Überlieferung als letzter unbestrittener König des Landes.[1]

So weit also die mittelalterliche georgische Tradition.[2] Sie bildet bis heute das Gerüst nicht weniger Untersuchungen, Darstellungen und Artikel.[3] Andererseits hat es nicht an skeptischen Stimmen gegenüber den fünf letzten Namen der traditionellen iberischen Königsliste gefehlt. Verdächtig erscheint insbesondere das je zweimalige Erscheinen eines Bakur und eines Parsman.[4] Streicht man zunächst Parsman VI. und Bakur III., ergibt sich folgende Konstellation: Wir haben den Sohn und Nachfolger Wachtangs, den die Tradition Datschi nennt, dessen Sohn Bakur und einen weiteren König, der den traditionsbehafteten Namen Parsman (griech. Pharasmanes) getragen haben soll. Wie weit sich dies mit der Aussage der griechischen Berichte vereinigen lässt, werden wir gleich sehen.

Gurgenes und Zamanarsos

Wenden wir uns nun der Art und Weise zu, in der die westlichen Quellen die Jahrzehnte nach dem Ende des Wachtang Gorgasal schildern. Zunächst scheint eine kurze Erinnerung daran angebracht, dass die letzten von den griechisch-römischen Autoren erwähnten iberischen Könige die bei Ammianus Marcellinus auftretenden Teilherrscher des späteren 4. Jhs., Sauromaces und Aspacures gewesen waren.[5] Danach ist den oströmischen Kaisern die Kontrolle über das Gebirgsland vollständig entglitten, sodass jede Erwähnung eines dortigen Machthabers überflüssig und der eigenen Reputation eher abträglich gewesen wäre. Jetzt, nach fast 150 Jahren, ist in Prokops Perserkrieg wieder von einem iberischen Herrscher die Rede. Unser Gewährsmann stellt zunächst das Land Iberien vor (*BP* 1.12.1-3). Dabei bemerkt er, dass die Iberer, obwohl Christen, „von alters her“ Untertanen des Perserkönigs seien. Dies zeigt, dass Prokops Informationen höchstens ein Jahrhundert zurückreichten. Dass Iberien von Augustus bis mindestens Antoninus Pius ein römischer Klientelstaat gewesen war, scheint vollständig vergessen worden zu sein. Aber auch die Aktivitäten der spätrömischen Regierung in der Zeit des Überganges von der constantinischen zur valentinianischen Dynastie waren selbst den Historikern offenbar nicht mehr präsent. Das

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[1] So die Feststellung in der *Bekehrung Georgiens*, Pätsch 1975, 299: *Und zu desselben Bakur Zeit ging das Königtum von Kartli zu Ende*.

[2] Sie findet sich voll ausgearbeitet bei Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 274-293, kürzer in der *Bekehrung Georgiens*, Pätsch 1975, 299.

[3] Die Herrscherliste bei Toumanoff 1969, 29 wird z.B. von Rapp 2014, 334 unverändert übernommen. Vgl. auch Brakmann 1996, 38; Hitchins 2001, 465; Plontke-Lüning 1998, 878.

[4] So Schleicher 2021, 167: „Zwei Bakur und zwei P‘arsman, verbunden mit dem Fehlen von historischen Informationen, lassen eine Vervielfältigung der Namen wahrscheinlich werden.“

[5] Siehe zu ihnen jetzt Schottky 2016, 214ff., zu Sauromaces bereits Schottky 2003, 1093.

gleiche gilt für Wachtang Gorgasal, dessen Aufstand gegen seinen persischen Oberherrn Peroz (482-484) von Prokop mit keinem Wort erwähnt wird. Dies lag vermutlich daran, dass das oströmische Reich in diese Vorgänge nicht involviert war.[6] Eine Generation und zwei Kaiser später ließ sich eine Beschäftigung der Regierung der allein übrig gebliebenen östlichen Reichshälfte mit den Angelegenheiten Iberiens jedoch nicht mehr umgehen. Nach der Darstellung Prokops genügte dem Sasaniden Cavades (Kavad) I. die Oberhoheit über die christlichen, aber im übrigen loyalen Iberer nicht mehr.[7] Er wies den dortigen König *Gurgenes* an, persische Bestattungsbräuche, also zweifellos die zarathustrische Staatsreligion, zu übernehmen. Gurgenes wandte sich um Hilfe an Kaiser Iustin I. Da diese zwar zugesagt wurde, aber nicht in Gang kam, musste Gurgenes nach Lazika auf römisches Gebiet übertreten. Dabei wurde er vom „ganzen iberischen Adel" (!), seiner Gemahlin und weiteren Angehörigen begleitet, von denen allein *Peranios* namentlich genannt wird. In Lazika gelang es, den persischen Angriff zum Stehen zu bringen. Später begaben sich die Iberer nach Byzanz (*BP* 1.12.4-14). Danach wird Gurgenes nur noch zweimal erwähnt. Zur Zeit der gerade geschilderten Vorgänge habe die Stationierung römischer Truppen in Lazika begonnen (*BP* 2.15.6). Besonders wichtig erscheint, dass die Rebellion des Gurgenes dazu geführt habe, dass die Perser die Ernennung eines Königs in dem Gebirgsland für die Zukunft verhinderten (*BP* 2.28.20). Gurgenes war demnach der letzte König des antiken Iberien.[8] Da Prokop allein von dem Ende seiner Herrschaft berichtet, möchte man gern wissen, wie lange er regiert hatte, und in welchem verwandtschaftlichen Verhältnis er zu Wachtang Gorgasal stand.

Im siebenten Teil haben wir uns mit der Theorie Toumanoffs auseinandergesetzt, wonach Gurgenes mit dem (Wachtang) Gorgasal der Chroniken identisch sei, was diesem eine überlange Herrschaftsdauer (etwa 447-522) verschaffen würde.[9] In Wirklichkeit dürfte der Tod Wachtangs bereits um die Wende vom fünften zum sechsten Jh. eingetreten sein. Falls ein konkretes Datum gewünscht wird, können wir als spätest möglichen Termin das Jahr 502 anbieten, das in der Forschung schon mehrfach genannt worden ist.[10]

An sich spricht nichts gegen die Annahme, Gurgenes sei ein Sohn Wachtangs gewesen und in direktem Erbgang auf ihn gefolgt. Wenn dies gewöhnlich anders gesehen wird, dann aus folgendem Grund: Nach der Darstellung der Chroniken

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[6] Schottky 2020a, 256. Dagegen denkt Schleicher 2021, 433-4 mit Anm. 311 u. 312 an zumindest „inoffizielle" Hilfe durch den damaligen Kaiser Zenon. Sie müsste indessen sehr diskret (oder ziemlich ineffektiv) gewesen sein, wenn sie so wenige Spuren hinterließ.

[7] Vgl. zum damaligen Großkönig z.B. Schottky 1997a, 1043-44.

[8] So PLRE 2, 527 s.v. Gurgenes mit Bezug auf die Prokop-Stelle. Relativierend dagegen Brakmann 1996, 37, wonach die Sasaniden den Iberern die Neuwahl eines einheimischen Königs „zunächst" nicht erlaubt hätten.

[9] Schottky 2020a, 250-253. Hiergegen jetzt auch Schleicher 2021, 165.

[10] Schottky 2020a, 253f. Siehe zu den Ansätzen in der Forschung Schleicher 2021, 163, Anm. 602, 165, Anm. 614 und, speziell zu 502, 172 (oben) sowie 360, Anm. 223.

wurde Wachtang Gorgasal von seinem Sohn *Datschi* beerbt.[11] Wer war dann aber Gurgenes? Mit dieser Frage hat sich neuerdings Frank Schleicher intensiv beschäftigt.[12] Er verweist dabei auf die einheimische Überlieferung, wonach in den späteren Jahren Datschis dessen Halbbruder Mirdat, ein Sohn von Wachtangs zweiter, oströmischer Gemahlin, mit der Herrschaft über Dshawachetien (Javaxet'i) abgefunden worden sei.[13] Von den Nachkommen Mirdats in Dshawachetien ist in der Folgezeit noch mehrfach die Rede,[14] doch wird zunächst keiner von ihnen namentlich genannt. Erwähnung findet erst wieder Guaram, ein Schwestersohn Mirdats, der ausdrücklich als Herrscher in Klardshetien und Dshawachetien vorgestellt wird. Er war ein Zeitgenosse der ihres Erbrechts beraubten Söhne Bakurs III. und stieg durch die vom Kaiser vollzogene Ernennung zum Kuropalaten zum faktischen Herrscher des Landes auf.[15] Schleicher hält es, unter Bezug auf eine frühe Arbeit Toumanoffs,[16] für möglich, dass sich in Dshawachetien eine Teilherrschaft unter den Nachkommen Mirdats bildete,[17] wobei auch Gurgenes aus diesem Geschlecht hervorgegangen sein könnte.[18]

Die Angelegenheit wird sicher nicht einfacher durch das Auftauchen eines als ὁ τῶν Ἰβήρων βασιλεύς Ζαμαναρσός bezeichneten Mannes in der Weltchronik des Theophanes. Berichtet wird zum Jahr 534/5 n. Chr., dass der von seiner Gemahlin und als „Senatoren" bezeichneten Leuten begleitete Fürst nach Konstantinopel kam, um Bundesgenosse Iustinians zu werden. Letzterer erfüllte den Wunsch und ehrte den Besucher und seine Begleiter mit Geschenken, ebenso die Kaiserin dessen Gattin. Danach entließ er seine Gäste ehrenvoll in ihr eigenes Reich.[19] Diese Nachricht gibt einige Rätsel auf.[20] Auf den ersten Blick plausibel

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[11] Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 274; *Bekehrung Georgiens*, Pätsch 1975, 299.

[12] Schleicher 2021, bes. 167-187 passim, vgl. auch 345-46 u.ö.

[13] Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 274-75: *... er* (sc. Datschi) *gab ihm* (Mirdat) *... Dshawachetien ... Mirdat ... besaß das Gebiet vom Panawar-See ... bis zum Schwarzen Meer, und er gebot dort als Eristaw, und er war König Datschi, seinem Bruder, untertan. ... Und König Datschi starb*.

[14] Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 275 und 292.

[15] Zum familiären und geographischen Hintergrund Guarams, sowie zu seiner Ernennung zum Kuropalaten, siehe Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 292f. Allein schon von der Chronologie her erscheint der Bericht höchst problematisch. Guaram soll der Sohn einer Schwester Mirdats, somit ein Halbcousin von Datschis Sohn Bakur II. gewesen sein. Man kann sich ausrechnen, in welchem Alter er zum Zeitpunkt des Todes von Bakurs gleichnamigem Urenkel gestanden haben müsste.

[16] Toumanoff 1952, bes. 35. Er beschreibt dort, wie das iberische Königtum nach der Flucht des (mit Wachtang Gorgasal gleichgesetzten) Gurgenes in Kachet´i weiterbestanden habe.

[17] Schleicher 2021, 181: „Wäre es ... überraschend, wenn der jüngere Zweig der königlichen Familie in Javaxet´i ... ein formales Königtum beanspruchte? … Zudem muss die Nähe zu den Römern starken Einfluss auf die Politik der Söhne Mirdats gehabt haben. Hier boten sich Möglichkeiten, die von den lokalen Fürsten genutzt wurden, … ."

[18] Schleicher 2021, 180 (unten).

[19] Theophan. a.m. 6027. Die kurze Notiz stellt die Gesamtheit dessen dar, was der Chronist zu dem betreffenden Jahr zu sagen hat, das er selbst als „Jahr der göttlichen Fleischwerdung 527" zählt. Vgl. Mango und Scott 1997, 513 mit Anm. 1.

[20] Mango und Scott 1997, 513, am Anfang von Anm. 1: „This paragraph remains obscure."

wirkt die Ansicht von Ernst Stein, der u.a. darauf hinwies, dass es bereits in dem genannten Jahr keinen iberischen König mehr gab und deshalb eine Dublette zu der Gurgenes-Geschichte Prokops vermutete.[21] Bei näherem Hinsehen sind die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen den beiden Berichten indessen nicht so gravierend. Gurgenes sucht in den letzten Zeiten Iustins Zuflucht bei den Römern und kommt über Lazika nach Konstantinopel. Nach Prokops Darstellung müsste die Königsfamilie und der gesamte Adel dort eingetroffen (und zunächst geblieben) sein. Bei Theophanes dagegen macht ein Königspaar, begleitet von den üblichen Honoratioren, einen Staatsbesuch bei Iustinian, der vor einigen Jahren auf Iustin gefolgt ist. Der wichtigste Unterschied ist wohl, dass sich die Iberer nicht länger im Kaiserreich aufhielten, sondern bald in ihr eigenes Land, ein weiterhin bestehendes Königreich, zurückkehrten.

Bei der Mitteilung des Theophanes handelt es sich nicht um die einzige Stelle, an der von Zamanarsos die Rede ist. Er ist zweifellos nicht verschieden von einem Σαμαναζός, den Iohannes Malalas für das Jahr 528/9 als regierenden Herrscher Iberiens erwähnt.[22] Seit Jahrzehnten ist in der Forschung versucht worden, Samanazos/Zamanarsos in die iberische Königsliste einzufügen – oder wenigstens in ein Herrscherverzeichnis eines der Teilstaaten des Landes. Als recht kreativ erwies sich wieder Cyril Toumanoff, der sogar Überlegungen zur Etymologie des Namens angestellt hat.[23] Während wir zur sprachwissenschaftlichen Seite nichts sagen können, sei immerhin die Frage gestattet, warum sich irgendein Herrscher als „jemandes Bruder" benennen (lassen) sollte. Schleicher hält die Identität des Zamanarsos mit Mirdat selbst für unmöglich und zitiert Toumanoffs Etymologie, ohne Stellung zu ihr zu nehmen.[24] Immerhin könne es sich bei Zamanarsos aber um einen Nachkommen Mirdats und um einen nahen Verwandten des Gurgenes (Sohn oder Bruder) gehandelt haben.[25]

Bevor wir uns in der Nachfolge Toumanoffs und Schleichers allzu sehr in der Vorstellung eines „Zamanarsos von Dshawachetien" verlieren, sei auf eine Nachricht hingewiesen, die in der Fachliteratur kaum zur Sprache kommt.[26] Nach der altslawischen Fassung der Chronik des Malalas war Samanazos kein Iberer, sondern Laze! Dies würde natürlich Einiges ändern. Die Notiz bei Theophanes dürfte (direkt oder indirekt) auf Malalas zurückgehen. Im Werk des Letztgenannten steht dann, was die ethnische Herkunft des Samanazos betrifft, Aussage

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[21] Stein 1949, 295 mit Anm. 1.

[22] Malal. 18.9 (429 Dind.).

[23] Toumanoff 1963, 385, Anm. 8 (unten): „(It) … makes one wonder whether perchance the two variants of the visitor´s name might not be reducible to something like Zμαδα(ρ)ζός disguising in an onomastic form the original Georgian phrase qualifying Mithridates of Cholarzene-ǰavaxet´i: *jma da(r)č´isi* = `Da(r)č`i´s brother.´" Vgl. bereits Toumanoff 1952, 45.

[24] Schleicher 2021, 183, zweiter Textabsatz und Anm. 703.

[25] Schleicher 2021, 183, zweiter Textabsatz.

[26] Vgl. aber Brakmann 1996, 37, 4. u. 3. Zeile von unten.

gegen Aussage. Es ist gut möglich, dass die altslawische Fassung die bessere Überlieferung bewahrt. König der Lazen war zu der betreffenden Zeit ein Mann namens *Tzathìos*, dessen Name in mehreren Varianten überliefert ist.[27] Zwei Einzelheiten, die von den Chronisten über Tzathios berichtet werden, sollten aufhorchen lassen: Zum einen der Name seines Vaters, der bei Iohannes Malalas *Damnazes,* im Chronikon paschale dagegen *Zamnaxes* lautet.[28] Zum anderen die Tatsache, dass sich Tzathios kurz nach dem Tode des Damnazes (522) in Konstantinopel einfand, um von der persischen auf die römische Seite zu wechseln. Er ließ sich taufen und bekam die Römerin Valeriana zur Frau. Relativ ausführlich werden die kostbaren Geschenke beschrieben, die Tzathios erhielt.[29] Nach der Abreise des jungen Paares entwickelte sich noch eine gereizte, durch Gesandtschaften geführte Diskussion zwischen Iustin und Cavades, der dem Kaiser völlig zu Recht vorwarf, ihm einen „Vasallen" abspenstig gemacht zu haben.[30] Auf diesem Bericht beruht auch die Darstellung des Theophanes. In ihr ist der Name von Tzathios' Vater ausgefallen, ebenso jeder Hinweis auf den anfänglichen Widerstand der Braut. Erhalten geblieben sind dagegen die Schilderung des prachtvollen Ornates, den Tzathios, erhielt und der Hinweis auf die sich abzeichnenden Schwierigkeiten mit Cavades.[31] Liest man den Bericht vom Aufenthalt des Tzathios bei Iustin und den vom Besuch des Zamanarsos bei Iustinian direkt nacheinander, bekommt man den Eindruck, als ob uns Theophanes immer die gleiche Geschichte erzähle. Gewiss gibt es Unterschiede. Der angebliche Iberer ist bereits verheiratet und muss auch nicht getauft werden. Dennoch sieht es so aus, als habe sich Ernst Steins Idee von einer „Dublette", die die Zamanarsos-Episode darstelle, auf andere Weise bestätigt. Für das Jahr 534/5 (a.m. 6027) waren wohl keinerlei Informationen mehr vorhanden. Theophanes (oder schon einer seiner Vorgänger) mag daher auf die Idee gekommen sein, diese aus Malalas' Bericht über die Reise des Lazen Tzathios zu extrahieren und zu einer Notiz über einen Besuch eines *iberischen* Königs umzuformen. Hierzu mag auch der Name von Tzathios' Vater beigetragen haben, der fast genauso wie der des angeblichen Ibererfürsten klang. Diejenigen Namensformen, die untereinander am ähnlichsten sind, Damnazes und Samanazos, finden sich beide bei Malalas. Man könnte auf die Idee verfallen, dass beide überhaupt nur Varianten des gleichen Individualnomens sind. Einen späteren Bearbeiter des griechischen Malalas-Textes, der dies nicht erkannte, mag es gestört haben, dass als König der Lazen

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[27] Siehe zu den Schreibweisen (mit Angabe der Fundstellen) Enßlin 1948a, 1957.

[28] Malal. 17.9 (412f. Dind.); Chr. pasch. 613. Hierzu kurz Lippold 1967, 2312.

[29] Malalas überliefert die Einzelheit, dass Valeriana zu der Heirat gedrängt werden musste. Siehe zu ihr kurz Enßlin 1948b, 2284.

[30] Malal. 17.9 (412.16-414.16 Dind.). Die Textpassage ist relativ häufig in moderner Übersetzung in der Literatur zitiert worden. Siehe Braund 1994, 277, Greatrex / Lieu 2002, 79f. und Schleicher 2021, 175 (nur bis zum Eintreffen des Tzathios bei Iustin, 412f. Dind.).

[31] Theophan. a.m. 6015. Vgl. dazu Mango und Scott 1997, 258, Anm. 1-3.

etwa zur gleichen Zeit einmal Damnazes, bzw. sein Sohn, an anderer Stelle Samanazos genannt wurde. So könnte es zu dem Irrtum vom „König der Iberer Samanazos“ gekommen sein.

Angesichts dessen wollen wir der künftigen Forschung in aller Zurückhaltung vorschlagen, von der Vorstellung eines iberischen Herrschers Samanazos/Zamanarsos, der etwa in den 520er und 530er Jahren eine Rolle gespielt habe, Abstand zu nehmen. Der letzte König von Gesamt-Iberien ist, wie sich aus Prokop eindeutig ergibt, Gurgenes gewesen. Er war mit ziemlicher Sicherheit der Sohn Wachtangs und dürfte diesem spätestens 502 direkt gefolgt sein. Damit wäre er nicht verschieden von dem iberischen König, der in der Chronik Datschi heißt. Wie die einheimische Tradition gerade auf diesen Namen verfiel, mag sich aus dessen ursprünglicher Bedeutung ergeben.[32] Auch gibt es Hinweise darauf, warum der historische Gurgenes aus der Überlieferung getilgt wurde. Interessanterweise hat sich nämlich ein derartiger Vorgang wiederholt. Oben wurde der Kuropalat Guaram erwähnt, der in der Chronik eine beinahe königsgleiche Stellung einnimmt. Sein tatsächlicher Name aber war anscheinend Gurgenes, sodass Schleicher geradezu von einem „Gurgenes II.“ spricht.[33] Wir hatten schon darauf hingewiesen, dass *Gurgen* ein unter den Bagratiden häufiges Individualnomen gewesen ist, das einige Zeit lang geradezu deren Leitnamen darstellte.[34] Möglicherweise hatten die Bearbeiter des Mittelalters Probleme damit, dass die letzten iberischen Herrscher des ausgehenden Altertums, die als „Chosroiden“ galten, bereits ausgesprochen bagratidische Namen getragen haben sollten.[35]

Gurgenes und seine Erben

Wir kehren zum Zeitpunkt des Übertritts des „ersten“ Gurgenes auf oströmisches Gebiet zurück.[36] Prokop berichtet, wie der König wegen ungenügender Unterstützung seitens der Römer zusammen mit dem Adel seines Landes

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[32] Zur Ableitung des Namens Dač`i von Dārčīhr, zusammengesetzt aus den mpers. Elementen *dar* („court, palace“) und *čihr*[*ag*] („seed, origin“) siehe Rapp 2014, 334 mit Anm. 17. Seine Bedeutung ist demnach etwa „der Hochwohlgeborene“ – passend für einen Erbmonarchen.

[33] Schleicher 2021, 350ff.

[34] Schottky 2020a, 252, Anm. 61 mit Verweis Ssumbat apud Pätsch 1985, 464-475.

[35] Der Kuropalat Guaram stellt dabei einen Grenzfall dar. Als Schwestersohn Mirdats soll er von der Seite seiner Mutter her Chosroide, väterlicherseits dagegen Bagratide gewesen sein (Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 293). Wenn ihm der Name Gurgenes entzogen wurde, dann wohl deshalb, um seine angeblichen chosroidischen Verbindungen noch stärker herauszustellen.

[36] Die Ereignisse werden gewöhnlich „ca. 526“ datiert, so z.B. *PLRE* 2, 527 s.v. Gurgenes. Doch könnte sich die Angelegenheit insgesamt von der noch 525 ausgesprochenen Bitte um militärische Hilfe bis zur spätestens ins Frühjahr 527 fallenden Flucht der Iberer hingezogen haben. Siehe hierzu Schleicher 2021, 345 mit weiterer Literatur in Anm. 147 u. 149.

nach Lazika floh. Im Schlussteil des Satzes *BP* 1,12,11 wird ausgeführt, welche seiner Angehörigen das Exil teilten:

> … τήν τε γυναῖκα καὶ τοὺς παῖδας ξὺν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐπαγόμενος, ὧν δὴ Περάνιος ὁ πρεσβύτατος ἦν.
>
> ... er [sc. Gurgenes] führte seine Gemahlin und seine Kinder zusammen mit seinen *Brüdern* mit sich, *deren ältester Peranios war*.

Es ist erstaunlich, dass sich in der modernen Literatur normalerweise eine Übertragung findet, die objektiv keine Stütze im Text hat. Als Beispiel sei hier nur die Übersetzung in der Prokop-Ausgabe von Otto Veh angeführt:

> Dabei nahm er seine Frau, seine Kinder – *der älteste **Sohn** war Peranios* – sowie seine Brüder mit sich.[37]

Die Frage, wie Peranios mit Gurgenes verwandt war, ist von nicht unerheblicher Bedeutung für das Verständnis der dynastischen Geschichte Iberiens in jener Epoche. Eines nämlich muss gleich vorausgeschickt werden: Gurgenes selbst spielte in der Folgezeit keine Rolle mehr. Wir haben schon gesehen, dass die beiden Erwähnungen seiner Person im zweiten Buch der Perserkriege nur an die Ereignisse im ersten erinnern, ohne etwas über seine aktuellen Lebensumstände auszusagen. Im ersten Buch fällt der Name Γουργένης zuletzt am Anfang von *BP* 1.12.11, doch ist der König in der Gruppe der Iberer, deren Schicksal *BP* 1.12.12-14 geschildert wird, sicher mit enthalten. Es kann daher kein Zweifel daran bestehen, dass Gurgenes zusammen mit seinen Getreuen in Konstantinopel ankam. Danach aber verliert sich seine Spur. Ein Herrscher, der nicht nur seine Angehörigen ins Exil mitnahm, sondern sogar die Elite seines Reiches motivieren konnte, ihn zu begleiten, kann sich hinterher nicht einfach ins Privatleben zurückziehen. Es ist deshalb sehr wahrscheinlich, dass der vertriebene König bald nach den geschilderten Ereignissen verstorben ist. Als Chef des iberischen Herrscherhauses galt von nun an Peranios. Prokop stellt ihn im ersten Buch der Gotenkriege (dem fünften Buch des Gesamtwerkes) erneut kurz vor und erweckt dabei den Eindruck, der im Heer Belisars dienende Iberer sei aus eigenem Entschluss von den ihm verhassten Persern zu den Römern übergetreten (*BG* 1.5.3). Darüber hinaus werden die anderen namentlich genannten Iberer in römischen Diensten, was ihren familiären Hintergrund betrifft, ausschließlich auf Grund ihres Verwandtschaftsverhältnisses zu Peranios definiert.

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[37] Veh 1970, 79 (unten). Nur vereinzelt findet sich in der Literatur ein Hinweis darauf, dass Peranios auch ein Bruder des Gurgenes gewesen sein könnte. Vgl. z.B. Toumanoff 1963, 372, Anm. 62 und Brakmann 1996, 37. Schleicher 2021, 177 u. 345 zitiert Prokop in der üblichen irreführenden Übersetzung und sagt erst 347, in der zweiten Zeile seiner Peranios gewidmeten Ausführungen, dass er der älteste „Sohn (oder Bruder)“ des Gurgenes war.

Ein Sohn des Peranios war Πακούριος, der 447 nach Italien beordert wurde (*BG* 3.27.2). Dass sein Name mit anlautendem Pi (anstatt mit Beta) geschrieben wird, hängt mit der zu Prokops Zeit bereits weit fortgeschrittenen Verwendung des Beta für den W-Laut zusammen, der sich im Griechischen, seit dem frühen Ausfall des Digamma, nur schwer abbilden ließ.[38] Damit hatte der iberische Prinz einen Namen, den etwa zur gleichen Zeit auch Herrscher seines Heimatlandes getragen haben sollen. Die Abstammung sieht dabei jeweils so aus: In der Chronik folgt auf Wachtang Gorgasal sein Sohn Datschi, diesem dessen Sohn Bakur II. In der Realität haben wir Wachtang, seine Söhne Gurgenes und Peranios, danach Pakurios, der als Sohn des Peranios ein Enkel Wachtangs war. Wie es aussieht, ist wieder ein Teil der Frage beantwortet, woher die Bearbeiter der Königsliste für eine Zeit, in der es keine iberischen Herrscher mehr gab, eigentlich deren Namen bezogen. Möglicherweise lässt sich sogar das Auftauchen des dritten Bakur noch genauer erklären, abgesehen von einer einfachen Verdoppelung. Pakurios ist, neben dem früh von der Bildfläche verschwundenen Gurgenes, der einzige namentlich genannte Vertreter der Königsfamilie, über dessen Tod Prokop keine Angaben macht.[39] Man darf daher vermuten, dass er seine Militärzeit im kaiserlichen Dienst lebend überstand und eventuell sogar ein hohes Alter erreichte. Ob die ihm bemessene Lebenszeit tatsächlich bis zum Ende der 570er Jahre währte, sei dabei dahingestellt. Er dürfte jedoch viele Jahre, vielleicht für Jahrzehnte, der letzte Repräsentant der entthronten iberischen Herrscherfamilie gewesen sein. Die kreativen Verfasser der Königsliste haben vielleicht gar nicht bemerkt, dass der möglicherweise bis in die späten Jahre Iustinians hinein lebende Pakurios immer noch derselbe Mann war, der schon einmal, als unmittelbarer Nachfolger Datschis, in dem Herrscherverzeichnis untergebracht worden war.

Somit bleibt uns die Aufgabe, auch für die angeblich zwei Könige namens Pharasmanes, die zwischen dem zweiten und dem dritten Bakur eingeschoben worden sind, ein historisches Vorbild zu finden. Zunächst sollte festgehalten werden, dass die Methode, zwei gleichnamige erfundene Fürsten direkt aufeinander folgen zu lassen, reichlich stümperhaft wirkt. Bei der Duplizierung des bedeutendsten iberischen Herrschers des 2. Jhs., Pharasmanes II., war noch wesentlich geschickter vorgegangen worden: Pharasmanes erhielt einen Sohn mit dem Namen Adam, und erst dieser soll der Vater eines weiteren Pharasmanes gewesen sein, der bis heute als „Pharasmanes III." für Verwirrung in der iberischen Königsliste sorgt.[40]

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[38] Wohlbekannt ist Prokops Schreibweise der weströmischen Kaiserresidenz: Ῥάβεννα. Den Personennamen hatte z.B. Zosimos (4.57.3; 4.58.3) noch Βακούριος geschrieben.

[39] Vgl. zu Pakurios das Namensverzeichnis bei Veh 1966, 1282 s.v. Πακούριος, Nagl 1942, 2156f. sowie jetzt Schleicher 2021, 348.

[40] Siehe hierzu jetzt Schottky 2014, passim.

Als Vorbilder für die letzten iberischen Könige mit dem Namen Pharasmanes kommen an sich zwei Personen in Frage: Peranios und sein Neffe Phazas. Wenden wir uns zuerst Letzterem zu.[41] Der Anfang seines Namens, *Pha-*, klingt beim ersten Hinhören zwar so, als könne er problemlos zu Pha-rasmanes ergänzt werden. Hier muss jedoch gleich daran erinnert werden, dass die beiden Namensträger, die kurz vor dem Ende des Königtums in Iberien regiert haben sollen, nur in den dortigen Chroniken und somit in der kartwelischen Form *Parsman* (*P'arsman*) auftreten. Dies mit Phazas zu verbinden, ist schon etwas schwieriger. Darüber hinaus erscheint er, trotz seiner Herkunft aus dem Herrscherhaus, als Vorbild für einen iberischen König wenig geeignet. Von Phazas ist allein im Rahmen des Gotenkrieges die Rede, in dem er, trotz persönlicher Tapferkeit, wenig erfolgreich agierte. Ende 547 fiel er in der Gegend von Kroton in einem Gefecht gegen die Goten (*BG* 3.28.15).

Wir werden damit auf den allein übrig gebliebenen Peranios verwiesen.[42] Er ist der einzige der von Prokop namentlich genannten iberischen Prinzen, der auf beiden Kriegsschauplätzen kämpfte. Seit 543 wieder im Osten, hatte er 544 maßgeblichen Anteil an der Verteidigung Edessas gegen die Perser (*BP* 2.27.42). In diesem Zusammenhang hat uns Prokop eine bemerkenswerte Einzelheit überliefert. Großkönig Chosroes versuchte die Auslieferung der Feldherren Petros und Peranios zu erreichen (*BP* 2.26.38).[43] Der wahre Grund für diese Initiative lag sicher in dem Widerstand, den die Heerführer gegen seine Eroberungsversuche leisteten.[44] Interessant ist in diesem Fall aber eher die vom Großkönig selbst vorgebrachte Begründung für sein Verlangen (der „Vorwand"). Petros und Peranios seien von seinem Vater ererbte „Sklaven", womit zweifellos Bewohner von schon länger zum Sasanidenreich gehörenden Ländern gemeint waren. Da ein Großkönig normalerweise einzelnen Untertanen, vor allem solchen von niederem Stande, nicht nachspürt, darf man annehmen, dass es sich in Wirklichkeit um relativ bedeutende, der Elite der jeweiligen Gebiete angehörende Leute handelte. Im Fall des Peranios steht dies auch zweifelsfrei fest. Man bekommt den Eindruck, als habe er, ohne dass dies von Prokop

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[41] Vgl. zu Phazas z.B. Nagl 1938, 1908f. und jetzt Schleicher 2021, 348f. Dass er Peranios´ Neffe war, ergibt sich aus *BG* 3.6.10.

[42] Zu seiner Tätigkeit in Italien vgl. das Namensverzeichnis bei Veh 1966, 1283 s.v. Περάνιος, Enßlin 1937, 586f. und Schleicher 2021, 347.

[43] Zu Chosroes I. Anuschirvan, der im September 531 auf Cavades I. gefolgt war, vgl. z.B. Schottky 1997b, 1149-50, zum römisch-persischen Konflikt auch Schottky 2000a, 377.

[44] Nur kurz können wir hier auf den zuerst genannten Petros eingehen. Der aus der Arzanene (Persarmenia) stammende Mann hatte schon einmal mit den Iberern zu tun gehabt, als er in Iustins Auftrag den bereits in Lazika angekommenen Gurgenes mit einer Abteilung Hunnen unterstützen sollte (*BP* 1.12.9 u. 14). Später organisierte er in Edessa zusammen mit Peranios den Widerstand gegen die Perser (*BP* 2.26.25ff.). Siehe zu ihm Enßlin 1938a, 1322f., wo der Name des seine Auslieferung fordernden Perserkönigs allerdings irrtümlich „Kawad" lautet.

je direkt ausgesprochen wird,[45] als der derzeitige iberische Thronprätendent gegolten. Bald darauf erledigten sich die Probleme, die Chosroes mit seinen abtrünnigen Untertanen hatte, anscheinend von selbst. Von Petros ist nie mehr die Rede. Peranios starb an den Folgen eines Reitunfalls, der ihm auf der Jagd zugestoßen war (*BP* 2.28.1).

Es ist dieser Peranios, der in der Literatur immer wieder in irgendeine Verbindung mit dem iberischen Königtum gebracht wird. Schon gegen Ende des vorvergangenen Jahrhunderts wurde die Meinung geäußert, mit den beiden Pharasmanes genannten Herrschern der Chronik seien Gurgenes und Peranios gemeint.[46] Hier ist anscheinend jemand auf dem richtigen Weg gewesen. Man muss nur rekapitulieren, dass es bereits Datschi war, unter dessen Namen der wohl allzu bagratidisch klingende Gurgenes versteckt worden ist, und dass es ursprünglich nur einen Pharasmanes gegeben hatte, der Peranios ersetzte. Warum der in der spätgriechisch-byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung prominent erwähnte Peranios aus der georgischen Überlieferung getilgt wurde, bleibt zunächst rätselhaft. Zu kurz gegriffen wäre sicher die Annahme, dies sei geschehen, weil er eben nie König geworden ist. Gurgenes hat noch regiert, wurde aber durch Datschi ersetzt, Pakurios hat niemals regiert, erscheint aber als Bakur II./III. gleich zweimal in der traditionellen Königsliste. Wir möchten daher eine Lösung anbieten, die sich bereits abgezeichnet hat, als wir uns mit den iberischen Herrschern in der Spätzeit Schapurs II. beschäftigt haben.[47] „Unser" Peranios, der – wenn überhaupt – inoffizielle iberische Thronprätendent des 6. Jhs., stellt nämlich den Beleg dafür dar, dass es bereits um 400 unter seinen Vorfahren einen Namensträger gegeben haben muss. Dass dieser es ist, der sich unter dem Namen *Ultra* verbirgt, hat vor vielen Jahrzehnten Paul Peeters erkannt.[48] Man darf annehmen, dass dieser frühere Peranios (Pīrān) später seinem Vater Aspacures auf den Thron folgte und etwa gleichzeitig mit Arcadius regierte. Die kaukasische Überlieferung hat merkwürdigerweise bereits die Erinnerung an diesen ersten Peranios unterdrückt.[49] Besonders aufschlussreich ist dabei das Vorgehen des Autors der Vita Petrus des Iberers. In diesem um 500 verfassten Werk gilt als iberischer Zeitgenosse des Arcadius ein König Pharasmanios. Diesem wird unterstellt, er habe Hunnen zu einem Überfall auf das römische Reich angestiftet.[50] Wie schon gezeigt wurde, ist jener Pharasmanios /

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[45] Im Namensverzeichnis bei Veh 1970, 584 s.v. Περάνιος wird dieser als „König von Iberien" (!) bezeichnet. Es handelt sich wohl um ein Missverständnis der Stelle *BP* 1.12.11, das auf einer Verwechslung mit dem am Anfang des Satzes genannten Gurgenes beruht.

[46] Justi 1895, 91, 8. Danach Enßlin 1938c, 1815.

[47] Schottky 2016, bes. 215-16 (Exkurs II: Die Namen Aspacures und Ultra).

[48] Peeters 1932, 39, Anm. 3: „... *Vltra* n´est pas un nom. Ammien aura cru traduire *Πέραν*, équivalent du nom pehlevi *Pîrân*. Les Byzantins le rendent d´ordinaire par *Περάνιος*. Ihm folgend Toumanoff 1969, 24, Anm. 97.

[49] Siehe hierzu jetzt Schottky 2017, bes. 220-223.

[50] Die Einzelheiten bei Raabe 1895, 15. Dazu kurz Enßlin 1938b, 1814.

Parsman eine historische Gestalt, hat aber einige Jahrzehnte später gelebt. Wir halten ihn jetzt für einen Onkel des Wachtang Gorgasal, der für diesen, als er im Kindesalter die Herrschaft antrat, die Regentschaft führte.[51] Somit dürfte er in einem Verzeichnis regierender Könige an sich gar nicht erscheinen, soll aber, um die Angelegenheit nicht weiter zu verkomplizieren, wie bisher als „Pharasmanes III." bezeichnet werden.[52] Dass er um etwa ein halbes Jahrhundert in die Vergangenheit verschoben worden ist, wodurch der in dieser Zeit tatsächlich regierende Pīrān verdeckt wurde, hat offenbar folgenden Grund: Zu den berüchtigtsten Maßnahmen, die Pharasmanes I. und sein Urenkel Pharasmanes II. ergriffen hatten, gehörte es, alanische Horden in Marsch zu setzen, die in den nördlichen Grenzgebieten des Imperiums und des Partherreiches für Unruhe sorgen sollten.[53] Offenbar schwebte Pīrān die Idee vor, noch einmal etwas derartiges zu versuchen. Der Erfolg dieser Initiative war zwar nicht überwältigend,[54] doch hatte sie eigenartige Auswirkungen auf die regionale historische Tradition. Es musste immer ein König Pharasmanes gewesen sein, der das Alanentor öffnete, um räuberische Reitervölker auf die Großreiche im Süden Iberiens loszulassen. War dieser Gedankenschritt erst einmal vollzogen, könnte der nächste darin bestanden haben, *jeden* überlieferten Pīrān durch Pharasmanes zu ersetzen. Der Name, der nur im Griechischen in der Form Peranios erscheint, mag im Kartwelischen von Parsman nicht klar zu unterscheiden gewesen sein.

Nachbemerkung zum achten Teil

Auf den vorangegangenen Seiten haben wir versucht, der dynastischen Geschichte Iberiens im 6. Jh. auf den Grund zu gehen und insbesondere festzustellen, was die einheimische Tradition aus dem ihr noch vorliegenden Material gemacht hat. Zum Schluss wollen wir uns mit der Frage beschäftigen, was die mittelalterlichen Chronisten zu ihren recht erheblichen Eingriffen in die Überlieferung veranlasst haben könnte. Ihr Hauptziel bestand mit Sicherheit zunächst darin, den Zeitraum zwischen dem Ende des antiken Königtums und dem Beginn des mittelalterlichen so weit wie nur irgend möglich zu verkürzen. Herrschern, die man nicht als regierende Monarchen ausgeben konnte, sollte wenigstens eine königsähnliche Stellung, wie die eines Kuropalaten, zugeschrieben werden. Erst seit 888 gab es wieder wirkliche Könige aus dem Hause der Bagratiden.[55]

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[51] Hierzu zuletzt Schottky 2020a, 244f.

[52] Dass der Herrscher (eher Regent) des 5. Jhs. allenfalls als Pharasmanes III. (nicht Ph. IV.) zu zählen ist, hat z.B. schon Nikuradse 1942, 67 richtig erkannt.

[53] Siehe dazu Schottky 2000b, 738f., Schottky 2013, 137-142 zu Pharasmanes I. und Schottky 2014, 93-99 zu Pharasmanes II.

[54] Schottky 2017, 220-21.

[55] Vgl. zur Wiedererrichtung des Königtums Nikuradse 1942, 120ff.

Angesichts dieses Zeitintervalls könnte man sich fragen, was es ausmachte, ob das ältere iberische Königtum bereits zwischen 530 und 540 aufgehoben wurde,[56] oder, wie die lokale Überlieferung will, erst gegen 580. Es bleiben immer noch gut dreihundert Jahre ohne eigentliche Monarchen übrig. Die Überbrückung der Jahrzehnte in der Mitte des 6. Jhs. mit fiktiven Königen erscheint aber auch noch aus einem anderen Grund eher missglückt. Wir sollen annehmen, die Iberer hätten sich gegen einen Chosroes Anuschirvan behauptet, müssten aber bald nach dem Herrschaftsantritt seines schwächeren Sohnes Hormisdas IV. ihre Krone verloren haben.[57]

Ein Grund für diese Verbiegung der historischen Wahrheit liegt offenbar in der Wandlung, die Wachtang I. in der georgischen Geschichtsschreibung durchgemacht hat. Nicht nur war zu seinen Lebzeiten (und wohl noch Jahrhunderte danach) sein Beiname „Gorgasal“ unbekannt, er erfreute sich auch sonst keiner übertriebenen Wertschätzung.[58] Seit dem 9. Jh. wurde er dann zu einer bedeutenden und mächtigen Herrschergestalt hochstilisiert.[59] Erst als diese Entwicklung abgeschlossen war, mag den Geschichtsschreibern aufgefallen sein, dass die iberische Monarchie recht bald nach dem Wirken des „Heldenkönigs“ zusammengebrochen war.[60] Man wollte sicher nur ungern zugeben, dass bereits dessen Sohn und unmittelbarer Nachfolger die Krone verlor und ins Exil gehen musste. Ließ man dagegen nach „Gorgasal“ noch fünf weitere Generationen unangefochten regieren und erst die sechste ihren Anspruch auf die Herrschaft einbüßen, hätte wohl niemand diesen Vorgang mit längst vergessenen Defiziten Wachtangs in Verbindung gebracht.

Die kreativen Chronisten entschlossen sich daher zu einer fast vollständigen Neugestaltung der Herrschaftsgeschichte Iberiens im 6. Jh. und, so weit dies nötig erschien, auch der Nachbarreiche.[61] Das erste Opfer dieses Projektes war Gurgenes, den man als gescheiterten König betrachtete. Seine Gestalt ist durch die Datschis ersetzt worden, von dem in jeder Hinsicht das Gegenteil dessen behauptet wurde, was über Gurgenes bekannt war. Dieses Vorgehen hat zu ganz eigenartigen Ergebnissen geführt. Bis heute bemüht sich die Forschung, Erkenntnisse aus den georgischen Berichten über Datschi zu gewinnen. Gurgenes dagegen wird in der Nachfolge Toumanoffs teilweise immer noch als mit (Wachtang) „Gorgasal“

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[56] Siehe dazu Schleicher 2021, 181, 185, 308, 439 u.ö.

[57] Siehe zu ihm z.B. Schottky 1998, 728f. Chosroes I. war Februar/März 579 gestorben.

[58] So Martin-Hisard 1983, 211: „Son existence historique est sans doute attestée, mais ignoré des Byzantins, méprisé honni des Arméniens, il se profile d´une manière un peu floue … .“

[59] Martin-Hisard 1983, bes. 221ff. Ihr folgend Schottky 2020, 256.

[60] Auch Schleicher 2021, 429 bemerkt eher beiläufig und in anderem Zusammenhang, dass das Königtum „die Ära Vaxtangs nicht lange überlebt“ habe.

[61] Hiermit meinen wir insbesondere, dass die Gestalt des Chosroes Anuschirvan, zumindest in der kollektiven Erinnerung der Iberer, viel von ihrem Charisma eingebüßt hatte. Die Nachwelt betrachtete inzwischen alle Sasanidenherrscher als „Chosroen“ (vgl. hierzu z.B. Schottky 1995, 1386 Ende). Der erste Namensträger tritt in der Chronik als „älterer Chosro“ und, anachronistisch, als Zeitgenosse Wachtangs auf.

identisch betrachtet. Eine andere Möglichkeit besteht, wie wir gesehen haben, darin, ihn als Vertreter einer Nebenlinie oder gar als Usurpator anzusehen. Was die Gestaltung der Berichte über die späteren Könige betrifft, lenkten die Bearbeiter teilweise wieder in vorgegebene Bahnen ein. Es ist aufschlussreich, dass Herrschernamen verwendet wurden, wie sie Mitglieder der im Exil lebenden Königsfamilie trugen. Dies beweist nämlich, dass die Erzählungen über die im Lande verbliebenen und dort mehrere Linien bildenden „Chosroiden" ebenfalls fiktiv sind. Gurgenes war, wie Prokop deutlich sagt, mit sämtlichen Angehörigen ins Exil gegangen. Angesichts der Notwendigkeit, einen Nachfolger für Datschi zu finden, bedienten sich die Chronisten des Pakurios, der zunächst als „Bakur II." in die Königsliste eingefügt wurde. Genealogisch war dies nicht vollkommen falsch, da er als Sohn des Peranios tatsächlich ein Enkel Wachtangs gewesen war. Erst als dessen Erbe wurde dann Peranios selbst ausgewählt, der tatkräftige Bruder des frühzeitig verschollenen und danach alsbald totgeschwiegenen Gurgenes. Warum er gerade unter dem Namen *Parsman* in die Überlieferung einging, haben wir oben zu ergründen versucht. An diesem Punkt hätten es die Bearbeiter vielleicht gut sein lassen können. Da aber die (fiktive) Darstellung bis ins späte 6. Jh. fortgesetzt werden sollte, wurde zunächst der auf der Gestalt des Peranios beruhende Parsman in wenig geschickter Weise direkt dupliziert.[62] Der dadurch entstandene Parsman (VI.) soll nun noch einen Sohn und Nachfolger namens Bakur gehabt haben. Dieser ist eindeutig, ebenso wie sein angeblicher gleichnamiger Urgroßvater, nach dem Vorbild von Prokops Pakurios gestaltet worden. An dieser Stelle ist sein Erscheinen auch relativ sinnvoll. Er war der einzige bekannte Sohn des Peranios und dürfte nach dessen Unfalltod zum Familienoberhaupt aufgerückt sein. Was sonst über ihn berichtet wird, ist wieder reine Fiktion. Als besonders misslich erscheint die von uns schon mehrfach angesprochene Tatsache, dass es dieser (erfundene) letzte König gewesen sein soll, der Vazgēn, den Dynasten der Gogarene, beseitigte.[63] Der Umgang mit Vazgēn gehört zu den ganz wenigen Maßnahmen, die sich ohne jeden Zweifel mit dem historischen Wachtang in Verbindung bringen lassen. Den mittelalterlichen Chronisten müsste dies auch noch bekannt gewesen sein. Es berührt daher ausgesprochen merkwürdig, mit welcher Bedenkenlosigkeit ein historisches Faktum um hundert Jahre verschoben wurde, nur um dem Bericht über einen fiktiven Herrscher eine größere Glaubwürdigkeit zu verleihen.[64]

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[62] Wenn man will, kann man es den Bearbeitern zugute halten, dass sie den angeblichen „Parsman VI." nicht auch noch zum Sohn seines gleichnamigen Vorgängers machten. Nach Dshuanscher apud Pätsch 1985, 276 war er sein *Brudersohn*. In der *Bekehrung Georgiens*, Pätsch 1975, 299 heißt es dagegen nur, nach Parsman (V.) sei *ein anderer Parsman König* gewesen.

[63] Siehe hierzu jetzt Schottky 2020, 248 mit Anm. 29.

[64] Toumanoff 1963, 262 verharmlost die Angelegenheit zu dem Fehler eines Abschreibers, der eine der Epoche des Hormisdas III. angehörende Nachricht irrtümlich (und selbstverständlich ohne jede Fälschungsabsicht) in die des Hormisdas IV. verlegt habe. Vgl. hierzu bereits Martin-Hisard 1983, 234 oben (Text der Anm. 60), zur kurzen Regierungszeit des Hormisdas III. (457-459) z.B. Schottky 1998, 728.

Erneut hat sich bestätigt, wie problematisch es wäre, wollte man die mittelalterlichen georgischen Chroniken für die Erstellung eines Königsverzeichnisses des antiken Iberien verwenden oder dieses sogar ausschließlich an Hand des einheimischen Materials aufbauen. Die zeitnahen literarischen Quellen, besonders diejenigen in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache, sind zwar im wesentlichen ausgewertet, könnten aber, wie gerade wieder gezeigt hat, doch noch die eine oder andere Überraschung bieten. Ein besonderer Glücksfall wäre es schließlich, sollten noch weitere Inschriften mit bisher unbekannten Herrschernamen gefunden werden.

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Abstract

King Vaxtang I of Caucasian Iberia, who was called Gorgasali in later Georgian tradition, died around A.D. 502. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Gurgenes, who ruled peacefully for more than twenty years under Sasanian rule. However, in the later years of the Roman Emperor

Justin I, Gurgenes encountered difficulties. The Persian Great King Kavad I attempted to impose Zoroastrianism on the Iberians. In response, Gurgenes rebelled and sought assistance from the Byzantines. Unfortunately, their promise of support was insufficient, forcing Gurgenes to go into hiding. He fled to Roman Lazica with his wife, relatives, and many Iberian nobles. Eventually, they traveled together to Constantinople, where Gurgenes likely died soon after. He is believed to be the last king of Iberia. In the following decades, several members of Gurgenes' family are mentioned: his eldest brother Peranius (not his son), his son Pacurius, and a nephew named Phazas, who served in the Roman military. None of them ever returned to Iberia. However, the Georgian historical tradition presents an entirely different account of these events. According to this version, Gurgenes was succeeded by Dač'i ("of high nobility"), who ruled the Iberians until his death. After Dač'i, four other individuals are said to have reigned as kings: Bakur II, P'arsman V, P'arsman VI, and Bakur III. This tradition asserts that the period of direct Sasanian rule did not begin until the early reign of the Great King Hormizd IV (r. 579-590).

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SAINT MERCURIUS' BIER, THE *ACHEIROPOIETOS* OF CAMULIA AND MAURICIOS' FOUNDATION OF ARABISSUS. EARLY BYZANTINE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CAPPADOCIA IN COPTIC AND SYRIAC TEXTS

Keywords: Early Byzantine Archaeology of Cappadocia, Caesarea Mazaca, Camoulia, Arabissos, Coptic Hagiography, Syriac Church Histories

The Coptic *Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint Mercurius the General*, a high ranking Roman officer executed during the reign of Decius or Valerianus in c. AD 250 at Caesarea Mazaca, gives us the circumstances of his martyrdom followed by a series of miracles performed by him.[1] The *Life* contains a number of returning motifs symptomatic of this class of popular literary works: demonic possessions, incurable illnesses, e.g. blindness, black magic practices, hostility to the Christian religion, sometimes love stories concluded with a happy end through the Saint's intervention, and stories about the Saint's icons.

The 8th Miracle of St. Mercurius brings a colourful story of a man who wanted to have a son. Kuris (or Kyrios) Hermapollo, a high ranking official, and a hero of the story promised a votive offering to St. Mercurius: 'if the God of St. Mercurius fulfils my petition I will make a bier for the martyr, the bier will be of precious ivory, and will look like the biers of the Roman emperors'.[2]

A large part of the story is missing. St. Mercurius appeared before the archon as a cavalry general (ⲙ̅ ⲡⲉⲥⲙⲟⲧ ⲛ̅ ⲥⲧⲣⲁⲧⲩⲗⲁⲧⲏⲥ) and apparently

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[1] Budge 1915, the date of the Saint's martyrdom at the beginning of the text: Fol. 1a, Copt.p. 256; English Translation p. 828; Holweck 1924, 706.

[2] Fol. 17a, Budge 1915, 274.

all the wishes of him who prayed to St. Mercurius asking him for assistance were eventually fulfilled. At the end of the 8th miracle we find a more detailed description of Hermapollo's votive offering founded at St. Mercurius' sanctuary in Caesarea Mazaca.

> ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲛ ϩⲉⲛⲡⲉⲩⲕⲓⲟⲛ ⲁⲩⲥⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ ⲡⲟϭⲉ· ⲁⲩϣⲉⲧϣⲱⲧⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲗⲟⲛ ϩⲓⲗⲉⲫⲁ[ⲛ]ⲧⲓⲛⲟⲛ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲙ̄ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ ⲙ̄ⲕⲁⲧⲕ̄ ⲁⲩⲱϥⲧ̄ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲛ̄ ⲑⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲙ̄ ⲡⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̄ ϩⲉⲛⲛⲱⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲓϭⲉ· ⲙⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲙ̄ⲧ ⲛ̄ⲥ⳨ⲟ̄ⲥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲃ· ⲙⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲙ̄ⲧ ⲛ̄ⲥⲫⲣⲁⲅⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ ϩⲁⲧ· ⲗⲟⲓ̈ⲡⲟⲛ ⲁⲩϫⲟⲕϥ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲕⲁⲗⲟⲥ· ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟϫ ⲛⲓ̈ⲡⲓ̈ⲕⲏⲥ⁘
>
> And they also made a bier of pine wood logs and carved ivory plaques, and thus made the bier and fixed to it the Martyr's icon adorned with jewels (sparkling beautifully? beautiful and sparkling?) together with three crosses of gold and three *sphrageis* (seals) of silver. They made the remaining components beautiful and perfected every detail.

Budge's rendering by-passed the difficulties in the interpretation of the 'jewels' described as ⲛⲁⲩⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲓϭⲉ. They are actually given a characteristic feature, probably as very beautiful or sparkling (from ⲛⲁⲩ to see?), but I am not sure of the exact meaning (see Crum, ⲱⲛⲉ). The Coptic text does not mention 'three crosses of gold and three crosses of silver' ⲙⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲙ̄ⲧ ⲛ̄ⲥ⳨ⲟ̄ⲥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲃ· ⲙⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲙ̄ⲧ ⲛ̄ⲥⲫⲣⲁⲅⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ ϩⲁⲧ as translated by Budge, but 'three crosses of gold and three *sphrageis*': perhaps medallions? Probably ⲛ̄ⲥⲫⲣⲁⲅⲓⲥ stand for the equivalent of the Syriac word ܛܒܐ translated by Father Nau as *sceaux*, *sphrageis*, seals, the meaning which we find in the description of the church in Qartamin, where they pictured the story of Salvation, an Evangelical narrative presented as a series of small images set on a large vase (cf. Pl. I). We also know of a cross alternating with a rosette decoration on the chancel of Qirqbize, which may probably be taken as an illustration of the obscure word in both the Syriac and Coptic texts (Pl. II).[3] Let us collect together other words and phrases in the above-quoted text, which refer to the fine arts and craftsmanship: ϩⲉⲛⲡⲉⲩⲕⲓⲟⲛ...ⲙ̄ ⲡⲟϭⲉ I understand as 'the bier of pine wood logs', τὰ πεύκινα, pine logs; ⲡⲟϭⲉ Teil, Stück, Tafel (Westendorf); broken piece *BMis* 2755 (Crum), bier of ϩⲉⲛⲡⲉⲩⲕⲓ(ⲛ)ⲟⲛ ⲁⲩⲥⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩ ⲙⲡ(ⲟϭⲉ) wood-inlay? ⲁⲩϣⲉⲧϣⲱⲧⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲗⲟⲛ ϩⲓⲗⲉⲫⲁ[ⲛ]ⲧⲓⲛⲟⲛ refers to 'carved ivory plaques'. ⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̄ ⲙ̄ⲕⲁⲧⲕ̄ the bier, literally the place of sleep; ⲑⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲙ̄ ⲡⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̄ ϩⲉⲛⲛⲱⲛⲉ the martyr's icon studded with precious stones.

As if running counter all the discussions on images of Christ engaging the Early Church, the *acheiropoietoi* showed Christians 'a true face' of Jesus, revealed

[3] Lassus / Tchalenko 1951, Pl. II,2.

in a miraculous way by the Christ Himself. The *acheiropoietoi* were not painted or sculpted, they came into existence miraculously, a fact which was interpreted by many as an announcement of the Second Coming, preceding the Last Judgement, which seemed imminent at the time. The word *acheiropoietoi* was by far not a creation of the inventors of the new cult. St. Mark quoted the words of Christ, who spoke of a new spiritual temple he was going to raise after the predicted destruction of Herod's temple: ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω (*Mk* 14,58). St. Paul speaks of our eternal home of οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰῶνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (*2 Cor*. 51). Abgar's *acheiropoietos* of Edessa was most worshipped of all of them. Now I am going to focus on the second great *acheiropoietos* of Early Christianity: the icon of Jesus from Camulia. We learn about the Camulia icon from a Syriac historical compilation composed by an anonymous, monastic author from Amida. The anonymous monk wrote his *Chronicle* some time before 568/9. It included a Syriac compilation of the originally Greek *Church History* by Zacharias the Rhetorician, who covered the years 431-491 (Books 3-6).[4] Book 12,4 of this historical compilation contains the story of the Camulia icon, which makes a component of a Sermon on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We know that the icon was transferred to Constantinople in 574 by Justinus II (565-578).[5] We also know a Greek version of the story which is said to have been compiled during the Diocletianic persecutions, in fact in all likelihood not earlier than its Syriac counterpart, that is circa 560-570, or perhaps later.[6] Let us read the relevant chapter from the anonymous Syriac *Chronicle*:

ܘܒܬܪ ܗܠܝܢ ܟܕ ܗ̇ܝ ܒܚܕ ܡܢ ܝܘܡ̈ܝܢ ܒܦܪܕܝܣܐ ܕܝܠܗ̇ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܗܘܬ. ܘܒܪܥܝܢܗ̇ ܕܟܠ ܗ̈ܘܝ ܗܠܝܢ. ܚܙܬ
ܒܢܒܥܐ ܕܡ̈ܝܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܒܦܪܕܝܣܐ. ܨܘܪܬܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܡܪܢ ܕܪܫܝܡ ܒܟܬܢܐ. ܘܐܬܘܗܝ ܒܡ̈ܝܐ. ܘܟܕ
ܐܣܩܬܗ ܕܠܐ ܪܛܝܒ ܗܘܐ ܐܬܕܡܪܬ. ܘܒܦܘܡܠܐ ܕܠܒܘܫܗ̇ ܒܪ ܚܡܝܪܐ ܠܗ ܣܝܡܬܗ. ܘܠܗܘ ܕܡܪܬܐ ܗܘܐ
ܠܗ̇ ܦܪܣܬ ܫܘܬܗ. ܘܐܫܬܟܚܬ ܐܦ ܒܗ ܒܦܘܡܠܐ ܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܗ̇ܘ ܕܫܠܡ ܡܢ ܫ̈ܢܝܐ ܒܟܠ ܡܕܡ. ܘܚܕ ܡܗܡܢܐ
ܥܠ ܠܡܦܪܥܐ. ܒܬܪ ܙܒܢܐ ܐܢ̈ܫܐ ܕܫܡܥܘ ܡܢܗ̇. ܘܡܗܡܢܐ ܐܚܪܢܐ ܐܬܛܦܝܪ ܒܗ̇ ܒܡܘܡܠܝܐ ܦܪܬܐ.
ܘܐܬܬܥܝܪ ܗܝܟܠܐ ܠܐܡܪܗ̇ ܡܢ ܐܘܦܛܝܐ ܗ̇ܝ ܕܗܘܬ ܒܪܗܘܛܝܘܬܐ. ܡܢ ܒܬܪ ܙܒܢܐ ܕܝܢ ܐܚܪܢܐ
ܐܬܬܐ ܐܚܪܬܐ ܡܢ ܕܡܘܕܝܢ ܦܪܬܐ. ܕܒܠܬܐ ܡܢ ܠܟܠ. ܕܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܕܐܟܣܘܣܐ. ܗܠܝܢ ܒܪ ܡܠܦܬ ܗܘܬ ܒܛܝܠܝܐ ܘܒܚܕ
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ܐܬܦܪܫܬ ܕܠܐ ܒܝܕ ܟܬ̈ܝܒܐ.

(ed.Brooks 1921, p.198-199)

And some time afterwards when one day she was in her garden and was pondering upon all those things (scil. she had heard from her teacher), she noticed in a fountain which was in the garden the image of Our Lord Jesus impressed on a linen cloth, which was in the water. And when she took it out she was surprised that

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[4] On the icon: Dobschütz 1899, 40-60, Belege 123-134*; on Zacharias: Baumstark 1922, 183f., bibl. n. 6, 183, n. 2, 184; Kitzinger 1954, 99f. bibl. n. 51, 100.

[5] Cedrenus, *Comp.Hist*. I 685 = *PG* 121, cc. 747-748; Kitzinger 1954, 125, 114, bibl. n. 51, 100; Dobschütz 1899, 6**f.; Zacharias Rhetor, *HE* ed. Brooks 1921, p. 198-199; Latin trans. Brooks 1954, p. 134-135; Hamilton / Brooks 1899, Engl. trans. p. 320-322; *Kirchengeschichte*, tr. Ahrens / Krüger 1899.

[6] Dobschütz 1899, 41, 17**, 27**; Kitzinger 1954, 97.

> it was not wet. And out of esteem she hid it in her head-cover. Next she came to that man who taught her and showed it to him. And they also found in her head-dress another and exactly the same image which was in the water. One icon was sent to Caesarea some time after the Passion of our Lord, while the other was kept in the village of Camulia. And a church was built there out of veneration by Hypatia who was baptized. Sometime later another woman from the village Divudin, which has been already mentioned above, in the district of Amasia, when she learnt about it, she somehow came into possession of one of the imprints of the icon from Camulia stimulated by a religious zeal and transferred it to her own village. They label it in this region '*achiropoet*', that is 'the one not made by human hands.[7]

We learn from the Syriac text that during Christ's lifetime a woman from Camulia near Caesarea found in a fountain of water in her garden an image of Jesus on a linen cloth. Later she also noticed that the image left yet another imprint on her veil, in which she had wrapped it. The story combines the two main varieties of the *acheiropoietoi*: a celestial image and its copy or imprint.[8] We also read that one of the icons was kept in the Church at Camulia, while the other at Caesarea. There was also a third image preserved at Divudin by Amasia.[9] What did it look like, we would like to know. Unfortunately, we know nothing about it. The *acheiropoietoi* were never described, so far as we know. However, Kitzinger believed that he had deciphered some important information from the concluding section of the Syriac sermon. He followed Hamilton and Brooks' reading: λαῦρατον for ܠܒܘܪܬܐ. They interpreted it as 'a wreathed image'. Kitzinger regarded this reading as the most acceptable. He also recalled the authority of C. Moss of the Department of Oriental Manuscripts in the British Museum, who personally consulted manuscript *Add.Ms.17202.* Moss was also inclined to accept this reading.[10] And consequently Kitzinger concluded that the author of the Syriac text had actually 'referred to the image of Christ as a λαυρᾶτον, which is a technical term for the portrait of the ruler.'[11] In other words the Camulia icon seemed to have been modelled on the imperial portraits.[12] In my opinion either Nöldeke, who read it l-ἑορτή,[13] or Ahrens and Krüger, who read it as l-ὁρατής,[14] were right reading ܠ as 'for/ to/ in glory of', not as one word: λ-αυρᾶτον.

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[7] Latin version in Zacharias *HE*, trans. Brooks 1924, 134-135; cf. English trans. Hamilton / Brooks 1899, 320-22.

[8] Kitzinger 1954, 113: 'Acheiropoietoi are of two kinds: either they are images believed to have been made by hands other than those of ordinary mortals or else they are claimed to be mechanical, though miraculous, impressions of the original.'

[9] ܕܝܘܕܝܢ(divudin), Zacharias *HE*, ed. Brooks 1921, p. 199, l.7; Diyabhudin; Diobulium read by Sieglin, in Dobschütz 1899, 5**, n. 8.

[10] Hamilton / Brooks 1899, 321, n. 10; cf. ed. Brooks 1921, p. 200, 1.1; Kitzinger 1954, 124, n. 180a.

[11] Kitzinger 1954, 124.

[12] Kitzinger 1954, 124, n. 180a.

[13] Followed by Dobschütz 1899, 7** n. 3.

[14] Kitzinger 1954, 100, n. 51; Ahrens / Krüger 1899, 248, 393.

Let us, however, read the word in the context of the whole passage. The word in question only makes up a small component of the confusing phraseological and lexical pattern.

ܗܕܐ ܕܒܫܡܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܕܥܒܕ ܕܟܠܗ ܕܐܝܟܢܐ ܣܘܪܝܐ ܘܣܘܪܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܘܡܪܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܘܬܚܝܐ ܕܥܬܝܕ ܠܡܬܚܙܝ ܘܠܡܐܬܐ.

(Brooks (ed.) 1921, 199-200).

And here is Hamilton's rendering followed by Kitzinger: 'and this same thing is a type of the progress of the mystery and picture and wreathed image of the King and Lord of those above and those below, which shall be quickly revealed.' This difficult Syriac *periodos* refers to processions (ἐγκυκλία, ܣܒܒܘܬܐ) with the image through the cities ordered by the emperor. Christians also call it the visitation of an icon. However, even if we have all the words, can we actually understand the sense? All these words put together do not make sense. That is my opinion. We may at least try to re-read the text.

ὁρατό(ς), Syriac ܐܝܬܐ aworto means basically something, which can be seen, ܐܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܐ a visible (image), an image accessible to sight (ἡ εἰκὼν ἡ ὁρατή). That is my proposal. Nöldeke's reading of ܐܝܬܐ as ἑορτή that is 'celebrations', or 'feast' is not to be despised either. Similarly, the rendering of Ahrens: ὁρατής as 'epiphany', 'revelation' or 'apparition' is actually close to my understanding of the word. Now we can read it again: 'the processions with the mystery and the image with its celebrations (Nöldeke's version) (or its 'epiphany', after Ahrens)' does make sense. 'The processions with the mystery (ܡܘܪܝ) literally His mystery, the mystery of Christ's appearance) and the icon which can be seen in public, the icon of the King and Lord of Heaven and Earth, is a sign (ܣܝܡ) that He will soon come again (ܡܗܪ ܐܬܐ).'

In this text we find some interesting words and phrases referring to the visual arts. They make up a small terminological data base:

ܝܘܩܢܐ(yukno), εἴκων, imago, a borrowing from Greek;

ܝܘܩܢ ܕܝ ܥ ܕܥܒܕ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܝܘܩܢ (yuqno dyeshu' deṣir bkhtono) image of Christ imprinted on a linen cloth, ܡܢܕܝܠ (mandil), ܡܢܕܝܠܝ (mandilin), Lat. mantile, mantilium, generally applied to theJerusalemite sudarium, Greek σουδάριον, towel, napkin, handkerchief; μανδύλιν, μανδύλιον, μαντήλιον, μαντίλιον, τὸ ἅγιον μαντήλιον, the holy towel, on which the likeness of Christ was impressed.

ܕܡܘܬܐ (dmutho), similitudo, imago, image.

ܨܠܡ (slem), ܨܠܡ correctly (ṣalmo) (Brockelmann 630a), (spelling mistake? dialect form?), imago, simulacrum, image, likeness, representation.

ܦܝܡܐ ܕܝܘܩܢ (peḥmo dyuqno), similitudo imaginis, of an imprint of the icon;

ܗܝܟܠ (haykhlo), aedificium, templum, church, of a building;

ܐܟܝܪܘܦܝܬ ܕܠܐ ܒܝܕ ܐܢܫ ܥܒܝܕ (akhiropoeth dlo 'avidh byidhayo), ἀχειροποίητος, quod non est ab homine factum, not made by the hand of man; ἡ ἀχειροποίητος εἰκών, the likeness of Christ which he sent to Abgar also

called τὸ ἅγιον μανδήλιον (Sophocles 291a). We should write *acheiropoietoi* and not, as so frequently and incorrectly seen in different studies: *acheirpoietai*; the term derivates from ἡ ἀχειροποίητος εἰκών, consequently pl. ἀχειροποίητοι. ἀχειροποίητα (neutral plural) may also be justified in certain instances.

The Greek text preserved in the corpus of writings by Gregory of Nyssa, actually of a much later date (c. 600-750) speaks of an *acheiropoietos* icon which appeared during the reign of Diocletian, and was later rediscovered under Theodosius I (379-395) and subsequently transferred to Caesarea (Mazaca). The Greek variation of the story speaks of only one Camulia icon, while the earlier Syriac text lists three of them: in Camulia, Caesarea and Divudin near Amasia.[15]

Theophylact Simocattes emphasised that Christ's icon was not the work of a weaver or a painter (*Hist*. II 34-6).[16] Dobschütz aptly commented on the iconography of the *acheirpoietos* of Edessa. His words may also be applied to the Camulia icon: 'Das Bild selbst bleibt im Dunkel des heiligen Mysterion verborgen. Der Typus desselben lässt sich nicht mit Sicherheit nachweisen.'[17] Some scholars believe that Christian iconography has preserved copies of the famous 6th century *acheiropoietoi*. Visser identified them in the monumental images of Christ Pantocrator in the Cathedrals of Palermo, Cefalu and Monreale (Pl. III). He was convinced that they refer directly to the 'authentic portrait' of Christ from the East.[18] Like some others I am also inclined to believe that the Christ of Camulia was probably copied on an ancient icon of St. John the Baptist pointing to an icon of Christ from Kiev, made according to the principles of the Justinianic classicizing style (Pl. IV),[19] while the icon of Christ from Sergius and Bacchus' icon also in Kiev probably reflects Abgar's mandilion image (Pl. V). It is very likely that we also face the *acheiropoietoi* of Camulia and Urfa in two icons reduplicated by anonymous great masters of icon painting in the icons of St. Peter in St. Catherine's of Sinai (Pl. VI) and the impressive late Byzantine Christ from the Trietyakovska Gallery in Moscow, one of the most impressive and ingenious icon paintings I have ever seen (Pl. VII). 'The two most famous *acheiropoietoi* of the pre-iconoclastic period', as Kitzinger put it,[20] appeared roughly at the same time in the mid 6th century in their own sanctuaries in Syria, Phrygia and Cappadocia.[21] The ancient text of the *Doctrina Addaei*, namely the

[15] Dobschütz 1899, 43f.

[16] Dobschütz 1899, 54. The *History* of Theophylact Simocatta dates in the years of Heraclius (610-641), Dobschütz 1899, 127** (Theoph. *Hist*. III 5, ed. de Boor 73: τὸ θεανδρικὸν... εἴκασμα...οὐχ ὑφάντου χεῖρας τεκτήνασθαι, ἢ ζωγράφου μηλιάδα ποικίλαι).

[17] Dobschütz 1899, 196.

[18] Visser 1934, 94.

[19] Felicetti-Liebenfells 1956, Taf. 31B, p. 26.

[20] Kitzinger 1954, 114.

[21] Visser 1934, 73; Kitzinger 1954, 114.

section which contains Christ's correspondence with Abgar Ukkama shows that the beginnings of the cult which played such an important role in early Byzantine Christianity should be traced back to the pre-Nicean church of Edessa/Urhai.

The veneration of the *acheiropoietoi* in the $6^{th}/7^{th}$ century was related to widespread expectations of the Last Judgement which were in one way or another related to the historical disaster of the Oriental Christianity looming large on the earthly horizon. In the period of the Germanic and Arab invasions and Persian wars such anxieties were not purely irrational and baseless. To Georgios Pisides the icon of Camulia was a proof of the Incarnation (*Exp. pers*. I, 145f., ed. Bonn). The cadence of the sermon on the Camulia icon by an anonymous Syriac monk, Pseudo-Zacharias, concludes with an apocalyptic vision of the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement.

In the conclusion of his *Church History*, John of Ephesus described a second foundation and the construction of the town of Arabissus by a newly appointed Emperor Mauricios (584-602) (*HE* V, XXII-XXIII). The Emperor made every effort to construct a new local capital and raise it in a truly imperial scale. Arabissus was his native town. He drew skillful and experienced workers from all the provinces of the Empire. His special envoys drafted artisans called ܠܐܛܘܡܐ (laṭume) λατόμους, a Greek borrowing in Syriac. John of Ephesus explained the term as ܦܣ̈ܘܠܐ (psule), stonecutters. Mauricios also sent masons ܒܢ̈ܝܐ (banoye), carpenters and engineers (ܐܪ ܓܘܠܒܐ), if this is the correct reading of ἐργολαβοί, as speculates E.W. Brooks (= architectos).[22] Mauricios also enlisted ironsmiths and a category of craftsmen labelled ܡ̈ܟܢܝܩܐ (makhnike), μεχανικοί, constructors, engineers. The Emperor was so eager to enlarge and adorn the town with all the buildings necessary to create an imperial urban centre that he dispatched a legion to guard and assist the builders. The constructors started with the demolition of an old churchܐܕܬܐ (adhto) and construction of a new much larger and higher one. Mauricios donated many splendid liturgical utensils made of gold and silver to this church. The imperial donation included golden altar vessels, which the people admired: ܡܐ̈ܢܐ ܡܫ̈ܒܚܐܠܡܕܒܚܐ (mone mšavḥe lmadhbḥo). A large *ciborium* (ܩܝܒܘܪܝܢ ܕܗܒܐ), a baldaquin adorned the central aisle. It was modelled on the ciboria of the churches in the imperial capital of Constantinople, as John comments. ܫܪ̈ܝܢܐ (šerione) were also sent and installed in the church. Were they ornamental bronze plates, *lorica*? A spacious *xenodochion*, a pilgrims' hotel, which consisted of a number of buildings (ܒܒܢ̈ܝܢܐ ܡܪ̈ܡܪܡܐ), (bbenyone marmorme) according to John, was also included in the architectural design of the imperial town. Arabissus was located on the crossroads of pilgrimage routes between the sanctuaries of Syria and the Holy Land on one side of the Taurus Mountain range, and the sanctuaries of Cappadocia, such as Caesarea, Camulia and Sebaste on the other side. The Emperor did not forget to build an ܐܡܣܝܢ (amsin),

[22] Ed. Brooks 1964, CSCO 106, SS. 55, 1964, p. 207.

which was of an appropriate size for such an important town. What this was I do not know. Brooks conjectures that John of Ephesus meant an *aerarium*.[23] The architectural plan of New Arabissus also entailed long, and monumental porticoes (ܐܣܛܘܐ ܡܬܝܚܐ ܘܪܘܪܒܐ) (esṭue methiḥe werawrbe), spacious basilicas and a palace (ܦܠܛܝܢ) (palaṭin), which was certainly an imperial residence. The whole town was strongly fortified.

Just two years after the foundation and still while construction was in progress, Arabissus was totally destroyed by an earthquake (585/6) (*HE* V, XXIII). All the newly raised buildings together with the older ones turned within minutes into rubble. The natural disaster was widely believed, including by John of Ephesus himself, to be an ominous sign of Divine anger. Even the Emperor felt, that God's hand was behind the catastrophe, John observed. Although Mauricios was frightened and depressed, nevertheless he decided to restore his hometown in the same shape and scale, just as he had planned to do at the beginning of his undertaking. Incidentally, the earthquake disaster, which devastated many towns in the Roman Orient, came just before John of Ephesus' death. The new construction work must have started in the last months of John's life. His detailed list of skilled craftsmen employed for the construction of Arabissus suggests there was an imperial document behind it, which John probably read himself. This is an intriguing point, because John, who enjoyed Theodora's and Justinian's grace until 565, had gradually lost Iustin II's grace (565-578). Justinian's successor eventually expelled him from Constantinople (571), where John had played an important role as a leader of the city's Monophysite Church. John died in exile in Chalcedon in 586. The Arabissus narrative must have belonged to the last pages of the *Church History* which he wrote, and very likely the very last ones. They seem to testify to his last effort to reconcile with the emperor. The chapter opens with a meaningful apostrophe to ܪܚܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܡܘܪܝܩ (roḥem Aloho Mauriq), 'God loving Mauricios.' However, the entire Arabissus chapter sounds ominous. In the narrow sense, its words foreshadow John's imminent death. In the broader sense, they comprise a hidden, intuitive prediction of the forthcoming doom of the entire Roman Orient, which was already looming in the darkness of the future human destinies, while John was still alive. John was born in Amida (Diyarbakir), which was first seized by the Persians (602), soon after John's death, then recovered for a short time by Heraclius (628), only to be captured by Arab invaders (640), and lost forever to the Greek Empire.

The Arabissus chapter opens with interesting information on Mauricios' throne name and a numismatic commentary on his imperial coinage. References to legends and images on coins are extremely rare in the Graeco-Roman letters.[24] The best-known instance comes from Cassius Dio's *History* (47.25.3).[25] He referred

[23] Brooks trans. 1964, CSCO 106, 1964, p. 207.

[24] Cf. a relevant discussion: Sutherland 1951; Jones 1974; Levick 1982; Crawford 1983.

[25] Crawford 1983, 51, the legend EIDMAR on the reverse, fig. 3.

to Cassius' and Brutus' denarii with two daggers, which symbolized the liberation of the Republic from Julius Caesar's tyranny. John of Ephesus informs us that at first Mauricios assumed the name of his predecessor Tiberius I (578-582), however, later he changed his mind and decided to return to his original birth name: Mauricios. Judging by his coins, it is clear that this is what happened, John adds. All his gold issues, that was produced by the Imperial mints, were signed with the name he received from his parents, 'Mauricios.' John of Ephesus clearly refers to the inscriptions on Mauricios' gold coins: ܒܛܒܐ ܕܡܘܢܝܛ ܕܝܠܗ ܕܒܕܗܒܐ (bṭavo dmuniṭo dileh dbdahvo).[26]

Mauricios' decision to change the status of his modest hometown into an imperial residence was not a novelty in Roman imperial history. Emperor Philipp the Arab upgraded his small native village, now Shahba, to the rank of a splendid urban centre, Philippopolis (Zos. 1.18.3). The newly founded Philippopolis was richly adorned with many public buildings and private houses. Their impressive floor mosaics, some of them of the highest quality, are rightly admired.[27] Unfortunately, Shahba is now inaccessible because of the ongoing war in Syria. Galerius also commissioned skilled craftsmen to raise a large and strongly fortified residence for his mother Romula in her native country. The architectural complex of Felix Romuliana comprised three basilicas, baths, the imperial palace, a large temple, and buildings for the military garrison. Its fortification walls and towers are still well-preserved. Two burial tumuli, which contained the ashes of Romula and Galerius,[28] still crown the tops of the mountain range east of the palace (Pl. VIII-IX).The still impressive ruins of the palace, located in the scenic mountain landscape of Eastern Serbia, have been converted into the attractive open-air museum of Felix Romuliana (Pl. X).[29] Naissus/Niś is yet another fitting

[26] Cf. Grierson 1982, 350, Pl. 1,2, Maurice, 6-solidus medallion, 583/602, AV, DNMAVRICTIBERPPAVG; Grierson 1982, Pl. 2, 24, Maurice, solidus, AV, DNMAVRTIBPPAV; Grierson 1982, Pl. 3, 39, Maurice, solidus, AV, DNMAVRITIBPPAVG; Grierson 1982, Maurice, Pl. 3, 41, tremissis, AV, DNMAVRICTIBPPAVG.

[27] Dunbabin 2006, 166-168, figs. 171-174, pl. 29.

[28] Galerius died in Nicomedia in May 311. His body was not buried in his earlier constructed mausoleum in Thessaloniki, but transferred to Romuliana, burnt on a funeral pyre, his ashes laid to rest at the side of his mother's grave under a second tumulus. Eutropius informs us that Galerius was born near Serdica (Eutr. 9.22.1: *Maximianus Galerius in Dacia haud longe a Serdica natus*). R. Hanslik observes that Galerius was *in seinem Heimatort Romilianum bestattet* (*Epith .Caes*. 40.60: *ortus Dacia Ripensi ibique sepultus est; quem locum Romulianum ex vocabulo Romulae matris appellarat*), Hanslik 1969, 1110. Felix Romuliana is actually located to the north of Niś (Moesia Superior), that is far away from Serdica (Thracia). All of these sources, the anonymous author of the *Epitome*, Eutropius and Hanslik's entry, refer to the late 4th century administrative divisions. At that time Serdica belonged to the *Dioecesis Daciae*. One way or another it is risky to say that Romuliana is near Sophia.

[29] The local museum of Zayečar has a small but well-arranged and attractive collection of antiquities from Romuliana, including a top-quality porphyrite portrait of Diocletian.

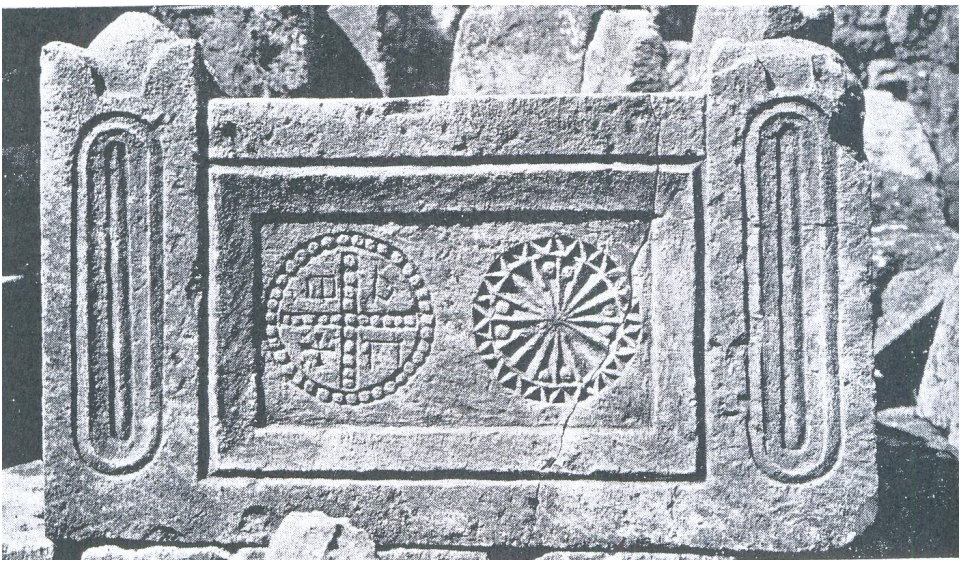
example of a parental town which was significantly enlarged and developed by Constantine the Great. He was born in Naissus in the house of the Tribune Constantius Chlorus and his wife Helena (27 Feb. c. 280). Naissus was a large garrison town located on the strategic crossroads connecting the main Balkan trade and military routes.[30] The impressive reconstruction of Viminacium in the local archaeological museum can offer an idea of a similar large scale garrison town in the Roman Balkans (Pl. XI-XII).[31] You can easily reach the attractive open-air museum of Viminacium if you travel from Budapest via Niš to Saloniki or Sofia on the way to Turkey and the Levant.

Plates

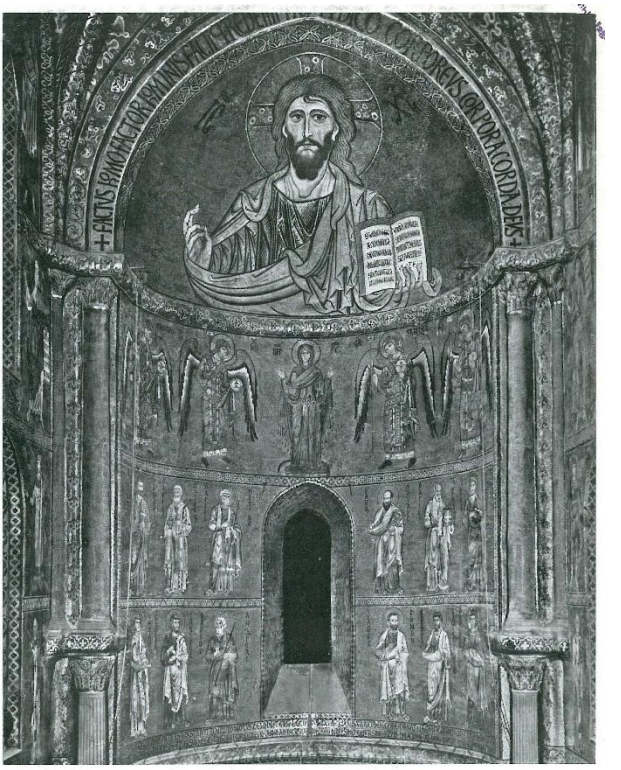
Pl. I. The Vase of Homs, an ecclesiastical vessel adorned with the sphrageis of Christ and the Apostles, Syria, early 6th century, Grabar 1966, il. 367.

[30] Cf. for further bibliography: Fluss 1935, 1589-1599; Danoff 1969, 1563-1564; Burian / Wirbelauer 2006.

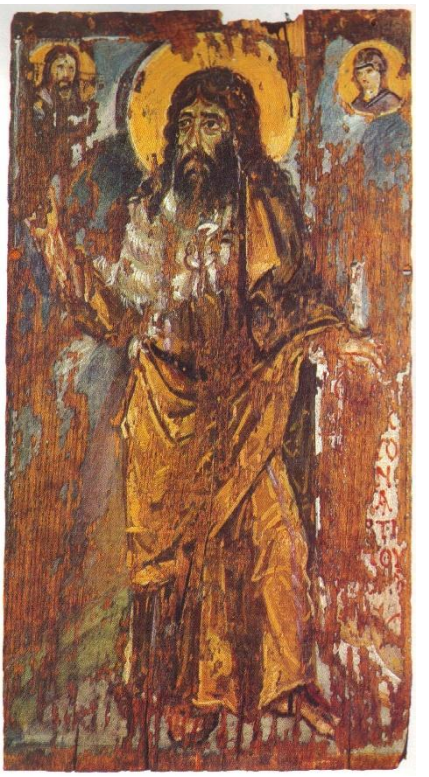
[31] Cf. Fitz 1975; Saria 1958. Neither paper has a discussion on the recent archaeological research project which has already uncovered some crucial areas of Viminacium. The discovery of Emperor Hostilianus' grave monument sounds absolutely sensational. Hostilianus was a victim of the widespread epidemic in 251.



Pl. II. A rosette decoration on the chancel in Qirqbize, Lassus 1951, fig. 2.

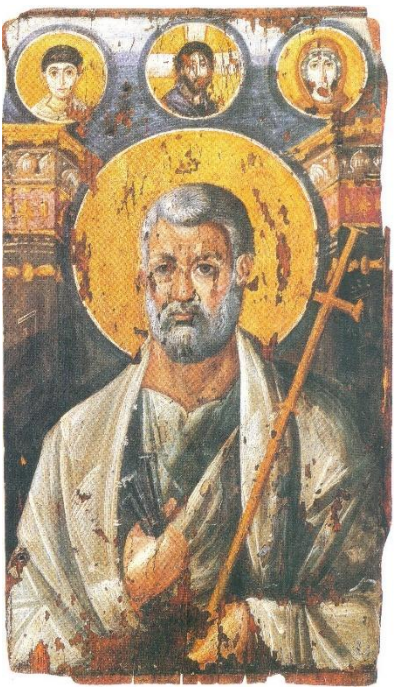


Pl. III. Christ Pantocrator, Cathedral of Cefalu, Sicily, Demus 1947, fig. 48.

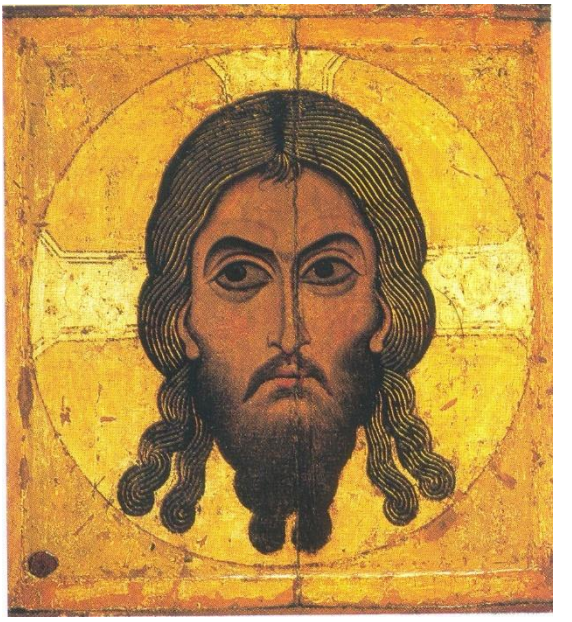


Pl. IV. John the Baptist with the icon of Christ from Kiev, 6th century, the Justinianic classicizing style, Felicetti-Liebenfells 1956, Taf. 31B.

Pl. V. St. Sergius and St. Bacchus with the icon of Christ, encaustic, 6th/7th century, Kiev, Felicetti-Liebenfells 1956, Taf. 30A.



Pl. VI. St. Peter, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, 6th century, Popova / Smirnova / Cortesi 2003.



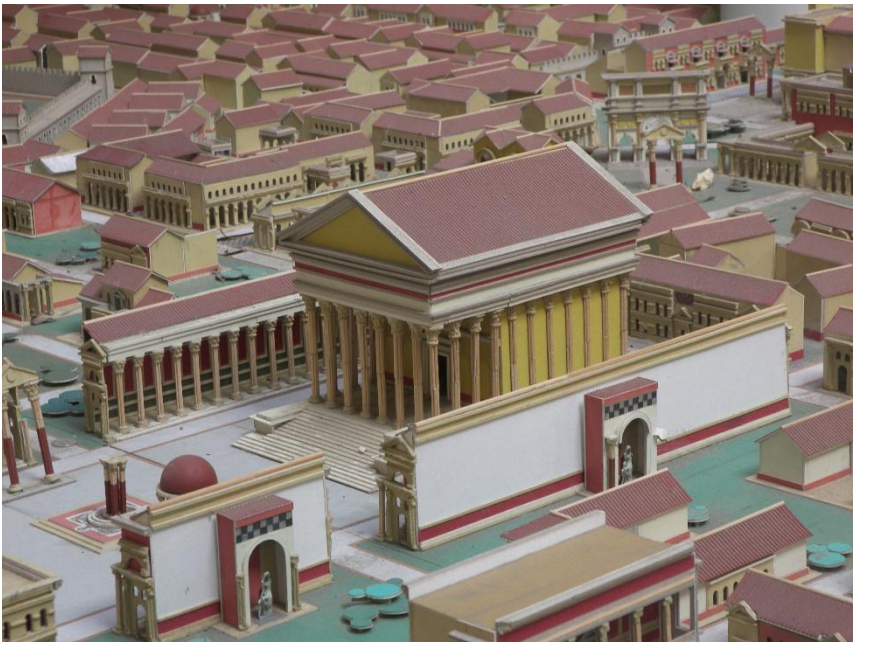
Pl. VII. Christ from the Trietyakovska Gallery in Moscow, Late Byzantine icon. Private archive of T. Polański.

Pl. VIII. Tumuli of Emperor Galerius and Queen Mother in Romuliana. Photo T. Polański.

Pl. IX. View from the top of the mountain range crowned by the Imperial tumuli of Galerius and Romula. Photo T. Polański.

Pl. X. The open-air museum of Felix Romuliana. Photo T. Polański.

Pl. XI. Reconstruction of Viminacium. Photo T. Polański.



Pl. XII. The main temple of Viminacium. Photo T. Polański.

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Abstract

At the end of the Coptic 8th Miracle of Saint Mercurius the General, a martyr executed c. AD 250 in Caesarea Mazaca, we find a description of Kuris Hermapollo's votive offering located at St. Mercurius' sanctuary of Caesarea. It was a bier of pine wood logs adorned with carved ivory plaques and the Martyr's icon fixed to it. In a Syriac historical compilation composed by an anonymous author from Amida (before 568/9) we learn about the Camoulia *acheiropoietos* icon of Jesus. We read in the text that during Christ's lifetime a woman from Kamoulia near Caesarea found an image of Jesus on a linen cloth in a fountain of water in her garden. The story combines the two main varieties of the *acheiropoietoi*: a celestial image and its copy or imprint. The two most famous *acheiropoietoi* of the pre-iconoclastic period appeared roughly at the same time in the mid-6th century in their own sanctuaries in Syria, Phrygia and Cappadocia. In both Coptic and Syriac texts we find some interesting words and phrases referring to the visual arts.

ANABASIS 14–15 (2023–2024)
STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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TRES FAMOSIORES RESPUBLICAE, OR KASPER SIEMEK ON ANTIQUITY

Tres famosiores Respublicae, Atheniensium sapientia;
Lacedaemoniorum fortitudine, Romanorum utroque:
Diversis initiis exitum similem habuere:
valetudine Athenienses senio Romana: Spartanoque concidit.[1]

(Kasper Siemek, *Lacon*, 1635)

Keywords: Ancient Greece and Rome in Modern Europe, Spartan reception, Ancient history in Poland, Greece and Rome in Polish political thought, Classical Sparta, Athens and Rome in the XV-XVIII century

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania was developing under special conditions. All around, absolutisms were springing up which, in the form of Prussia, Russia, and Austria, would consume the Commonwealth towards the end of the eighteenth century. That endeavor would prove successful owing to their military superiority, but also to their making extensive use of corruption, preying on the weaknesses of the Commonwealth's republican system, and spreading slogans of tolerance and the rule of law at home and in Europe. In the seventeenth century, however, all that was still *in statu nascendi*. Having escaped the carnage of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and

[1] "The three most famous Republics, the Athenians' for wisdom, the Lacedaemonians' for valour, the Romans' for the one and the other, had different beginnings but a similar end; the Athenian one declined because of health, the Roman and Spartan, because of age" (*Lacon*, Dial. III (174–175). Further on in this article, excerpts from the Latin text will be cited in the footnotes (translator's note – Klaudyna Michałowicz).

defended itself against external threats (and actually becoming an external threat itself by intervening in Muscovy, whose capital it captured in 1610, with a Polish prince failing only by a hair's breadth to be crowned the tsar of Russia, Poland continued to be, at least until the middle of that century, a superpower.

The citizens of the Commonwealth living in the seventeenth century, who, seeking an ancient affiliation, called themselves Sarmatians, were well aware of the uniqueness and value of their statehood. Political writers, however, while they took pride in the Commonwealth, were also aware of its shortcomings and the lurking dangers. The contemporary world did not provide them with many analogies to debate these issues, and as a result, they sought a more distant point of reference, finding ancient examples to which the Commonwealth could relate in recognizing its own strengths and weaknesses.

Vae victis

In Polish historiography, however, even up to the present day, the "Sarmatian times" are viewed as a period of decline, and the "Sarmatian" political thought is rarely a subject of interest. The reasons for this are undoubtedly complex, but – leaving aside the issue of values – what lies at the root of the criticism is indeed a grievance, a regret at the ineffectiveness of a state which, at decisive moments of its eighteenth-century history, repeatedly failed to stand the test of clashes with the neighbouring absolutist empires.

This ambiguity of feeling has been expressed by Zbigniew Rau in terms so apt that his observations merit being quoted in full:

> There is no doubt that such a radical difference in the perception of Sarmatism cannot be entirely explained by the temporal perspective of its view alone. For while it is understandable that the Sarmatians, despite ideological disputes or even differences of rank and status, unanimously perceived the Commonwealth's system in an affirmative manner, the fact that critical commentators on Sarmatism showed similar unanimity in their condemnation and rejection of it is much less understandable. After all, they were often separated by centuries in time perspective and located on antipodes in the ideological spectrum. It is therefore difficult to resist the impression that they must have been united by a certain common canon of experience, radically different from that of the Sarmatians, which not only made it impossible for them to understand the Sarmatians, but also, as a result of this inability to understand them, commanded them to condemn them. And indeed: when a critic of Sarmatism evaluated this historical phenomenon, he did so from the position of his own present; and this present constituted an opposite of the Sarmatians' present. A Sarmatian was a citizen of a state which he still had the right to treat as a sovereign power. A critic of Sarmatism was often a subject of a foreign power, a citizen of a state that was not sovereign or at least one threatened in its sovereignty. For the Sarmatian, politics meant a domain determined by the needs and will of the citizens of the Commonwealth. For the critic of Sarmatism, politics most often constituted a margin of activity, the framework of which was

> determined by the foreign power of which he was a subject, or by the non-sovereign state of which he was a citizen, or even by the state that was sovereign but concurrently particularly sensitive to the canons of its own geopolitics. The Sarmatian could most often be proud of his state and his position within it. By the same token, he by no means felt handicapped when he compared his state and himself with other European states and their subjects. The critic of Sarmatism could not derive any pride from such comparisons; on the contrary, he had every right to feel handicapped by them.[2]

Antiquity in seventeenth-century Polish political thought

The above will suffice for a general introduction. The purpose of this text is not to analyze the situation of Poland, but rather to examine the place of Antiquity in Polish political thought in the seventeenth century. During the Old Polish period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), the ancient tradition played a major role in Polish political and constitutional thought, which almost entirely belonged to the republican current.[3]

Scholars have written extensively about the fundamental influence of ancient writers' reflections on the way of thinking and writing about the state, as present in the Commonwealth, as well as on the Sarmatians' adoption of basic concepts from ancient writers, especially Cicero, that describe the civic system and civic values. In addition to being familiar with the works of Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon (*Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*), Plutarch (an educated Sarmatian was brought up on Plutarch[4]), and Herodotus, Polish political writers were readers of and influenced by many of their contemporaries – writers of the Renaissance cultural turn towards the ancient past, who vividly analysed the texts of ancient authors. Already, sixteenth-century republican thought in the Commonwealth was emerging in contact with the classical republican tradition, which comprised the ancient and early modern Western traditions.[5]

The exemplars to be invoked were, first and foremost, the Roman republic and 'Roman models of civic language', viewed through the eyes of Cicero. Jerzy Axer states that it was "Latin antiquity that was a component of the cultural identity of the Commonwealth";[6] the Greek originals, as Axer goes on to write, were known to a Polish nobleman through Roman copies. In general, continues this expert on the reception of antiquity, "Old Polish intellectual culture was imbued with *latinitas* (language, legal and constitutional system, literature in Latin);

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[2] Rau 2018,16–17. All quotations, originally in Latin or Polish, have been translated into English solely for the purpose of the current publication (translator's note).

[3] Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2012, 81.

[4] Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2014, 33.

[5] Pietrzyk-Reeves 2012.

[6] Axer 2014, 479–506.

the use of Latin was widespread, it was a living language, spoken (and often thought in); fluency in two languages (a *sui generis* bilingualism) of the privileged strata participating in culture persisted for a very long time, until the beginning of the eighteenth century".[7] Greek texts were known in much more elite circles; but some elements, due to their distinctiveness and "otherness" against the background of the ancient republics, surfaced on their own, albeit in a stereotypical form (*vide* the strict Spartan upbringing).

In the political writings of the Old Polish period, the Commonwealth was presented as a continuator of, or even an heir to, the "old commonwealths," as described by the historian and writer of the Baroque period, Szymon Starowolski (1588–1656).[8] An anonymous writer active in the period of the first interregnum, author of the book *Naprawa Rzeczypospolitej do elekcyi nowego króla* ['The repair of the Commonwealth for the election of the new king'], believed that the construction of the Commonwealth exceeds the penetration of those wise lawgivers of republics, as they write about Lycurgus, Solon, and Romulus.[9]

Kasper Siemek

Polish political thought comprises the work of many authors.[10] The focus herein is that of Kasper Siemek, author of the treatises *Civis Bonus* and *Lacon*.[11] In the preface to an edition of the first of these, Zbigniew Rau comments: "This treatise represents a genuine opening, a *sui generis* starting point for political discourse in seventeenth-century Commonwealth".[12]

An undoubted originality of thought characterises both works. The first of them, a treatise *titled Civis bonus (1632),* contains a systematic lecture on the state, law, and the citizen, and at the same time an apotheosis of the status quo in the Commonwealth, rooted in the experience of success in the 1630s. Three years later,

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[7] Axer 1995, 76, 77.

[8] Starowolski 1650, 160 (quoted after Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2014, 29).

[9] *Naprawa Rzeczypospolitej* 1573 (quoted after Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2014, 29).

[10] Marcin Kromer (1512–1589) – Kromer 1578; anonymous author of the 1588 book *Philopolites*; Wawrzyniec Goślicki/L. G. Goslicius (ca. 1530–1607) – Goślicki/Goslicius 1568; Krzysztof Warszewicki (1543–1603) Warszewicki 1579; Warszewicki 1598; Ł. Górnicki (1527–1603) – Górnicki 1616a; Górnicki 1616b; Andrzej Maksymilian Fredro (1620–1679) – Fredro 1664a; Fredro 1664b; Aaron Alexander Olizarowski (1618–1659) – Olizarowski 1651; Piotr Mieszkowski (d. 1652) - Mieszkowski 1637; Łukasz Opaliński/Paulus Naeocelius (1612–1662) – Opaliński 1659; Jan Sachs – Sachs 1665; Krzysztof Hartknoch (1644–1687) – Hartknoch 1678.

[11] Little is known about the life of Kasper Siemek (d. 1642); see Kulesza 2026. He came from an impecunious gentry family. Like many other young men of his generation, he studied at the universities of Cracow (1610) and Bologna (1620). He worked as a preceptor to the sons of wealthy noblemen.

[12] Rau 2018, 19.

Kasper Siemek published a work entitled *Lacon seu de Reipublicae rectae instituendae arcanis dialogus* (1635).[13] Paweł Sydor describes it as follows: "The past meets the future in a conversation between two wise men and practitioners, so to speak, one of whom [Augustus] represents a political organisation that is the state, while the other [Lacon] presents the point of view of a citizen and is a champion of freedom".[14] In Lacon's nine conversations with Octavian Augustus concerning the political systems of Sparta and the Commonwealth, Siemek emphasises the role of the Senate: comprising members of the social elite, this body watches over the king's power, preventing the threat of tyranny (*Non potest esse princeps malus, si senatus bonus est*), stabilises the system, and upholds order and the rule of law.

Unlike *Civis bonus*, which takes the form of a continuous lecture, in the second of his treatises Siemek points to a specific historical moment in the history of the Roman republic when the interlocutors, Octavian Augustus and the Spartan exile Lacon,[15] meet: "I shall present the matter as if in a stage play, that is, I shall explain it in a conversation most like a true one; combining Augustus, *princeps* of the Romans, with Lacon, one of them more favourable to the Republic, the other to liberty" (Introductory Dialogue, 110–111).[16]

It is mainly Lakon who speaks. In Dialogues II to IX, his statements occupy ca. 75 percent of space, while those of Augustus no more than 25 percent. Those proportions fluctuate, however. In the two later chapters, i.e., VII and VIII, the statements of Augustus occupy about 30 to 35 percent of the text, while in the last dialogue, IX, 44 percent of the text belongs to Augustus.

ANTIQUITY IN BOTH TREATISES

Sources of information

In *Civis Bonus*, the author makes overt references to Herodotus, Aristotle, Plutarch, as well as Cicero (*Cato*) and Caesar (*Anticato*). In addition, he betrays familiarity with Thucydides, Aristotle (*Politica*) and Plutarch (*De vitioso pudore*; *Vitae parallelae*; *De defectu oraculorum*), as well as Roman authors: Cicero (*Tusculanae disputationes*; *De re publica*; *De officiis*; *In Catilinam I*; *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*; *De senectute*), Caesar (*Commentarii de bello civili*), Livy (*Ab urbe condita*), Virgil (*Aeneis*), Ovid (*Ars amatoria*), Tacitus (*Annales*), Seneca (*De providentia*; *De ira*) and Valerius Maximus (*Factorum et dictorum memorabilia*).

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[13] Siemek 2021.

[14] Sydor 2021, 29.

[15] Sydor 2021, 28

[16] Rem narrabo quasi fabula, vel colloquio expediam, proximo veri. Principem Romanorum Augustum, Laconi componendo, alter Reipublicae impensius cupiebat, alter libertati.

Key numbers

In *Civis Bonus*, Greece is referred to 99 times (of which 24 are references to Sparta), and Rome is referred to 124 times.

Four specific Spartans are mentioned by name: Lycurgus (4 times), Agesilaus (4), Lysander (1), and Machanidas (1). Similarly, four Athenians are mentioned: Solon (2), Alcibiades (2), Peisistratus (1), and Plato (1).

There are also 19 other Greeks: Dion of Syracuse (referred to 5 times), Pyrrhus (5), Alexander the Great (4), Plutarch (4), Dionysius the Younger (3), Philip (3), Pelopidas (2), Timoleon of Corinth (2) and Perseus (2); Eumenes, Antigonus, Demetrius, Herodotus, Aristotle, Charon of Thebes, Synon, Protous, Callimachus and Cineas are each mentioned once.

Romans are far more numerous, with a total of 48. The ones to appear with the greatest frequency are Caesar (16 times), Cato the Younger (13), Pompey (9), Cicero (9), the two Bruti, the Younger and the Older (10), Tarquin the Proud (6), Metellus (4), Hannibal (3), Scaevola (3), Emilius Paulus (3), Porsenna (3), Cassius (3), Scipio Africanus (3), Fabius Maximus (3), apart from those, Marius, Manilius, Cornelia, Catiline, Tiberius, Cremutius Cordus, Regulus, Vitellius, Avilius, Nero, Romulus, Seneca, Camillus, Coriolanus, Sextus Roscius, Titus Cloelius, Lucrece, Sulla, Trajan and others.

Heroes from outside the ancient world are considerably fewer in number: 40 from the history of Poland and 8 from other countries.

NON NUMERANDA SED PONDERANDA SUNT TESTIMONIA

Civis bonus

Siemek's references to Ancient Greek history are somewhat fewer in number than those to Roman history; many, as exemplified by the motto to this article, occur in conjunction with Roman history. Thus, there is the double stereotype of the brave Spartan and Roman woman, compared with an example from the author's own period: "For in our times, husbands often do not leave their homeland, in those days, women never did, but at the risk of their own lives they repelled the incursions of enemies no less bravely than husbands resisting with the edge of their weapons. This often happened in Rome, not infrequently with the Lacedaemonians" (Cap. V, 152–153). Siemek compares this with the Turkish siege of the city of Eger in Hungary, where eighty women "arranged a sortie from the besieged fortress and made a great slaughter among the Turks" (Cap. V, 154–155). A quite trivial, and certainly irrelevant, story from his Italian journey,

where a seat at table in an inn was given up in favour of his high-born companion, is illustrated with a reference to the esteem in which the Spartans were held in the world: "And the Lacedaemonians, each and every one of them, because of their freedom and lofty spirit were regarded as kings and were held in great esteem throughout the world" (Cap. II, 106–107).[17] Another example, possibly meant only to provide an intellectual decoration to the text, is: "Who shall express the integrity of Cato, the virtue of Seneca, the valour of Pelopidas, the courage of Dion? (Cap. XII (286–287).[18]

Relatively little space in *Civis bonus* is devoted to Athens. Alcibiades, a restless spirit and a warmonger, makes an appearance (Cap. IV (138–139), juxtaposed with the history of Poland's war against the Turks (140–141). Further on, it is recounted how Solon saw through the designs of Peisistratus: "As soon as Solon noticed him, still stained only in thought, for he was contemplating the crime: 'Have you read,' he said, 'o son of Hippocrates, the Ulysses of Homer?', thus indicating that he too acted by means of the same contrivances" (Cap. VI (186–187). Additionally, Plato is summoned to Syracuse by Dionysius (Cap.). XII (300–301).

At first glance, Siemek seems to say surprisingly much about Sparta. However, a closer look at his views on the republic reveals his interest in Sparta and Rome (especially obvious in the *Lacon*) but the detailedness of his knowledge of Sparta is by no means a given. What is evident is not only understanding, but also curiosity, arising, in part at least, from critical reading. *The Life of Lycurgus* by Plutarch of Cheronea, *The Life of Agesilaus*, and probably also *The Life of Lysander* have obviously been read with much attention.

Siemek is interested, for understandable reasons, in Lycurgus as the founder of the Spartan system. He follows Plutarch's argument closely, although he writes from memory, as is evident from his substitution of a perpetrator (a single one, as in Plutarch) for perpetrators of the gouging out of Lycurgus's eye:

> To Lycurgus, who was gifted enough to put the republic in order, divine tributes were paid by means of erecting a temple in his honour, where he was worshipped like a god, as attested by Herodotus and by Plutarch, citing Aristotle. Festive days were also established in his honour, which were called Lycurgidae, or the days of Lycurgus. Lycurgus was certainly not a god, but a man, but because men, through benefactions, as if by imitation, become like the god who is the greatest benefactor, Lycurgus was considered a god, because he had never harmed anyone and had benefited everyone by establishing the most just laws, for the reason of which he lost one eye. He had it gouged out by those whose way to wickedness and crime had been closed (Cap. X, 250–251).[19]

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[17] Et Lacedaemonii, quouquot erant, propter eorum libertatem, et animum excelsum pro regibus habebantur, magnaeque per orbem authoritatis.

[18] Integritatem Catonis, sanctitatem Senecae, virtutem Pelopidae, Dionis fortitudinem quis edicet?

[19] Licurgus, quia ingenii satis habuisset ad rempublicam ordinandam, omnium rerumpublicarum glorisissimam, humanas laudes superavit. Non homo, sed Deus habitatus est et divini honores illi habiti extructo eius honori templo, ubi pro Deo colebatur, ut Herodotus testis est et Plutarchus

Siemek's references to Sparta are selective; a phenomenon which, incidentally, is characteristic of the reception of Sparta in all times and places. There are the aforementioned references to the brave Spartan women, and of course to the love of freedom exhibited by the Spartans themselves. There is even (unless it is a general ascertainment) a hint of awareness regarding the famous Spartan inspection of infants: 'The Lacedaemonians were commanded by law to scrutinise the shapes of the body, in order to use them as signs of virtue and to bring up more carefully those who seemed by birth more capable of virtue" (Cap. VII (200–201).[20]

In vain would Siemek's work be searched for references to Spartan society, the perioeci, the helots, the crypteia; this is understandable. However, Sparta's political system is absent as well. Instead, there is a focus on the fall of Sparta during the reign of King Agesilaus (Agesilaus II):

> A very famous king of the Lacedaemonians, Agesilaus (for even a king does not make a kingdom, but with the senate forms a republic; and no one ever used the name of the kingdom of the Lacedaemonians, but everyone spoke of the commonwealth), he, I say, received from the august senate the rule of a commonwealth in the fullness of happiness and in the bloom of fame; but after the death of Lysander, a man of ancient virtue, the spirit declined in the people, as a result of which the fame and happiness of the commonwealth declined as well. Therefore the Thebans, ravaging the lands of the Lacedaemonians, reached as far as Sparta. And then, for the first time, one could see from Sparta the enemy at the walls of the republic and the smoke stirred up by the enemy. Thereupon each member of the senate rushes to the king and scolds him: 'Give us back,' he cries, 'the republic in the same state as you received it' (Cap. III, 130–131).[21]

Siemek saw (through the eyes of the sources and/or his own) the downfall of Sparta under Agesilaus – something that Xenophon, whose views have been adopted by today's scholarship, tried to hide from his readers. In Siemek's perception, Sparta's misfortunes had been the ruler's fault: "Agesilaus, king of

ex Aristotele; diesque festi eius honori dictati Licurgidae vocabantur sive dies Licurgi. Non Deus certe, homo fuit Licurgus, sed quia beneficiis homines aliquatenus similitudine similes redduntur Deo, qui summus benefactor est, Licurgus pro Deo habebatur, quia neminem iniuria, omnes beneficiis affecit constitutis rectissimis legibus, propter quas tanquam propter beneficjum alterum amiserat oculum, ab illis effosum, quibus ad nequitiam et scelera fuit praeclusa via.

[20] Lacedaemoniis inspiciendi certa corporum lineamenta lex fuit, ut iis indiciis virtutis uterentur diligentiusque educarentur illi qui ad virtutem magis nati esse videbantur.

[21] Agesilaus, gloriosissimus rex Lacedaemoniorum (neque enim rex facit regnum, sed cum senatu respublica est et nemo unquam regnum Lacedaemoniorum, sed rempublicam omnes appellaverunt), is, inquam, cum a senatu amplissimo intergerrima felicitate et summa gloria recepisset rempublicam regendam hominumque interea immutata virtute post fata Lysandri, viri antiquae virtutis, et gloriam felicitatemque reipublicae immutari oportebat. Itaque Thebani terras Lacedaemoniorum vastantes Spartam usque progressi sunt. Et tum primum et hostis in pomoeriis reipublicae et fumus ab hoste excitatus Sparta videri potuit: „redde – inquit – nobis talem, qualem accepisti rempublicam."

the Lacedaemonians, was blamed for the unfortunate fate of the republic, and in our country, too, various kings were often reproached for the same reason" (Cap. VIII, 214–215).[22] Agesilaus bribed the gerousia:

> By means of this subterfuge, as has passed into memory, the senate of the Lacedemonians was tempted at first. When it became known that Agesilaus was doing too many favours to the senate, he was not only forbidden to do so, but was punished, because he gave too much to a few and almost nothing to all. There should be a measure in giving, there should also be a measure in taking. I remember reading in Cicero that Philip wrote to his son Alexander: 'Do not spoil with generous gifts those who are ready to take, lest you be called a supplier instead of a king' (Cap. X, 256/258–259).[23]

The final collapse of the Spartan system occurred, according to Siemek, at the end of the second century BC: "The Lacedaemonians survived free, with their laws unchanged, for eight hundred years. Finally, oppressed by the tyrant Machanidas, serving him, they succumbed" (Cap. X, 254–255).[24] Siemek is evidently sure that the final collapse of the laws occurred during the reign of the tyrant Machanidas (c. 211–207 BC), for in the following chapter he restates: "The Lacedemonians survived eight hundred years, establishing and observing one hundred and fourteen laws" (Cap. XI, 279–280).[25]

As to Roman history, Siemek's attention is clearly drawn to the overthrow of kings. He recalls the expulsion of Tarquinius the Proud by Brutus (Cap. V (160–161; see also Cap. IX, 240–241); he is familiar with the story of the rape of Lucrece (Cap. V; 162–163); he has heard of the threat of intervention by the Etruscan king Porsenna (Cap. VI, 178–179). He writes: "Romulus had established a free republic for the Romans. The Romans thought that it should be governed by kings; but some time afterwards, when the arrogance of this office was clearly revealed to them in the person of Tarquinius the Proud, they drove the kings out, establishing a pure form of republic, in which they lived not only for a very long time, but also very meritoriously, and surpassed all kingdoms in immortal fame, which under kings they would by no means have attained" (Cap. X, 254–255).

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[22] Lacedaemoniorum Agesilao regi imputata et apud nos saepe diversis regibus adversa reipublicae fortuna exprobrata fuit.

[23] Hac machina primo Lacedaemoniorum senatum tentatum fuisse memoriae proditum est, cum Agesilaus senatui nimis benefacere deprehensus est et non modo prohibitus, sed etiam punitus fuit, quia paucis nimis multa, omnibus nihil paene dedisset. Sit modus dandi, sit et accipiendi. Memini me legisse apud Ciceronem Philippum, Alexandro filio scripsisse: „Non corrumpas largitionibus, qui accipere sunt parati, ne praebitor non rex appelleris."

[24] Lacaedemonii octingentis annis immutatis legibus perstiterunt liberii; tandem a tyranno Machanida oppressi eidem servientes perierunt.

[25] Lacedaemonii octingentis perstiteruntannis centum quatuordecim institutis et observatis legibus.

Siemek refers to Camillus and Scipio Africanus (Cap. V, 154–155; see also Cap. VII (200–201), Fabius and Cato the Elder (Cap. VII, 200–201), Marius and his victory over the Cimbri (Cap. VII, 200–201). The period of the Empire is perhaps the least represented. A perfunctory reference to Nero serves only as an example of a transformation from a good man to a criminal (Cap. X, 260–2610). *Traianus imperator* appears only in juxtaposition with the king of Poland, *Stephanus rex noster* (Cap. VIII, 214–215), by implication probably a military commander, an *imperator* par excellence, perhaps even *optimus princeps*. The *lex trium liberorum* appears as a marginal reference (Cap. IX, 230–231); the fact that it was introduced by Augustus is not mentioned. Siemek has the most to say about the decline of the Roman Republic; apart from other considerations, this is an obvious result of reading Plutarch, Cicero and Caesar.

Siemek's heroes are Cato the Younger, Brutus and Cassius. He calls Cato "the most zealous defender of liberty" (Cap. II, 112–113) and "Free Cato" (*Liber Cato*) (116–117); he writes that "Cato could not endure Caesar's ambition, Pompey's hubris, Metellus's faithlessness, because they were harmful to the republic" (Cap. IV (144–145).[26] The twenty-seven conspirators against Julius Caesar were, in his view, "the best citizens" (*optimi cives*) (Cap. IX, 236–237). Elsewhere, Siemek adds that Brutus was a Stoic, Cassius an Epicurean (Cap. XII, 302–303), while Cato drew on Stoic philosophy (Cap. VII, 206–207). By way of contrast, he juxtaposes Zamoyski, whom he considers a *civis bonus*, with Catiline, who was "a wild beast acting to the detriment of the community of citizens" (Cap. II, 101–102, 102–103). He writes: "I will not call Catiline an evil citizen because, as I have already said, he was an enemy" (Cap. III, 126–127).[27] He appreciates Scaevola, who was "a good citizen, and can even be called the best, because he risked his own life for the love of the fatherland" (Cap. IX, 234–235). He also appreciates Cicero, although he places him lower than Cato: "Cicero, who devoted the strength of his talent to the benefit of the republic, was a good citizen. Cato was better still, since he was motivated by nothing but love for the republic, and he flattered no one. Cicero sinned in this one thing, the belief that preference should be given to Octavian" (Cap. III, 128-129).[28]

Cicero is referenced again, perhaps in connection with Siemek's own reading of the speech *Pro Sextio Roscio Amerino*: "I remember that the illustrious man [*summo viro*], Cicero, in his defence of Sextus Roscius relates that Titus Cloelius, a man of great renown, had been killed in a room at night, the assassin

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[26] Cato non sustinuit ambitionem Caesaris, superbiam Pompeii, perfidiam Metelli, quia ista reipublicae erant nociva.

[27] Catilinam non appellabo malum civem, quia hostis fuit, ut iam dictum est.

[28] Bonus civis, Cicero, vim sui ingenii utilitati reipublicae accommodans, melior Cato, quia nullus studio, sed tantum reipublicae amore ducebatur ac memini adulatus est. Qua in re una Cicero erravit Octavium praeporendum ducens.

leaving no traces, and the suspicion of murder could not fall on anyone else but two young men sleeping together" (Cap. IV, 144–145). Also, Siemek owes much to his reading of Caesar, which he seems to signal when he writes: "Julius Caesar overcame the violence of the Gauls by means of procrastination, as he himself wrote in his Commentaries. It was not Marcellus by fighting, but Fabius Maximus by refraining from fighting in the camp, who proved that Hannibal could be defeated" (Cap. IV, 142–143).

Lacon

In *Lacon*, the author demonstrates his familiarity with Aristotle (*Metaphysica*, *Politica*), Posidonius, Plutarch (*Vitae parallelae*) and Roman writers: Cicero (*De officiis*, *Pro Tito Annio Milone*, *De legibus*, *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, *Pro rege Deiotaro*), Velleius Paterculus, Martial (*Epigrammata*), Suetonius (*Vitae Caesarum*), Sallustius (*De coniuratione Catilinae*), Valerius Maximus (*Factorum et dictorum memorabilia*), Seneca (*Epistulae*, *De tranquilitate animi*, *De brevitate vitae*, *De beneficiis*) and Tertullian (*Apologeticum*).

Greece is referred to 211 times (including Sparta 94 times), and Rome, 218 times.

Nine Spartans are mentioned by name: Lysander (11 times), Agesilaus (5), Cleomenes (2), Agis (2), Clearchus (1), Callicratidas (1), Lycurgus (1), Gylippus (1) and Nabis (1). Twelve Athenians are mentioned: Temistocles (3 times), Cimon (3), Alcibiades (3), Pericles (3), Thucydides (son of Melesias) (1), Anaxagoras (1), Niciasz (1), Aristides (1), Solon (1), Plato (1), Peisistratus (1) and Aspasia (1). There are also nine other Greeks: Aristotle (3 times), Epaminondas (2), Philopoemen (2), Alexander (1), Philip (1), Pyrrhus (3), Perseus (1), Epicure (1), Posidonius (1), Pitagoras (1).

Some forty Romans are mentioned: Caesar (18 times), Pompey (13), Sulla (7), Crassus (5), Agrippa (5), Octavian Augustus (4), Marcus Lepidus (4), Aemillius Paulus (4), Maecenas (4), Numa (3), Varus (3), Romulus (2), Scipio (5), Tarquin the Proud (1), the Curiuses (1), Camillus (3), Cato (1), Agrippa (1), Atticus (2), Catullus (1), Gaius Atilius Regulus (1), Mark Antony (3), Quintillus (1), Lucullus (1), Marius (3), Marcellus (3), Clodius (2), Catiline (3), Quintus Metellus (1), Scipio (1), Brutus (3) and others. According to the index, there are 6 heroes from the history of Poland and 1 from elsewhere.

Siemek is aware that "wretched traces of the ruins of Ilion lie on hillocks" and knows that all things pass away like Troy did, only fame remains (Dial. IV, 188–190). He mentions the Greek lawgivers, Solon and Lycurgus (Dial. IV, 222–223). His focus is, however, not on regimes they created, but rather on the practial aspects of their functioning and, in essence, on political history. Thus, *Lacon* contains a summary of the history of Athens under Pericles:

> The Republic was being torn into pieces, involuntarily going in various directions, as the populace fruitlessly repented of the deed, in times of prosperity [having been] uncontrollable; so public folly wasted the wisdom of individuals: the rest was lost with Pericles. He was in himself worthy of love and reverence; he knew how to win the populace; he was distinguished by his education and innate ability; the immoderate inclination of the populace towards him caused his downfall. Excessive power corrupts a man so that he cannot bear an equal when he has no superior. [Pericles] adapted the future to the present, lest the ancient nobility of others should stand in the way of the newness of the nobility of his sons. He first oppressed the sons of Cimon, a man whose glory was still freshly remembered. Then he attacked Thucydides, a man inferior to himself, superior to the others, but better than all. And Pericles had no shortage of corrupt commoners. They attributed that intention to the philosopher Anaxagoras; it is the usual vice of the commoners, to call their own faults another's wickedness. In fact, as virtues grow weaker, so vices grow stronger as a result of imitation. Alcibiades, worse as an example, shone in a war abroad. And since the conditions of the Sicilian war were disgraceful, it was believed that the public disgrace of Nicias could be removed by a man whom the people regarded more kindly. Ostracism, the only remedy against might, is abolished; it is now safer [to practise] tyranny and wicked scheming. He made this growing hatred between the commoners and the optimates complete, with ultimate doom for the state; for to himself he attracted as much power as all had had before. When he went into exile, he made the Republic empty, as if the head and the more important part were missing, because the others had no experience (Dial. III, 174–177).[29]

Siemek embellishes his vision of democracy, in which Pericles leads the populace and thus destroys his opponents, with details that demonstrate considerable general knowledge. He mentions first Cimon as a rival of Pericles, then Thucydides (son of Melesias), and finally Pericles's collaborator Anaxagoras of Klazomenai. The passage betrays familiarity with the Sicilian expedition, and of Nicias's association with it. There is also a reference to ostracism and its alleged abolition. Alcibiades, already mentioned in *Civis bonus*, deserves a mention here as well.

Slightly earlier, Siemek alludes to an anecdote (known only from Diodorus) according to which Alcibiades advised Pericles, who was under threat of having to submit a financial report, to provoke a war (Peloponnesian War) in order to

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[29] Cymoniis in primis, depressit filios, recenti memoria viri inter gloriosos. Tucididem deinceps agressus, inferiorem se, caeteris superiorem, sed meliorem omnibus. Nec defuit venalis populus Pericli. Anaxagorae philosopho, id Consilii imputabutur, conueto vulgi vitio: sua errata alienam improbitatem vocitare. Caeterum, ut virtutes decrescunt, ita vitia imitamentis intenduntur. Peior exemplo Alcibiades, legibus et nobilitati infestus, domi terrore, foris bello enituit. Et quia infames belli Siculi conditiones; Niciae, publicum dedecus, posse abolere credebatur: populo gratior. Ostracismum, unum adversus potentiam remedium, demolitur: iam tutior tyrannis, et impia machinamenta. Iste gliscentes, populum inter optimatesque inimicitias complevit extrema publici pernicie: cum ad se unum, quantum omnes haberent, pertraxisset potentiae. Se exacto: vacuam fecit Rempublicam, tanquam defuisset caput et potior pars, inexercitatis reliquis.

distract the populace: "Among the Athenians, the talent of Alcibiades was great but perverse; he was corrupted by riches, and he corrupted the Republic. The Republic's great generosity towards him was the source of wickedness. He corrupted many, even Pericles, with the instruction that a powerful man should think of not giving rather than giving accounts to the Republic" (Dial. III, 168–169).[30]

There are also snippets of other information of varying value. For instance, there is a mention of how, during the Persian wars, Themistocles urged the Athenians to leave the city (Dial. IV; 194–195; see also Dial. IV (196–197) and of the king of Persia's reaction to the defeat in the Battle of the Eurymedon (Dial. IV (200–201); also, the reader is told that "among the Athenians, Pericles, even though not able to do much in war, won the populace to himself and publicly held on to his reputation, if tarnished" (Dial. VII, 312-313).[31]

Siemek perceives the senate as an extremely important institution, nowhere does he use the name of the gerousia, and the Areopagus Council appears in his work only once, precisely in *Lacon*: "In Athens, the state [was] the people's, but the senate was chosen from among the wise, without any regard to poverty or wealth. Thus the populace could not go wild. The Areopagus, influential owing to its skill and authority, helped, for the more difficult matters were entrusted to it' (Dial. IV, 192–193).[32]

Siemek informs the reader about the alleged idolisation of Aristotle by the Greeks: "Yet to Aristotle, free Greece granted divine honours. He was endowed with Athenian citizenship, and his homeland was forbidden to claim him; it was a crime to deny that he was an Athenian. He preferred the aristocracy above the others, because that which is moderate gains the recognition and rule of the best. To the senate he gave the name of optimates for the reason of their virtue and talent. This is enough to govern, the rest he omitted or rejected" (Dial. IV, 204–205).

Fittingly, the titular Lacon has much to say about Sparta. Siemek alludes to the earliest history of Sparta, talking about the Parthenia and the founding of Tarentum: "The origins of the Lacedemonians are mystifying. The Parthians, seasoned in military service, having incited the helots to a conspiracy, made an attempt to become equal to the others; the conspiracy being discovered and neutralised, the fugitives, the founders of Tarentum, pointed out the means of effecting a change, and this matter proved detrimental to the state"

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[30] Alcibiadis inter Athenienses magnum sed pravum ingenium illum fortuna, ille Rempublicam: corrupit. Origo malignitatis, profusa in eum Respublica. Is multorum et Periclis corruptor: monito, de non reddendis potius, quam reddendis Reipublicae rationibus virum potentem cogitare oportere.

[31] Pericles apud Athenienses cum parum potuisse bello, et publicae retinuit sui opinionem, sed distractam.

[32] Athenis popularis status, senatus tamen e sapientibus legebatur, nullo pauperita respectu. Nec vulgus delirare potuit. Assistebat Areopagus artium professione auctoritate potior, dum eo difficilliora amandabatur.

(Dial. VI (280–281).[33] Solutions known from Sparta were adopted by the Romans, with whom the Spartans took refuge when their state collapsed after centuries of existence: "And the Spartan laws (*instituta*) were brought to Rome by Numa; on this basis his origin is determined. The Spartans, who in the time of Nabis, out of hatred of tyranny, fled from their country in all directions, were attracted by the Roman freedom and the similarity of laws" (Introductory Dialogue, 110–111).[34]

Siemek's actual knowledge of Sparta is limited to the time of Lysander and Agesilaus (Agesilaus II). He rightly emphasises that Agesilaus owed his throne to Lysander: "Agesilaus, thanks to Lysander's skill and power, was given supreme power with us" (Introductory Dialogue, 116–117).[35] His point of view is as follows:

> He would have been the best king if he did not have to repay the dignitaries for the royal power given to him. As a result of leniency, it came to pass that austerity turned into unbelievable disorderliness and luxury, which suddenly and vastly changed the strength and ability to endure the hardships of military service. Before their power weakened and failed, a decision was made to defeat the rivals of Spartan fame, the restless and quarrelsome Athenians. They had long been greatly corrupted by disorderliness and luxury, and deprived of their usual strength, because contempt drove men of wisdom into exile, they easily gave in to the accepted philosophers, which, had it been possible, should have been resisted in time. The lower ranks brushed aside, the more powerful [men] vied for supreme command in the war, the most powerful [man] gaining it. The armies on both sides [were] equal. The Thebans [were] slightly effete, ours by then somewhat lacking in energy. Our army [was] stronger in numbers, the enemy [made stronger] by the talent of the commander, Epaminondas. Our old valour, once almost intact, by then already weakened, was not equal. Thus, vanquished by the talent of one wise man, we now wander, scattered (Introductory Dialogue, 116–117).[36]

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[33] Primordia Lacedaemoniorum arcani ratio. Parthenii militia exerciti, excitis in coniurationem Helotis, quo pares fiant caeteris, periculum fecerunt: praecognita et praeventa coniuratio; profugi, conditores Tarenti, corrigendi ostenderunt modum, quae res publicis nociva.

[34] Et instiuta, Romam intulisse Spartana: Nummam, cuius inde origo: perhiberetur. Dillapsi sub Nabide, Tyrannidi infensi: libertate Romana, legumque similitudine, alliciebantur Spartani […].

[35] Agesilaus, artibus et potentia Lysandri, rerum apud nos potitus.

[36] Rex fuit Optimus, ni Primoribus dati regni referre gratiam debuisset. Conniuentia ventum est, ut austeritas, in novum luxum commutaretur, qui tollerantiam militiae viresque, repente non mediocriter labefactavit. Antequam diffluant, et enerventur vires: aemulos Spartanae gloriae, confusos et discordes Athenienses, opprimi visum antiquo luxu corruptiores, sapientibus ob. Contemptum profugis: destituti consequentis viribus, non aegre opprimuntur. Thebanis non tanta gloria, recens philosophorum receptorum ingeniis gliscebat, cui in tempore si posset, occurrendum fuit. Inferiores semoti; potentiores, belli imperium ambiebat, potentissimus consequitur. Militia utrinque par, Thebanis leviter mollibus, nostris, iam mediocriter dissolutis. Noster exercitus multitudine, hostilis, ingenio Epaminundae Ducis, potior. Antiqua et integra virtus nostra, vix olim: iam tum imminuta, impar. Ita unius sapientis ingenio victi, nunc disiecti vagamur.

The Lacon returns to the issue of Lysander's merit and position on two more occasions: first, by highlighting Lysander's importance and the potentially bad consequences of it: "Lysander had more authority among us than King Agesilaus; it was subdued as disastrous, but a situation dangerous to the state would have been looming had it not been averted" (Dial. III (168–169),[37] and second, describing the relationship we Agesilaus and Lysander in Asia Minor, and Lysander's alleged plans for regime change in Sparta, in more detail:

> Lysander was the first to introduce this kind of power in violation of the old law. Having become governor of many of the greatest cities of Attica and Achaia thanks to the excessive benevolence of King Agis, by generous hospitality he tied to himself the first among the citizens as friends, then made them his table companions so that they would not think differently than he. Trusting in so many and so great servants, he transferred the crown from the king's son to [the king's] brother, so that he might have royal power not by laws but by [Lysander's] grace. Hence he was dear to the new king, terrible to the citizens. Agesilaus was ashamed as if Lysander had reminded him of the benefices for which he could never sufficiently repay. He got rid of him by sending him as an envoy to the Hellespont. The king regarded [Lysander] as loathsome and detestable, although he had never reigned. The only thing lacking in the power of the man who had appointed the king was this: intending to avenge his hopes, he presented a new law for the transfer of the royal power from Heraclids to the best of the citizens, supporting this with just causes, if only there had been no hatred; and he would have accomplished this, if the king, who had experience in pretence, had not betrayed, or deserted, the commander of the Beotian war, by then restored to rank and favour; or perhaps he perished, surpassed by the virtue of Epaminondas. The one and the other is generally known; the Republic perished with him. The rest, already spoilt by service, above all wanted provinces and cities to be free from Lysander. With the diminution of the freedom of citizens and kings the fame lessened: they could not last, since what had hitherto united the parts had disintegrated.
>
> A. So you disapprove of Lysander's deeds?
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> L. Indeed, I do not approve of them, because it is more difficult for many mediocrities to be destroyed than for one mighty man (Dial. III (178–179, 180–181).[38]

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[37] Apud nos maior Lysandri, quam Agesilai Regis fuit auctoritas, quae tanquam exitiosa, supressa, sed parum abfuit publici discrimen.

[38] Lysander id potentiae genus, primus, violato iure antiquo, intulerat: Aegide Regis nimio favore, multarum amplissimarum, Atticae, Achaiae, urbium, gubernator factus:lautitia devinxerat potiores civitatis, tanquam amicos, postea mensae asseclas mancipavit, ne ab se diversa sentirent. Tot tantisque fretus servitiis, a filio Regis, ad fratrem, transtulit coronam: ne legibus, sed sua gratia haberetur regnum. Unde novo regi carior, formidolosior civibus. Pudebat Agesilaum, quasi nunquam satis solvendum exprobraret beneficim Lysander. Specie legati Hellespontum amolitur, ivisus, infeensusque Regi, quod non regnaret. Hoc unum defuit potentiae, qui fecerat Regem. Vulturus spes suas, novam proponit legem transferendi ab Heraclidis, ad praestantiorem civium regni. Iustis innixus causis, si odium abesset: et effecisset, ni Rex simulandi peritus, loco, gratiaeque restitutum Ducem belli Boetici prodidisset, deservisserue; aut forte Epaminundae superatus virtute, periit.

Siemek is aware of some details of the political history of Sparta in the late fifth and early fourth century BC, for instance the issue of Callicratidas's quarrel with Lysander (Dial. III (170–171), Clearchus's attack on Artaxerxes (Dial. II (146–147) and the case of Gylippus, "who grew rich to the detriment of the public cause" (Dial. VII (312–313).[39]

It seems that Siemek links the collapse of the state's power with the victory of Thebes, but the collapse of the political system he regards to be the result of a long-term process, as indicated by his statement that "the laws were disrupted during the reigns of Agesilaus, Agis, Cleomenes" (Dial. V (244–245).[40] If this reference pertains to Agesilaus II, Agis IV and Cleomenes III, it means that Siemek is unaware of the activities of the last two, the "reformer kings" of the third century BC, or he is holding them responsible. Whatever the case, the last chord of Sparta's history are, in Siemek's perception, the reigns of Nabis or even Machanidas.

In fact, Siemek knows more about Sparta than his text reveals. He says, for instance: "The famous Lacedaemonian weapon, carried over the vast and various areas of Asia and Europe, was well known in Africa too" (Dial. VI (294–295).[41] The mention of Africa among the parts of the world that have come to know the fame of Spartan war craft could be taken as a cliché, were it not for Xanthippus of Sparta, a mercenary chief in the service of the Carthaginians. At various points, it is clear that Siemek's knowledge is not skin deep. He knows, for example, that the laws of Sparta are called *rhetra*: *Legibus, quas nostri Rhetras* (Dial. VI (294–295). He has also apparently heard of *xenelasia*: "Spartan strictness did not admit foreigners, elsewhere [it was] looser, for in Athens and everywhere Spartans were admitted" (Dial. VIII, 328–329).[42]

Siemek knows the political structures of the Roman republic as well, including the assemblies: *comitia curiata*, *tributa* and *centuriata* (Dial. VII, 304–305, *curiata* also in Dial. VII, 318–319), offices: tribunes and consuls (Dial. II, 138–139), the censor power: *censoria potestas* (Dial. IV, 190–191), or *dictator* (Dial. IV, 223–225). As apparent already in *Civis bonus*, he is quite familiar with the events of the waning years of the Republic. In *Lacon*, he speaks, among others, of the triumvirate of Crassus, Caesar and Pompey (Dial. III, 168–169). Speaking of Pompey and

Utrumque in vulgo: cum hoc, periit Respublica. Caeteri servitiis iam impuri, provincias urbesque malebant; Lysandro vacuas. Imminuta civium libertate, et Regum minor gloria: consistere nequibant, dissoluto, quod hactenus? connectebat partes.

A. Igitur facta Lysandri improbas?

L. Et vero non probo, cum difficillius sit multos mediocres, quam unum evertere potentem.

[39] Gylippus apud nos qui publico damno dituerat.

[40] Sub Agesilao, Agide, Cleomene regibus […].

[41] Famosa Lacedaemoniorum arma, Asiae et Europae per vastos et diversos ambitus circumlata, nec Africa eorum ex pers…?

[42] Spartana austeritas, exteros non admittebat, nam laxior ubique, Athenis et ubiuis non prohibiti Spartani.

Caesar, he mentions clients and patrons (Dial. III, 164–165). He assesses Crassus unfavourably; his Lacon says: "Crassus, the most powerful one in your country, was useless in war, unless he took the fruit of someone else's victory; he fell because he failed to accomplish what he dared to do" (Dial. VII, 312–313).

In addition, *Lacon* contains some assessments formulated by Augustus:

> Sulla, an unknown, did not shine with virtue or talent in front of the Nolan army; later, he excessively relied on luck in war, on power at home. Caesar, in contrast, was distinguished by wisdom in warfare, by gentleness at home; neither luck could desert him nor the populace cease to love him. My father was most modest; if only he had not fallen into the human race's innate desire to rule, a vice innate to warlike spirits (Dial. IX, 348–349).[43]

It is obvious, in more than one place, that the assessment of Caesar, and his killer Brutus, presents a problem:

> How much my father showered Brutus with honours, and would have continued to do so if he had been more moderate in his public activities. However, enraged by the fall of the fatherland, he dared to challenge fate; he did not conquer the heavens. Yet he did enlarge the Senate, so that, while keeping the former men, he would have his own ones there: those, however, were swept away by the new and ancient heroic examples. It would have sufficed to have, in the Senate, just one man opposed to autocracy. I excluded the unworthy, whom I knew to have been appointed through favour, and induced the disorderly crowd to be serious (Dial. II, 140–141).

Siemek says much, with clear expertise, about the relationship between the Senate and the *princeps*. He certainly knows the terms o*ptimus princeps*, *pater patriae*, *Augustus* (Dial. V, 262–263). He refers to the notorious defeat of Varus, much discussed in the time of Augustus: "It is only recently that Varus lost in battle [who knows] how many eagles, banners of the Roman army, and public glory" (Dial. III, 162–163; see also Dial. IV, 210–211, and Dial. VI, 288–289).

And again, a range of references appears in various places in the text: on restoring *libertas* to Greek states (Dial. II, 140–141); "If you try hard, you will overcome even Nature. Witness Hannibal, who crossed the Alps" (Dial. IV, 188–190; Caesar "resorts to the ways of the tyrant Peisistrates" (Dial. VI, 284–285).

Siemek's attention to detail is evident. For instance, he uses the term *lanista* with precision (Dial. IV (202–203); he knows the difference between the types of spears and shields: "The Greeks had adopted *hasta* [short light spear] instead of *sarissa* [long heavy spear], and *scutum* [long shield] instead of *clipeus* [round shield]" (Dial. VI (290–291).[44]

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[43] Ignotus Sylla, nec ante Nolanum exercitum, enituerat virtute aut ingenio: deinceps fortuna in bello, domi potentia abutebatur, contra Caesar prudentia in bellis, clementia domi insignis, nec deseri, a fortuna, nec non amari a populo potuit. Modestissimus pater meus; ni ad innatam Humano generi Dominatus cupiditatem recidisset, bellicosis animis ingeneratum vitium.

[44] Hastas pro sarissis, scute pro clypeis assumpserant Graeci, levitate armorum, hostilem fortunam causati.

CONCLUSIONS

It is a common belief that the authority of Antiquity was used in Poland to emphasise the worth of the political solutions adopted by the Commonwealth; that those references were a meeting of two apologies: the apologia for the republican system of Antiquity and the apologia for the system of the Polish-Lithuanian state. Invoking the example of the ancient republic made the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania universal.[45]

Siemek probably used the example of *tres famosiores Respublicae* to the same purpose. There are obvious conclusions to be drawn from a reading of both his works in relation to the presence of the tradition of Antiquity, as well as the less obvious conclusions arising from the extensive presence of Greece and Rome in his writings and the by no means superficial nature of his knowledge. It does not seem that Siemek derived his knowledge of Athens and Sparta second-hand or through Latin authors. Traces of an in-depth reading of Plutarch and of his own very independent analysis are more than evident in his texts. What is more, on a broader level, these texts must be perceived not so much an attempt to raise the worth of contemporary Poland by appending an ancient example to it, but an attempt to understand a state that was still alive and open to change by referring to states whose history was already closed: the illustrious *famosiores Respublicae*. It is hard to resist the impression that Siemek was interested in achieving the most advantageous system, not in elevating the Commonwealth by giving it ancient roots.

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[45] See Grześkowiak-Krwawicz 2014, 31.

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Abstract

During the Old Polish period (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), the ancient tradition played a major role in Polish political and constitutional thought. The citizens of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania living in the seventeenth century were well aware of the uniqueness and value of their statehood. The contemporary world did not provide them with many analogies to debate these issues, and as a result, they sought a more distant point of reference, finding ancient examples to which the Commonwealth could relate in recognizing its own strengths and weaknesses.

In the political writings of the Old Polish period, the republican system of the Commonwealth was regarded as a realisation of the mixed model which existed in Sparta and Rome at the earliest and which was regarded as a permanent, stable, virtually ideal system. It is clearly visible in the texts of Kasper Siemek, who like many other young men of his generation, studied at the universities

of Cracow (1610) and Bologna (1620). In the last years of his life he wrote two treatises on political and legal issues. In the first treatise, *Civis bonus* (1632), he gave a systematic lecture on the state, the laws and citizenship, and at the same time an apotheosis of the *status quo* in the Commonwealth. In the second book entitled *Lacon,* Octavian Augustus and a Laconian discuss the republican constitution, acknowledging that only a republic, under the rule of law, enabled freedom to be preserved.

Siemek's texts reveals a knowledge of the ancient history that was thorough for its time. The author was fluent in Greek and Latin, familiar with the works of Plutarch, Cicero and Aristotle. His knowledge of various details of Greek and Roman history is really surprising.

It is a common belief that the authority of Antiquity was used in Poland to emphasise the worth of the political solutions adopted by the Commonwealth; that those references were a meeting of two apologies: the apologia for the republican system of Antiquity and the apologia for the system of the Polish-Lithuanian state. Invoking the example of the ancient republic made the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania universal. Siemek probably used the example of *tres famosiores Respublicae* to the same purpose. There are obvious conclusions to be drawn from a reading of both his works in relation to the presence of the tradition of Antiquity. But in my opinion Siemek was interested also in achieving the most advantageous system, not only in elevating the Commonwealth by giving it ancient roots.

REVIEW ARTICLES

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STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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RECENT PERSPECTIVES ON PARTHIAN HISTORY: RESEARCH APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Keywords: Parthia, Western Asia, Central Asia, history, methodology, Arsakids

For historians of antiquity, the history of Parthia remains one of the most challenging areas of research. The reason for this is the great diversity of the sources, which makes it difficult to utilize them effectively. Furthermore, this history encompasses a vast area comprising many distinct regions, spanning from the Persian Gulf to Afghanistan. Therefore, there are not many multifaceted and comprehensive monographs on Parthian history. Wolski (1993), still essential, is too condensed and needs significant additions. Some recent monographs deal with Parthia-Rome relations (Schlude 2020; Nabel 2025). Most existing studies are partially outdated (Debevoise 1938), superficial, or lack substantial academic merit, as is often the case with many recent efforts. There are also interesting popular publications outside the scope of this review.

Three monographs on early Parthia have recently been released: Balakhvantsev (2017), Olbrycht (2021), and Overtoom (2020). In my 2021 monograph (*Early Arsakid Parthia*), I chose to omit some controversial issues offered by Overtoom (2020), believing that a debut author could be forgiven for shortcomings or errors. When N. Overtoom published his overly critical review of my book (Overtoom 2022),[1] I decided to respond by addressing his work more thoroughly, for the benefit of the historical research on the Arsakid and Hellenistic periods.

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[1] Several reviews of my book on early Parthia (Olbrycht 2021) have been published. See Nikolić 2021; Günther 2022; Lerner 2023; Müller 2025. I acknowledge the support of the Humboldt Foundation and the University of Münster, Germany.

Overtoom's book contains reasonable and correct conclusions. Thus, e.g., Overtoom (2020, 64) is right in his statement that "From Arsaces I to Mithridates II, the early Arsacids carved out a mighty imperial state that endured far longer than the previous hegemonies of the Achaemenids, Argeads, and Seleucids. This unexpected success created a legacy that inadvertently influenced the early relationship of the Parthians and Romans and eventually led to one of the longest-standing rivalries in history." It should be recognized that Overtoom (2020, 252) is correct in identifying the Guti with the Yuezhi and other tribes in Central Asia.

Overtoom's monograph is filled with footnotes, many of which cite numerous studies. However, it is often unclear whether these cited studies support or contradict the concepts presented. An example is the following passage: "Mithridates II appears to have occupied all of the lands of the former Kingdom of Bactria (likely including Sogdiana and Arachosia), extending the Parthian frontier in the east." Thus, reference is made to the conquests in Bactria and Arachosia under Mithradates II. This is what footnote 44 refers to, including 12 studies.[2] Of these studies, a large portion do not discuss eastern Parthian expansionism but instead focus on coin finds made in Bactria and Sogdiana. Contrary to Overtoom's (2020, 256) claims, the Chinese envoy Zhang Qian never visited Parthia in person.

It is necessary to point out the debatable interpretative background that Overtoom adopted: his book is based on several questionable premises. The author advocates for the neo-realist theory in international relations, although he prefers the term "realist theory" or an "international-systems approach." This concept is drawn from contemporary political science (Overtoom 2020, 25, n. 133). Neorealism, a framework taught by Kenneth Waltz at Columbia and Brandeis, has been widely employed in political science and historical research in the USA.[3] Overtoom (2020, 23) argues that realist theory is "a useful and rewarding theoretical framework for the study of geopolitical history in the ancient world, especially in the third to first centuries." He believes that the structural realist approach to international relations helps us reevaluate the reasons for Parthian success within the broader international context of the ancient Middle East. Overtoom's approach is notable for its unquestioning acceptance of realist theory as a research model without offering any detailed justification for its merits.

However, what Overtoom considers a valuable framework raises questions for historians of the period and scholars of Oriental studies, as it appears to be a flawed methodological approach in some aspects. Overtoom claims that "realist theorists argue that interactions between states become increasingly tense because the understanding of power capabilities between states is opaque"

[2] "Olbrycht 2010b: 151–53; Overtoom 2019b: 14–15. Compare Pilipko 1976; Koshelenko and Sarianidi 1992; Rtveladze 1992: 33; id. 1994: 87; Zeymal 1997; Rtveladze 2000; Biriukov 2010; Litvinskii 2010; Gorin 2010; Olbrycht 2012b."

[3] See, e.g., Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2018.

(Overtoom 2020, 19). However, the statement that "in a system of interstate anarchy, warfare is the only way to determine actual state power and its relation to the power capabilities of other states" (ibidem) is misleading. Numerous forms of diplomatic and economic relations can regulate conflicts or prevent armed confrontations. Furthermore, when analyzing inter-state relations, cultural, religious (e.g., references to cults), and economic factors that do not relate to the military sphere should be taken into account.[4] A fine example of the coexistence of several large states and a whole group of small principalities is the political system in Western Asia around 1500-1100 B.C., which has been described in detail by researchers. It was not anarchy, but an advanced system of relations that is still referred to today in the diplomacy.[5] The realist theory is not comprehensive in covering the full spectrum of relations between states and nations.[6]

The realist theory fails to account for significant deviations in actual state behavior. Leadership, domestic politics, religion, cults, ideology, economic and technological conditions, and international institutions play crucial roles in shaping state behavior. These influences and interconnections can lead to outcomes that the so-called "realist theory" cannot predict or explain. By and large, a more nuanced approach to understanding international relations is needed – one that incorporates domestic and transnational factors, acknowledges the role of change, and recognizes that a wider array of variables influences cooperation and conflict than the realist theory allows. While realist theory has contributed valuable insights to the study of ancient history, it faces substantial challenges from multiple theoretical perspectives. Alternative approaches – ranging from constructivism to postcolonial theories – offer richer, more nuanced frameworks for understanding the complexity of ancient international relations.[7] Rather than reducing ancient politics to power

[4] The essay by May, Rosecrance, and Steiner (2010, 6-7) offers insightful critiques of the fundamental shortcomings of realist theory. They argue that "realists and neorealists have overlooked the importance of "change," ignored ideological, economic, and social constraints, and downplayed the significance of ideological leadership. They have ignored the key factor of geography, in itself a changing circumstance; they have omitted theory and international history of transnational ties and institutional, economic, and social factors that affect the international environment in which states operate and, indeed, alter the balance between the state and the international order." See also Ahrensdorf 1997.

[5] See Liverani 2001.

[6] The limitations resulting from the application of the "realist" theory in historical research were pointed out by J.D. Lerner (2022, 444): "The predicative capability of the Realist theory is limited merely to a binary proposition that rulers faced: anarchy or warfare in which only recurrent war or hegemonial domination was the logical outcome. In other words, it is a self-fulfilling proposition." As wisely noted by a scholar, "According to this theory, states coexist in a Hobbesian, dog-eat-dog condition, where war and conquest are required to survive. Overtoom relies on this theory to explain the endless wars of this period" (Chaffetz 2020).

[7] One of the more commendable models of international relations is the concept developed by Paweł Włodkowic (c. 1370–1435), also known as Paulus Vladimiri. He was a Polish scholar, diplomat, and the rector of Cracow Academy. His concept, termed the theory of permissive natural

(chiefly military) competition, these theories illuminate the roles of culture, cults, norms, institutions, networks, and ideas in shaping the ancient world. The ongoing scholarly debate reflects the vitality of the field and the continued need for theoretical innovation in ancient history studies.

When sources are lacking, a pattern of the realist theory is sometimes injected. This leads to risky conclusions. By way of an example, Overtoom (2020, 199) claims, "Moreover, a closer evaluation of the geopolitical developments in the region through the framework of Realist Theory strengthens the case that the cities in Mesopotamia sided with Antiochus in 130 because of systemic pressures." It is difficult to understand how realist theory can enable the reconstruction of the course of Antiochos VII Sidetes' expedition against Parthia.

In ancient history, Arthur Eckstein (2006) applied the realist theory to the Hellenistic world and Rome's expansion in his work *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome*. However, his efforts yielded results, some of which were heavily criticized. The book was critiqued by German historian Karl Hölkeskamp (2009), who highlighted the shortcomings of Eckstein's approach, particularly the inadequacy of the theoretical model he employed. Interestingly, Eckstein emphasized the connections between realist theory and Mommsen's concept of imperialism (2006a; 2012). Hölkeskamp also noticed this connection. Eckstein's analysis draws upon Mommsen's work, highlighting the alignment between his own interpretation and the fundamental tenets of Mommsen's classic thesis, which viewed Rome as a force for ordering the "Hellenistic world" of anarchy. In this approach, the expansion of the Roman Empire was seen chiefly as a reaction to systemic pressures rather than a manifestation of the Romans' exceptional, pathological imperialism.[8] Essentially, the same model can be seen in Mommsen's and Waltz's theories, namely the justification of military force used by a given power as the only solution to remove alleged "interstate anarchy." Conquest is viewed as a universal remedy to political "chaos."

Overtoom (2020, 5) criticizes Mommsen for viewing the Parthian uprising as a nationalistic movement;[9] However, he found in my book a "nationalistic"

law or just war theory, represents one of the earliest and most systematic formulations of international law principles. Włodkowic's ideas, which include advocating for diplomatic solutions and the sovereignty of states, are considered precursors to modern human rights principles and international relations theory. He opposed the use of brute force in politics (Bełch 1965; Wielgus 1998).

[8] It is not difficult to see Mommsen's parallel with his chauvinistic recognition of Prussian imperialism and the Second German Reich as a kind of necessity to bring order to Europe on the eve of the 19th/20th centuries. Mommsen labeled himself a "liberal," but was a fervent advocate of German nationalism and maintained a militant stance toward Slavic peoples, including Czechs and Poles. See his 1897 letter to the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna.

[9] Overtoom 2020, 5: "A good example of misguided "unit-attribute" theory in Parthian studies is the notion that Parthian success stemmed from a "nationalistic" Iranian backlash against the Hellenistic Seleucids. Theodor Mommsen described the Parthian rebellion and war against the Seleucids as a nationalistic crusade against Hellenism." Mommsen evaluates Parthia according

aberration, and in the spirit of Mommsen and Waltz, he condemned it: "I also find Olbrycht's conclusion that the rebellions of Parthia and Bactria were separatist movements by Iranians and Greeks seeking independence against the Macedonian Seleucids too nationalistic in tone (Overtoom 2022, 46). The statement refers to the phrase "Iranian and Greek aspirations for independence" (Olbrycht 2021, 31), specifically regarding Parthia and Bactria. This insinuation is a hasty attempt to put a misleading label on legitimate scholarly conclusions.

According to Overtoom, the history of Parthia is marked mainly by wars and transitional crises between major conflicts. Indeed, the sources discuss wars in great detail, but one must also consider other aspects of the source tradition. What is falsely called "interstate anarchy" is usually the system of equilibrium of many countries (involving treaties, alliances, and conflicts), as was the case, for example, in the 2nd-1st centuries B.C., when there were various states in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East - the Seleukid Empire, Pergamon, Kappadokia, Bithynia, Pontos, Greater Armenia, Egypt, Macedonia, Judaea and other minor kingdoms. It was not anarchy, although the Seleukids' specific degradation became apparent in their constant domestic struggle. It was a world order and a particular hierarchy involving major states and smaller kingdoms.

Overtoom relies solely on classical sources, largely ignoring archaeological evidence, particularly from Turkmenistan and Iranian Khorasan. He references several works focused on Western Parthia, including Hatra and Nineveh, which only play a minor role in his narrative. Additionally, he cites E.J. Keall, who addressed Western Iran during the Later Parthian period. Overtoom fails to study the numismatic sources independently, instead relying heavily on the work of F. Assar and accepting sometimes questionable theories without scrutiny. For instance, Overtoom follows Assar in asserting that Arsakes IV was a historical figure around 170 B.C., despite the absence of any primary source mentioning him. He claims (2020, 153) that "Phriapatius died around 170, and new epigraphic evidence from Nisa suggests the existence of a previously unknown Parthian king, now known as Arsaces IV, who was the great-grandson of Arsaces I and Phriapatius' second cousin once removed. He reigned briefly for two years before dying unexpectedly in his early thirties as an ineffective leader without an heir." However, in notes 122 and 123, the main source of his information is derived from five works by Assar and a study by Karras-Klapproth, which is irrelevant to the topic. Overtoom accepts this theory without conducting an independent analysis of it. This pattern is repeated throughout the volume, which

to his model, seeing in the rise of the Parthian state "a national and religious reaction" – Mommsen 1894, vol. 3, 288: "the Parthian state, as compared with that of the Seleucids, was based on a national and religious reaction, and that the old Iranian language, the order of the Magi and the worship of Mithra, the Oriental feudatory system, the cavalry of the desert and the bow and arrow, first emerged there in renewed and superior opposition to Hellenism."

raises doubts about the validity of the author's conclusions. Between Phraates II and Mithradates II, Assar in Overtoom (2020, 248) posits the existence of three kings – two named Artabanos and one named Arsakes (c. 127–121 B.C.) – despite historical records mentioning only Artabanos I during this period. Overtoom takes these speculative assertions at face value, demonstrating a lack of independent scrutiny of the written sources and numismatic evidence.

Overall, the absence of a thorough approach to the evidence significantly limits the quality of Overtoom's book, which is rife with speculation and interpretation without the application of rigorous historical methodology. In the field of historical research, the appropriate use of sources is crucial, and, unfortunately, Overtoom's work falls significantly short of the expected standard.

Issues of historical geography are likewise missing. Chaffetz (2020) pointed out this major shortcoming: "It would have been helpful had Overtoom devoted more attention to geography, explaining where and what resources were exploited by his protagonists." The Ochos River, where Arsakes I lived, is not mentioned.

The term "Hellenistic" Middle East (Overtoom 2020, 246 and passim) is not appropriate for Arsakid expansion under Mithradates II and his successors. It is better to avoid the label "Hellenistic" for this phase, when the role of states with dynasties of Greek-Macedonian descent, i.e., Hellenistic kingdoms, was marginal. In particular, it is challenging to consider Armenia, Adiabene, or Mesene as "Hellenistic" states.

The use of the designation "Iranian interstate system" for the Parthian Empire is questionable: "the Parthian Empire under Mithridates remained an unlimited revisionist state that aggressively pursued the complete dominance of the much-expanded Iranian interstate system" (Overtoom 2020, 250-251). Such terminology is inappropriate as the Arsakid Empire included not only kingdoms in Iran, such as Atropatene, Elymais, and Persis, but also claimed territories in many countries outside of Iran, including Babylonia, Mesene, Adiabene, Osrhoene, Armenia, Albania, and Seleukid Syria.

One issue with Overtoom's book is its organization, particularly the use of enigmatic chapter titles. A similar problem exists with subchapters appearing in different fonts. Apparently, they are intended to represent various levels of importance, but it is unclear what significance, if any, they may hold. Overtoom often applies a Seleukid perspective: the subchapter "A New Crisis" (p. 162) begins with the statement, "After becoming king in 175, Antiochus IV appointed his close friend Timarchus to the major command of viceroy over the Upper Satrapies." Bactria and Demetrios appear in subsection titles, but the less experienced reader will be confused. After the subheading "Recovery" on p. 150, there is the subsection "The Disaster of Demetrius." And where is the Parthian conquest of Babylonia? According to Overtoom 2020, 175 (with n. 175): "Justin

in 41.6.8 states that the Parthians conquered Elymais before conquering Babylonia." Nevertheless, this claim is not justified, as there is no mention of Babylonia in Justin 41.6; the passage mentions Media, Hyrcania, and Elymais.

Contrary to Overtoom's claim on p. 171 n. 227, Justin 41.6.7–8 records that Mithradates returned to Hyrcania after finalizing his conquest of Media. The statement on page 173 raises doubts: "Mithridates entered the symbolically powerful cities of Seleucia and Babylon as a triumphant conqueror, appointing commanders of Greek descent to maximize support in the region." Next, in footnote 235, Overtoom states that Mithradates I appointed Antiochos, son of King Ar'abuzana, as his supreme commander, with Nikanor as one of Antiochos' subordinates. Overtoom does not discuss Antiochos in detail but apparently believes he was Greek. However, this prince was the son of King Ariobarzanes, an Iranian ruler likely from Media Atropatene. From the reign of Phraates II, we know that there were commanders called Philinos and Theodosios, who seem to have been of Greek or Macedonian descent, judging by their names, but this remains a hypothesis.[10] One of the supreme governors was Himeros, the Hyrcanian. And the Arsakid viceroy in Greater Media was Bagayasha, the brother of Mithradates I.

Chapter 5, "The Climax of the Seleucid-Parthian Rivalry" (pp. 189-245) begins with the mention of Mithradates I. The first footnote reads, "The Parthians revered Mithridates so much that they deified him. Assar 2011: 118." I take it on faith that Mithradates was deified, but I would prefer to have source evidence to support this assertion. In fact, the chapter chiefly deals not with Mithradates I but with Antiochos VII and his war against Phraates II.

Overtoom mentions Phraates II's seizure of power only in passing (2020, 198): "He began his reign by consolidating Parthian hegemony over Elymais in 132/131, and he also initiated extensive military preparations in Babylonia in 131." It is essential to know where Phraates was in 130 B.C. because he did not stay in Mesopotamia and did not confront the invading army of Antiochos VII. Overtoom claims that he was making preparations there and pacifying Elymais. It seems more likely that Phraates stayed in the eastern borderlands of Parthia, fighting the nomads.[11]

Overtoom (2020, 267 and 275) presents a speculative version of the end of Mithradates II's reign. According to this view, in ca. 93 B.C., the remaining son of Mithradates I, Sinatrukes, rebelled against Mithradates II. Mithradates II died around 91 B.C., and one of his successors was "his son Mithradates III". Overtoom does not discuss the accounts himself but extensively quotes several works by Assar as the basis for his narrative.

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[10] A comprehensive account of these officials and commanders was compiled by Mitsuma (2021), published after Overtoom (2020) had been released.

[11] Olbrycht 1998, 86.

On questions of the origins of Parthian military traditions, Overtoom (2020, 37) presents a sound position: "The innovations of the Parthian army were indeed exceptional in the Hellenistic Middle East. Although the Parthians settled on the Iranian plateau and came to embrace many cultural influences from Greek and Persian neighbors, they did not adopt the military traditions of the Greeks and Persians. Instead, the Parthians continued to emphasize the asymmetric cavalry tactics and organization of their nomadic roots. The Parthians recruited their cavalry largely from settler-soldiers, who offered service in exchange for land; however, the Parthians' cavalry-focused militarism was of steppe origin, and the social structure of the Parthian state remained closely connected to its military organization."

In his review of my book (Olbrycht 2021), Overtoom (2022, 46) raises concerns about its balanced approach: "The three parts of the book could have been better integrated to read more smoothly as a whole. Part I, although important on its own, in particular appeared mostly detached from the primary purpose of Parts II and III, namely the history and culture of early Arsacid Parthia." This is a flawed argument, which stems from a completely different research methodology than that used by Overtoom. If we detach the history of Andragoras and the activities of the Seleucids in the province of Parthia prior to Arsakes from the broader context of early Arsakid Parthian history and culture, it becomes challenging to justify this approach. In his articles and influential book, Józef Wolski extensively examined the origins of the Parthian state, devoting a significant portion to Seleucid history (Wolski 1993). This focus is also reflected in my own book.

Overtoom (2022) applies the ambiguous terms "provocative reconstruction" and "speculative reconstruction" to place my book (Olbrycht 2020) in a negative light: "Olbrycht's provocative, albeit speculative reconstruction of Andragoras' rebellion in 256 BCE and Arsaces I's invasion in 244/243 BCE hinges on his equally provocative, albeit speculative reconstruction of the civil war of Seleucus II and Antiochus Hierax". It would have been more instructive had he engaged directly with the scholarship rather than relying on superficial labels.

In his review, Overtoom criticizes my statement that Antiochos III died looting a temple in southern Iran "to pay enormous tribute to Rome (when it appears undeniably that Antiochus' true purpose was to gain the money he needed for a new eastern campaign) (Olbrycht, 2021, pp. 68–69)." Fortunately for us, Justin (32.2.1-2) provides an explanation of the event - Antiochos needed money for Rome: "In Syria, meanwhile, king Antiochos, being burdened, after he was conquered by the Romans, with a heavy tribute under his articles of peace, and being impelled by want of money or stimulated by avarice, brought up his army one night, and made an assault upon the temple of Jupiter in Elymais, hoping that he might more excusably commit sacrilege under plea of wanting money to pay his tribute. But the affair became known, he was killed by a rising of the people who dwelt about the temple." In Elymais, Antiochos III wanted

to repeat his exploit of Ekbatana in 211/0 B.C.: the sacrilegious plundering of a local sanctuary.[12]

In the peculiar realm of realist theory, the position of Parthia is difficult to determine. Although it was a kind of superpower, did it remain an element of an alleged "interstate anarchy"? Overtoom's Parthia is a state that increasingly became a "rogue superpower" – neither committed to internationalism nor retreating into isolationism, but instead pursued an assertive, self-interested foreign policy. The lack of a nuanced and subtle analysis of the sources leads Overtoom to reconstruct a Parthia that acted unilaterally by prioritizing its imperial (if not "nationalistic") military interests over multilateral cooperation. This approach thus views Parthia as a state built purely on its military prowess without the constraints of regional consensus or alliance obligations, whose only notable contribution was to bring anarchy into the world. Overtoom uses a theoretical model that partially distorts historical reality, making it inaccurate and misleading.

In the field of research on Parthia, Overtoom's book fails to provide sorely needed insights. To a certain extent, Overtoom offers interesting reflections on the wars and struggles associated with the expansion of Parthia, but these issues are often discussed from the Seleukids' perspective, who were essentially the enemies of Parthia. While Overtoom effectively demonstrated his writing skills in his shorter articles on Parthia, his "realist" models in the monograph under review are over-utilized. They should have been set aside to focus instead on extracting valuable information about Parthian history.

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[12] Will 1982, II, 239.

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Abstract

Historians specializing in antiquity face significant challenges when studying Parthian history. This difficulty primarily stems from the wide variety of sources available, which makes them complex to utilize effectively. Furthermore, Parthian history encompasses a vast territory, including numerous distinct regions that stretch from the Persian Gulf to Afghanistan. Consequently, comprehensive, multifaceted monographs on Parthian history are scarce. Recently, three monographs on early Parthia have been published: Balakhvantsev (2017), Olbrycht (2021), and Overtoom (2020). Overtoom's work employs a theoretical model that distorts historical reality in certain aspects, resulting in inaccuracies and misleading conclusions. The author supports the neo-realist theory in international relations. Historians of this period and scholars in Oriental studies should approach this model and methodological concept with caution, utilizing a broader research spectrum.

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SELEUCID HISTORY: NEW PERSPECTIVES AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

Keywords: Seleucids, Hellenistic History, Iran, Babylonia

The treatment of Seleucid history in the last two decades reflects a rich diversification in perspective.[1] Rather than a fractured, declining successor state, these recent works argue for an ideologically cemented empire - integrated yet adaptable, central yet locally negotiated. Economic, administrative, political, and ideological dimensions, to name but a few, are now all embraced in a polyphonic historiographical chorus.[2]

To cite but a few examples. Kosmin[3] explores the concept of space and territory in the Seleucid Empire, arguing that the Seleucid Empire was more than a fragile successor kingdom, it was a deliberately constructed, ideologically coherent state model, spatially imagined from the very beginning of its existence. Chrubasik[4] investigates political dynamics and internal fragmentation in his work focusing on the recurring pattern of usurpation as part of normal Seleucid political life. He maintains that usurpers avoided challenging the dynasty outright as they operated within its ideological frames, claiming legitimacy through popular and military support with kingship negotiated more than an inherited strategy. In doing so, he skillfully shifts the narrative away from viewing

[1] This is the review article of: T. Daryaee, R. Rollinger and M.P. Canepa (eds.), *Iran and the Transformaiton of Ancient Near Eastern History: the Seleucids (ca. 312-150 BCE). Proceedings of the Third Payravi Conference on Ancient Iranian History, UC Irvine, February 24th-25th, 2020* (Classica et Orientalia 31), Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2023.

[2] The best and most current bibliography on the Seleukids is Strootman's unpublished collection of works from 1870 to 2021, see Strootman 2022.

[3] Kosmin 2014.

[4] Chrubasik 2016.

these crises as pure chaos, highlighting instead their resilience and underlying political structures. A third area covers administrative and spatial histories. Aperghis[5] and Capdetrey[6] provide systematic studies of administrative institutions, territories, and state financial systems. In so doing, they supply the missing administrative and fiscal bedrock that earlier works often neglected.

Yet, gaps remain. There is still much lacking in regard to social history and non-elites as most texts remain top down in their approach, oriented toward elites: A dearth exists for in-depth studies on rural populations, women, slaves, and cities outside administrative cores. While administrative syncretism (Greco-Babylonian, Hellenistic-Iranian) is acknowledged, integrated studies examining inter-cultural dynamics are limited. Finally, the later periods of the dynasty and its decline are still lacking. While much progress has been made regarding usurpers, there is much that remains unexplored about the late Seleucid cult, identity formations, and memory or how locals perceived their rulers are ripe for discovery. Taken as a whole, these studies from multiple traditions solidify the Seleukid Empire's place in the broader Hellenistic and Near Eastern historical narrative. It is in this context that the present work falls.

It has become common in recent years for some scholars to postulate specific terms that embrace theoretically the spirit of Hellenism and how it should shape historiographic and ideological perceptions of the Hellenistic world in future research. There is a tacit agreement on how to formulate such an approach by demonstrating its applicability – in the present case - to Seleukid history. This necessitates the collation of various interpretations to establish a conceptualization that accurately captures the essence of Hellenism. The result has led to some unhappy inventions of rather discordant sounding terms, like "glocal" or "glocalism" – a combination of "global" and "local," an amalgam of universalism and particularism. The idea is embedded in the notion of connectivity as well as mobility so that "globalized styles and concepts can become *de-terriorialized*, somewhat detached from their presumed origin and available on a much wider scale than before."[7] These theoretical concepts are taken from global studies. As Hoo frames it:

> globalization concepts of complex connectivity, time-space compression, deterritorialization, glocalisation, and translocation deeply challenge and unsettle traditional stances and notions on localism and change. As such, they provide critical theoretical observations and useful heuristic tools to productively approach Hellenism and cultural inbetweenness during the time period in focus.[8]

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[5] Aperghis 2004.

[6] Capdetrey 2007.

[7] Kruijer 2024, 35.

[8] Hoo 2022, 243.

Unfortunately, these ideas often do not translate well when applied to the specificity of the content that they are analyzing – in this case, the Hellenistic kingdom of the Seleukids.

Iran and the Transformaiton of Ancient Near Eastern History consists of fourteen contributions that were mostly presented at the third meeting of the series, *Payravi Conferences on Ancient Iranian History*, held at the University of California Irvine in 2020 organized by the book's editors.[9] In the Introduction, T. Daryaee and R. Rollinger, argue that at its apex the Seleukid Empire "was neither 'Eastern' nor 'Western'…neither 'Babylonian' nor 'Iranian,'" rather it was "Seleucid in its foundation, ideology, and identity." At the same time, the Empire in its first 150 years had succeeded in becoming "part of Iranian history" (5). The term that the editors settle on to describe the approach taken in the volume is "Irano-Hellenica" which they attribute to A. Zournatzi in her "Overview" (6). The reality is that the term "iranohellenica" forms part of the web address (http://iranohellenica.eie.gr/content/overview) of a preliminary draft release of her project. Zournatzi herself prefers the term, "Greek-Iranian." It is also worth noting that this is the only place in the book where this term appears. Nonetheless, "Irano-Hellenica" is intended to close the gap created by the dichotomy posed by terms, such as "Orient – Occident," or by extension "Hellenism and Persianism" with the latter sometimes written as "Iranianism."[10] The idea is to transcend the spatial division created by purely geographical and/or socio-cultural perceptions and instead seeks an approach that connotes both localism and globalism, think glocalism, which appears to act as a synonym for the concept of *inbetweeness*, according to which the "in" corresponds to the idea of *local* and the "between" to the *global*.[11] As is the case with many conferences, the papers fluctuate from the very specific to the very synthetic and take on widely varying subjects and points of view that are not always positioned well together under the rubric of the stated work.

R. Strootman's "How Iranian was the Seleucid Empire?" argues that the empire was to a degree Iranian due to its military structure, such as the kingdom's resources used for martial purposes, and the contributions made by local Iranian dynasts. Chronologically, the analysis extends from 330 BCE with the destruction of Persepolis by Alexander the Great to the conquest of Ekbatana by Mithradates I in 147 BCE. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the historiography of "Hellenism" in Iran and the inherent problems posed by the use of the term "Hellenistic," although he concedes that it must remain until a better expression can be found. In discussing the effect of Seleucid rule in Iran, he

[9] The papers of the first two conferences were published as a single volume, Daryaee / Rollinger 2021.

[10] Strootman 2020.

[11] Versluys / Riedel 2021, 13-18; Hoo 2022, 21-33.

asserts that by the 3rd century the Seleucid Empire had become "a multipolar network polity: it had an itinerant court and a variety of imperial centers" that stretched from Asia Minor to Central Asia (19). He also entertains the notion that prior to the conquest of Babylonia by Mithradates I, the Seleucids and the Arsacids were rivals for control of Iran as opposed to a neat transfer of power from one to the other. In addressing Iran's significance for the Seleucids, he expands on the theme that the country served as a wellspring of men and resources for military purposes, especially the safeguarding of trade routes. As an interesting parallel, Seleucid kings treated the women in their family as resources: marriages of their sisters and daughters were used to promote the reach of empire, particularly to local dynasts. This leads him to discuss the roles that Iranian elites played as officials in the empire, resulting in the "'Iranization' of the Seleucid Empire," even though they are largely invisible in the historical record owing to Hellenization (25). He concludes by noting the absence of identifiably "Greek" material culture attributed to the Seleucid era in the lands that had encompassed the empire, "which compels us to reconsider what we mean by "Seleucid" (27).

In S.M. Burstein's, "The Seleucid Conquest of Koile Syria and the Incense Trade," emphasis is placed on the importance of controlling the region for its "strategic significance" that also acted as "its special curse" (37). This leads to the heart of the analysis, for he argues that in addition to the military and political considerations of Antiochus III's victory in the Fifth Syrian War (c. 202-195 BCE), there were economic ramifications that affected the transportation of goods that moved through the region between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Attention is given to the latter with focus on incense and spices that were transported overland along two well-travelled caravan routes across Arabia.[12] To make up for the loss in revenues from the Seleucid control of these lucrative trade routes, Ptolemy VIII employed explorers who rediscovered the African source of incense in ancient Punt by securing the hazardous sea route in the Red Sea. As was the case with Ptolemy II, Ptolemy VIII subsequently undertook similar strategies in having Eudoxus sail to India to open direct lines of trade and commerce. The repercussions of this undertaking were long-lived, not only when the Roman participated in these exchanges but also when the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum played a dominant role by the third century CE.

S.E. Cole's, "Seleucid and Ptolemaic Imperial Iconography in the Syrian Wars (274-168 BCE): The Role of Dynastic Women," argues that both dynasties portrayed royal women in military settings. The Ptolemies began this practice by appealing to their Greek population with the use of mosaics and to their Egyptian subjects by employing stelai to represent the queens as loyal wives and mothers, who promoted dynastic stability and whose cults safeguarded the empire.

[12] On the economic and political role played by the Nabataeans in the Hellenistic era, see Pearson 2011, 5-41.

The Seleucids adopted this practice later during the reigns of Antiochus III, Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV chiefly as a countermeasure to the threats posed by Parthia and Rome. The focus of the argument centers on the Thmuis mosaics of Egypt supplemented with coins, epigrams, and pottery. The Ptolemaic practice of incorporating the Seleucid anchor with flukes extending upward or other Seleucid dynastic emblems was intended to invoke Ptolemaic victories, such as the seizure of Seleucia Pieria. Whereas mosaics were limited to private settings among elites, the Raphia Stelai contain decrees that were erected "before Egyptian temples and thus presented a public-facing message to local priesthoods and communities" (65). Three fragmentary stelai composed in Greek, hieroglyphs, and Demotic Egyptian, known as the Raphia Decree, venerate a priestly council after the Fourth Syrian War, and contain images of Ptolemy IV and his sister-wife Arsinoe III, who adorn two of the stelai. Arsinoe's presence at the battle is depicted in the guise of the protector of her husband and hence the kingdom. Fewer remains exist from the Seleucids. Although they presented themselves as inheritors of the Achaemenids in written sources, they seem not to have done so in art. The sole exception is coinage, in which queens appear only in the second half of the dynasty with Laodice III the wife of Antiochus III and their daughter Laodice IV as the sister-wife of both Seleucus IV, then Antiochus IV. Subsequent coinage of Seleucid queens emphasizes their position as forebearers of the dynastic line. The Seleucids appear to have modelled the representation of their royal women after Ptolemaic practices.

"Seleucus I and the Seleucid Dynastic Ideology: The Alexander Factor"[13] by K. Nawotka seeks to determine how the memory and image of Alexander the Great were used to formulate Seleucid ideology and whether they were merely a holdover from Seleucus I himself and subsequently Antiochus IV, or if they were truly meaningful to Seleucus I and acknowledged by his successors. He begins with an assessment of Libanius who provides indirect evidence alleging that Seleucus was related to Temenos, the founder of the Temenid/Argead clan and thus to Alexander's dynasty. He then turns to the monument set up at Nemrud Dağı by Antiochus I of Commagene, in which the king's maternal ancestors are presented in a gallery starting with Alexander the Great, then Seleucus I followed by successive Seleucid dynasts. He then takes up stories prophesizing Seleucus as the eventual successor of Alexander. The tradition surrounding Alexander's will is also wrapped in this tradition as Seleucus is recognized as the king's lawful heir apparent. For his coinage and in his inscriptions, Seleucus chose Zeus as his patron deity, as "his god of choice…as it was of Alexander" (95). Thus, Seleucus' legitimacy as ruler and as Alexander's rightful successor was based on his ability to remake his image as ruler of Babylonia and embrace Zeus as his patron deity, even though Apollo also played a similar role in the royal genealogy.

[13] To Nawotka's impressive bibliography on Seleucus, one may add Hannestad 2020, which would not have been available when he wrote the article.

V. Messina's, "Seleucia-on-the-Tigris: Embedding Capitals in the Hellenizing Near East," seeks to ascertain the veracity of "the effectiveness of interpretive models created for describing" the city as one of the most important "in the Hellenizing world" (101). He begins with a discussion of the foundation of new capitals in the Hellenistic world, followed by the shifting perception of cities in the ancient Near East. One facet of these changing assessments is the notion of "disembedded capitals" presented as a model "to explain the caesurae between new foundations and pre-existing contexts" (105) by returning to the earlier works of R. Stanley and A. Joffe.[14] The idea is to understand these sorts of capitals as a distinctive type whose foundation was most likely associated with major formal ceremonies. As such, disembedded capitals are understood as "urban sites founded *de novo* and designed to supplant existing patterns of authority and administration."[15] He concludes that Seleucia-on-the-Tigris contradicts the model, even though "it can be argued on sound arguments that such a policy was pursued" (122).

The city also forms the basis of the next contribution by J. Degen in his "Seleucus I, Appian and Seleucia-on-the-Tigris: The Empire Becoming Visible in Seleucid *Ktíseis*." The analysis focuses on Appian's *Syriake* 58 regarding the foundation (κτίσις) of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and how this account informs us of Seleucus' "ideological background" of this imperial project, why he made it visible as "a symbolically laden performance," and how the event provides insight into his notion of "imperial identity" as a means of legitimizing competing concepts of his rulership (127). This leads him to undertake a close read of Appian's account by examining the role of the Babylonian priesthood, the attempt by the Magi to frustrate the city's foundation out fear that it would displace the preeminent position long held by Babylon, and the imperial policy that Seleucus pursued within the context of his Macedonian background which he brought to the Near East. The idea is amplified in his examination of the fluctuating ideas about kingship starting with the Assyrians. The study then turns to how Seleucus won legitimation for his royal prerogative in Babylon by posing as a Babylonian king. The model from which he draws his reconstruction derives from the so-called "Cyrus-Cylinder" in which the Babylonian priesthood had remade Cyrus into an ideal Babylonian ruler. Both Cyrus and Seleucus succeeded in quelling local opposition to their rule by highlighting their status as divinely chosen. Appian's passage reveals that "Seleucus defeated the Babylonian priests with Babylonian strategies of legitimate kingship making it a complex account that is full of symbolism meaningful to multiple cultures and political traditions" (150).

For its part Babylon figures prominently in J. Haubold's, "Iran in the Seleucid and Early Parthian Period: Two Views from Babylon." In this case, Haubold mines two sources - Berossos' *Babyloniaca* (c. 280 BCE) and the *Astronomical*

[14] Stanley 1980; Joffe 1998.
[15] Joffe 1998, 549.

Diaries for the period spanning c. 145-120 BCE - to grasp how the Babylonian priesthood perceived Iran and Iranians. He draws on the former to ascertain this view in the early decades of Seleucid rule and the latter to comprehend the degree to which this view changed in the post-Seleucid era marked by the beginning of the Arsacid period. Together both works reflect how the priesthood made sense of their Iranian neighbors within the context of Babylonian history and culture.

In "From Sennacherib to the Seleucids: The Settled Landscape of the Assyrian Heartland during the Hellenistic Period," R. Palermo notices that Mesopotamia, especially in the southern and central part of the country, remains archaeologically underexplored for the Seleucid period. As more excavations have been conducted in the northern region of Mesopotamia in Kurdistan, the analysis focuses on the spatial impact from the late Iron Age to the early Parthian period in terms of settlements and the region's physical transformation, drawing on data from the Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey coupled with legacy evidence and historical records. The goal is to derive information regarding "colonization, migration, landscape exploitation and top-down, or bottom-up, imperial strategies" (185). He concludes that the landscape as it appeared during the Assyrian Empire changed markedly in the Seleucid period and shows the diminishment of the centrality once enjoyed by Babylonia. The settlement pattern in the Erbil plain is less conclusive as changes in settlement pattern cannot yet be deciphered with any degree of certainty as to why variations in the archaeological record exist.

O. Coloru's, "Seen from Ecbatana: Aspects of Seleucid Policy in Media," discusses two historical phases of Media under Seleucid sovereignty. The first, "Building Seleucid Media (306-246 BCE)," began when Seleucus I brought Media under his administrative umbrella and the role that the country played in the kingdom. The year 246 BCE stands as the date when the Seleucids lost the Upper Satrapies. This leads to the second phase - the reorganization of the Upper Satrapies (246-148 BCE).

The chapter by L. Martinez-Sève, "Seleucid Religious Architecture in Ai Khanoum: A Case Study" investigates how the intermural temple-sanctuary constructed during the reign of Antiochos I at the site of Ai Khanoum (northeastern Afghanistan) as religious architecture can be used to define Seleucid imperial identity. Emphasis is placed on the different kinds of architectural forms used in the construction of this temple and its later reconstructions to glean insight into the selections made by the architects. She sets forth an overview of the temples and their appearance, which leads her to calculate that the post-Seleucid Greco-Bactrian temple rose 12-15 meters set atop a podium to achieve a height of up to 16-17 meters (225-226). The discussion then proceeds to a postulation of the ornamentation of the Greco-Bactrian temple and a comparative analysis of building traditions in the Near East with special attention given to Bactrian, Iranian, and (Syro-)Mesopotamian temples.

In K. Ruffing's chapter, he provides a historiographic synopsis of scholarship on "The Economy (-ies) of the Seleucid Empire" that undergirded the kingdom within the framework of ancient economics. He takes as his starting point the "Bücher-Meyer-Controversy" of the last decade of the 19th century. The former argued that economic development underwent three stages beginning with the "closed domestic economy" of the ancient world as opposed to the latter who emphasized similarities between the economy of antiquity with that of his own. He then considers the pioneering work of Rostovtzeff, who signaled that central to the Seleucid economy was "monetizaton, Greek immigration and colonization, and thus political, social, and economic unification" (257). The 1960s and 1970s marked the emergence of "primitivist orthodoxy" developed primarily by Jones and Finley, which was superseded by Sherwin-White and Kuhrt in the 1990s. They, like Aperghis, whose thesis benefited from the supervision of Kuhrt, renewed many of the insights originally proposed by Rostovtzeff in his own 2004 monograph. A few years later, van der Spek applied the "New Institutional economy" to the Seleucid Empire, while Capdetrey viewed the Seleucids as continuing many of the practices inaugurated by the Achaemenids. This led to the notion of searching for the roots of the Seleucid economic system in Assyria and subsequently in the Babylonian economy during the Hellenistic era. The overview concludes with a discussion on which ethnicon to use as a term for characterizing Seleucid economics, the difference between public and private economy and the problem of how to interpret sources written in Greek from those in Babylonian.

"The Seleucids and the Sea" is an examination by C. Schäfer of two areas in which the Seleucids were involved with maritime affairs. The first concerns the eastern fleet focusing on the activities of the first two Seleucid kings, who assigned warships to patrol the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The historical record is spotty at best. Only a few naval bases serving as supply depots in the Gulf are known. The perennial problem for the fleet was access to fresh drinking water as warships could remain at sea for only brief periods of time, because "rowers needed an enormous amount of freshwater" (274). The kings also undertook exploratory expeditions of the Caspian Sea.[16] Schäfer follows the estimate of Aperghis[17] that there were no more than 20 triremes manned by 5,000 men charged with safeguarding this part of the empire. More information is forthcoming about the Seleucid fleet in the Mediterranean. In order to determine the extent of Seleucid participation in this theater, the analysis rests on a comparison with the maritime activities of the Antigonids, Ptolemies and later the Romans and their eastern allies. The Seleucids were never dominant players

[16] To the bibliography on Patroclus' journey along the coast, add Rtveladze 2010; Ртвеладзе 2012; Lerner 2014; Lerner 2020.

[17] Aperghis 2004, 199.

in the Mediterranean with their fortunes ebbing and flowing depending on their military successes or failures. Any pretenses of Seleucid hegemony in the region were dashed with Antiochus III's agreement to curtail any further military encroachment into the region as a result of his signing the Peace of Apamea in 188 BCE, although Antiochus IV seems to have tried to revive the navy during his reign. All told, the strength of the Seleucid fleet seems never to have exceeded 10,000 men at any time in the Mediterranean (281).

S. Stark, "Some Observations on the Early Seleucid Northeastern Frontier," drawing on "relevant" archaeological evidence and textual sources reevaluates two current approaches for studying parts of the Upper Satrapies under Seleucid rule – either the dynasty's direct involvement in the region or its "general structural problems" (285). In so doing, he isolates two distinct areas: the Kopet-dagh micro regions, consisting of portions of the satrapy Parthia-Hyrcania; and the Zeravshan Delta in Sogdiana. The conclusion is centered on the relationship between Seleucid administration of the region and its relationship with "tribes," or as he prefers, "pastoral groups." He briefly dismisses the notion that pastoralists relied on agricultural goods from sedentary societies, that there is no evidence to corroborate a "Daha invasion," or that the Seleucids adopted a "closed-door" border policy. Rather the early Seleucids implemented a "flexible and multi-dimensional" program in their dealings with pastoral groups at their northeastern frontier (295).

M.P. Canepa's, "The Seleucid Empire and the Creation of a New Iranian World," serves as the proceedings last entry in which he references many of the contributions. The chapter frames the Seleucids as dynasts who ruled an Iranian Empire and fashioned a program of imperial urbanism. He briefly presents an overview of the Seleucid economy, while also placing the kingdom within a geopolitical context. The article concludes with a discussion of the transformation of how Iranian religions were practiced during this period.

The proceedings achieve the goal of demonstrating the range of expertise that can inform how the varying complexities of the Seleucid Empire can be analyzed. In this regard, the collection makes a valuable contribution to the study of the Hellenistic period. The work also offers a fine example of the range of specializations, tools, and perspectives that can be brought to bear to forge an understanding of this period of history.

Despite the many admirable qualities of the volume, there are some editorial problems that diminish the overall usefulness of the proceedings. The book struggles somewhat to strike the right balance between presenting individual entries and components of a whole. There is ample repetition in the repeated focus of Seleucus I and Antiochus I and the need for more unified interdisciplinary action, which seem to intimate that chapters will be read independently.

These minor issues aside, the volume will undoubtedly attract attention and provide a solid background for further research as there are still many questions to be answered about ancient Iranian history during the Seleucid period. It serves as an important addition to our knowledge of the subject and will be useful to both historians and archaeologists studying this part of the Hellenistic world.

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Abstract

This comprehensive review article examines the recent transformation in Seleucid historiography, analyzing fourteen contributions from the third Payravi Conference on Ancient Iranian History held at UC Irvine in 2020. The work addresses a fundamental shift in scholarly perspective from viewing the Seleucid Empire as a fragmented, declining successor state to understanding it as an ideologically coherent, adaptable empire that successfully integrated central authority with local negotiation across diverse territories from Asia Minor to Central Asia. The article traces the evolution of Seleucid studies over the past two decades, highlighting key theoretical developments including Kosmin's spatial analysis of territorial conception, Chrubasik's examination of usurpation as normal political practice, and systematic administrative studies by Aperghis and Capdetrey. The authors introduce the concept of "Irano-Hellenica" to transcend traditional East-West dichotomies, though they acknowledge the limitations of applying globalization theories like "glocalism" to ancient contexts.

The fourteen contributions span diverse methodological approaches and geographical regions. Methodologically, the contributions demonstrate the field's increasing sophistication in combining textual analysis with archaeological evidence, numismatic studies, and comparative imperial analysis. The work particularly emphasizes the importance of Babylonian sources and the complex dynamics of center-periphery relationships in imperial administration.

The review identifies persistent challenges in Seleucid studies, including the continued focus on elite perspectives, limited integration of intercultural dynamics, and insufficient attention to the empire's later periods. Despite these limitations, the volume represents a significant advancement in understanding the Seleucid Empire as neither purely "Eastern" nor "Western" but distinctly "Seleucid" in its foundation, ideology, and identity, while simultaneously becoming integral to Iranian history during its first 150 years. This work contributes substantially to Hellenistic and Near Eastern historiography by providing new theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical evidence that will inform future research on ancient Iranian history, imperial studies, and cultural transformation in the post-Achaemenid period.

ANABASIS 14–15 (2023–2024)
STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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FROM EPAMINONDAS TO STANISŁAW KONARSKI. ANCIENT GREEK HERITAGE AND ASPIRATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH IN THE MID-18TH CENTURY

Keywords: Epaminondas, Stanisław Konarski, tragedy, ancient Greek legacy, Polish Commonwealth

Epaminondas, written by Konarski in 1756, is a five-act tragedy set in ancient Thebes in the 4th century BC. The play centers on the historical Theban military leader Epaminondas and his internal dilemmas concerning fighting enemies, acquiring power, patriotism, and the conflict between the good of the homeland and adherence to strict laws.[1] Celebrated throughout the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, Epaminondas (c. 419/411–362 BC) was considered one of Greek history's most significant figures who transformed the city of Thebes from a weak state dependent on Sparta into a leading power in Greece. He defeated the Spartans at the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC and liberated the Messenian helots. Against the backdrop of ancient times, Konarski critiques contemporary issues in the Rzeczpospolita, including paid treason, abuses of power, and an ineffective government system.

Stanisław Konarski (1700-1773) was a Polish priest, publicist, educator, and playwright. After graduating from school in 1715, he joined the Piarist order, began his novitiate, and was affiliated with the nationally famous and highly distinguished Piarist College in Podoliniec (present-day northern Slovakia) for seven years, specializing in the humanities. He became a teacher of syntax and

[1] This article is devoted to the work of Stanisław Konarski, *Epaminondas*, edited by Jacek Wójcicki, Warszawa 2023 (Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskiego Oświecenia [Library of Writers of the Polish Enlightenment], vol. 25). Thanks are due to Massimo Nafissi for his comments. On Konarski's biography, see: Konopczyński 1926; Rose 1929; Kurdybacha 1957; Mrozowska 2023.

poetry, and he engaged in catechetical work and philosophy. He also taught at the Collegium Resoviense in Rzeszów. After that, Konarski traveled to Italy, where he studied in Rome and worked as a teacher of rhetoric at the Collegium Nazarene. He subsequently went to Paris to study educational theories, where he became familiar with the writings of John Locke. In 1732, inspired by Józef Andrzej Załuski, Konarski began editing a vast collection of constitutions and Parliament (Sejm) laws titled *Volumina Legum*.[2] He established the renowned Collegium Nobilium in Warsaw (1740) and founded the first public reference library on the European mainland (1747). Konarski reformed Piarist education in Poland in accordance with his educational program, the *Ordinationes Visitationis Apostolicae* (1755). These reforms were a turning point in the 18th-century effort to improve the Polish education system. His political treatises, such as *On the Means of Effective Counsels* (*O skutecznym rad sposobie*, 1760-1763), are invaluable works engaging in efforts to save the Rzeczpospolita (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) in the face of a looming collapse due to pressure from hostile neighbors (Prussia, Russia, and Austria).

In 2023, a new critical edition of Stanisław Konarski's tragedy titled *Epaminondas* was published, featuring a carefully edited text, detailed explanations, and commentaries.[3] This edition is based on a manuscript housed in the Vilnius Historical Archives. Earlier editions of the drama were published under the title *The Tragedy of Epaminondas* (*Tragedia Epaminondy*).[4]

The most important ancient source for Konarski's *Epaminondas* was the Latin biography of Epaminondas by Cornelius Nepos (1st century BC) from *De viris illustribus*. Konarski also drew upon the Latin *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* (*Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem*) by Valerius Maximus (1st century AD) and the Greek *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (*Basileon apophthegmata kai strategon*) by Plutarch (died c. 120 AD). His educational background, the availability of Plutarch's works, and the thematic overlap provide strong circumstantial evidence for the assumption that Konarski was familiar with Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas* while writing *Epaminondas.* Pelopidas was a close friend of Epaminondas, and his *Life* contains a plethora of information about the latter.

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[2] Konarski 1732-1782.

[3] Wójcicki 2023. An international conference was held in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the death of Stanisław Konarski dedicated to his legacy. It was organized by the Institute of History at Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, the Institute of Literary Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Polish Province of the Piarist Order. During the conference, the Polish Classics Theater (directed by Jarosław Gajewski) performed Konarski's *Epaminondas*. After 264 years, Konarski's tragedy returned to the Collegium Nobilium Theater.

[4] The first critical edition of Konarski's work, released a century ago by Wacław Kloss, the director of the Warsaw Władysław IV Gymnasium, included both linguistic and historical explanations (Kloss 1923). See also Nowakowski 1882.

The historical context of Konarski's play is essential. The state of Thebes fights to regain its independence against Sparta and the domination of mighty Persia. Konarski perfectly understands these circumstances, introducing a crucial Persian envoy into the tragedy. In 371 BC, the Thebans, led by Epaminondas, defeated the Spartans at Leuctra. It is with the recollection of this victory that the tragedy begins. In Thebes, the oligarchic, pro-Spartan faction clashes with the democratic party, which supports independence and Epaminondas's efforts. The plot revolves around accusations against the victorious commander of unlawfully extending the term of command over the army, which Epaminondas justifies as necessary to maximize the advantage over Sparta. His opponents use this as a reason for the unconditional application of the death penalty, as provided for in the law. Not all details correspond to historical reality, but Konarski brilliantly captures the events in Thebes as an allegory of the situation in Poland around the 1750s.

The main character does not appear on stage until Act II. He refuses to attend any celebrations in his honor, recognizing every citizen's achievements as merely a duty and repayment of a debt incurred to his homeland. In addition, he rejects attempts at bribery by the Persian envoy Diomedon (Dyjomedon), citing the binding laws of Thebes. Act III is characterized by an escalation in tension, marked by the Persian envoy's obstinate attempt to bribe Epaminondas. In response, Epaminondas vehemently rejects the offer, asserting that no amount of wealth can bribe him. Act IV depicts the city torn apart by rebellion. Epaminondas is taken to prison. Act V includes, above all, a trial of Epaminondas by the city authorities, which is paradoxical because the accused demands that a death sentence be passed on him, while the polemarchs, who are his friends but must uphold the law, try to avoid such a verdict. Epaminondas's unyielding stance as a defender of the principle of *dura lex, sed lex* remains unchanged, even with the arrival of Pelopidas with good news about the pacification of the rebellious city. Epaminondas dictates to the judges the text of the epitaph he wants for himself, which is actually a list of his own merits for his homeland. After such an apology, Epaminondas does not hear the death sentence, but the sounds of general enthusiasm and the announcement that he will be honored by grateful Thebes. The finale of the drama brings the account of witnesses to the suppression of the revolt; the crowd kills the rebellious son of Pelopidas. The dialogues condemn the corrupters of youth and call for revenge against them. However, Epaminondas once again shows noble magnanimity, and thanks to his intervention, the main oligarchic reactionary who survived the riots is sentenced only to banishment. The work culminates in a scene of a triumphant procession, which, in a joyful mood, solemnly dances onto the stage around the bronze statue of Epaminondas.

In his drama, Konarski highlights the contentious role of laws codified by the state. The law of Thebes threatened the death penalty for the greatest commander in the city's history. Similar cases occurred during the Peloponnesian War in Athens.

Konarski alludes to the laws in Poland, with which he was very familiar. After many years of work, Konarski compiled a large corpus of statutes enacted in Poland over several centuries. These laws contained outstanding government solutions and some poorly functioning regulations; Konarski used his tragedy to encourage political discussions in Poland and draw consequences regarding improved regulations.

The indication of politicians being corrupted by foreign ambassadors is unusually evident, a problem that was particularly pronounced in 18th-century Poland when many dignitaries were corrupt traitors serving the interests of powerful neighbors, including Prussia, Russia, and Austria. Konarski could not write about it openly, but the power of the allusion is compelling. The character of the Persian ambassador, who attempts to bribe Epaminondas, plays a vital role in the tragedy.

An important question has been overlooked in modern scholarly studies. Why did Konarski choose Epaminondas, arguably the most outstanding commander in ancient Greece, as his central figure? Epaminondas was successful in many campaigns and implemented innovative military tactics that revolutionized Greek and Macedonian warfare. Young Philip, who would later become king of Macedonia and father of Alexander the Great, spent a few years in Thebes as a hostage, closely observing the military reforms of Pelopidas and Epaminondas. He would later apply these solutions in Macedonia. Konarski longed for a strong ruler or commander who could liberate Poland from the corrupting influence of foreign powers. Poland had great potential, including robust military capabilities, but its hostile neighbors consistently and violently limited its economic growth and political stability. With adequate state organization, Poland could have created a strong army to deter enemies. However, the neighboring powers did not allow the army to be enlarged. These motives and inspirations, in the face of overwhelming enemy forces, come to the fore in this passage, which is all the more significant given the circumstances:

Epaminondas, Act I, l. 15-20:

> There you see those proud and stern Spartans,
> who forged chains for Greece and Thebes:
> a numerous and valiant army, as if certain of their loot,
> for ours were not there, not even a third of us.
> Courage—perhaps, but the sides were uneven:
> for every five Spartans, there was barely one of ours.[5]

Epaminondas's deeds are briefly described in some ancient works. However, Epaminondas's life is missing from the most famous collection of ancient biographies, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 45-120 AD) was one

[5] 'Tu pyszne one widzisz i harde Spartany / co kuli na Grecyją i Teby kajdany: / liczne i bitne wojsko jak na pewny leci / łup, bo naszych nie było i części tam trzeci<ej>. / Serca - może, lecz strony nierówne obiedwie: / na piąciu Spartańczyków nasz był jeden ledwie.'

of ancient Greece's most prolific writers, particularly celebrated for his biographical works that paired Greek and Roman figures to illustrate moral virtues and character traits. In the *Life of Agesilaus* (28), Plutarch mentions discussing portents and prodigies in his *Life of Epaminondas*, indicating its existence (see also *Life of Pelopidas,* 27.4). These and other sources suggest that the *Life of Epaminondas* existed, but it is lost.[6] Based on historical evidence, it appears that Plutarch indeed composed a *Life of Epaminondas* as part of his renowned *Parallel Lives* series. However, this work has not survived to the present day.[7] Plutarch included Epaminondas as a character in his dialogue, *De Genio* (*On the Genius of Socrates*). Epaminondas, a secondary but symbolically important character, participates in the conspiracy to liberate Thebes, contributes to the philosophical discussions that mask the plot, and embodies the virtues of restraint, wisdom, and civic duty.[8]

Overall, the new edition of the tragedy Epaminondas has initiated discussions about Konarski's role in Polish history and literature, the vibrant presence of ancient Greek cultural traditions in Poland, and the character of Epaminondas. Konarski's *Epaminondas* fits perfectly into the tradition of great Greek tragedy. He portrayed Epaminondas's dilemma between the good of his homeland, which was achieved by defeating enemies, and another good: the legal order. For Konarski, these allusions pertained to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is astonishing how relevant this dilemma remains today when numerous voices say that adequate and balanced politics require reference to Greek tragedy. In his new book, American political writer Robert Kaplan puts it this way: 'As the Greeks defined it, tragedy is not the triumph of evil over good but the triumph of one good over another good that causes suffering.'[9] For contemporary writers, this

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[6] Wilamowitz advanced the view that Pausanias (9.13.1-15.6) is a simple epitome of Plutarch's lost biography of Epaminondas. Peper elaborated this concept. See Wilamowitz 1874; Peper 1912. Tuplin (1984) argues that the Wilamowitz / Peper hypothesis, in its pure form, cannot be sustained. He calls for a more nuanced understanding of Pausanias' sources and methods when recounting the *Life of Epaminondas.* By analogy, it is worth noting that Pausanias relied on Plutarch's *Life of Philopoimen* in his excursus on that politician (Nafissi 2025). Cf. Frakes 2017.

[7] Geiger 2019. Epaminondas's accomplishments would have made him an ideal subject for Plutarch's biographical examinations of virtue, character, and leadership. The apparent pairing of Epaminondas with Scipio Africanus, the Roman general who defeated Hannibal, aligns with Plutarch's method of comparing Greek and Roman figures who demonstrated similar qualities.

[8] Pelling 2008.

[9] Kaplan 2023, XIV. Kaplan considers the lessons for foreign policy making to be drawn from classical Greek and Shakespearean tragedies to offer a view that US policymakers must 'think tragically to avoid tragedy'. Unfortunately, this perspective is often associated with realist theory or similar concepts, which are unlikely to produce the desired lasting solutions, and tends to overemphasize military factors and options. For aspects of realist theory, see M.J. Olbrycht, 'Parthian History: Research Approaches and Methodological Problems' in this volume. Kaplan (2023, 8) claims that 'tragedy is about bravely trying to fix the world, but only within limits'.

is an almost unsolvable dilemma formulated pessimistically, without a clear metaphysical perspective. For Konarski, however, the tragic dilemma was crowned by Epaminondas's willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of his homeland. And this attitude prevailed.

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Abstract

Epaminondas, written by Konarski in 1756, is a five-act tragedy set in ancient Thebes in the 4th century BC. The play centers on the historical Theban military leader Epaminondas and his internal dilemma concerning the balance between fighting enemies, acquiring power, patriotism, and the conflict between the good of the homeland and adherence to strict laws. Such dilemmas remain valid today, as numerous voices argue that adequate and balanced politics require reference to Greek tragedy. In one of his new books, American political writer Robert Kaplan claims that

He and other writers seek a hidden grammar of the modern era in Greek tragedy, at least for the Anglo-Saxon world, which is experiencing a cultural and religious crisis. Kaplan fails to appreciate a key factor in Greek tragedy—hubris—which significantly alters the validity of his approach.

'as the Greeks defined it, tragedy is not the triumph of evil over good but the triumph of one good over another good that causes suffering.' For Konarski, the tragic dilemma was crowned by Epaminondas's willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of his homeland. The new edition of the tragedy *Epaminondas* has initiated discussions about Konarski's role in Polish history and literature, the vibrant presence of ancient Greek cultural heritage in Poland, and the character of Epaminondas. Konarski brilliantly captures the events in Thebes as an allegory of the situation in Poland around the 1750s. The indication of politicians being corrupted by foreign ambassadors is unusually evident, a problem that was particularly pronounced in 18th-century Poland: many dignitaries were corrupt traitors serving the interests of powerful neighbors, including Prussia, Russia, and Austria. Konarski longed for a strong ruler or commander who could liberate Poland from the corrupting influence of foreign powers.

REVIEWS

ANABASIS 14–15 (2023–2024)
STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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YANG JUPING ET AL. (EDS.), *FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE YELLOW RIVER: HELLENISTIC CIVILISATION AND THE SILK ROAD*, 6 VOLS., BEIJING: ZHONGHUA BOOK COMPANY 2024, IN CHINESE, 3,300 PP. ISBN 9787101168464

Hellenism in the East has gained much attention within classical studies in recent decades. Yet this book series, edited by an enthusiastic team led by Professor Yang Juping of Nankai University, marks the most ambitious undertaking on this topic to date. This is demonstrated not only by its scale – bringing together more than 40 contributors from related fields and comprising 3,300 pages and 1,500 high-quality illustrations – but also by its expanded geographical scope. Moving beyond the regions historically reached by Alexander's campaigns, it casts its gaze upon the remote Middle Kingdom of China, offering a comprehensive survey of Hellenistic-derived cultural phenomena across the entire Silk Road from the 4th century BCE to the 7th century CE.

To manage such a vast subject, the series is thoughtfully structured. It contains a general introduction, four subject-based volumes, and a volume of collected papers, each prefaced by a concise introductory essay by the chief editor. Except for the last volume, they also conclude with a detailed list of illustrations, a well-translated Chinese-English glossary of terms, and a wide-ranging bibliography. Thus, the whole series moves from presenting a wealth of well-categorised historical information to engaging readers in ongoing scholarly conversations.

The opening volume, *From Alexander to Zhang Qian*, examines the rise of Alexander's empire from 334 to 323 BCE and its subsequent fragmentation into independent kingdoms across the Mediterranean, West Asia, and Central Asia. Notably, in addition to presenting this fundamental layout of the Hellenistic

world, it devotes ample space to commercial phenomena – both within these realms and in the faraway Chinese empires of Qin and Han – thereby highlighting the emerging connections between Western and Eastern civilisations through expanding trade networks.

The next three volumes, titled *From Alexander to Samarkand*, *From Macedon to Sogdiana*, and *From Apollo to the Buddha*, explore carefully selected themes that vividly illustrate the large-scale eastward transmission of Hellenism: cities, coinage, and visual art. These themes are examined through a wide range of textual sources, from the renowned *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* to numerous lesser-known inscriptions in Greek, Gāndhārī, Chinese, and Iranian languages, alongside abundant material evidence such as coins, sculptures, pottery, and other artefacts. Fresh archaeological discoveries from recently excavated sites, including the fortress of Kampyr Tepe in southern Uzbekistan and the Buddhist monastic complex at Mes Aynak in eastern Afghanistan, are seamlessly woven into the broader historical narrative and illustrated with well-chosen photographs. The first thing to emerge from these discussions is the tremendous role played by the Greeks in reshaping their eastern territories. The second volume, for instance, examines cities possibly founded by the Greeks and highlights their later transformation into key hubs of the Silk Road. The monetary system they introduced, analysed in the third volume, greatly facilitated commercial exchange across these cities and beyond.

However, what stands out more prominently in these discussions is not a simple one-way transmission of Greek elements, but a dynamic process of cultural interaction in which local communities developed foreign models to create new forms. A direct example can be found in post-Hellenistic Central Asian coinage, better understood only in the past two decades: issued by Yuezhi/Kushan or Hunnic rulers of steppe origin, these coins draw on Greco-Roman standards yet replace classical motifs with power images indicating their own nomadic conventions and religious affiliations. The fourth volume is particularly noteworthy in this regard. After a fascinating, in-depth review of the development of Hellenistic art, it reveals how the Greek – and, equally importantly, Roman – visual legacy was localised and integrated in the legendary land of Gandhāra in present-day north-western Pakistan and neighbouring Central Asian regions, giving rise to distinctive and splendid schools of Buddhist art. This incorporation is evident, as is traditionally well-known, in a variety of motifs, from decorative elements such as Acanthus to more figurative images like Atlas and *putti*. It is also reflected in techniques, for example the use of stucco for modelling marble-like statues. As the related chapter comments (p. 194), 'this indicates that the artists of Greater Gandhāra had transformed Western classical traditions into their own forms, which are imbued with vitality and largely independent of classical art.'

A fifth volume, *From Greece to China*, extends this analysis to a crucial new area: the reception of, and responses to, Western-derived inspirations in Han-Tang China. It notes that references to the Greeks and their descendants are rare and mostly legendary in Chinese historical sources, suggesting a lack of direct, consistent contact between the Hellenistic kingdoms and Chinese dynasties. However, it synthesises substantial visual evidence to argue for a different, yet illuminating, form of connection: numerous classical motifs, transmitted via Central Asia, were readily adopted and creatively adapted by the ancient Chinese to suit their own aesthetic preferences and cultural traditions. Evidence of this can be found in Xinjiang, in the famous Miran murals and in textiles from Loulan and Khotan, as well as in the heartland of Han-Chinese cultural regions, such as the Buddhist sculptures of the Yungang Grottoes and the Heracles-like guardian figurines from Tang-period tombs. In this way, the volume fulfils its primary purpose of demonstrating that Hellenistic cultural legacies were both encountered and deeply integrated into Chinese civilisation through the networks of the Silk Road.

Finally, the sixth volume, *The Legacy of Hellenistic Civilisation along the Silk Road*, gathers 27 research papers from two conferences held in 2016 and 2018 during the series' preparation. These papers are primarily contributed by leading academics from China and six other countries, with expertise spanning classical studies, history, art history, numismatics, and archaeology. They reflect the current state of scholarly debate and interdisciplinary collaboration, showcasing the study of the Hellenistic world as a vibrant international field of inquiry. In the volume, these papers are organised thematically and correspond to the titles of the preceding volumes. For interested readers, they provide an excellent resource for deeper engagement with specific historical concepts, objects, and archaeological sites introduced earlier in the series, such as the evolving definition of the 'Silk Road' itself and the influential coin types of Alexander and his successors, particularly those issued in Central Asia and northwest India.

This book series reflects the growing interest and fresh perspectives that Chinese academia has brought to classical studies in recent years. The editorial team challenges the traditional boundaries that typically separate the Hellenistic period (often considered to end with the rise of Rome in 146 BCE) from the establishment and flourishing of the Silk Road (commonly dated to the aftermath of Zhang Qian's mission in 128 BCE). Rather than portraying Hellenistic civilisation and its legacy as an invariable force that dominated certain parts of ancient Asia for a fixed period, they propose a more sophisticated model in which it was actively reshaped by and absorbed into local cultures, enabling its long-term presence and long-distance transmission along the Silk Road. In doing so, they unprecedentedly bridge two fields that are often treated as chronologically distinct, expanding the horizons of Hellenistic history.

Of course, no project of this scale can be entirely free from minor weaknesses. While topics concerning science, technology, and literature are indeed intertwined with discussions of currency, religions, and material production, one might expect, if space allows, more focused coverage of these indispensable components of Hellenism. Furthermore, the inclusion of many original English papers in the last volume might at first seem inconsistent with the predominantly Chinese text, though it in fact reflects the editors' consideration for non-Chinese readers and those Chinese scholars who might need to read the original English papers. Nevertheless, the series makes a tremendous effort to compile up-to-date information across multiple disciplines and, as it stands, remains an invaluable, nearly encyclopaedic reference work for both researchers and non-specialists. For the large Chinese readership in particular, it helps demystify the obscure terminology of Mediterranean studies and significantly broadens their view of the ancient world. An English translation is expected in the near future, which would undoubtedly benefit international readers and further enhance the impact of the original insights presented in this work.

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STUDIA CLASSICA ET ORIENTALIA

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MAREK JAN OLBRYCHT, *EARLY ARSAKID PARTHIA (CA. 250-165 B.C.) AT THE CROSSROADS OF IRANIAN, HELLENISTIC, AND CENTRAL ASIAN HISTORY*, LEIDEN / BOSTON: BRILL 2021 (MNEMOSYNE SUPPLEMENTS 440), 377 P., ISBN: 978-90-04-46075-1

Since compared to Teispid and Achaimenid history, Arsakid Parthia appears to be still understudied – although particularly the recent years saw a notable increase in Arsakid studies – Marek Jan Olbrycht, one of the internationally leading authorities on ancient Iranian history, coinage, and archaeology,[1] enriches the current scholarly debate by this new book (p. IX).

Examining the emergence, rise, and development of Parthia with its cultural interdependencies and political connections from Hellenistic times (3rd century BC) to the era of conquests (2nd century BC), Olbrycht provides the first comprehensive monograph on this subject in the current scholarly debate. The study is based on the whole range of sources available: literary, epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological evidence. It pays special attention to the multifold problems posed by the evidence such as its scarce nature or the Greek and Roman perspective of the literary accounts.

Carefully divided into clear sections, the monograph operates convincingly with a combined chronologic and systematic approach. The first part is dedicated to the geopolitical situation of pre-Arsakid Parthia in Hellenistic times (chapters 1-3, pp. 17-100), the second part treats the emergence and development of the Arsakid realm (chapters 4-7, pp. 103-238), and the third part examines the numismatic and archaeological evidence (chapters 8-9, pp. 241-293).

[1] To cite only a few of his numerous essential publications: Olbrycht 1996; 1997; 1998a; 1998b; 2009; 2010; 2013; 2014; 2016; 2017; 2021.

In a highly clear and user-friendly way, most of the chapters end with a short conclusion; the essential results are additionally summed up in concluding remarks (pp. 294-295).

Carefully introducing the readers to the subject, a preliminary chapter informs about scholarship on pre-Arsakid and Arsakid Parthia. In addition, the geopolitical setting of the regions in discussion is explained (pp. 1-13). As for the latter, Olbrycht's profound personal knowledge of the area and its climatic conditions proves to be a major advantage.

Setting the stage for the Parthian rise, chapter 1 explains the geopolitical situation in Northeastern Iran and the Caspian-Aral region in Post-Achaimenid times (pp. 17-36). Chapter 2 discusses the tendencies to disintegration in the Seleukid Empire paving the way to the Parthian struggle for autonomy (pp. 37-72). Chapter 3 is concerned with the important event of the revolt of Andragoras, governor of Parthia-Hyrkania, against the Seleukid rule (pp. 73-100). Critically analyzing the fragmentary literary and the numismatic evidence, particularly the iconography of the coins minted in Andragoras' name as a sign of independent sovereignty, Olbrycht also re-assesses the etymology of his name and importance of his commemoration in Arsakid cultural memory.

Chapter 4 (pp. 103-125) embeds the rise of Arsakid Parthia in its geographical context and brings light into some notoriously debated issues such as the location of the River Ochos (pp. 103-119). Chapter 5 analyzes the crucial events of the *defectio Parthorum* under Arsakes, his subsequent career, and his portrayal in the literary sources (pp. 126-161). Olbrycht argues plausibly that the mysterious figure of Arsakes I's brother Tiridates was in fact a historical person whose commemoration may have been intensified by Tiridates, a pretender challenging Phraates IV: in order to legitimize his claims, Tiridates may have tried to get himself a prestigious namesake from the glorious past (pp. 147-149). Debating the results of the influential Parthian expert Józef Wolski,[2] Olbrycht suggests a revised chronological order of events, re-dating the battle of Ankyra to 244/243 BC (pp. 77, 160-161).

Chapter 6 treats the achievements and problems of Arsakes I and pays special attention to his relations with the steppe people (pp. 162-200). Chapter 7 is devoted to the development of the Arsakid realm and rule from Arsakes II to Phraates I (pp. 201-256).

The Arsakid coinage, mints, resources, and iconography with its reflections of the self-proclaimed royal image as well as the legends of the coins are thoroughly analyzed in chapter 8 (pp. 241-256). Completing the study, the last chapter is concerned with the archaeological perspective on early Arsakid Parthia (pp. 257-293).

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[2] Wolski 1956/1957, 41-42; Wolski 1996, 181; Wolski 2003, 26, n. 44.

The book is equipped with a genealogic list of the early Arsakids (p. XVII), a profound map, 16 color pictures of excellent quality, carefully embedded in the text, an extensive bibliography (pp. 297-354), and useful indices (pp. 365-377). As for another advantage, the monograph provides bilingual citations of ancient literary sources, the Greek or Latin texts and English translations, revised by Olbrycht, and uses the Greek, not the Latinized spelling for Greek names.

In sum, Olbrycht provides a highly impressive study reflecting his profound expertise in Iranian political, cultural, and material history from the Achaimenids and Alexander to the Diadochs and Seleukids and the Arsakids. The monograph clearly shows the efforts and results of life-long research on the subject. As mentioned before, particularly Olbrycht's own familiarity with the regions under discussion is a clear advantage adding to his convincing argumentations.

Overall, he provides the reader with an immense wealth of information, new ideas, re-assessments, and plausible solutions to much debated scholarly issues. To name just a few: the re-dating of the Fraternal War to 244/243 BC (p. 72); the reflections on Andragoras' rare name, its etymology, and dependence on the Iranian *Narseh* (pp. 83-84); the suggestions regarding the propagandistic use of the figure of Tiridates by his namesake, the pretender against Phraates IV (pp. 147-149); the re-consideration of the role of the Aparnoi in Arsakid times (pp. 121-122) or the thoughts on the etymology of the name of Friyapatak (pp. 220-221).

The excellent book with the richness of its expert knowledge and complexity of arguments clearly addresses a scholarly audience. However, thanks to the clear structure, user-friendly division, and comprehensive bibliography it can also be recommended to graduate students working on Arsakid Parthia. In any case, Olbrycht's comprehensive monograph will certainly become a standard work and "Must Read," strongly recommended to all interested in Arsakid and in Seleukid history.

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JUPING YANG (ED.), *ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS AND THE SILK ROAD*, BEIJING: CHINA SOCIAL SCIENCE PRESS, 2021, IN CHINESE, 514 PP. ISBN 978-7-5203-8484-1

This book marks a new study on the ancient civilizations along the Silk Road prior to the 7th century A.D. The term "Silk Road" has, in modern scholarship, tended to refer to a network of trade routes that ran from East to West. But in this volume, Juping Yang (ed.), who also serves as the Director of the project "Hellenistic Civilizations and the Silk Road", and his team pay special attention to the ancient civilizations that contributed to the opening and development of these routes. The book's emphasis focuses on the Hellenistic Kingdoms of Asia Minor, Central Asia and South Asia, and the empires of Parthia, Rome, the Kushans and Sasanians. Special attention is also paid to Sogdiana's role in fostering East-West relations. Trade and commerce serve as the unifying factor of the work, especially in terms of the role that China played. The book's strength lies not only in its historical analysis of important literary sources on the topic, but it also incorporates recent archaeological discoveries made in China. What appears as yet another publication on the role of trade routes that appeared along the Silk Road is in actuality a work concentrating on conflict and interaction among these different civilizations. In addition, the work stresses the role played by the Scythians in fostering the exchange of goods, peoples and ideas as participants in this commercial highway.

The book is divided into seven chapters with each concentrating on a particular civilization or society and its role in the history of the Silk Road. Xiaoxiao Pang and Kebing Gao open the work with "The Hellenistic World and the Silk Road", which concentrates primarily on the roles of the Hellenistic kingdoms

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in regional trade. Pang's investigation is based on case studies of several Alexandrian foundations situated in Central Asia and northwestern India. He argues that the independence of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom and the later nomadic invasions in Central Asia exerted positive effects on commercial relationships in this area (47). Gao analyses the reasons why the maritime trade between Egypt and India failed to prosper during the Ptolemaic period. He concludes that warfare with the Seleucids and Rome led to an erosion of Egypt's maritime hegemony. Moreover, pervasive state involvement in overseas trade, such as imposing a high-income tax and a monopoly on imports and exports, dissuaded merchants from undertaking risky overseas ventures (53).

Sansan Wang's "The Parthian Empire and the Silk Road" discusses the cultural communication between the Parthian Empire and China. Wang argues that statues of lions with wings, used in tombs of Han Dynasty, originated from the image of griffin. He further supposes that the Parthians introduced the myth of griffin to China (95). The Parthian Empire also played a significant role in spreading Buddhism to China. For example, the Buddhist monk An Shigao (安世高) is the earliest known translator of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese, while his family name *An* indicates his origin from *Anxi* (安息), the Parthian Empire as it is called in the Chinese sources (102).

Xiaoxiao Pang's, "The Kushan Empire and the Silk Road", examines the establishment and development of Kushan cities in Central Asia and Northwest India. These cities were linked by land and water routes, and thus effected the direction of the Silk Road in the South Asian subcontinent. For example, interaction among various peoples is represented by elements of different cultures on Kushan coins, especially Buddhism. Pang explains that the role of the Kushan kings in promoting the spread of Buddhism does not mean that they were Buddhists. Rather, he proposes that royal support for Buddhism was propaganda intended to placate the Buddhist population and not a sign of religious devotion (184).

In chapter four, "The Roman Empire and the Silk Road", also written by Kebing Gao, the author investigates when and how relations between China and Rome began. The Roman Empire may have been known by the Chinese as early as the 2nd century, because an embassy from "Ta-chin" (大秦) visited China with gifts to the Chinese emperor in 166 A.D. However, the gifts they brought were products from nearby lands such as India and Vietnam. Gao thus proposes that these so-called "ambassadors" were probably Roman merchants. Moreover, the name "Ta-chin", according to Gao, does not necessarily refer to the Roman Empire, but to its eastern provinces where prosperous cities were situated along the Silk Road (200).

In "The Sasanid Empire and the Silk Road", Yiming Li focuses on the relations between the Sasanid Empire and China. He first analyses the diplomatic exchanges, discussing at length several examples of Sasanid ambassadors who

travelled to China to forge an alliance against the Turks (284). The communication between the two countries is also reflected in the trade and commerce that passed between them, evidenced by the multiplicity of items from Persia found in Chinese tombs (296). This topic is further elaborated by Hamidreza Pasha Zanous in the appendix, "The Persians Along the Silk Road", wherein he analyzes the Chinese account of the circumstances surrounding the flight of the Persian Prince Peroz III along with most of the imperial family, when he sought refuge in the Chinese imperial court following the Arabian conquest of Iran. He argues that two statues of foreign dignitaries at the Qianling Mausoleum of Shaanxi Province depict Sasanian princes, even though the inscriptions that had once accompanied them are now unreadable (343).

Xiaoyan Qi's "Sogdiana and the Silk Road" focuses on Sogdians who served as middlemen and on those who, having migrated to China, became military officials in the Chinese government. These officials acted as liaisons between the Chinese government and Sogdian communities. Qi pays special attention to the coins of the Ikhshid Dynasty in the early 7th century, which were greatly influenced by the Chinese coins of "Kaiyuan Tongbao" (开元通宝). She proposes that the Ikhshid Dynasty issued these coins for political reasons: to win the support from China (366).

The book concludes with Longhai Zhang's "The Scythians and the Steppe Silk Road". Zhang maintains that the silk found in Europe before the Han Dynasty likely originated in the Eurasian Steppe Belt and was transported there by nomadic peoples, such as the Scythians. Based on information supplied by Herodotus, Zhang reconstructs the northern steppe routes from the Black Sea to China (397). The analysis rests chiefly on Scythian art displaying a variety of cultural influences, Greek, Near Eastern and Chinese. He argues that such products reveal a sophisticated cosmopolitism that was part of the everyday life of these nomads.

This is an essential collection that offers new insights into our understanding of the Silk Road, in considerable measure due to the information gleaned from Chinese sources. It serves as essential reading for anyone interested in learning more about the history, culture, and trade of the Silk Road.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AcIr	*Acta Iranica*.
AE	*L´année épigraphique*.
AJP	*American Journal of Philology.*
AMI	*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*.
AMIT	*Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan*.
ANRW	H. Temporini / W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Berlin / New York 1972-.
Antiquity	*Antiquity: an international journal of expert archaeology.*
ARAM	*ARAM Periodical.*
BAI	*Bulletin of the Asia Institute.*
BAR IS	*British Archaeological Reports International Series.*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge.
CHI	*The Cambridge History of Iran*, Cambridge.
CIG	*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*.
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.*
DNP	H. Cancik / H. Schneider (eds.), *Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, Stuttgart / Weimar 1996-2003.
EHR	*English Historical Review*.
EncIr	E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Costa Mesa / New York.
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, Berlin / Leiden 1926-1957.
FHG	*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*. Collegit, disposuit, notis et prolegomenis illustravit C. Müllerus. Vol. I-V, Parisiis 1868-1884.
FOst	L. Vidman, *Fasti Ostienses* (Praha ^{2}1982).
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies.*
HABES	*Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien*, 1986ff.
HdA	*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*.
HSCPh	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*.
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin 1913-.
IPNB	*Iranisches Personennamenbuch.*

IrAnt	*Iranica Antiqua*.
ISIMU	*ISIMU. Revista sobre Oriente Próximo y Egipto en la Antigüedad.*
JA	*Journal asiatique.*
JAH	*Journal of Ancient History.*
JASB	*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1832-1921.
JHS	*The Journal of Hellenic Studies.*
JRS	*The Journal of Roman Studies*.
LexMA	*Lexikon des Mittelalters*.
LThK^{3}	W. Kasper et al. (eds.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ^{3}1993ff.
MBAH	*Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte.*
MDAFA	*Mémoires de la délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan.*
NC	*Numismatic Chronicle.*
NTOA	*Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus*, Fribourg / Göttingen 1986-.
PIR	*Prosopographia Imperii Romani saeculi I, II, III*, ^{2}1933ff.
PLRE, 1	A.H.M. Jones / J. Morris / J. Martindale (eds.), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 1, Cambridge 1971.
PLRE, 2	J. Martindale (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 2, Cambridge 1980.
RA	*Rossiīskaīa arkheologiīa.*
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*.
RE	*Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Neue Bearbeitung, G. Wissowa / W. Kroll / K. Mittelhaus / K. Ziegler, Stuttgart, 1893-1980.
REA	*Revue des études anciennes.*
REArm	*Revue des Études Arméniennes, Nouvelle Série*.
RhM	*Rheinisches Museum für Philologie.*
RIC	H. Mattingly / E.A. Sydenham et al., *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, London 1923-1994.
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.
TAVO	*Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*.
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*.