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'Persianisation' in the Art and Architecture of Achaemenid Provincial Palaces, 550-330 BC.

According to Margaret Cool Root, a leading scholar on the ancient Near East, the royal art of the Achaemenid kings reflects the ideals and attitudes of the king and his courtiers, presenting, above all, an ideal view of the nature of Persian kingship.² Root argues that the variegated origins and appropriated concepts of Achaemenid iconography, from the Egyptian illustrations of conquered peoples in the form of the Nine Bows to the Assyrian royal hero (Fig. 1), create conceptual patterns that are continually replicated at Persepolis (Fig. 2) to create an official artistic programme.³ Root asserts that the themes found in royal iconography were disseminated from the empire's centre and were not the result of individual artists' own creativity. However, is this only representative of the rich iconography of Persepolis, or were the art and architecture of provincial palaces,

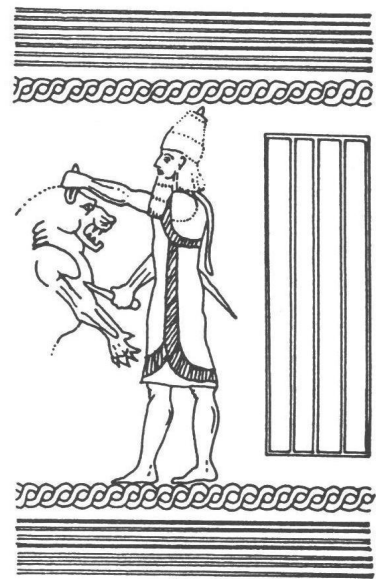


Fig. 1 – The Assyrian king stabbing a lion

including the *paradeisoi* (large gardens or parks) and glyptic art (artwork engraved on seals and

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² Margaret C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), p. 1-2.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-144, pp. 303-309.

other small finds) representative of the wider process of ‘Persianisation’? It is worth highlighting at the outset that the various approaches to governing the empire must have impacted on the archaeological record, both on the material evidence left behind and the ways in which Achaemenid influence is *not* detectable. Regarding the latter, Root has highlighted five factors that have combined to minimise the retrieval of Achaemenid art and architecture: the low priority given to Persian levels at archaeological sites in comparison to Hellenistic or Roman levels, the negative quantification of retrieved material, miscategorised works of Achaemenid-type portable art, misappropriated monumental art claimed to be Greek work despite the presence of Achaemenid features, and the uncritical categorisation of some works as ‘Graeco-Persian’.⁴ Achaemenid studies have progressed markedly in the intervening years, though these issues are not yet fully resolved and are particularly applicable for some of the sites under discussion here. It must also be noted here that this paper cannot aim to answer all questions raised due to the scope of the topic, but hopefully contains the scope for further research and study with the publication of new excavation reports.

What is meant by the idea of ‘Persianisation’? The term recalls the frequently debated topic of ‘Romanisation’; although the two are different processes, there are some parallels. ‘Romanisation’, coined by Francis Haverfield, originally denoted the method by which Roman provinces were ‘civilised’, and encourages the view that Roman culture was imposed on the provinces regardless of its reception by the local populus.⁵ The need to reconceptualise ‘Romanisation’ has long been recognised, even if some citizens in the

⁴ Margaret C. Root, ‘From the Heart: Powerful Persianisms in the Art of the Western Empire’ in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), *Achaemenid History VI* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1991), pp. 7-14.

⁵ Francis Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923 [1906]), p. 11.

Roman Empire may have wished to be seen to be Roman.⁶ For Jane Webster, the central problem is the term itself – ‘it is not, in the end, termed *Romanisation* for nothing’ – in that it implies a one-dimensional process of imposing Roman culture onto that of the ‘uncivilised’ subject populous.⁷ Part of this process was how the values on which Rome prided itself spread throughout the empire, ‘and it was the belief that others shared those values that legitimised Rome’s representation of social order’.⁸ Webster argues ‘Romanisation’ ignores the process of contact and culture change, but that creolisation suggests ‘a process of *resistant* adaptation’ to create a mixed culture, rather than one culture displacing another.⁹ Martin Millett has argued in favour of a redefinition of the term to suggest dialectical change whereby ‘Roman culture interacted with native cultures to produce the synthesis that we call Romanised’.¹⁰ These two theories will form the basis of the process of ‘Persianisation’ proposed here.

‘Persianisation’ has recently been defined by Maria Brosius as the ‘mechanisms by which the cultural influence of Achaemenid Persia on other peoples resulted in the adoption and adaptation of Persian cultural traits’.¹¹ Rather than focusing on the adoption of Persian cultural traits, however, the crucial element to note is adaptation. ‘Persianisation’ was not a process of one-way acculturation; indeed, the Persians had adopted and adapted elements of other civilisations in the creation of their own culture. Instead of applying the ‘Romanising’

⁶ Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 14.

⁷ Jane Webster, ‘Creolizing the Roman Provinces’, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 105: 2 (2001), 210.

⁸ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, p. 5.

⁹ Webster, ‘Creolizing the Roman Provinces’, *AJA*, 209, 218.

¹⁰ Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.

¹¹ Maria Brosius, ‘Keeping Up with the Persians: Between Cultural identity and Persianization in the Achaemenid Period’ in Erich S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 135.

model of hierarchic directives spreading the culture of the centre of the empire onto the provincial elite, ‘Persianisation’ is argued here to be a combination of Brosius’ model of adoption and adaptation with Webster’s concept of cultural creolisation. In essence, it is the extent to which Achaemenid influences can be seen in the periphery of the empire through socio-political structures and iconographical impact. Rather than looking for ‘Graeco-Persian’ or other distinctly defined forms of artistic fusion, ‘Persianised’ monuments reflect either Persian behaviour or iconography – in short, could the monument have existed if the Persian state did not?¹² By giving strict tags such as ‘Graeco-Persian’ to Achaemenid art and architecture, the results of ‘Persianisation’ have often been disregarded entirely. In the same way that regional variation in cultural exchanges can be seen in the Roman empire due to the lack of a single ‘Roman’ identity, there was no single ‘Persian’ identity to be disseminated into the provinces. The result was stylistic variation in regional art and architecture based primarily on the Achaemenid themes of kingship, which were themselves a result of different cultural influences.

Viewing the effects of the provincials on the Achaemenids is as important as tracing Achaemenid influences on the provincials, but who had the greater desire for the provincials to emulate the art and architecture of the centre: the king or the elites? If the local elites took it upon themselves to emulate, it is debatable whether it would be accepted by the Persian ruling class as they would have had little influence over what was adopted and what quality the representations would be.¹³ The king certainly had an interest in fostering local emulation in order to display his influence over locals in the provinces, just as court art in the Persian

¹² Christopher Tuplin, ‘The Limits of Persianization: Some Reflections on Cultural Links in the Persian Empire’ in Erich S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), p. 162.

¹³ Brosius, ‘Keeping Up with the Persians’ in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 135.

heartland signified his power over his subjects.¹⁴ Bruno Genito has argued that Achaemenid kings, unlike Roman administrations, may not have counted cultural dissemination as part of the royal role, but Brosius, more convincingly, posits that the Achaemenids spread cultural ideas through more subtle methods than a direct implementation of the most significant iconography.¹⁵ For local elites, the ‘Persianising’ process worked in two ways: it displayed their political loyalty to the Persian king and elevated the member of the elite to a position that encouraged their courtiers and others around the court to imitate and impress him.¹⁶

Local culture did continue to flourish in some regions under the Achaemenids, and this has been interpreted as inherent weakness in the Achaemenid administration. However, in the same way that visual imagery contributed to the socio-political stability of the Roman Empire, so the integration of Achaemenid royal art and architecture with provincial styles (according to localised circumstances) contributed to the stability of the Achaemenid empire.¹⁷ With this in mind, it seems safe to drop the scare-quotes and refer directly to the process of Persianisation.

¹⁴ Brosius, ‘Keeping Up with the Persians’ in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 145.

¹⁵ Bruno Genito, ‘The Achaemenid Empire as Seen from its Eastern Periphery: the Case of Dahan-i Ghulaman in Sistan. Forty Years Later, a Preliminary Revision of Data’ in Paolo Matthiae, Frances Pinnock, Lorenzo Nigro and Nicolò Marchetti (eds), *Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East Vol. 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), p. 85; Brosius, ‘Keeping Up with the Persians’ in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 143, p. 145.

¹⁶ Brosius, ‘Keeping Up with the Persians’ in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 143; Tuplin, ‘Limits of Persianization’ in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 154.

¹⁷ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), p. 338.



Before examining provincial art and architecture, an outline is necessary of how the Persian provinces, known as satrapies, were governed. A partial list of the empire's satrapies in the late sixth and early fifth centuries can be compiled from royal inscriptions, Babylonian texts and a passage in Herodotus, but drawing correlations between the sources is not always possible.¹⁸ It also appears that some satrapies, such as those on the eastern periphery, fell under the jurisdiction of larger satrapies, while others are only rarely depicted in royal reliefs. This suggests a hierarchy within the satrapal system, but how were politically underdeveloped areas governed, and what effects did this have on art and architecture?

¹⁸ Hdt. 3.89-97; Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake: Eisenbraun, 2002 [1996]), pp. 392-393.

The re-use of former local administrative centres as the sites for satrapal capitals indicates the Achaemenids' desire to preserve pre-existing political entities where possible.¹⁹ With the exception of introducing the general satrapal system, the creation of a unified politico-administrative structure was bypassed in favour of retaining local systems, such as the Paphlagonian and Indian kingdoms or Carian dynasts.²⁰ Subject cities retained a degree of autonomy, particularly in the cases of the Ionians and Phoenicians, in return for fulfilling financial and military obligations.²¹ Although the evidence for the political situation in some satrapies is often fragmentary, it appears that administrative structures had to be put into place if pre-existing political systems were underdeveloped. For instance, an architecturally complex palace was constructed at Gumbati involving oriental artistic styles and stone masonry, hitherto unknown in eastern Georgia, to replace the modest Iron Age complexes.²² The changes in architecture at local centres of power under the Achaemenids suggest the move was a political directive rather than a local emulation, although stylistic variation is down to the influence of local officials.²³

¹⁹ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 64, Elspeth R.M. Dusinberre, *Aspects of Empire in Achaemenid Sardis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.

²⁰ Pierre Briant, 'Pouvoir central et polycentrisme culturel dans l'empire achéménide: quelques réflexions et suggestions' in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg (ed.), *Achaemenid History I* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987), p. 2.

²¹ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 64.

²² Florian Knauss, 'Persian Rule in the North. Achaemenid Palaces on the Periphery of the Empire' in Inge Nielsen (ed.), *The Royal Palace Institution in the First Millennium BC* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2001), pp. 127-129; Florian Knauss, 'Caucasus' in Pierre Briant and Rémy Boucharlat (eds), *L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide: nouvelles recherches* (Paris: De Boccard, 2005), p. 204.

²³ Maria Brosius, 'Pax Persica and the Peoples of the Black Sea Region: Extent and Limits of Achaemenid Imperial Ideology' in Jens Nieling and Ellen Rehm (eds), *Achaemenid Impact in the Black Sea: Communication of Powers* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010), p. 31; Margaret C. Root, 'Art and Archaeology of the Achaemenid Empire' in Jack M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East vols. III & IV* (New York: Scribner, 1995), p. 2615.

Looking east, archaeology is challenging the belief that there was little political organisation in the provinces of Thatagush, Gandhara and Hindush before the Achaemenids.²⁴ Charsadda, a major site in Gandhara, was continuously occupied from c.1400-50 BC, while there does not seem to have been a shift in settlement organisation at Akra, the provincial capital of Thatagush.²⁵ There are also only a handful of references to the provinces on the Persepolis Fortification tablets and the perennial absence of at least one Indian delegate on Persepolitan reliefs on the Apadana (the great audience hall) and the Throne Hall.²⁶ Consequently, it has been suggested that the eastern provinces were under the umbrella of the satrapies of Bactria and Arachosia due to their comparative isolation from the centre.²⁷

Before laying too much emphasis on the significance of this isolation, it must be said that the Achaemenids prided themselves on an all-inclusive empire. Root has demonstrated this in her study on Persepolis, while similar ideas are displayed in the inscriptions describing the construction of the palace at Susa.²⁸ Conversely, Assyrian texts describing the palace at Khorsabad hardly mention where materials are sourced from or the ethnicity of the workers.²⁹ This is in spite of the fact that some elements of the Khorsabad palace's architecture, such as building a *bit-bilani* (variously defined as a columned portico or narrow

²⁴ Peter Magee and Cameron A. Petrie, 'West of the Indus – East of the Empire: The Archaeology of the Pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid Periods in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan' in John Curtis and St John Simpson (eds), *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History, Art and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East* (London: Tauris, 2010), p. 503.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 505, p. 518.

²⁶ Peter Magee, Cameron Petrie, Robert Knox, Farid Khan, and Ken Thomas, 'The Achaemenid Empire in South Asia and Recent Excavations in Akra in Northwest Pakistan', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 109: 4 (2005), 713.

²⁷ Magee et al, 'The Achaemenid Empire in South Asia', *AJA*, 714.

²⁸ Root, *King and Kingship*, *passim*; E.g. Darius' Foundation Charter.

²⁹ E.g. Daniel D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia 2: Historical Records of Assyria* (London: Histories & Mysteries of Man, 1989 [1927]), no. 366; cf. Tuplin, 'Limits of Persianization' in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 159.

palace building) within the complex, reflect inspiration from elsewhere in the empire.³⁰ The Assyrian king Sennacherib records his construction of a *bit-bilani*, often associated with the architecture of Syria and the Levant, in an inscription: ‘a portico, patterned after a Hittite (Syrian) palace, which they call in the Amorite tongue a *bit-bilani*, I constructed ... for my lordly pleasure’.³¹ While the Achaemenids and Assyrians both depicted tribute bearers in relief art, the ideologies behind them were vastly different. Artwork on the doors of the temple of Mamu at Imgur-Enlil, commissioned by the Assyrian Shalmaneser III, represents a large-scale collection of goods to demonstrate the natural order of the empire. It was no accident that the cities at the empire’s centre were seen as the heart of civilisation, while the tribute-bearers depicted are from the furthest corners of the empire.³² On the other hand, the tribute procession associated with the Apadana at Persepolis offers an idealistic vision of the Achaemenid dominion, with the Great King at the centre of an orderly and flourishing empire, suggested by the numerous gifts being brought to him by a structured yet relaxed procession of delegates from the subject lands.³³ This aspect of empire was a key part of the Persianising process, but how far is it visible in the art and architecture of provincial palaces?

Some regions, such as Egypt and Thrace, are subjects unto themselves and will not be discussed in the following survey. Egyptian-Persian diplomatic relations were frequently strained and resulted in numerous rebellions, the most serious of which came in 405 and resulted in Egypt seceding from the empire until 343. Thrace was also only part of the

³⁰ David Stronach, ‘The Garden as a Political Statement: Some Case Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium B.C.’ in Carol A. Bromberg and Bernard Goldman (eds), *Bulletin of the Asia Institute Volume 4 Part I* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), p. 172.

³¹ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, no. 366.

³² Michelle I. Marcus, ‘Art and Ideology in Ancient Western Asia’ in Jack M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East vols. III & IV* (New York: Scribner, 1995), pp. 2489-2492.

³³ Root, *King and Kingship*, pp. 277-278.

empire for a short time and brings with it the added debate surrounding the existence of the satrapy of Skudra. These add too many complications to be discussed in this overview, which will instead look at a variety of art (such as glyptic art from Dascylium or wall paintings from Dahan-i Ghulaman) and architecture, both in the sense of palatial architecture as well as palatial features, such as *paradeisoi*.

The primary evidence for Dascylium, the satrapal capital of Hellespontine Phrygia, is glyptic and many of the excavation reports remain unpublished, but it appears that some Achaemenid architecture, recycled in the Hellenistic period, shows west Anatolian workmanship as well as east Greek-Lyidian elements on painted clay tiles.³⁴ Tomris Bakir has argued a number of different ethnic groups lived together at Dascylium,³⁵ and so this mixed culture is not surprising. The key evidence from Dascylium is glyptic, however, and is discussed below.

The complex of the satrapal capital of Greater Phrygia at Celaenae was built on a raised plateau, though it is not clear whether Xerxes' palace was constructed from stone or mud brick.³⁶ Terrace architecture is also used at sites including Sardis and Lachish, but this is more likely to be an adoption of local features. Archaeological investigations are ongoing, but one Achaemenid-era inscription is worth highlighting. Dating from the fifth-fourth

³⁴ Deniz Kaptan, 'From Xenophon to Kritoboulos: Notes on Daskyleion and the Satrapal Court' in Bruno Jacobs and Robert Rollinger (eds), *Der Achämenidenhof / The Achaemenid Court*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), pp. 833-834.

³⁵ Cited in Kaan Iren, 'A New Discovery in Dascylium: the Persian Destruction Layer' in Paolo Matthiae, Frances Pinnock, Lorenzo Nigro, and Nicolò Marchetti (eds), *Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East Vol. 2* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), p. 251.

³⁶ Lada Sementchenko, Astrid Nunn and Ingrid Dinkel, 'La prospection sur le site', www.ausonius.u-bordeaux3.fr/axes/Kelainai/Prospection_site.html, accessed 5 May 2011; Xen. *Anab.* 1.2.9; Krzysztof Misiewicz, 'Les prospections géophysiques', www.ausonius.u-bordeaux3.fr/axes/Kelainai/Geophysique.html, accessed 5 May 2011.

centuries, the fragmentary votive inscription is written in Lydian, and is the first Lydian inscription found in the region.³⁷ Further regional linguistic continuity in western Anatolia is hinted at from Greek, Phrygian and Lydian graffiti on potsherds at Dascylium as well as bilingual Lydian-Aramaic and Lydian-Greek inscriptions at Sardis.³⁸ It is tempting to extend Elspeth Dusinberre's argument that the Sardian inscriptions are evidence of elite acculturation to Achaemenid ideology through local customs to the evidence from elsewhere in Asia Minor, but more evidence is required for a firm conclusion.

At Sardis, the old capital of the Lydian empire, it is possible Croesus' palace was reused by Achaemenid satraps, but a lack of stratified remains in the archaeological record suggests the palace may have been situated elsewhere.³⁹ The use of Sardis as a satrapal capital is important; as a developed political centre under the Lydians, there was no need to construct Achaemenid architecture on a large scale to reflect the elite's standing in the empire. Rather, the pre-existing political structure only needed to be recast to be seen through the lens of Achaemenid art and architecture, allowing local traditions to remain in place while using Persian art to portray the new satrapy's inclusion in the empire. If more evidence of the palace at Sardis were to come to light, it may illuminate how Achaemenid art interacted with local material culture, but the palace's *paradeisoi* may be evidence for Persianisation.⁴⁰ Although they are not visible in the archaeological record, but the literary sources clearly state that the gardens were immaculately laid out and tendered.⁴¹ Ideologically, this regularity

³⁷ Askold Ivantchik, 'L'épigraphie', www-ausonius.u-bordeaux3.fr/axes/Kelainai/Epigraphie.html, accessed 5 May 2011.

³⁸ Elspeth R.M. Dusinberre, 'Satrapal Sardis: Achaemenid Bowls in an Achaemenid Capital', *American Journal of Archaeology* 103 (1) (1999), 75; Deniz Kaptan, *The Daskyleion Bullae: Seal Images from the Western Achaemenid Empire, Vol. 1: Text* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2002), pp. 11-12.

³⁹ Dusinberre, 'Satrapal Sardis', *AJA*, 75.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See below.

and ordered structure in the garden's layout can be paralleled with the Achaemenids' control in their rule over the empire.

The palace of Lachish in Palestine was positioned on an elevated terrace while still incorporating the eighth century palace.⁴² Although there is little Achaemenid influence in local art, the idea of combining Mesopotamian architecture with local forms is displayed through the combination of the Syrian *bit-bilani* with a Babylonian courtyard house.⁴³ Henri Frankfort remarked in reference to Persepolis that Achaemenid architecture is 'remarkably original, especially in the lavish use of columns and the predominance of square rooms'.⁴⁴ Stylistically, the architecture at Lachish shows its Achaemenid influences in this way, creating a palace that was innovative and harmonious in form, while the Achaemenids also brought innovative architecture to Palestine, such as round columns in 'pure Greek' style.⁴⁵

In the Caucasus, excavations have unearthed a huge number of Achaemenid-related monuments that show clear architectural developments from the Iron Age.⁴⁶ For instance, Karacamirli's bell-shaped column bases are only known from the Achaemenid period.⁴⁷ The main building at Karacamirli was probably the palace of the local governor, suggested by the presence of a propyleion (monumental gate entrance) at the site.⁴⁸ This parallels the Persian kings' palace at Susa and Cyrus the Great's residence and final resting place at Pasargadae.

⁴² Inge Nielsen, *Hellenistic Palaces: Tradition and Renewal* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1994), p. 51.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁴ Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (London: Penguin, 1969 [1954]), p. 218.

⁴⁵ Ephraim Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538-332 B.C.* (Warminster: Aris & Philips, 1982), p. 58.

⁴⁶ Florian Knauss, 'Ancient Persia and the Caucasus', *Iranica Antiqua* 41 (2006), 103.

⁴⁷ Florian Knauss, Iulon Gagoshidze, and Ilias Babaev, 'A Persian Propyleion in Azerbaijan Excavations at Karacamirli' in Jens Nieling and Ellen Rehm (eds), *Achaemenid Impact in the Black Sea: Communication of Powers* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010), p. 116.

⁴⁸ Knauss et al, 'A Persian Propyleion' in *Achaemenid Impact*, pp. 111-113.

The Karacamirli propyleion and Gate R at Pasargadae were also ways of entering the complex's garden or courtyard, similar to how the Tripylon divided visitors at Persepolis.⁴⁹ The Achaemenids' preoccupation with control and order may therefore be visible in the architecture of administrative centres across the empire as well as in Persepolitan art.

The fifth century palace at Benjamin contains a number of columned rooms, the bases of which largely have torus-like shapes; one is particularly reminiscent of Persepolis in its decoration of the torus with large, stylised petals.⁵⁰ This design, where the edges of the petals spring outwards from the smooth cylinder, is characteristic of buildings from Artaxerxes I's reign.⁵¹ Whether this instance is a hierarchic directive or a local emulation of contemporary fashion, it seems to support Knauss' theory that Achaemenid art and architecture was used by local elites to display their new status in the empire in locales where political systems were previously under-developed. This is harder to trace at sites such as Sardis, but how far can it be seen in sites in the east?

Dahan-i Ghulaman, generally argued to be the satrapal capital of Drangiana, has been described as an Achaemenid city 'neither of the centre nor of the periphery'.⁵² This position is underlined by the palace's architecture, which blends elements from heartland palaces with traditional building techniques of Bactria and Chorasmia.⁵³ Dahan-i Ghulaman's architecture is strongly regionalised, but symbols from the heartland are also seen through rare traces of

⁴⁹ Knauss et al, 'A Persian Propyleion' in *Achaemenid Impact*, p. 117.

⁵⁰ Felix Ter-Martirossov, 'The Typology of the Columnar Structures of Armenia in the Achaemenid Period' in I. Nielsen (ed.), *The Royal Palace Institution in the First Millennium BC* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2001), p. 160.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² S. Mansur, S. Sajjadi, and Faramarz Saber Moghaddam, 'Peintures et gravures murales découvertes à Dahan-e Gholāmān, Sistān', *Studia Iranica*, 33: 2 (2004), 285; Bruno Genito, 'Dahan-i Ghulaman: una città achemenide tra centro e periferia dell'impero', *Oriens Antiquus*, 25 (1986).

⁵³ Genito, 'Achaemenid Empire' in *Proceedings of the 6th ICAANE*, 81.

artwork as it appears that all the walls of Room 25 were once painted.⁵⁴ Images of a hunting scene depicting an archer riding in a chariot and another of a Bactrian camel evoke similar scenes at Persepolis, possibly due to their replication by artists who were familiar with Persepolitan art and were attempting to emulate the imagery in a satrapal capital.⁵⁵ It is tempting to believe artists replicated Persepolitan art elsewhere as traces of paintwork have been discovered in Thracian tombs and tumuli in western Anatolia, but the evidence is too fragmentary.⁵⁶

Where evidence of direct influence is lacking, it would be wrong to assume that the empire was weak since there were numerous ways to integrate and govern subjects.⁵⁷ This particularly applies to Pakistan, where the lack of architectural remains removes archaeological contexts. Some parallels in ceramics are worth illuminating here, however. Strong similarities are seen between S-carinated rim bowls dating to the sixth-fourth centuries at Akra, Charsadda and Kandahar, while 4th century tulip bowls found at Charsadda perfectly match contemporary examples from Persepolis and Pasargadae, suggesting a major increase in commerce in South Asia.⁵⁸ Moreover, the tulip bowls found in this region match evidence from Sardis,⁵⁹ where Achaemenid influence is evident. The increased number of tulip bowls may indicate an imitation of Persian banqueting practices by local elites as a form of re-establishing and maintaining their authority in the region, with the consequence that

⁵⁴ Genito, 'Dahan-i Ghulaman', *Oriens Antiquus*, 302.

⁵⁵ Sajjadi, and Saber Moghaddam, 'Peintures et gravures murales', *Studia Iranica*, 288-289.

⁵⁶ Maya Vassileva, 'Achaemenid Interfaces: Thracian and Anatolian representations of elite status', http://151.12.58.75/archeologia/bao_document/articoli/4_Vassileva_paper.pdf, accessed 5 May 2011; Kaptan 'From Xenophon to Kritoboulos' in *Der Achämenidenhof*, 833, n.19.

⁵⁷ Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'The quest for an elusive empire' in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), *Achaemenid History IV* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1990), p. 264.

⁵⁸ Magee et al, 'The Achaemenid Empire in South Asia', *AJA*, 725-727, 735.

⁵⁹ Cameron A. Petrie, Peter Magee, and M. Nasim Khan, 'Emulation at the edge of empire: the adoption of non-local vessel forms in the NWFP, Pakistan during the mid-late 1st millennium BC', *Gandharan Studies*, 2 (2008), 5.

non-elites then looked to emulate the practices of the elites.⁶⁰ As illustrated above, the Persianising process was often more subtle than direct implementation of significant iconography; local elites were able to be elevated and encourage others to imitate them by appropriating Persian material culture.⁶¹ Emulation of Achaemenid products continued during the Hellenistic period in Pakistan, as well as in areas from the Caucasus to Thrace, suggesting receptiveness to the Persianising process in the provinces.⁶²

It may be tempting to focus solely on the archaeology, but Persianisation constituted the transmission of symbolic ideas as well as acculturation. This connection of the provinces with the centre of the empire can be seen through Achaemenid iconography in *paradeisoi* and the Dascylium seals.

Paradeisoi, either in the form of hunting parks or botanical gardens, were known before the Achaemenids but were not so widespread.⁶³ Gardens of earlier Mesopotamian kings were generally an annex to the palace without ceremonial purposes, although early Assyrian texts reveal the presence of numerous species in a *paradeisos* were symbolic representations of the king's power.⁶⁴ The prime example of an Achaemenid *paradeisos* is at Pasargadae, which features the geometrical precision of the *chabar bagh* (fourfold garden).⁶⁵ This precision is noted in two anecdotes about the Sardian *paradeisoi*. When the celebrated Spartan general Lysander visited Cyrus' *paradeisos*, he noted 'the beauty of the trees in it, the accuracy of the

⁶⁰ Petrie et al, 'Emulation at the edge of empire', *Gbandaran Studies*, 11.

⁶¹ Tuplin, 'Limits of Persianization' in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, p. 154.

⁶² Petrie et al, 'Emulation at the edge of empire', *Gbandaran Studies*, 8-9; Knauss, 'Caucasus' in *L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide*, p. 200; Brosius 'Pax Persica' in *Achaemenid Impact*, p. 35.

⁶³ Cf. Christopher Tuplin, *Achaemenid Studies* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), pp. 80-87.

⁶⁴ Nielsen, *Hellenistic Palaces*, p. 50; Tuplin, *Achaemenid Studies*, p. 86.

⁶⁵ Stronach, 'The Garden as a Political Statement' in *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 176.

spacing, the straightness of the rows, the regularity of the angles and the multitude of sweet scents'.⁶⁶ Cyrus' response to Lysander that he practices combat or horticulture every day denotes the two functions of *paradeisoi*, indicating they were key elements in the ideal of the king (or satrap) as protector of the land and guarantor of fertility and prosperity.⁶⁷ The *paradeisos* of the satrap Tissaphernes is described in further detail by Diodorus: '[Agesilaus] destroyed the garden and *paradeisos* of Tissaphernes, which had been carefully and expensively laid out with plants and all other things that contribute to luxury and the peaceful appreciation of good things'.⁶⁸

With its order, harmony and accommodation of numerous different species within its borders, some argue the *paradeisos* was effectively a microcosm of the empire as a whole.⁶⁹ This concept can also be linked to the idea that they symbolised prosperity, seen in Persepolitan art. The perfectly aligned trees of the Sardis *paradeisoi* are replicated in the neat grid of fir trees from Fars that divide the foreign delegates in the procession depicted on the Apadana facades, while the fruitfulness of the conifers may even symbolise the king in his role of king-as-gardener.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Xen. *Oec.* 4.21.

⁶⁷ Xen. *Oec.* 4.24; Pierre Briant, 'À propos du roi-jardinier: remarques sur l'histoire d'un dossier documentaire' in Wouter Henkelman and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), *Achaemenid History XIII* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2003), p. 35.

⁶⁸ Diod. 14.80.2.

⁶⁹ Kaptan *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 96; Dusinberre *Achaemenid Sardis*, 72.

⁷⁰ Margaret C. Root, 'The Lioness of Elam: Politics and Dynastic Fecundity at Persepolis' in Wouter Henkelman and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), *Achaemenid History XIII* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2003), p. 21; Root 'Lioness of Elam' in *AchHist XIII*, 25, n.8.

Achaemenid art was not confined to the large reliefs in palace complexes or the luxurious *paradeisoï*, however. Iconography was also transposed to smaller media, such as the Dascylium bullae (seal impressions), suggesting the Persianisation of the provinces was more far-reaching than the transmission of architectural styles. The images on the seals, and other mobile media, hint at how Achaemenid iconography was transmitted as well as demonstrate the continual

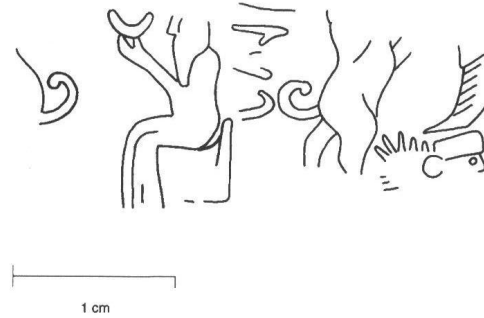


Fig. 3 – Composite drawing of DS 19

revisualisation of the king's identity by his subjects.⁷¹ A more detailed study would demonstrate that the corpus of seals represents a blend of Achaemenid, Anatolian and east Greek styles, but several elements are worth illustrating here.⁷² DS 19 (Fig. 3) appears incompletely on one seal impression, but the reconstructed image depicts a seated figure wearing a Persian robe with a lotus in his right hand and a bowl on the fingertips of his left hand.⁷³ The lotus flower and the seated figure's stylised robe and beard are representative of royal iconography, while the cup supported on fingertips represented the royal attribute of the kings of Ur and Assyria, later adopted by the Achaemenids, to read divine will and give judgements.⁷⁴ The use of fingertips to hold drinking vessels is referenced by Xenophon and

⁷¹ Lindsay Allen, 'Le roi imaginaire: An audience with the Achaemenid king' in Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler (eds), *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005), p. 40.

⁷² Cf. Kaptan, *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*; Deniz Kaptan, 'A glance at northwestern Asia Minor during the Achaemenid period' in Wouter Henkelman and Amélie Kuhrt (eds), *Achaemenid History XIII* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2003), pp. 189-202.

⁷³ Cf. Deniz Kaptan, *The Daskyleion Bullae: Seal Images from the Western Achaemenid Empire, Vol. 2: Catalogue and Plates* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2002), p. 67; Kaptan *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 28-29.

⁷⁴ Kaptan *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 28-30.

seems to suggest, more generally, that it was how sophisticated drinkers should act and formed part of Achaemenid court etiquette.⁷⁵

The royal audience scene, typical of Achaemenid iconography, is preserved on 12 bullae from Dascylium, replicating the image depicted on DS 4 (Fig. 4), and intriguingly the designs are near-perfect replications of images in the Throne Hall.⁷⁶ Although there are differences between the image on

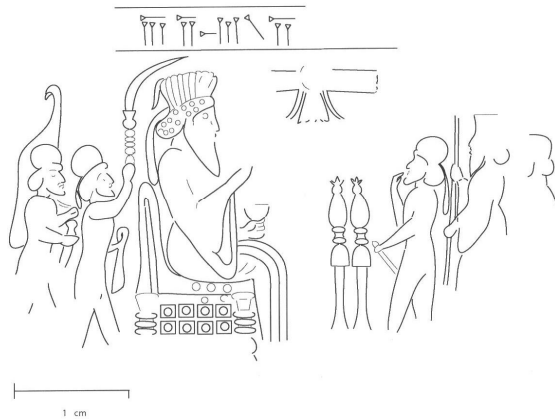


Fig. 4 – Composite drawing of DS 4

DS 4 and the audience scene as depicted in the Throne Hall, such as the king's right hand being raised in a gesture of acknowledgement rather than holding a staff, these variations are minor and may illustrate the seal's commissioner changing details for his own requirements.⁷⁷ If this is the case, it would tally with other examples where artists have created slightly regionalised styles. For instance, the court ceremony depicted on DS 4 is reminiscent of ritual banquet scenes and suggests royal iconography through elements such as the winged disk of Ahura Mazda, but the banquet table is missing.⁷⁸ Rather than depicting an actual banquet, it is likely the seal is reflecting the king's attributes, portrayed through objects such as the lotus flower and the stylisation of his robes and beard.

⁷⁵ Xen. *Cyr.* 1.3.8, Margaret C. Miller, "Manners Makyth Man": Diacritical Drinking in Achaemenid Anatolia' in Erich S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), pp. 97-100.

⁷⁶ Allen, 'Le roi imaginaire' in *Imaginary Kings*, p. 48.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48-50.

⁷⁸ Kaptan, *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 29.

The prevalent theme on the seals is the royal hero. This theme, perhaps embodied by a giant statue of the royal hero in Susa, depicts the Great King protecting the empire from hostile forces in the heroic royal ideal, stabbing or overcoming a rampant beast (often a lion) – an idea also conveyed through the king-as-archer.⁷⁹ The royal hero's identity has been debated due to variegated forms of portrayal, either in non-royal clothes, suggesting it is a common Persian man, or as a crowned figure, suggesting it is the Persian king.⁸⁰ However, its meaning seems quite clear: the hero is protecting Persia from hostile forces and has successfully defeated his enemy. The reliefs and text of the Bisitun inscription depict the same theme, but in a defined historical setting instead of the more abstract imagery of the royal hero, and includes the only Achaemenid stone relief that depicts the Great King in a context representing specific military engagements.⁸¹ In contrast, Assyrian iconographic and epigraphic evidence reiterate the power of the king and the ability to collect tribute from far-flung corners of the empire.⁸²

At Dascylium, the motif shows the hero in control of the beast and about to slay it (Fig. 5), or restraining the beast without the intention of killing it in the hero's role of master-of-beasts.⁸³ The royal hero was therefore not intended to represent the king in actual combat, but instead to be apotropaic imagery to symbolise the ability of the king – and by

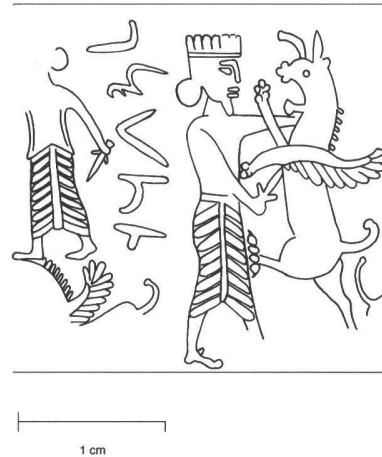


Fig. 5 – Composite drawing of DS 18

⁷⁹ Cf. Root, *King and Kingship*, pp. 111-113, pp. 303-308; Kaptan, *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 73.

⁸⁰ Root, *King and Kingship*, pp. 303-306.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.

⁸² Marcus, 'Art and Ideology' in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, p. 2504.

⁸³ Kaptan, *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 57-58.

extension, his empire – to ward off any sort of evil. The royal hero on the Dascylium seals was therefore another medium for the transmission of Achaemenid iconography, representing the unity of the empire and the king's protection of the provinces from evil, and is another example of the conscious replication of Achaemenid iconography in local culture.

Achaemenid art is not just confined to the Dascylium seals, however. Both the audience scene and the royal hero are seen on shield interiors of Persian figures depicted on the late-fourth century Alexander Sarcophagus.⁸⁴ In addition, stone blocks found at the fortified Achaemenid site of Meydancikkale in Cilicia depict a procession that closely resembles the Ionians in procession on the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis: bearded figures with curled hair, wearing chiton and himation, move to the left with offerings in upraised hands.⁸⁵ Persian influence is also seen in Georgia, where the Akhgori and Kazbeg treasures contained Achaemenid metal vases and jewellery, while there are similarities in forms between the image of a Bactrian camel at Dahan-i Ghulaman and artwork at Persepolis and Pasargadae.⁸⁶

It remains to conclude. As Knauss argued with regard to the Caucasus, Achaemenid architecture was used to reflect the elite's status in the new empire, but Achaemenid influences are less detectable in regions where political development was already relatively advanced. It is probable that this initiative came from the centre, though variation in artistic

⁸⁴ Root, 'From the Heart' in *AcbHist VI*, 12-13.

⁸⁵ Dusinger, *Achaemenid Sardis*, 87; Charles Gates, 'The Place of the Achaemenid Persian Period in Archaeological Research in Cilicia and Hatay (Turkey)' in Pierre Briant and Rémy Bouchardat (eds), *L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide: nouvelles recherches* (Paris: De Boccard, 2005), p. 63.

⁸⁶ Knauss, 'Ancient Persia and the Caucasus', *Iranica Antiqua*, 81; Sajjadi, and Saber Moghaddam, 'Peintures et gravures murales', *Studia Iranica*, 289-290.

and architectural styles may be attributed to local officials. This combination of Achaemenid and local artistic themes is seen throughout the western and central provinces, even at sites where there are few distinctively Achaemenid features such as Lachish. Despite the lack of architectural evidence in Pakistan, the introduction of tulip bowls suggests an emulation of banqueting and feasting in the Achaemenid manner. Further copies at Dahan-i Ghulaman and Sardis suggest that this was more than a simple reaction from the local populace but the acceptance of a new, iconographically charged form into their material culture. For local elites, emulating Achaemenid court praxis was a better method of re-establishing and consolidating their own authority than by building an Apadana.⁸⁷ At the same time, it allowed the Persian kings to depict figures from satrapies such as Gandhara in their royal reliefs to demonstrate the all-inclusiveness of their empire, while its prosperity was symbolised in regional *paradeisoi*. The *paradeisoi* may even encapsulate the empire through their emphases on order, harmony and inclusion of multiple elements from various provinces. The Achaemenids thus used architecture and related features to symbolise the tenets of control and order in their empire.

This may have caused an alteration in glyptic art: the royal hero is depicted as master-of-beasts in the Dascylium seals rather than in the process of slaying the beast, as often seen in the Persian heartland.⁸⁸ As master-of-beasts, rather than hunter-of-beasts, the hero's image was transformed to a more peaceful (and perhaps less incendiary for resentful subjects) interpretation of the Persepolitan royal hero, who is depicted slaying the same lions and bulls that also supported the royal palaces in the form of capitals. The message of hostile forces

⁸⁷ Dusinberre, 'Satrapal Sardis', *AJA*, 96-97; Petrie et al, 'Emulation at the edge of empire', *Ghandaran Studies*, 11.

⁸⁸ Kaptan, *Daskyleion Bullae Vol. 1*, 57-58.

being defeated by and supporting the royal hero is clearly paralleled with the conquest and integration of multiple territories into the Great King's empire. Visual imagery was a key method of communication in the ancient world; even Darius I's celebrated trilingual inscription at Bisitun, which details how he defeated a series of rebellions following his coronation in 522 BC, was not intended to be read. Carved high on the side of the mountain, the text formed part of an awe-inspiring visual representation, completed by the sculpted relief of Darius and the defeated rebel leaders. To read the text itself, one had to find a copy.

However, as has been stressed, Persianisation operated in both directions. The fusion of Achaemenid practices with local culture and the transmission of Achaemenid messages, many of which are seen in their Persian form at Persepolis, through local artistic and architectural modes was a crucial tool in the administration of the empire. Since some provinces were controlled in a more overt fashion than others, ideologically-imbued art and architecture were able to be adapted and altered according to localised circumstances.

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Fig. 2 – Map of the Achaemenid empire, Author's own.

Fig. 3 – Plate 98, from Deniz Kaptan, *The Daskyleion Bullae: Seal Images from the Western Achaemenid Empire, Vol. 2: Catalogue and Plates* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2002).

Fig. 4 – Plate 50 (as Fig. 3).

Fig. 5 – Plate 96 (as Fig. 3).

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