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ACHAEMENID WOMEN: PUTTING THE GREEK IMAGE TO THE TEST

Yazdan Safaei¹

The historians of ancient Greece, as part of the elite of Greek communities, reflect through their accounts most of the cultural traditions and the ideology of their own time. By studying the works of these historians one can become familiar with these traditions and the common view on the world in Greek culture regarding various issues and concepts. The purpose of this paper is to study and analyze the Greek approach to women and the effect of this approach on the way the history of the Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550 – ca. 330 BC) was written. Our central theme in this paper is the question of the connection between the Greek perspective on women and the reliability of narratives related to women in the accounts of Achaemenid history by Greek historians.

Introduction

The historians of ancient Greece, as part of the elite of Greek communities, reflect through their accounts most of the cultural traditions and the ideology of their own time. By studying the works of these historians one can become familiar with these traditions and the common view on the world in Greek culture regarding different issues and concepts. The purpose of this paper is to study and analyze the Greek approach to women and the effect of this approach on the way the history of the Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550 – ca. 330 BC) was written. Our central theme in this paper is the question of the connection between the Greek perspective on women and the reliability of narratives related to women in the accounts of Achaemenid history by Greek historians. What is the position of women in Greek philosophy? What is the position of women in Greek literature? What is the position of women in Greek history and culture? What is the relation of the position of women in Greek culture with Greek history? What is the impact of Greek traditions on the way the historians of ancient Greece described Achaemenid women? If any at all, are there other sources to analyze the position, status, and state of women in the

¹ I would like to express my appreciation to Jan Stronk and Wouter Henkelman for commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

Achaemenid period? And what sort of approaches and perspectives on Achaemenid women do they reflect? Are there conclusions, and – if so – which ones, that have been reached by a comparison of Greek sources with other related sources on women in the Achaemenid period?

A review of modern literature

Until some decades ago, on the one hand research on Achaemenid women did not have any significance in the study of Achaemenid history and, on the other hand, among studies related to women in the ancient world a focus on Achaemenid women was less of a concern. Nonetheless, in some books, articles, and, specifically, some chapters of certain volumes, there are sporadic references to Achaemenid women. However, none of these contributions studies this important subject with the approach adopted in this article.

After having published two papers (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, b) focusing on the matter of decadence and its relevance to women in Greek view and in modern scholarship, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, while focusing on Xerxes' period, studies the role of princesses in the court and criticizes their portrayal as presented in the Greek sources. She believes that the stigmatizing description of eastern women, including concepts such as betrayal, lies, trickery, and imprisonment in such secluded environments like a harem, is mostly the consequence of an original Western perspective on the East as a civilization with feminine traits (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993).

In her turn, Heidemarie Koch studied the position of women in art and social life of the Achaemenid period: she cannot accept the idea of the harem as a place for imprisonment of Achaemenid women, since there are some major contradictions between such a suggestion and the evidence from the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. Despite the absence of depictions of women in Persepolis, Koch tries to reconstruct their social life in the Achaemenid period, based on existing information in the administrative and economic texts of the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (Koch 1992). Koch returns to this matter in another article as well (Koch 1994).

Perhaps the most prominent research on this subject, however, is the book *Women in Ancient Persia (559-531 BC)* by Maria Brosius (Brosius 1996). This book was based on Brosius's doctoral dissertation, which she had presented to the Faculty of *Litterae Humaniores* at the University of Oxford. The author, in different chapters, focuses on royal women, royal marriage alliances, royal women and the Achaemenid court, and women and economics. She emphasizes the importance of the Greek approach and compares it with data provided by the Persepolis Fortification Tablets and Babylonian tablets in the Achaemenid period. After long discussions on each of these issues, she concludes that Greek authors considered the Achaemenid women to be the agents of destruction, turbulence, rebelliousness, and decadence of the Achaemenid Empire.

Also Touraj Daryaee has compiled an article on women during the Achaemenid period, in which he submits the facts known on Achaemenian women and introduces some fresh thoughts and sources on that matter (Daryaee 2006-07). In this

article, he pays specific attention to the goddess Anahita and in the passing he analyzes both written documents and material culture.

In the fourth chapter of his book *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559 to 331 BCE*, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones focuses on Achaemenid harems and the role of women in court (Llewellyn-Jones 2013, 96-122). He addresses the roles of women and mothers and princesses in the harem and observes their extensive power. Before all else, though, he describes the harem from the perspective of Greek sources. However, he adds that in order to have a good understanding of the situation, one may need to pass over the orientalist clichés. Moreover, he believes that one must employ the word ‘harem’ accurately and precisely. In this respect, he suggests that the importance of the existence of ‘harems’ was to keep the private areas of royal residences apart from the public ones. At the same time, Llewellyn-Jones does not set any ground rules for the influences of Greek philosophy on the portrayal of women. He continues with a study on the archaeological evidence about the Achaemenid ‘harem’ as well as the position of the king’s mother and wives.

Women in Greek Ideology

In Greek ideology or social thinking, women had no roles in politics unless they were trying to mastermind a betrayal or conspiracy. About the way Gyges came to the throne, Plato says that originally he had been a shepherd who found a ring that made him invisible, of which he benefited: “he seduced the king’s wife, plotted with her against the king, killed him and seized the power” (Pl. *R.* 359D-360B; see also Hdt. 1.8-12 in which the king’s wife has a stronger role). It assumes such a story was common behavior. In Greek tradition, it was believed that the founder of a prominent dynasty in Lydia had ultimately achieved the crown by the intentions and will of a woman and not based on his eligibility and competence.

Apart from betrayal and conspiracy, being tale-bearers and war motivators were other reasons of women’s presence in politics. Aristotle states that an incident caused by the rejection of a girl in Delphi originated the whole chaos which happened afterwards (Arist. *Pol.* 5.3.3 (= 1303b38-1304a4)). He also reports on some of the revolutions in oligarchic systems owing to matrimonial issues (*id.*, 5.5.10 (= 1306a33-b3)), on Dionysius’ marriage with a girl in Locri that toppled the whole state of Locri (*id.*, 5.6.7 (= 1307a38-40)). Furthermore, the reason of the rebelliousness against the Peisistratids was the insult to Harmodius’ sister (*id.*, 5.8.9 (= 1311a37-b1)). Those women whose presumptions had toppled dynasties (*id.*, 5.9.13 (= 1314b27-28)) have been called sometimes the provocateurs at the service of empire (*id.*, 5.9.3 (= 1313b13-18)), 6 (= 1313b34-39))². In such a situation, ‘Silence gives grace to a woman’ (*id.* 1.5.8 (= 1260a31)). In Greek literature, women’s betrayal is always accompanied with the huge tendency of getting revenge. The *Oresteia* is a trilogy that begins with the tale of Aga-

² For more examples for the case of women’s roles in wars, see Kuhrt 2001.

memnon, the Greek king who had executed a military campaign in retaliation of kidnapping Helen – his brother’s wife – by Prince Paris of Troy: “For one woman’s promiscuous sake/ the struggling masses, legs tired/ knees grinding in dust,/ spears broken the onset”³. Agamemnon who had razed the whole city of Troy to the ground because of the flightiness of his brother’s wife and had started the 10-year-long battle over her, himself was killed by his own wife⁴. *The Libation Bearers* (*Choephoroi*) is another story from this trilogy, a play relating to the period after the murder of Agamemnon in which one can clearly see a fair share of negative portrayal of women⁵ and especially their disloyalty (A. *Ch.* 991-996). In the next play of the trilogy, the *Eumenides* introduces us to a portrayal of helpless women (e.g. A. *Eu.* 94-116) and of avengers full of duplicity (cf., e.g., A. *Eu.* 625-630). It is, within this context, no surprise that the vivid description by Aeschylus of the Furies (A. *Eu.* 67-79) is that of winged *women*.

There are always troubles being caused by women and it has been suggested to men to never make decisions under the influence of women (Arist. *Ath.* 35.2); therefore philosophers such as Aristotle appear to consider women to be inferior to men (Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.12 (= 1254b13-15); 1.5.2 (= 1259b2-3)). Technically, in cases of being under the influence of women, men are seduced by their shallow and primitive motivations. As a typical example, Antea incited her husband, Proetus, who was a local king, to kill a hero, Bellerophon, who rejected her lust (Hom. *Il.* 6.147-70). In practice, women are frequently stated to have entered their path to policy and battles only for shallow and primitive motivations, which were accompanied by deceptions; such deceptions have been even attributed to goddesses (Hom. *Il.* 14.215-241; 22.216-239). Consequently, it is no wonder that men are advised they never should trust a woman (Hom. *Od.* 10.431-37). Herodotus presents Cambyses’ mother as the motivator of a campaign against Egypt (Hdt. 3.3) and also Darius’ wife as the motivator of a campaign against Greece (Hdt. 3.133-134) and in view of the foregoing it is no wonder again that those wars did not have a happy ending. Disloyalty by women is obvious in Herodotus’ reports on the history of Lydia (Hdt. 1.8-12, 91) as well as in the revengeful action by Queen Nitocris in his report on the history of Egypt (Hdt. 2.100). Without doubt, getting revenge, disloyalty, and conspiracy by women of the ‘harem’ are the most prominent motifs for strife in Ctesias’ reports. The most significant of these stories is about Artaxerxes II’s mother Parysatis⁶.

In the *Republic*, Socrates implicates that women’s desires to luxurious concepts

³ A. *Ag.* 62-65. Cf. *id.* 399-407; 445-448; 822-823.

⁴ A. *Ag.* 1448-1471, 1625-1636; cf. Hom. *Od.* 3.214-216, 242-256; 4.90; 11.388-392.

⁵ A. *Ch.* 303-395, 429-443, 603-606, 613-638.

⁶ Cf. Ctes. *Pers.* T 11e (Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 102), F 26 [= Plu. *Art.* 14.9-17] (Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 206-208, Stronk 2010, 373-377), F 27(70) (Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 210, Stronk 2010, 380-381), F 29a (Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 211, Stronk 2010, 282-283); also see D.S. 14.80.6: cf. Stronk 2017, 230).

unsteady the balance of society and consequently cause a bloodbath (Pl. *R.* 373A-374B). In his *Alcibiades*, Plato⁷ is mocking Alcibiades and in the process compares his wealth to that of someone who is both a foreigner and also a woman (sc. the Persian queen) and describes the great wealth of Amestris (Pl. *Alc.* 121C-123D; Brosius 1996, 123). The connections between the concepts of luxury and women have also reflections in historical works (Hdt. 2.98; 4.162). Being obsessed with a luxurious life has been connected with decadence, especially in Ctesias' report on the history of Assyria. From Ctesias' point of view, the reason of decadence and degeneracy of this empire was the luxurious life which had prevailed among Assyrian kings and had its roots in direct connection with womanliness, notably personified in King Sardanappalus (F 1b⁸; F 1n, F 1oα, F 1pα, F 1pδ⁹; cf. F 1pβ¹⁰). Women frequently, even in philosophical works, fall victim to being kidnapped, even by gods (Pl. *R.* 391DE; for the case of Persephone, see Lincoln 1979). Kidnapping, was a very popular theme in Greek literature and the best known story is about the kidnapping of Helen by Paris, which was the alleged cause of the great war and 10-year battle around Troy¹¹. The *Iliad* underlines the claim that kidnapping women had been considered as (one of) the most important causes of wars. In the other work attributed to Homer, the suitors' intention to marry Odysseus' wife was the reason for him to murder them¹². This motif repeats itself in Herodotus' *Histories*. He states that kidnapping of women by Phoenicians has been the cause behind the battle between Greeks and Asians (Hdt. 1.3-4.). References to a relation between kidnapping women and waging wars occur in Plutarch's works as well¹³.

Another concept in Greek philosophy which has mingled with the word woman is the withering concept of fright or cowardice (Pl. *R.* 388A), which come exactly next to the concepts of contempt and disdain originated from womanish characteristics (Arist. *Pol.* 5.8.14 (= 1312a1-4)). Furthermore, generally speaking women possess this senseless characteristic (Pl. *R.* 469D) and have always been humiliated by Greek philosophers (cf. Pl. *Ap.* 35AB) and are somehow self-evidently considered to be inferior to men (Arist. *Rh.* 1.9 (1366a-1368a)), most pregnant 1.9.23; *EN* 8.8 (1158b); 12-13 (1160b)). In literary works men occasionally also address each

⁷ Sancisi-Weerdenburg elucidates us about Plato and Isocrates as follows: "The works of Plato and Isocrates that contain a number of statements about Persia and Persians, should not be considered as sources. They merely repeat, or at best recoin, stereotypes that were current in Greek popular opinion. A distinction should be made between literature that was meant to add something to the knowledge about Persia and writings that use the already available knowledge for other purposes" (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, 34).

⁸ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 113-133; Stronk 2010, 202-249.

⁹ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 144-145; Stronk 2010, 262-263.

¹⁰ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 144; Stronk 2010, 260-261.

¹¹ See, for example, Hom. *Il.* 1.13-14, 21-24; 3.45-49, 150-152, 171-172; *Od.* 4.146; 9.323.

¹² See, for example, Hom. *Od.* 1.275-282; 2.83-88; 14.160-163; 22.29-35.

¹³ Plu. *Thes.* 2.1-2; *Rom.* 14-15, 28.1, 32; *Them.* 3.1-2; *Per.* 24.1.

other as if the addressee were a woman, in a context of contempt (Hom. *Il.* 7.90-91), to the extent that even in historical works womanliness is being considered as a sickness and men are named and described as women in a derogatory way (cf. Hdt. 1.105; 7.153). In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus allegedly also advised against the communication with women because they could hamper men from performing their daily important responsibilities (X. *Cyr.* 5.1.7-8.). Being in a relationship with women made men unstable and unbalanced. Women's affairs nearly always are considered as second-rate in historical works, as goes from the tasks the Amazons charged their menfolk with (cf. D.S. 2.45-46).

Generally one can therefore say that Greek ideology related to women in general and femininity in particular, which can be noticed in their philosophical works, reflects in Greek literature as well. Greek historians who were influenced by this ideology and/or attitude show this very matter in their works. This issue suggests that there is a unique approach in Greek philosophical works on 'women', a cynical approach, which permeates into Greek literature and influences the historical works with this very perspective, inferring this approach into their narratives¹⁴. Now, it is the right time to clarify how such influences determine the narratives by Greek historians, specifically through this ideology related to women, in writing the Achaemenid history¹⁵.

Analyzing the position of Achaemenid women in Greek classical sources

Since in the ideology of Greek historians, the increase of the roles of women directly connects with the process of Achaemenid decadence, keeping in mind that Greek sources have declared the spark of decadence was ignited right after the death of Cyrus (cf. X. *Cyr.* 8.8), it is obvious that during the reign of Cyrus II there should not have been many traces of a multi-cynical approach toward women.

In Ctesias' narrative, there is a Babylonian woman, the wife of a deceased dream interpreter, who finds out about Cyrus' intended revolt and informs Astyages (F8d(24-5)¹⁶). The death of Cyrus occurred in a battle with the queen of the Massagetae, who wanted to avenge her son: her vindictiveness gave her the urge to kill Cyrus (Hdt. 1.201-214¹⁷). However, in fact, the most important indication is related to the beginning of decadence in Achaemenid Empire. Because Cyrus was always on a battlefield, the educational responsibilities for his children fell to women in the court. Instead of securing a high-powered training for his children, like the one he had enjoyed himself, 'he viewed with indifference his sons receiving an upbringing in the Median fashion, an education corrupted by so-called

¹⁴ In Sancisi-Weerdenburg's words: "The Orient seen as a mainly weak world with predominantly feminine characteristics is a creation of the male western world" (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987b, 117).

¹⁵ Here, I studied image of women in Greek view through direct references to Greek sources. For a scholarly work on the position of women in Greek society, see MacLachlan 2012.

¹⁶ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 165; Stronk 2010, 300-301.

¹⁷ For another narrative see Dandamaev 1989, 66-68.

happiness, in the hands of teachers who were women and eunuchs' (Briant 1989, 34, after Pl. *Lg.* 695A). The reason to consider Xerxes as a symbol of decadence follows exactly the same logic (cf. Stoneman 2015, 3). Unlike the idea of scholars like Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, who believes that Greek sources have attributed the decadence phenomenon from the 4th century BC onwards¹⁸, one may emphasize the notion put forward by Xenophon in the last chapter of the *Cyropaedia* (X. *Cyr.* 8.8), who declares that in Greek perspective the spark of decadence already revealed itself with the beginning of Cambyses' kingship. Olmstead also acknowledges that in this period, "harem intrigues were not yet tormenting the Persian court, though they might be expected in the near future" (Olmstead 1948, 86).

The very first effort of Cambyses after being crowned was to conquer Egypt. Herodotus, in justifying Cambyses' motivation, narrates that an Egyptian ophthalmologist who bore a grudge against Amasis, the Egyptian king, tempted Cambyses to propose for Amasis' daughter. However, Amasis sent another girl, the daughter of the former pharaoh, instead of his own daughter and this girl revealed the truth to Cambyses in Persia. Consequently, Cambyses, infuriated at Amasis, dispatched an army to Egypt (Hdt. 3.1). Herodotus also mentions a variant (Egyptian) narrative, which states this girl was Cyrus' wife and Cambyses' mother, but Herodotus himself rejects the authenticity of this narrative (Hdt. 3.2). There even is a third version of the story, telling that the real mother of Cambyses, Cassandane, was jealous of the Egyptian wife of Cyrus and that Cambyses started the war against Egypt to avenge his mother (Hdt. 3.3). Despite Briant's opinion on the story to propose to marry Amasis' daughter, either by Cyrus or by Cambyses, who regards it as Persian propaganda and contends that historians should completely ignore it (Briant 1996, 60), it is, however, evident that the role of women exactly fits the scope theme of warmongering. Despite Lloyd's opinion about Phanes, the Egyptian physician who encouraged Cambyses to dispatch an army against Egypt (Lloyd refers to Phanes as "a renegade mercenary": Lloyd 1988, 55), Herodotus states that the physician joined the Persian encampment after Cambyses decided to conquer Egypt (Hdt. 3.4). In fact, the circumstance that Egypt, on the eve of Cambyses' dispatching his army, proclaimed that the Achaemenid Empire had executed long-lasting political and military schemes to conquer Egypt (cf. Dandamaev 1989, 71-73), therefore suggests that Cambyses' decision to dispatch an army to Egypt was no sudden or instant burst based upon conspiracies of women of the 'harem'.

In Herodotus' report, the second crime Cambyses had committed was to murder his own sister, who was his wife as well. Indeed, the madness attributed to Cambyses (by Herodotus) was not exclusively related to murdering his own sister, since marriage between siblings, as Herodotus mentions, was not customary

¹⁸ Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, 33. Henceforth, all three-digit data refer to dates BC.

among Persians until then (Hdt. 3.31). However, Cambyses technically had violated no Persian law by getting married to both his sisters. Nevertheless, as Boyce declares, it is an absolute surprise that the action which had risen out of the king's prurience made its way to become a religious ritual (Boyce 1979, 54). One may also raise the question whether those marriages were based on Egyptian customs, since Cambyses had stayed there for so long. In fact, we can be confident to state that to marry siblings was since long an established practice in Egyptian royal families (cf. Tuplin 1991, 260). However, it seems such a tradition also was so widespread in the ancient world that its boundaries were not confined to only among the Egyptians: therefore one cannot conclude that the roots of this enterprise of Cambyses had originated solely in an Egyptian ritual. Scholarship on these marriages without considering the ancient tradition of sibling-marriage is beyond the bounds of possibility. Consequently, Cambyses was not the initiator of this institution (Boyce 1982, 75). In the same vein, Briant assumes that the endogamous policy, here used in the sense of marriage within the own family, had been repeated as it were as a tradition all over the Achaemenid history (Briant 1996, 105). Therefore Cambyses did not commit any anomalous affair. Consequently, his kind of marriage and his connections with women therefore cannot be shifted onto his alleged madness. Moreover, this madness features solely in Greek sources: unlike them, most of the Egyptian sources generally consider him as a wise and rightful king (cf. Dandamaev 1989, 76-77; as a matter of fact, not all Egyptian texts are positive regarding Cambyses: see Stronk 2017, 150 note 41).

It is as if there was a cessation of decadence during the reign of Darius the Great. If the crowning of Darius had reawakened the whole Achaemenid dynasty, the reason behind this fact was, in the Greeks' view, that Darius was not the son of a king and therefore had received a flawless education (Briant 1989, 34). In this period, the role of Queen Atossa in Greek sources is indeed notable. In Herodotus' narrative, it had been Atossa who, upon the request of her special Greek physician, tempted Darius to dispatch an army to Greece (Hdt. 3.133-134). Despite the doubts, of which Cook is well aware, as regards the authenticity of Herodotus' narrative on the conversation between Darius and Atossa in bed, Cook believes that the king's physician, Democedes, eavesdropped this conversation and Herodotus subsequently had gained the knowledge of it from Democedes' grandchildren in Italy (Cook 1985, 202). One can hardly accept such a theory, because Herodotus' narrative carries on the clichéd-role-of-women theory in tempting kings for commencing a war (see also Griffiths 1987).

Significantly, the next king, Xerxes, who is the incarnation of an eastern dictator and decadent king (Rawlinson 1871, 243; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, 43), had his own way to gain the crown through the involvement of the same Atossa (Hdt. 7.2-4). Such a narrative, deservedly, has become the subject of Sancisi-Weerdenburg's and Briant's strictures and objections¹⁹. Henkelman has published a text,

¹⁹ Cf. Briant 1990, 86; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a.

coded as NN 1657, from the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, to be dated to 498, which means 12 years before the coronation of Xerxes: “⁰¹7 l. flour, ⁰¹⁻⁰²allocation from Mirizza, ⁰²⁻⁰³a Parthian named Tamšakama, ⁰³⁻⁰⁴spear bearer, ⁰⁴sent/assigned by Xerxes (*Xšēršā), ⁰⁵together with his three companions, ⁰⁶⁻⁰⁷sent from the King to Parthia: ⁰⁷⁻⁰⁸they received (it as) ration (for) 1 day. ⁰⁹⁻¹⁰Third month, 24th year. ¹⁰⁻¹¹Their ration (was) 1.5 l., ¹²1 servant received 1 l. ¹³He (T.) carried a sealed document from the King” (Henkelman 2010b, 29). There is no reference to Xerxes’ position and his status in this text. However, it indicates he has an elevated position. Henkelman assumes that the word ‘*dama*’ (“sent/assigned”) implies that Xerxes was in some sort of commanding position and probably this term was related to the government of the important satrapy of Parthia. Henkelman compares this absence of a reference to Xerxes’ title with a similar case, sc. the case of *XPk* (cf. Kent 1953, 152; Schmitt 2009, 170), allegedly an inscription from the time of Darius’ reign, where a reference to the position and status of Xerxes is absent as well. However, the palace statues dating to this period show Darius and opposite of him Xerxes. From this fact and these two texts, Henkelman concludes that Xerxes, at this time, was chosen as the crown prince of Darius (cf., e.g., Briant 1996, 534-538). Incidentally, he emphasizes the rare occurrence of Atossa in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets compared with the established roles of Irdabama and Irtaštuna (in the Persepolis Fortification archive) and the absence of a reference by Xerxes to his own mother in *XPf* (Kent 1953, 149-150; Schmitt 2009, 160-163, Xerxes’ so-called Harem text) and his accentuation of his paternal relation, leaving aside his maternal one, and also Xerxes’ remark to have been chosen by Darius the Great himself as the latter’s crown prince (*mavišta*) above all his other (at least three) brothers: all indications taken together, Henkelman suggests, make that Herodotus’ narrative on the role of Atossa can be proven fundamentally wrong (cf. Henkelman 2010b, 31-33). As it is, Herodotus’ narrative dates the time of Darius’ choosing Xerxes to become the crown prince after the battle of Marathon and shortly before the death of Darius. Owing to the absolute power of his mother, Xerxes would have become the crown prince, Herodotus asserts (Hdt. 7.2-4). Also Plutarch mentions that the crisis of succession only was solved after the death of Darius (Plu. *Mor.* 488D). In fact, it seems that the evidence presented by Henkelman, based on the aforementioned Persepolis Fortification Tablets, indicates that Xerxes was chosen as the crown prince 12 years before Herodotus’ suggested date. It seems that this paradox of timing has been caused by Herodotus’ stipulation of Atossa’s role in choosing Xerxes. Accepting Henkelman’s opinion on Xerxes and the Crown Prince issue in 498, the logical conclusion would be that Atossa had no role in this situation. In fact, as Briant explains, by choosing Xerxes Darius intended to prevent the transfer of royal power to Gobryas’ family (Briant 1990, 96; for more problems see also Brosius 1996, 50). It seems that Dandamaev has accepted Herodotus’ narrative (Dandamaev 1989, 180-181). However, Briant, rightly attributes no value to a connection between the ‘harem’ and Xerxes’ gaining power

(Briant 1993, 401-402)²⁰. Anyhow, in his critical review of Dandamaev's book, Briant, after mentioning Dandamaev's absolute adherence to the Greek sources, avers that Dandamaev wrongly believes in Persian decadence and its presence after Xerxes' period (Briant 1993, 418-419). As mentioned before, the theme of Persian decadence in Greek sources started literally after the death of Darius: however, by determining the period of Darius the Great as the hiatus in the gestation of decadence one can refer to Xerxes' reign as the turning-point of this matter. In fact, by attributing importance to the role of Atossa in the coronation of Xerxes, Greek sources appear to be trying to connect Achaemenid decadence with the turning-point of women's decisions and their involvements in court politics²¹.

At the end of Herodotus' *Histories* (Hdt. 9.108-113) a conspiracy at court after Xerxes' return from Greece is related. Brosius believes that the behavior of Amestris, the king's wife, and her vindictiveness caused the outbreak of this crisis in the empire. In fact, somehow the story completed Herodotus' narrative of the beginning of the work, telling of the conspiracy and vindictiveness of king Candaules' wife (Hdt. 1.8-12). Based upon Herodotus' arrangement of narrative patterns, Greek historians have attempted to portray with the use of such occurrences the complete circle of fall and decadence of empires (cf. Brosius 2013, 661-2). I also should refer to another narrative from Herodotus, in which he declares that this very wife of Xerxes, Amestris, is said to have sacrificed 14 sons of great families (Hdt. 7.114). This claim can be rejected easily due to its great contradiction with the essentials of Iranian religion. The modern historians, influenced by Xerxes' portrayal introduced by Greek sources, consider him as an unwise king who was surrounded by women and eunuchs²². Greek sources consider Xerxes to have been the victim of conspiracies of the 'harem' at the end of his reign as well (cf. D.S. 11.69.1-2; Stronk 2017, 194). These sources, of which the main origin may well have been Ctesias, say that the eunuch who murdered Xerxes decided that Artaxerxes should succeed to the throne. In this decision Megabyzus, who was upset because he suspected his wife of adultery, colluded with this eunuch, Artapanus (Ctes. *Pers.* F 14(34)²³). In

²⁰ One only can wonder why Stoneman accepted Herodotus' narrative of Atossa's role, also referring to Aeschylus' play *The Persians* and the importance of her presence in it (cf. Stoneman 2015, 26). It is evident that the goal of *The Persians* was to try to demonstrate that the Achaemenid court was (and acted) under the influence of women and that it projected this weakness of the Achaemenid system by emphasizing Atossa's role.

²¹ Stoneman states on this issue that Atossa was well aware that Darius had killed her husband, Bardia, and that she solely assisted Darius under the condition that Darius would choose, Xerxes, her son, as the crown prince (Stoneman 2015, 21-22). However, such a theory would entail us to accept the presupposition that Darius literally killed the true Bardia and, incidentally, does not explain why Atossa changed her sentiment from one brother, Cambyses, to another brother, Bardia. Moreover, Stoneman simply does not explain the fact that, as we mentioned, Xerxes emphasized his ancestry back to Darius in his inscription. Besides, when Darius got married with Atossa, it was not clear when exactly (or even if) Atossa would give birth to a boy: therefore, Darius simply could shirk such a commitment later, a commitment that could be absolutely fictitious at the same time.

²² See, e.g., Dandamaev 1989, 232-233; Stoneman 2015, 61-63. Cf. Wiesehöfer 1988, 1-2.

²³ See Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 187; Stronk 2010, 338-389.

this narrative, we thus see a description of events, where one of the conspirators is a eunuch and the other, who is not a eunuch, has joined the conspiracy being influenced by being upset due to his wife.

It was in the reign of Artaxerxes I when the Achaemenid court became the place of refuge for Themistocles, who had faced some problems in Athens. The portrayal that Plutarch introduces regarding Themistocles' escape is based on the Achaemenid view on their women. Guided thereby, he reports that Persian women lived in such a way that nobody could see them and that, when they were traveling, they were transported in some carriage which was completely closed. Plutarch tells that Themistocles could successfully escape using such a carriage and under cover of feminine clothes²⁴. With his background he even could get close to the king's mother (Briant 1994a, 309; Plu. *Them.* 26.6). In fact, this source indicates this fugitive traitor could only escape from the masculine environment of Athens through feminine garb. Such a plan places the feminine style of living before the masculine matrix of Athens' society and also connects this fugitive traitor who ended up in an eastern decadent court surrounded with women.

Themistocles, who had escaped to the Achaemenid court in feminine garb, was not immune from vindictive women in that court. Diodorus, who is aware of the entrance of Themistocles in the Achaemenid court in Xerxes' period, reports that the daughter of Darius and sister of Xerxes, Mandana, who had lost her children in the battle of Salamis and considered Themistocles to be guilty for that tragedy, had gone to the king and asked him to punish Themistocles. On this issue she had assured herself of the support of some courtiers. However, Themistocles was acquitted of the charges in court (D.S. 11.57.1-5; Stronk 2017, 189-190).

During the reign of Artaxerxes I, Megabyzus was successful in suppressing a rebellion in Egypt led by one Inaros, who killed the king's brother, Achaemenides, in battle. Megabyzus had been successful to take Inaros to Persia with a promise of immunity. However, the queen mother, Amestris, who wanted revenge for her son, finally successfully persuaded the king to let her murder Inaros. This act of revenge on behalf of the queen mother was a clear breach of the promise of immunity by Megabyzus: according to Ctesias' report the king's action was a good reason for Megabyzus to rebel (Ctes. *Pers.* F 14(36-40)²⁵).

Ctesias' account mentions that after Artaxerxes I, Xerxes II governed for a short time, being the only legitimate son of Artaxerxes by Damaspiia. However, Sogdianus, one of the illegitimate sons of Artaxerxes from his Babylonian concubine Alogune, murdered Xerxes II and crowned himself. In this period, which has been styled by Ctesias as the period of court killings, next followed the murder of Sogdianus by Ochus, another illegitimate son of Artaxerxes (by Cosmartidene, also a Babylonian), who crowned himself under the name of Dar-

²⁴ Plu. *Them.* 26; also see D.S. 11.56.7-8, Stronk 2017, 189.

²⁵ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 188-190; Stronk 2010, 338-343.

ius. While Sogdianus still was alive, Parysatis advised Ochus to become much closer to Sogdianus and using that closeness Ochus could defeat Sogdianus (Ctes. *Pers.* F 15(49-50)²⁶).

Darius II was the son of Artaxerxes I by his Babylonian concubine Cosmartidene (see also Brosius 2006, 27). Darius II pledged to Hydarnes' family that he would marry Parysatis. Moreover, Darius II agreed to a formal marriage between the daughter of Hydarnes, Stateira, and Darius II's own eldest son, Artaxerxes II (Plu. *Art.* 2.2). On the other hand, Artaxerxes II's sister, Amestris, got married with the son of Hydarnes, Terituchmes (Ctes. *Pers.* F 15(55)²⁷). It seems these marriages were the first experiences of getting married outside of the family circle since 521 and the reason behind it were the complications around Darius II's accession, the kind of conflicts that forced Darius II to stand for the pledge with the Hydarnes family. However, a short time later, Darius II and Parysatis massacred all distinguished members of the Hydarnes family: Terituchmes and his son, his parents, and all his siblings, except Stateira, Artaxerxes II's wife (Ctes. *Pers.* F 15(56)²⁸). This frenzy of killings is often attributed to the inclemency of Parysatis. However, these killings had their own political rationale. All distinguished members of the Hydarnes family at the court were under suspicion to attempt to usurp the royal power: this determined their being killed as their destiny (Briant 1990, 96-97 and note 49)²⁹.

Artaxerxes II and his wife could survive from this massacre (Plu. *Art.* 2.2). He succeeded to the throne after the death of his father. However, like his father, he shows himself still under the influence of Parysatis. As Briant indicates, in the opinion of some modern historians, notably T. Petit (cf. Petit 1993), one of the reasons of Achaemenid decadence is *la personnalité falote d'Artaxerxès II* (see Briant 1994b, 115). Meanwhile, since George Rawlinson³⁰, there has been always a focus on Parysatis' role, a noteworthy role, which always has been accepted as a certain fact among historians (Briant 1994b, 119). It was Parysatis who persuaded Artaxerxes II to forgive his brother, Cyrus the Younger, who had the intention to kill him³¹. Much of this portrayal of Parysatis is taken from the one that Plutarch's *Lives* (viz. the *Life of Artaxerxes*) has given the reader, which

²⁶ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 192-193; Stronk 2010, 348-349.

²⁷ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 195; Stronk 2010, 352-353.

²⁸ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 195-196; Stronk 2010, 352-353.

²⁹ It seems Parysatis was not only involved in political issues but also in religious matters. Boyce established that Parysatis held a very exceptional place due to her Babylonian origin and her childhood during which she had become familiar with Ištar and, most importantly, due to her role of developing the cult of Anahita/Ištar in western Iran: therefore Boyce considers Parysatis as one of the reasons for the spread of the goddesses' idolatry during this very period (Boyce 1982, 201-203, 218-219).

³⁰ For the contrasts between female East and male West in Rawlinson's work, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987b, esp. 117-119, 128-131.

³¹ Cf., e.g., Ctes. *Pers.* F 16(59); X. *An.* 1.1.3; Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 11, 197; Stronk 2010, 356-357.

is a mixed portrayal of suspicion and ambivalence, like the poisonous ambiance between Parysatis and Stateira. Stateira had her own claim to fame as regards the subject of vengeance, as she got revenge for her own family very severely (Ctes. *Pers.* F 16(58)³²). However, without doubt, the best known revenge was the revenge of Parysatis on those who were responsible for the death of her beloved son, Cyrus the Younger (Ctes. *Pers.* F 16(66-67)³³). Plutarch reports that Parysatis detected Cyrus' murderer by the help of her own eunuch (Plu. *Art.* 16.12). In the end, Parysatis also killed her own daughter-in-law, Stateira, who had lots of problems within the 'harem', as described by Ctesias (Ctes. *Pers.* F 27(70)³⁴).

Ctesias is the main source for the history of the middle parts of the history of the Achaemenids, specifically the period of Artaxerxes II, which is the longest rulership of an Achaemenid king, and through the significant ideology of the Greeks this work has its own deficiencies and lapses (see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a). However, it was probably Diodorus who developed the idea of Persian decadence through Ephorus and who has bequeathed it to posterity. The idea is, though, that Ctesias agreed with it and that also Dinon emphasized this issue, in spite of the fact that we were left with only some short fragments of the latter.

All these sources had guided Plutarch in writing Artaxerxes II's biography, mostly underlining Parysatis' role. The woman is considered as the unconditional supporter of Cyrus the Younger and, logically, a significant part of Artaxerxes' biography is devoted to her vindictiveness and the cruelties towards her son's killers and ultimately she also killed her own daughter-in-law, Stateira. From Plutarch's point of view, the Achaemenid court was under the authority of Parysatis and Stateira who were doing each other's worst. After eliminating Stateira, Parysatis gained more and more power and even returned to court shortly after getting banished to Babylon because of her murdering Stateira.³⁵ The daughter of Artaxerxes II, Atossa, got married to the king as Parysatis requested and gained high power and supported her own brother in achieving the crown. Therefore, the portrayal of the Achaemenid court that Plutarch presents in his biography of Artaxerxes II is as if this court was the center of vindictive ambitions and full of women's conspiracies, completed with eunuchs' plots and court-murders, resulting in one of Artaxerxes' sons committing suicide while another son of his, Arsames, was killed by Ochus. Meanwhile, Isocrates, the Athenian rhetor, was promoting the thought of decadence at the Achaemenid court and also was trying to make the Greeks ready to commence a war against this falling empire (cf. Briant 1996, 331-333). Historians like Dandamaev simply have accepted the composite portrayal of a decadent

³² Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 197; Stronk 2010, 354-355.

³³ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 199; Stronk 2010, 358-359.

³⁴ Llewellyn-Jones/Robson 2010, 210; Stronk 2010, 380-381.

³⁵ Stolper believes that "... holdings of Parysatis in Babylonia were part of a system of land use, recruitment of labor and payments, and political control that was widely applied and that linked the men and women around the Achaemenid kings to deeply rooted practices and institutions of their subjects". (Stolper 2006, 464-465). For her role in Plutarch's work, see generally Binder 2008, 228-273.

empire and the key-role of women (Dandamaev 1989, 305). However, it is clear that this portrayal was constructed under the influence of Greek ideology and its viewpoint as regards women.

After he had succeeded Artaxerxes II, Ochus named himself Artaxerxes III and was crowned in 359 (Schmitt 1986, 658). The reign of Artaxerxes III indicates that the empire was not in decay, at least not militarily. In this period, the Achaemenid Empire was confronted with chaos in different regions. Some of this, such as the rebellion of Artabanus, could not cause too many problems, which is why the command of the Achaemenid army sent a local general to suppress it (Briant 1998, 700-701). However, after that major rebellions occurred in Egypt, Phoenicia, and Cyprus. Egypt resisted against the attacks of Artaxerxes III and was simultaneously supporting the rebellions in the Mediterranean theaters. The situation was not very much encouraging for Persia until Artaxerxes III decided to join the war himself and took the command of the army: the rebellion in the Mediterranean theaters (Cyprus and Phoenicia) subsided and Egypt, after years of independency, became part of the Achaemenid Empire in 342 once more³⁶. In some historical reports from one of Artaxerxes III's wars, the war against the Cadusii in the north, some narratives are mentioned on heroic actions of the later King Darius III (cf. D.S. 17.6.1). Nonetheless, also the end of Artaxerxes III's reign was marked by conspiracies of eunuchs.

Bagoas, considered as a very close companion of Artaxerxes III, who is referred to by Diodorus as the chiliarch (the commander of the royal guards) and also as a very irascible and vicious eunuch, conspired with a physician and poisoned Artaxerxes. Next, Bagoas crowned the youngest son of Artaxerxes III, Arses, and consequently killed all the new king's brothers to secure absolute authority over the young king. The young king, who had the intention to punish Bagoas, however, experienced the same destiny with all his family as his father underwent (D.S. 17.5.3-4): in the third year of his reign the young king was as yet killed by Bagoas (D.S. 17.5.4). Exceptionally, in this case an Akkadian-Babylonian document (the so-called Dynastic Prophecy) supports Diodorus' report. This Late Babylonian text (possibly from the Seleucid Period) 'prophesized' (*post eventum!*) that Arses was killed by a eunuch and that his successor (= Darius III) reigned five years (cf. Grayson 1975, 26, 35).

After Darius III had been crowned, he killed Bagoas. Also Arses had had the same intention, but unlike Darius III he was not so successful on that matter (cf. Olmstead 1948, 490). This remark suggests that the act of killing Arses by Bagoas was an absolute vindictive reaction to the intention of the king to kill his chief advisor and therefore could be considered as an impulsive conspiracy. When two kings are attempting to kill such a high-ranking person in court it indicates as well, though, that this person is likely to have been the cause of the dissonance in their proceedings.

³⁶ Dandamaev 1989, 307-311; for an Akkadian text on the insurgency in Sidon, see Glassner 2004, 240-242.

Shortly after his accession to the throne, Darius III encountered the army dispatched and led by Alexander (III of Macedon) and, after the three great battles of the Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela, was killed while escaping from Media to the East (cf. Safaee 2016). Meanwhile, after the Battle of Issus, the family of Darius had been captured by Alexander. Gradually, after Alexander's externalizing his eastern-oriented tendencies, his own generals accused him of growing eastern attitudes, such as being fond of luxuries (cf. Safaee 2013, 4-5). The luxury that stood out while they were collecting the spoils of war after the Battle of Issus were items such as opulent furniture, jewelry, and feminine accessories (D.S. 17.35.3-4).

Alexander the Great's manner toward the royal women who had been captured by him has become the soul of narratives on his high-minded attitude and his morality (cf. Brosius 1996, 88). The relation of Alexander with women is not solely limited to the royal women of Darius III: Alexander frequently has been portrayed by historians as being under the influence of his mother, Olympias. Such a picture is comparable with the portrayal of Xerxes as being under the influence of his mother, Atossa (cf. Stoneman 2015, 9).

The image of Achaemenid women in non-Greek sources and its comparison with that in Greek sources

In order to examine the image Greek sources present of Achaemenid women, the image of these women in other sources must be taken into account. These sources include archival documents of Persepolis, which are mostly in Elamite, Aramaic documents from Ancient Bactria, and Babylonian sources and artifacts. These sources are, indeed, wide-ranging, but to prevent that this article becomes too long, they will be referred to in part, though evidently so sufficient that they can offer an appropriate instrument for a comparison with Greek sources.

Persepolis archival documents

During the excavations led by Ernst Herzfeld at Persepolis, from 1933 to 1934, thousands of clay tablets were discovered in the fortification wall at the northeast corner of the Persepolis terrace. The writing on these tablets, which can be dated between 509 and 493 – viz. from the thirteenth year of Darius' reign to its twenty-eighth – is mostly in Elamite. Also another archive was retrieved, this however from the treasury building (cf. Hallock 1969, 1). These collections of tablets are considered as primary documents and sources for the Achaemenid history and culture (cf. Henkelman 2012, 5179). As Koch has pointed out, by using the Elamite texts of Persepolis, we can uncover a new image of the Achaemenid women (Koch 1994, 125-126).

Dandamayev has calculated that 37.5% of the workers in Persepolis were men, whereas 39.8% were women, 12.7% boys, and 10% girls (Dandamaev 1975, 73). We can conclude that women had an active role in the working groups of Persepolis. Next to the references to working groups, there are the most important royal women: Atossa, Irtaštuna, Irdabama. Two texts, dated to 500/499, have

been retrieved about Atossa (PF 0162 and PF 0163)³⁷, under the name of Udusa, who is best known among these women in classical Greek texts (cf. Henkelman 2010b, 31). Brosius, who was unaware of Atossa's existence in the archive, linked the lack of references (notably to Atossa) in Achaemenid documents with the way Darius attained sovereignty (Brosius 1996, 14-16). But there is also a possibility that the reason her name was less referred to was her residence in a place outside Persepolis, probably in Susa.

The texts of the Persepolis fortifications archive group J, which are for the royal documentation of provisions and include PF 691-740, 2033-2035, document the receipt of provisions under the king's order for the court. 43 of the texts relate to issues at the king's direct orders and 20 texts to orders from other royalty, including Queen Irtaštuna, Darius' wife (PF 730-732), Aršama, her son from Darius (PF 733-734, 2035), and lady Irdabama (PF 735-540) (see Makvandi 2012, 22).

The name of Irtaštuna (Herodotus calls her Artystone (cf. Briant 1996, 438)) occurs in many texts of the fortification archive, such as PF 1793 and Fort. 6764. Fort. 6764 is about giving animals to Irtaštuna (see Hallock 1969, 52), the text which has been published by Cameron, and in it Darius has ordered a hundred sheep to be given to Irtaštuna (cf. Cameron 1942, 216; see new edition by Henkelman 2010a, 668-669.). In the texts of the group T, which are bureaucrat letters (PF 1788-1860, 2067-2071), five letters belong to Irtaštuna: these were sent to the central office in Persepolis by her representatives to collect food provisions (cf. Makvandi 2012, 27-28). Also texts PF 1835-1836 can be regarded as issued by Irtaštuna (cf. Makvandi 2012, 109). In addition, among the originally unpublished texts, NN 2523 is a letter by Irtaštuna which seems to have been posted from Susa (Henkelman 2008, 110 note 243). She is seen to have used a personal seal in the fortification archive (Garrison/Root/Jones 2001, 10). Her name has been identified on 25 texts of the fortification archive with her personal seal, all of them on its own, i.e. without counter-seal. The importance of her office can be illustrated best by her ordering for travel provisions in the texts of group J as the king's substitute (cf. Makvandi 2012, 59). Among the seals of the Persepolis fortification seals collection (or PFS), this seal is considered a big one, very adroitly prepared.

Henkelman believes that Irdabama is probably Darius' mother (Henkelman 2010b, 29) or perhaps more likely one of his wives (Henkelman 2010a: 693). We know her only from the fortification tablets. Her name does not occur in classical sources (for a probable terminology **Rtabāma-*, "brilliance of Arta", see Tavernier 2007, 292). This lady used the seal PFS 51 which also was one of the very important seals in the fortification archive. In fact, the high status of Irdabama is defined by the use of her personal seal on the texts of group J. In fact, Irtaštuna and Irdabama are the only people in the texts of Group J who act as king's substitutes. The transfers of this group were done using their personal seals instead of

³⁷ Henkelman 2010a, 703 note 136; On the name see Tavernier 2007, 212. There are more unpublished fragmentary Fortification texts which mention of the name Udusa: personal communication by Wouter Henkelman.

official seals (see Makvandi 2012, 59). Payments related to their activities were done in a rather wide geographical area (see Koch 1994, 137-138).

We are already familiar with Darius I's daughter Artazostre from Persepolis fortification tablets PFa 5, PF 688 and NN 2533: Gobryas accompanied Artazostre during her journey, probably to meet her husband Mardonius, in 489. We know from PF 684 that during this journey a woman named Radušnamuya accompanied her and that the latter as well had received a provision equal to 176 quarts of wine for four days (cf. Brosius 1996, 92). Hallock believes that she is the same as Radušdukya³⁸ in the text of Fort. 1017 (Hallock 1978, 110). This woman, in the text, received 360 quarts of flour for two days: this shows her high status and according to some linguistic evidence: Brosius believes that she might be the wife of Gobryas or Darius' sister (Brosius 1996, 92).

Irrakpirda is another of the royal women mentioned in the fortification tablets. She is entitled *Dukšiš* (= "princess", "royal lady") in NN 0812 (Henkelman 2008, 406). Lady Ištīn has the same title in PF 0823. She is accompanied by a person named Bagiya, who is probably her husband (Henkelman 2008, 414; Henkelman 2017, 52-53 note 8). Generally, we encounter three titles in the Persepolis fortification tablets: *Irti*, *Mutu*, and *Dukšiš*. *Mutu* is used for ordinary women all the time, but *Irti* and *Dukšiš* are terms to refer to the women of the court (Brosius 1996, 25).

Next to the royal women, we know of a woman named Mizapirzaka who owned the seal PFS 1437s. We know she was on her way to Persepolis in (Darius') year 28 (= 493/494) and that she had a sealed tablet which permitted her to receive a provision of beer. Among the fortification texts, her name only occurs on PF 1546 (Garrison/Root/Jones 2001, 211). Also, in PF-Teh 7 a lady named Umarlama(ya)la³⁹, who was on her way to the king from Kerman, received more provisions than the king's daughter in Fort. 1017 (see Arfaee 2008, 26-27). The woman named Utur in NN 2259:19 seems to have been a priestess for some religious practices. This is the only document in the whole fortification archive of Persepolis which directly alludes to a role of women in religious practices. Henkelman compares her with Aspasia, the lady whom Artaxerxes II appointed as the priestess of the Anahita temple in Ekbatana (Henkelman 2008, 402-404). Although men usually received more provisions than women, some documents display that they received the same amount for a similar task. In fact, the amount of the provision was directly related to the person's position and was not related to gender⁴⁰. For instance, apart from the abovementioned cases, also PF 1153 and PF 1219 have indications that women received rations (Henkelman 2008, 318 note 734). On the other hand, Achaemenids distributed wine, beer, and flour to women who had recently given birth as part of special provisions. If the baby

³⁸ Brosius (1996, 92) reads it as "Radušdukda" but the correct reading is "Radušdukya" (personal communication by Wouter Henkelman).

³⁹ Arfaee (2008, 26-27) reads it as "Ubanmāla" but the correct reading is "Umarlama(ya)la" (personal communication by Wouter Henkelman).

⁴⁰ Koch 1994, 126-127; cf. Kawase 1984, 19, 21-22.

born was a boy, the provision was doubled. It is clear that these provisions were added to the regular provision as a reward to mothers (see Briant 1996, 448). The evidence can be found in PF 1200-1237, 2048⁴¹. These provisions were not restricted to Persian women: as an example for this, thirteen Skudrian mothers (PF 1215) and an Ionian mother (PF 1224) figure in the administration (see Hallock 1969, 347, 349). This is testified to by a report by Strabo: “The kings set forth prizes annually for those who have the most children” (Str. 15.3.17/733⁴²). Later, Alexander III, who assumed many Persian customs (cf. Safaee 2013, 5), gave a coin as prize to pregnant women during his visits to different realms (Plu. *Alex.* 69.1-2; cf. Kuhrt 2001, 6-8). The term *Kamakaš* is often interpreted as giving a special provision, as it is used in three travel documents (PF 1533, PF 1575, and PF 1577) and nine times in the documents of group M to refer to the provisions specified for a mother who had newly given birth⁴³.

Women in working groups were not merely worker: the use of the term *araššara* shows that women also played the role of leaders in working groups. The women in PF865-866 are referred to by the term *araššara*, which means leader, and according to PF 875, 876, 1012, 1063, 1064, 1076, they received three *marriš* (basic weight for liquids, wine, and beer) of wine and according to PF 1790 a third of one sheep (see Kawase 1984, 22).

Royal women were not confined to the harems, as pictured in classical sources, but they even had their personal estates⁴⁴. Irtaštuna had two estates in Mirandu and Kuknaka⁴⁵. Two letter-orders by Irtaštuna (NN 0761, NN 0958) mention her *ulhi* (“house, domain”) at Matannan where Cambyses had a palace built. It is likely that Irtaštuna as Cambyses’ (half-) sister and also as a senior member of the Teispid family holds Cambyses’ palace at Matnānu as part of her own estate (Henkelman 2011, 580). Furthermore, PFa 27, translated by Henkelman (Henkelman 2008, 161-162 note 355), makes clear that lady Irdabama had an estate in Šullaggi. According to PF 1739 and Fort 6764 and under orders of Parnaka provisions were given to the representatives of the queen. In these two texts, Parnaka mentions that the order has been issued by king himself. This evidence can most probably be compared with the classical reports which discuss the endowment of lands and cities to queens by Achaemenid kings (cf. Briant 1989, 46 note 12). These sources talk about the importance of the territory called, for example, the queen’s girdle⁴⁶. Cyrus the Younger passed the villages of Parysatis two times, some of which one might have been around Aleppo and another, called Poleis, was located north of

⁴¹ Kawase 1984, 21; Koch 1994, 131.

⁴² References to Strabo are both in the order of book, chapter, and paragraph and in Casaubon-pages, a method still followed in many editions.

⁴³ PF 1212, 1217, 1228, 1235, 1943, 1944, Fort 1957; See Hallock 1969, 707.

⁴⁴ Koch 1994, 133-134; also, e.g., X. *An.* 2.4.27.

⁴⁵ PF 1835–PF 1837: see Hallock 1969, 504-505.

Opis. The profits of these villages belonged to the queen's girdle. We also are informed about another estate, called the queen's veil, which was used for her jewelry. The same custom is mentioned regarding a city called Anthylla, which was allocated for funding the queen's shoes. Classic sources have also attributed such a custom to the court of ancient Egypt (cf. Briant 1985, 59-60). This information is comparable to that obtained from the archive of Persepolis, in which Irtaštuna receives a hundred sheep from the king's possessions. Moreover, the archival evidence shows that this queen received different products like wine, beer, flour, etc. (cf. PF 1835, 2035, 2049) from various villages (see Briant 1985, 64; also see Hallock 1969).

In addition to the aforementioned evidence which indicates the relation between royal women and ownership of estates, the Persepolis fortification tablets also show that women participated in structural economic activities. Two texts show that the king himself ordered his wife Irtaštuna to be provisioned. PF 1795 tells of an order which Parnaka gave on behalf of the king for 200 quarts (*marriš*) of wine to be given to Irtaštuna – who is here referred to as a *Dukšiš* (cf. Hallock 1969, 490). Fort. 6764, too, has documented giving 100 sheep to Darius' wife. She received a lot of provisions with Aršama in three other documents. PF 733 is the order to give [426 BAR, which equals] 4260 quarts [or QA] of flour and grain/corn (Hallock 1969, 222), and PF 2035 is an issued draft for 543 quarts (54 *marriš* and 3 QA: Hallock 1969, 628) of beer. Brosius (1996, 96-97) interprets this information as an indication for the involvement of royal women in feasts. Daryae rightly states (Daryae 2006-07, 53), after a review of these sources, that we can conclude that women in the Achaemenid period were active at all social levels and that they not only played different roles in different positions, but also that they had leadership of groups of both sexes and received an equal wage compared to men for their managerial responsibilities.

Babylonian Sources

A collection of Babylonian tablets from the Murašû archives, which confirms the existence of Parysatis' possessions in Babylon, is comparable with the information in the classic sources. Her lands were managed by her *paqdu* (= "steward") (cf. Briant 1985, 64-65; see also Stolper 1985, 63-64 and Stolper 2006). In fact, the information of the Babylonian tablets shows that women were not restricted to the Persian harems but that they also had estates outside the heartland. In these tablets the name of Parysatis is rendered as *Purušātu*, *Purušātiš*, etc. (Jursa/Stolper 2003-2005, 351). According to the Murašû documents, *Purušātu* seems to

⁴⁶ Briant 1987, 2; Koch 1994, 138-141. Briant refers to a passage in Pl. *Alc.* 123B: "For I myself was once told by a trustworthy person, who had been up to their (viz. the Persians') court, that he traversed a very large tract of excellent land, nearly a day's journey, which the inhabitants called the girdle of the king's wife, and another which was similarly called her veil". See also Stolper 2006, 463-464.

have enjoyed a court in Babylonia including judges and nobles in her service⁴⁷. In addition to Parysatis, there are some references to Xerxes' daughter as well in the Babylonian documents, in which she is mentioned as Mārat šarri. The evidence coincides with the year of accession of Xerxes. Also a provision has been given to her wet-nurse (cf. Brosius 1996, 29). Two Murašû texts from the reign of Artaxerxes I refer to 'É SAL ša É.GAL' which means "estate of the Lady of the Palace", and the Lady of the Palace is surely a queen (Stolper 1985, 62). Apart from this, in an Akkadian tablet (PT 85) found in the Persepolis treasury and dated to the twentieth year of Darius the Great's reign, Indukka, the mother of Tutu, was referred to as the head of businessmen and probably received the rest of the money that had been to be paid to her for the business she did (see Cameron 1948, 200-202).

Aramaic Sources

An ostrakon, which is registered as AES 45035, is kept in the British museum. On the concave side of it we read: "I sent [word] to you yesterday in the name of Hodaviah son of Zechariah, saying 'come this day', but you did not come. In [to] the hand of [i.e. through] my daughters send [word] to [me] [or, I sent to you]" (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 198). Such a text shows that women had an active role in Achaemenid bureaucratic system, testified to by the role of the daughters in sending the message.

Ancient Aramaic documents from Bactria (known as the Khalili collection) include official documents, related to the last years of Achaemenid period. These documents shed new light on how the Achaemenid bureaucratic system functioned. One of those documents (A9) seems to have documented a deal between a local governor, named Bagavant, and his wife: this is an exceptional situation in the ancient world (Naveh/Shaked 2012, 16).⁴⁸

Among the Iranian loanwords in Aramaic documents from Bactria, the title *xšaθra-kanyā appears in lines 13 and 27 of C4, which means "(a girl) of the kingdom" or "an entertaining girl" and it is probably a word referring to a working group (Naveh/Shaked 2012, 209). Since this term follows "servant-boys" in C4:27 (Naveh/Shaked 2012, 203) and the word 'sngšn, meaning melody (Naveh/Shaked 2012, 209), follows it, it is possible that "entertaining girl" may well be

⁴⁷ Brosius 1996, 3-4; Meissner 1904, 384. "Eleven texts from the Murašû archive dated in regnal years 1-11 of Darius II (...) indicate that she controlled farmland and subordinates (...) near Nippur. A text from Babylon appears to refer to nearby farmland belonging to the same Parysatis in regnal year 10 of Artaxerxes II" (Jursa/Stolper 2003-05, 351).

⁴⁸ Naveh and Shaked have translated it as follows (Naveh/Shaked 2012, 125): "1 This is: drugs that Bagavant himself² [re]ceived from his wife³ [in Za]rtan, which is in the presence of the judge (?). This drug⁴ (is) the third kind, of his wife⁵ this white one, which is for eating,⁶ [whatever] he deducts (of it), remove (?). znty (?) are taken (?)⁷ ... from that of the wife. Eat when⁸ ...⁹ ... so that it may be¹⁰ [a pr]esent.¹¹ This is the drug which Bagavant received¹² from his wife ...". However, the translation seems to be uncertain (personal communication by Wouter Henkelman).

a better adaptation of the text's intent. This document is dated to the seventh year of Alexander's reign (C4:1) and has recorded the payments which Vakhshudata, a producer, had assigned (Naveh/Shaked 2012, 203). Working groups documented in these documents are comparable to those referred to in the Persepolis fortification tablets.

Works of art

It is mostly said that women are not depicted in Achaemenid art. Daems argues thus: "There is hitherto no evidence concerning the production of naked female figurines during the Achaemenid period (550-334 BC). This is not surprising, since the Persian rulers saved all their energy and skills for making wars against, and submitting neighbouring tribes and powers. All attention in art and iconography was put in military, virile depictions that could easily be associated with power. The portraying of popular art in the form of naked women thus did not match in such a society. So in comparison with other pre-Islamic periods, women were less depicted during the Achaemenid period" (Daems 2001, 42). Obviously the argument is weak: firstly because we know there are images of naked women in different areas in the Achaemenid period (see below), and even if there were no evidence, as she claims, it still did not imply a lack of images of naked women. Hence, such an analysis about Achaemenid art is bound to be defective. Secondly, the convictions she expressed are the result of a weakness in methodology, namely that she had, in search of Achaemenid art, restricted herself to the geographical expanse of Iran as it is today and did not investigate the wide expanse of the Achaemenid reign. A third reason, fittingly mentioned by Judith Lerner, regards the fact that Daems necessarily came to this very conclusion because she compared Achaemenid art with Iranian art in other periods (Lerner 2010, 153). It needs to be noticed, however, that there is one image of a woman in Persepolis engraved on a nail of some chariot's wheel engraved on the wall of the northern front of the *Apadana* (Shahbazi 2010, 117). She has a strip in her hands hooked under the chest. We can see the nails of such wheels, made in the form of humans with hands clutched, on Persepolis' chariots⁴⁹.

In Achaemenid art, dentate crowns were not particular to the kings but mostly women were depicted wearing these crowns. In an Iranian cloth from Pazyryk, women and even their servants have such crowns. Also on seals women are seen with dentate crowns (see Koch 1992). Among the images published by Daems, there is a womanly figure with her hands clasped against the breasts, her hair cut in pageboy style topped by a crown: such a type of hairdressing was quite fashionable in the Achaemenid period (see Daems 2001, 43 referring to fig. 163 (on p. 126)). A bust related to the fifth or fourth century BC, which is probably that of a princess (or a prince?), also wears a crown and is very skillfully created. Also, the face is adroitly formed, the eyes could have been inlaid with gems, and the

⁴⁹ Calmeyer 1980; Curtis/Tallis 2005, 225.

nose is very delicate (Daems 2001, 45, referring to fig. 169 (on p. 128)). Images of Achaemenid women with crowns have been found even on a plaque from Egypt (cf. Brosius 2010, 145).

The top register of stele IAM 5763 from Aksakal near Daskyleion, currently housed in the İstanbul archaeological museum, dated to the mid-fifth century BC, shows two attendants clad in long garments following the heavy-looking vehicle with a rounded top; the bottom register shows a banquet scene, in the middle of which a woman is sitting clad in a long veil and wearing a dentate crown and two servants, probably women servants, are seen on her right side (Kaptan 2003, 194-195).

In Achaemenid iconography, like on gold plaques from the Oxus treasure, aristocratic women are seen with a dress of loose and long sleeves and a draped skirt, which rubs against the ground, sometimes held together by a belt. In some instances, women are covered by a veil and sometimes pictured with bare arms or breasts; other statuettes of women were made of ivory and bronze (see Daems 2001, 44 referring to figs. 165-166 (on p. 127)). There also is a stamp in the Louvre Museum which depicts a woman who is applying her make-up. It shows a privileged woman, sitting on a stool with her feet on a footrest, staring at her reflection in the mirror. A maid standing behind her is fanning her and a servant is in front of her (see Koch 1992). This cylindrical seal is part of the De Clercq collection (see Kaptan 2002, 34; Bakker 2007, 214).

Among the seals from Daskyleion, too, we find some with images of women. Images of some special type of women are observed on two seals, sc. DS 83 and DS 101 (Bakker 2007, 208). There also exists another image of a woman on seal Erg. 410, which retains a small part of DS 163, and in it a woman with a shawl and veil is represented⁵⁰. The seal DS 101 shows the right side profile of a woman who has an ointment (unguent) bottle in her left hand and moves slowly to her left side. Her head, and particularly her visage, seems to have been damaged from the beginning, when the clay was not dried yet. What remains of her head are a beautiful and prominent neck and her hair flowing down in a pigtail. Her right arm, bent at the elbow, shows she wears a Persian dress with loose sleeves and there is a slight hint of the diagonal folds over the back of her thighs. The edges and angles are done much more skillfully in the similar image of this woman, preserved on DS 83, which has a harder and coarser outline (see Kaptan 2002, 156-157; Bakker 2007, 208). Apart from these two seals from Daskyleion with depictions of women, there still exists another seal, DS 53, on which a woman, perhaps a siren, is seen whose hair is gathered behind her neck and one of her arms is visible. Her body, which is in the form of a bird, can be a reflection of Greek mythology (Kaptan 2002, 136). Other seals, like DS 142 (Kaptan 2002, 171-173), DS 165-168 (Kaptan 2002, 174), DS 172 (Kaptan 2002, 187), and DS 173-175 (Kaptan 2002, 188-189), show a feminine figure but unfortunately these seals have not been maintained well.

⁵⁰ See Brosius 2010, 143-144; Kaptan 2002, 50-51.

Sometimes identification of the nature of the object is under question. For example, a collection of feminine figurines dated to the period from the sixth to fourth centuries BC is sometimes introduced as representing Iranian Anahita and sometimes this is all doubted (cf. Briant/Boucharlat 2005, 20-21). These figurines are found in different places such as north-eastern Syria (see Lyonnet 2005, 132). A bronze kohl tube from Syria, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and dated to the fifth or fourth century BC, shows a woman in an exquisite many-folded dress (cf. Brosius 1996, 85). The identification of the woman sitting on a chair, depicted on seal C 16496 in the Buffalo, NY, Museum of Science has faced problems. This seal depicts a woman with a long shawl sitting on a chair, with a smaller woman behind her. Such a scene bears some resemblance with – quite as much as it is different from – scenes which show the king in Persepolis: especially the feature of both the king and the woman enjoying the company of an attendant behind them is striking. In her extensive analysis of this seal, Lerner concludes that the sitting woman is no goddess but a noble woman, probably one residing on the margins of the empire (see Lerner 2010).

Apart from the bullae, a plaque ornamented with the image of a woman in a long dress with three long stems in her left hand, which she holds to her chest, has been found in the upper layers of Tel Sheikh Hassan in north-east Syria. This plaque is claimed by some to be related to the Neo-Babylonian or to the Achaemenid period: it has been dated to a period varying from the eighth to the fifth century BC (see Lyonnet 2005, 140). There also exists another plaque, made of limestone, showing an image of a Persian woman: it has a height of about 15 centimeters and dates to the fourth century BC. The woman wears a long dress and her hands are joined in front with the left hand holding the right and she has jewelry such as earrings, a bracelet and a necklace as well as a bobbed hair-dressing like that found on the relief figures at Persepolis (see Brosius 1996, 85).

Among the works of art in the British Museum, the image of an Achaemenid woman is noticeable. It is to be found in a ring in the museum, where it has been registered as ANE 124004, belonging to the Oxus Treasure. On the circular and simple ring, there is an oval bezel with the engraved figure of a woman with a long dress, a crown on her head, braided hair hanging down her back, sitting on a chair with a low back: she has a flower in one hand and a ring on the other hand (cf. Curtis/Tallis 2005, 146; there are a few cursory renderings of women dressed in the Persian robe in the Oxus Treasure, see Goldman 1991, 91-92). As Daems believes, she smells of the flower which might have probably been offered to the temple (Daems 2001, 44)⁵¹. Among the bronze kohl bottles kept at the British Museum two bottles, registered as ANE 132353 and ANE 132620, can be mentioned as showing the image of a woman (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 149). There are two etched tablets as well, registered as ANE 123994 and ANE 123991, showing

⁵¹ Bakker has listed the artefacts that carry images of women who stand or sit on a low stool in a Table (Bakker 2007, 209, with references).

the image of a woman who is looking to the left (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 168-169). Another tablet of the treasure is different from the aforementioned tablets: ANE 123995 is an etched tablet with the image of a woman looking to the right: the collar of her dress is a V-neck and her skirt is long. She has earrings on and her two hands are raised and they seem to be empty. The edge of the tablet is filled with raised dots (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 169). One of the Achaemenid seals used in the bureaucratic system and kept in the British Museum, ANE 124016, displays the portrayal of a naked woman with braided hair, hanging down her back, approaching another figure, who is leaning on a chair, both stretching their hands towards an orb (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 190). Next to the aforementioned depictions, a picture on a Neo-Elamite seal from Persepolis, PFS 77, and a seal in the Achaemenian style in the Louvre Museum, AO 22359, can be mentioned (cf. Brosius 2006, 41; also Goldman 1991, 94). Another object kept in the British Museum, GR 1849.60120.12, an Athenian cup, on which a woman is depicted, sitting on a chair looking at herself in the mirror, as well as her maid, who in her eastern clothing is probably Persian (Curtis/Tallis 2005, 248).

A lioness on the reliefs of the *Apadana* palace-stairs accompanies the Elamite delegation (cf. Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993, 22-23). The Elamite delegation is the only group which has a female animal with them. The animal's *femaleness* is proved, inter alia, because the lack of manes (see Root 2003, 11). This lioness can be a symbol of the queen mother in Elam, the two male cubs (each clasped tightly to the chest by a member of the Elamite delegation) a symbol of her children (Root 2003, 20).

In the Persepolis fortification archives, there is only one image of a female personality who does not have a divine aspect and she is the woman sitting magnificently, her entourage gathered around her. This image is on an earlier Elamite seal, PFS 77⁵². This seal, which apparently belongs to Neo-Elamite period, depicts a woman sitting on a splendid throne, having long apparel on and her bobbed hair is done behind her head. A person standing behind her is fanning her and in front of her, a third woman is standing behind a censer. It seems that the seal shows the atmosphere of an audience with her majesty (cf. Brosius 1996, 86).

The Harpy monument from Xanthos in Lycia is a perfect manifestation of Achaemenid art outside of its center (cf. Brosius 2010, 142). On all four faces of the monument there are marble panels in the Greco-Persian lithography style with shallow reliefs. On the eastern face, there is a scene which is guessed to represent Harpagus himself; on the southern face his wife and on the western the princesses are depicted (Brosius 2010, 143). Also, a tomb has been discovered in Susa, which is attributed to an Achaemenid prince and has probably been located on the surface of the Achaemenid fort wall on the acropolis. There is, too, a skeleton attributed to a princess in a bronze coffin in the form of a bath

⁵² Brosius 2010, 141-142; Lerner 2010, 155-156; Root 2003, 20; Henkelman 2010a, 693-694 and note 96.

and there are two silver coins in the coffin which probably belong to the fifth or fourth centuries BC (see Boucharlat 2005, 242). In a grave from Pazyryk valley (Altai Mountains, Siberia), the Achaemenid periphery, a tapestry woven with the motif of four women has been found, who gather on either side of an incense burner. This object probably belongs to the fourth century BC: the women are dressed in long, ornamented clothes and the two women closest to the censer wear crowns on their heads and their hair is fastened at the back of the head. One hand is raised in greeting and the other is holding a flower (see Brosius 1996, 86; also Henkelman 1995-96, 290-291). There is an indication that images of women in Achaemenid art were also found beyond the borders of the empire: apart from the objects found in the Scythian graves in Pazyryk, the image of an Achaemenid-style woman was found on a gold ring in a tomb dated to the fourth century BC in Pydna in Macedonia (cf. Lerner 2010, 153, 155 (fig. 14.3)).

It should be noticed however that the existence of clear images of women is not a necessary proof for the essential value of femininity in ancient societies. There are various historical situations which display a probability for more intricate reasons to depict women than giving them individuality by presenting direct images of them. In fact, other social forces considered the depiction of a feminine image in a patriarchal society to be a rewarding choice, aimed at exhibiting their luxurious and family privileges and wealth. In a more general sense, including the image of an important female character is not a necessary proof for the essential importance of her as an individual. Conversely, a lack of public and open images of women does not necessarily mean ignoring the importance of women's personality in upper classes of the society. In some societies, high-ranking and powerful women, with whom we are familiar through their names in the different historical sources, do not enjoy an artistic image (Root 2003, 27-28).

Conclusion

Studying how Achaemenid women are represented in Greek sources and responding to the question of how such a depiction corresponds with historical facts requires a careful study about the position of women in Greek mindset, in addition to a comparison with other sources.

The worldview and the attitude regarding women in the Greek world we can attain through a review of Greek philosophical, literary, and historical texts. In this study, it was necessary to reconstruct the image of women in Greek mentality above all through a direct reference to such sources: such a reconstruction can play the role of a database which displays various aspects, from narrative to moral, by which women came out of the unknown world of darkness into light. These aspects show that most narratives in which women play a key role are in different ways related to concepts and events such as betrayal, vengeance, luxury, decadence, fear and timidity, being kidnapped, and the commencement of huge wars.

In fact and based on all this, according to Greek sources, the role of women in the policy of the Achaemenid court becomes prominent only when the narrative is about the planning of conspiracy or treason. In such a context women, hitherto

unattended in these sources, come into view all of a sudden and attain a strong role in destructive activities. Greek philosophy generally idealizes unvoiced and inactive women, hence we might expect from a Greek historian to depict the relative (prominent) presence of Achaemenid women in political and social relations reversely. Additional evidence about the role of women in political, economic, and social affairs has been primarily derived from the Persepolis fortification texts.

The relation between luxury and decadence and women's roles in Greek historiography was another issue of significance in this study. On the one hand, women are factors facilitating luxury in the Achaemenid court and on the other hand they are directly or indirectly influential on the progressive decline of the empire. According to Greek sources, the Achaemenid court is essentially contrary to Greek culture. Greek culture enjoyed masculine characteristics and as a result escaped constantly from luxuriousness. This culture needed an enemy with opposite and particularly feminine features. Thus, the context and background of Greek culture were utterly influential on how Achaemenid femininity was described, so much so that the same mentality, which is highlighted in philosophical works on the denunciation of effeminacy, can be traced in literary works and also penetrates into historical sources and one can find its manifestation in the accounts of Achaemenid women or effeminate Achaemenid men.

Even apparently historical subjects, such as the relation between woman-abduction and the start of devastating wars, are reflected in Greek philosophical works. It seems that the Greeks' general mindset towards women has been quite unwavering and has remained unchanged, which is why any image of them in historical sources is reflected in philosophical and literary works. On the contrary, as regards the Achaemenid empire there are no references of women's destructive activities in other sources. Even the general idea gathered from archival texts supports the conclusion that women moved about in roads with no problems or difficulties, and that they did not need to be afraid of being abducted. Moreover, Achaemenid art never shows women in a worrying state or stress but always at peace.

Generally, the sources for the Achaemenid period are wide-ranging. It could be argued that the Persepolis fortification archive covers merely a limited period of the reigns of Darius and Xerxes and that a research on them cannot lead to a generalized picture for the entire Achaemenid period. But as has been made clear above, this evidence is supported by Babylonian and Aramaic sources which belong to the middle or later parts of the Achaemenid period. Consequently and on a temporal note, our non-Greek sources provide a sufficient time span to arrive at a conclusion. Achaemenid art shows aristocratic women with crowns which only kings could wear: this gives rise to the notion that royal women enjoyed a high status at the Achaemenid court and that they were not merely a bunch of uncalled for conspirators in secluded harems. The archival sources of the fortification, too, support the same image which Greek sources erroneously reject, because those sources consider the role of Achaemenid woman in political activities, and more importantly, in economic and social activities, in a selective manner. While a philosophical text like Plato's *Symposium* explains that women could not participate

in men's parties, the Fortification Tablets have documented provisions given to royal women for holding great events. Contrarily, against the image provided by the Greek philosophical sources about the relation between women's luxury and the disruption of social order, the Elamite documents do not support in any way the conclusion that the many provisions of some women had a perverse effect on the order of the court.

It therefore stands to reason that the main sources for research on the Achaemenid history, that is the works of Greek historians, have in their explication of historical narratives used and reflected many of the Greek cultural traditions and worldviews for the Persian world. A reading of these sources can show these Greek views, but in order to comprehend them, one should not rely only on Greek historical sources, especially when considering a particular subject like women, which needs an extraction of the Greek perspective and judgment from the philosophical sources. The Greek literary sources can also act as strong evidence to substantiate the existence of such a point of view.

There is a negative view of women in Greek philosophy, reflected in their literary works, which has influenced the Greek historians as well. Naturally, the mental presuppositions of these historians have had a role in their historical accounts. This study shows that Greek historians have used their personal view of women, rooted in Greek culture, in their description of Achaemenid women. This view relates women to concepts such as luxury, decadence, cowardice, disloyalty, conspiracy, vengeance, and war. It can be even said, with some caution, that many of the historical narratives have been written in a way to justify such an outlook, while non-Greek sources, especially mostly the Elamite sources of the Achaemenid archives in the center of the empire, and those of Babylonia and Bactria as well, as the archaeological evidence stand in stark contrast with this attitude.

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