

EXCAVATING AN EMPIRE

Achaemenid Persia in Longue Durée

Edited by

Touraj Daryaee, Ali Mousavi and
Khodadad Rezakhani



SINCE 1980
Mazda Publishers
Costa Mesa California 2014

Chapter 1

The Achaemenid Empire in the Context of World History (550-330 BCE)

Touraj Daryaee and Khodadad Rezakhani

Dynastic history often suffers from the hindrance of being studied from a monolithic point of view. As the name would suggest, studying a dynasty, even an imperial one, seems to naturally suggest the study of a closed system, where the dynasty is the driving force whose disappearance would spell the termination of the system itself. Even when studying an empire as a geographical setting, such as that of the Roman Empire, our perception seems to be diverted to study the “empire”, rather than what it really is, a geographical region. Consequently, with the disappearance of the “empire” or the governmental system, we look for the signs of the disappearance of the life as it was under that empire. This would then give rise to the issues of the existence or non-existence of a “Fall” of the empire, e.g. the Roman Empire¹. The same myopic vision also applies to the issue of the fall of the dynasties such as the Achaemenids, when with their demise at the hand of Alexander, we try to identify distinct changes and breaks in historical continuity², and further consider the Parthian or Sasanian dynasties to have brought identifiable new trends to the region.

¹ The arguments for the “Fall” of the Roman Empire obviously start with Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Volumes 1-3*: Everyman's Library, 1993. These long lasting, and quit influential ideas have been since mid-twentieth century, highly criticized and revised, mainly by Peter Brown and his students who tend to see a continuity and transformation in the Mediterranean: Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity AD 150-750: AD 150-750* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), but also Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Fascinatingly enough, the old “fall paradigm” seems to be making a comeback in a new guise: Bryan Ward Perkins, *The Fall of Rome: and the End of Civilization*: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006) and closely related but differently argued, Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

² Briant has argued in many occasions that we need to see continuity in the conquest of the Achaemenid Empire by Alexander, going as far as calling the Macedonian conqueror “the last Achaemenid great king,” Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*: translated by Peter T. Daniels, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002. There are many who still feel more comfortable with the older interpretation which obviously fits better with the ironically more “conflict oriented” modern world view and the “clash of civilizations” paradigm

In this paper, we shall argue that the Achaemenid state-system was an example of successful attempt to establish a socio-economic and political world-system that stayed constant and progressed for at least the 1000 years that followed its disappearance from the historical narrative, and probably even to the present. We try to present examples of the profound institutions that the Achaemenid system managed to instill in their Iranian territories and that guaranteed the continuity of historical progression for millennia to come. From a certain perspective, our analysis might seem to have been influenced by the world-system analysis, first developed by Wallerstein³. However, it should not be assumed that we are also steadfast adherents of the world-system theory as it has been defined, rather utilitarian authors who have found the general framework of this theory to be particularly useful for thinking about what we shall call the Iranian World.

Apart from its inherent Eurocentrism, an assumption that a "world-system" could only have been a capitalist one and thus a post 1500 European phenomenon, the world-system analysis also creates another hindrance for us. That is, specifically, its notion of the existence of a hegemonic player in the world-system⁴ which assumes a certain set of standards to define a hegemonic power, including the absolute ability to determine the flow of exchange, as well as a hegemonic cultural influence. While the Wallersteinian world-system, by sticking to its modern and capitalist labels, tries to absolve itself of the problems of studying the pre-1500 super-regional systems and networks, they cannot at the same time deny the existence of these world-systems in the pre-modern world. The fact is that in many cases, and for us most significantly the case of the Achaemenid Empire, there existed a dominant, although we believe decidedly non-hegemonic, system which operated on the same criterion of core-periphery relations which most define a world-system. The Achaemenid system, based on the political dominance of a centralized power, exploitation of economic peripheries, and the central processing and distribution of economic resources was indeed a world-system in its basic form. The Achaemenid Empire, unlike the empires before it, was not based on the political oppression and economic destruction of conquered regions, rather on a well designed system of political support for economic production and expansion throughout the whole empire and a localized, non-franchised taxation system which was at the same time directly dependent on the central power. In this system, the imperial center, as a major consumer but also the focal point of all economic activity, was indeed the core of the system, while the economic production and consumption of outlying areas related and depended on the economy of the center and both fed the center and was manipulated by it. In this system, what is reputedly missing from the "modern" world-system is in fact capitalism, as defined by the Marxist narrative of the progression of material history and closely adhered to by the neo-Marxist proponents of the world-system(s) theory. This is a limitation that can be refuted

which seems to oddly survive, albeit in more popular works: Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great*: Penguin Books , 2004.

³ Immanuel Wallerstein, *the Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the 16th Century*. (New York: Academic Press, 1974). Despite all their problems, due to insistence of the modernity of the "capitalist world-system" one might be more tempted to use the analysis as it has been used by Gunder Frank or Abu-Lughod: A. G. Frank, *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (London: Routledge, 1996); Janet L. Abu Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁴ This is best laid out in I. Wallerstein, "The Three Instances of Hegemony in the History of the Capitalist World-Economy," *The Essential Wallerstein*, New Press, 2002.

in a future work; here, it suffice to say that indeed, if we agree on the currently dominant definition of capitalism, then all pre-1500 systems will be excluded from world-system analysis. On the other hand, if we accept the Achaemenid Empire as an economic and political system based on an economically dependent and bi-directional relationship between its own center and periphery, and with wide-ranging exchange, albeit non-hegemonic relations, with its neighbors, then we can safely call the empire a world-system by itself indeed. Below, we shall discuss how we believe this system came to existence and how it might have operated⁵.

The Achaemenid Empire (539-333 BCE) was the first great empire of the ancient world. From its beginnings as the result of conquests by Cyrus II of Persia (later known with the eponym “the Great”) and his son Cambyses to the complicated administrative and financial power that it became under the rule of Darius I (again “the Great” and quite deservedly so) and Xerxes I, the Achaemenid Empire was a true “world empire” and a political unit that truly deserves to be studied for its effects on the formation of world history⁶. In a sense, one could also say that the Achaemenid Empire was the culmination of ca. 3000 years of civilization and about 2000 years of exercise in empire-building in the Near East⁷. So, one could claim that the Achaemenid Empire was a new-comer into world history, as no one and no entity could have existed without strong ties to what came before it. However, despite being a continuation of the imperial systems before it, the Achaemenid Empire was also something quite new, indeed an innovator in humanity’s continuous effort in organizing its affairs.

Cyrus II, the founder of the empire that came to be known as the Achaemenid Empire, himself is a great example of what the empire embodied and how it saw and defined itself. Cyrus was the local ruler of a city well-known in ancient history, the city of Anšan/Anzan, long famed as the “highland” capital of the Elamite state. It was from here that the Elamites often descended upon the Susiana Plain to form strong kingdoms and oppose the Babylonians and Assyrians, and to these same highlands they often retreated when their opponents gained the upper hand. Cyrus, in this sense, was the ruler of an ancient city with ancient traditions and well-established administrative and hierarchical systems. However, Cyrus was also the representative of a society of newcomers, the Persians, who as descendants of migrating Indo-Europeans, had arrived in the valleys and plains that later bore their name, Persis or Persia, only a few hundred years before. Despite being the ruler of an Elamite city, and maybe carrying an Elamite name (OP. *Kaurush*, perhaps a form of El. *Kura*-) ⁸ it was to the Persians that he turned when his thoughts were fixated on conquest. So, Cyrus represented something old: the millennia old Elamite civilization,

⁵ For a recent evaluation of the Achaemenid Empire as a system and in a context close to the concerns of world historians, see J. Wiesehofer, “the Achaemenid Empire,” in *Dynamics of Ancient Empire*, 2010.

⁶ The history of the Achaemenid Empire has been treated by a few historians. The best and most up-to-date of these is Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*. See also the excellent treatment of the political situation by M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, Translated by W. J. Vogelsang, E.J. BRILL, 1989.

⁷ For a general treatment of the ancient Near Eastern history, see Marc van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, Ca. 3000-323 BC*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, particularly pages 195-238 when he details the imperial states of the region.

⁸ For other suggestions see W. Eilers, “The Name of Cyrus,” *Acta Iranica*, vol. 3, 1974, pp. 3-9; also H.-P. Schmidt, “An Indo-Iranian Etymological Kaleidoscope,” *Festschrift for Henry Hoenigswald*, eds. G. Cardona and N.H. Zide, Tübingen, 1987, pp. 357-359.

based on a sophisticated bureaucracy and sedentary agriculture, but he and his supporters also represented the new: the Persians, the tribal pastoralists⁹.

Cyrus' conquests of Anatolia, another old seat of civilization, one based on sea-faring and agriculture, as well as the heavily agricultural civilization of Mesopotamia, were the first steps in realizing what the Achaemenids ultimately came to represent. One could argue that Assyrians had already tried to take advantage of the resources offered by the Anatolian highlands¹⁰. They, along with Babylonians, are also to be credited with the first attempts at conquering and controlling the rest of the "Near East" (i.e. West Asia in this case). They invaded and pillaged Syria and Palestine and even attacked Egypt. They established trading posts in the Taurus and tried to monopolize the trade of Anatolia. They even ran excursions into the highlands of Iran and left us immensely valuable accounts of the people of those regions¹¹. But they never actually managed, nor does it seem that they systematically tried, to control all of these regions under the same political system. The relationship between the Assyrians and the conquered lands was a parasitical one, a relationship in which the empire, in fact an expanded city-state political entity, extracted large percentage of local production and practically dried all local resources, in exchange for ceasing future conquest and pillage activities.¹² Same seems to have largely been true for the Babylonian attempt at empire building, where the empire was more interested in guaranteeing its own control of the trade routes than the well-being of its subjects, let alone the conquered ones.

The conquest of Anatolia and Babylonia, as well as what seems to be the rest of the Iranian Plateau, by Cyrus, however, appears to be a dramatic change of tone and direction for this heir of the ancient Near Eastern empires. Cyrus, or shortly after him Darius, put the newly conquered lands under a firm and well-organized imperial system in which the territories were divided into semi-autonomous provinces ruled by local administrators. At the same time, the empire had a visible presence in each province (or *Satrapī*, from OP *xšathrapaiti*) via its agents, tax assessors, and garrison commanders. But what is unique in Cyrus' empire is not the administration, something that is to be perfected by Darius I, but rather his remarkable success in achieving what had not been done before: a largely peaceful union of ancient rival civilizations of Anatolia,

⁹ The origins and the ethnicity of Cyrus has been the subject of many scholarly articles in the past few years, partly arising from the extreme interest that modern Iranian nationalism has bestowed upon him. For his familial connection to Darius and the later Achaemenids, see the article by David Stronach, "Anshan and Parsa: Early Achaemenid History, Art and Architecture on the Iranian Plateau," In John Curtis ed. *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period*, British Museum Press, London, 1997. Most recently, Potts has argued for the Elamite ethnicity of Cyrus as well, a detail which is largely unnecessary and inconsequential. D. T. Potts, "Cyrus the Great and the Kingdom of Anshan," in V. Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (Eds.) *Birth of the Persian Empire*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005, pp. 123-124.

¹⁰ For Assyrian trade relations with Anatolia, see van de Mierop (*op. cit.*) pp. 127-135 and 219. An interesting study of the Mesopotamian trade and economy occurs in an unlikely source: A.L. Oppenheim, "A Bird Eye's View of Mesopotamian Economic History," in Karl Polanyi et al. (eds.), *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, Glencoe, Il.: The Free Press, 1957, where a rather incredible, and by now discounted, view of trade and economy is presented.

¹¹ Most famously, the inscriptions of Tiglath Pileser III in Nimrud: H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria*, 2nd printing, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Science, 2008. Also, L.L. Levine, *Two Neo-Assyrian Stele from Iran*, Toronto, 1972.

¹² Van de Mierop (*op. cit.*) pp. 230-237. For the other influences of the Assyrians on pre-Achaemenid Iran, specifically on the Hasanlu elite see, M. I. Marcus, "Centre, Province and Periphery: A New Paradigm from Iron-Age Iran", *Art History* 13/ 2, June 1990: 129-150.

Mesopotamia, Elam, and the Iranian Plateau! This is evident of from Cyrus' own statements and propaganda as to his deeds and actions in comparison with earlier Assyrian and Babylonian narratives and their views of the conquered people.

Upon Cyrus' death, interestingly while trying to bring yet another ancient center of civilization, Transoxiana, into the fold, his son and successor, Cambyses, mounted the throne. A close student of his father's actions, although apparently not a good one in the ethics class,¹³ Cambyses immediately mobilized the empire's forces towards the conquest of Egypt. The swiftness of this action, and its success, makes us believe that the plans for this conquest were drawn by Cyrus himself. This meant that yet another center of ancient civilizations, the Gift of the Nile, was united, successfully and lastingly, with those of its ancient rivals. This indeed was a unique event, truly never done before.

Cambyses' short reign was followed by a brief episode of unrest, which nonetheless never threatened the totality of the empire much, save an attempt in Egypt, which was natural considering the short time lapse between its conquest and the death of its conqueror. We have both Greek and Persian attestation to the nature and consequence of the rebellion and disorder. The rebellions, however, soon gave way to the reign of a man which can safely be called the greatest administrator in world history up to that time.

Darius is called great, unlike Cyrus or Alexander, not because of his conquests, of which he had a few, but because of the fact that he is effectively the founder of the system which is the basis of state administration in the world even today. He perfected the provincial system of Cyrus, appointing local rulers closely watched by the "Great King's Eyes and Ears" who were dispenser of justice.¹⁴ The taxation system was truly reformed, creating a more effective and economically encouraging system unprecedented up to the time. The safety of the empire was guaranteed by the establishment of local garrisons responsible only to the Great King himself. In this way, Darius took central responsibility for the basic role of the government, protecting its citizens, while at the same time removing the threat of rebellion by the local rulers¹⁵. Despite his devotion to Ahuramazdā, the Lord Wisdom of the Zoroastrian faith, he continued Cyrus' enlightened religious policies by not only allowing free religious practice, but also facilitating religious self-determination by giving limited political powers to religious leaders. It is under this policy that Ezra becomes not only the leader of the Jewish Diaspora that was freed from the Babylonian captivity by Cyrus and sent back to the Holy Land, but also the representative of the Great King in that land and the effective political leader of the Jews as well¹⁶.

Much can also be said about Darius' monetary policy, his creation of a Royal Road system, some 1400 miles long, which was the inspiration for the better known Han and Roman Road system, and his many other administrative achievements. The creation of a royal artery with its station (*stathmoi*) and guard stations (*phylakteria*) created one of the safest and quickest avenues

¹³ For this, see Herodotus' famous presentation of Cambyses as a cruel and inconsiderate ruler, Her. 3.7.- 3.33. He is obviously not presented very kindly by Darius either: Behistun 1.10-1.12.

¹⁴ As for the function of the office see A. Sh. Shahbazi, "Irano-Hellenic Notes: The 'King's Eyes' in Classical and Iranian Literature," *American Journal of Ancient History*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1998[1997], p. 182.

¹⁵ A complete treatment of the Achaemenid administrative system is presented in Muhammad A. Dandamaev and Vladimir G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 96-115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 104-105.

of communication.¹⁷ But again, like Cyrus, his greatest achievement, and what distinguishes the Achaemenid Empire particularly, is the fact that under Darius rule, the great ancient hydraulic civilizations of the Nile, Mesopotamia and Indus were united under the same political system and shared it with the Iranian Plateau and Anatolia as well.

Darius created an imperial system which was very much mindful of its economic function. In this system, roads and waterways were constructed and opened for trade and communication. It is during Darius I's rule that the first version of a canal connecting the Mediterranean to the Red Sea was constructed, where ships could actually navigate the waterways from Africa to Asia.¹⁸ The Chaluf cuniform text suggests that the Darius wanted to connect the waterways of the empire, creating further connections between Egypt and Iran.¹⁹ Darius was certainly seeking communication via the sea between the periphery of the empire, i.e., Egypt with that of the imperial heartland, Persia and Mesopotamia.²⁰ He commissioned Scylax to navigate the Indus and the Persian Gulf to report on the waterway.²¹ Agricultural production, one of the most important sources of income for the empire, was given equal attention through the construction of major canal system, as well as an innovative system of *qanāts* which broadened the possibility of cultivation from Egypt²² to Arabia²³ and Persia.²⁴ Thus, cultivation was made possible not only at the river basin, but also at the in-between arid regions through this ingenious innovation. These operations were meant to create an economic system on a scale the Eurasian world had not experienced before.

This should not be taken for granted, as it was a truly magnificent feat. Not only was the political rivalry between these civilization legendary, but their distances were quite forbidding as well. There is about 2,000 km of distance between the Indus and the Tigris and another 1000 between the Euphrates and the Nile. The Iranian Plateau occupies a 1,200 km north-south boundary and is engulfed by two quite high mountain ranges. Anatolia and its remarkable access to both the Black Sea and the Aegean are hidden behind the Taurus and Anti-Taurus. For a single

¹⁷ The existence of the inns (*katagogai*) and caravanserais (*kataluseis*) on the Royal Road is also discussed by D.F. Graf, "The Persian Royal Road System," *Achaemenid History VIII: Continuity and Change, Proceedings of the Last Achaemenid History Workshop*, April 6-8, 1990 – Ann Arbor, Michigan, eds. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, A. Kuhrt and M. Cool Root, Leiden, 1994, p. 1671

¹⁸ Dandamaev and Lukonin, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-211; and for citation for all ancient authors see G. Posener, *La première domination perse en Égypte*, Cairo, 1936.

¹⁹ Chr. Tuplin, "Darius' Suez Canal and Persian Imperialism," *Achaemenid History VII: Asia Minor and Egypt: Old Cultures in a New Empire, Proceedings of the Groningen 1988 Achaemenid History Workshop*, eds. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt, Leiden, 1991, p. 244.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²¹ Dandamaev and Lukonin, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

²² M. Wuttmann, "Les qanāts de 'Ayn-Manāwīr (oasis de Kharga, Égypte)," *irrigation et drainage dans l'Antiquité, qanāts et canalisations souterraines en Iran, en Égypte et en Grèce, séminaire tenu au Collège de France sous la direction de Pierre Briant*, Persika 2001, Paris, pp. 109-135.

²³ R. Boucharlat, "Les galeries de captage dans la péninsule d'Oman au premier millénaire avant J.-C.: questions sur leurs relations avec les galeries du plateau iranien," *irrigation et drainage dans l'Antiquité, qanāts et canalisations souterraines en Iran, en Égypte et en Grèce, séminaire tenu au Collège de France sous la direction de Pierre Briant*, Persika 2001, Paris, pp. 157-183.

²⁴ P. Briant, "Polybe X.28 et les qanāts: le témoignage et ses limites," *irrigation et drainage dans l'Antiquité, qanāts et canalisations souterraines en Iran, en Égypte et en Grèce, séminaire tenu au Collège de France sous la direction de Pierre Briant*, Persika 2001, Paris, pp. 15-40.

administrative system to successfully unite all these civilizations was an unmatched success. The uniqueness of this achievement might further be established when one notices that it *remains* unmatched. Indeed, following Alexander's conquest of the region, a feat that barely lasted the lifetime of its achiever, this area has never been united under the same political system again!

It is for this reason that the present authors believe that the Achaemenid Empire deserves to be studied from a world historical point of view. The accomplishments of the Achaemenid Empire have outlasted the life of the empire itself. Throughout history, any confrontation between Europe, or the "West", and the rest of the world has been likened to the Greco-Persian Wars, incidentally by means of which most Western readers know about or of the Achaemenids. As mentioned before, the Achaemenid administrative system has been the inspiration for most subsequent powers, including the Roman Empire, which is then remarkably continued by the will of a modern state, that of the US, to choose Rome as its self-appointed political ancestor.

But the Achaemenid Empire was a world empire, and more importantly a world-system, for other reasons as well. The famed administrative system, after all, served a purpose, and that purpose was to facilitate the everyday business of its inhabitants. In history's long parade of kings and commanders and their wars and conquests, we tend to forget that although history is populated by strong men, and occasionally strong women, real historical territories were populated by everyday men and women of whom we don't even know the names. These people sowed seeds, made horse-shoes, built houses, took their cattle to the pasture, crafted kitchen ware, and occasionally even traded goods between villages, towns, provinces, and sometimes countries. They paid taxes which guaranteed their safety, gave them a right to move freely between places, resided in their chosen domains, and received the state support of their enterprises, in the most basic sense, which means that it gave them the right to earn their living.

For this class of people, and from this particular point of view, the Achaemenid system represented and provided several things. In its remarkable uniformity, the empire offered a consistency that could assist larger enterprises than subsistence level production. In this aspect, mostly reflected through taxation, the state allowed the producer to plan for profit making, eventually causing a form of specialization which naturally would result in higher production reflected by an observable improvement of living standards. In its tolerance and flexibility, the empire allowed for localization, leaving the Aegean or Phoenician merchants to roam the seas and look for profits where they were, while leaving the nomadic pastoralist to raise its cattle and the farmer to utilize all its resources. This emphasis on local economic autonomy is also reflected in the monetary system, where a state issued currency (the *daric* and the *siglos*, based on Babylonian and Lydian precedents) was supplemented by locally issued coins (the so-called "satrapal issues") in regions with more monetized exchange relations. At the same time, the centralized administration and its management of the taxation, as well as distribution of resources provided a uniformity which lasted even the fall of the empire and became engrained in the region.

The same lasting effect can be observed in Achaemenid cultural policies. It is remarkable that a word translatable to "Multi-Cultural" (Old Persian *vispazanānām*) was used in an

inscription of Darius at *Naqš-e Rostam* to describe the empire.²⁵ The Achaemenid administration is famed for having adopted, and indeed cultivated, the Aramaic language and script, as its uniform means of communication. But under this autocratic looking action, one should notice that Old Persian, the mother tongue of the Great Kings themselves, was consistently used for inscribing tablets in Behistun and Susa and the heartland of the empire in Persis. Akkadian continued as the language of the people and business in Mesopotamia, indeed well into the Arsacid era, while Phoenician and Egyptian remained the common, and even parallel administrative languages of their respected territories. Herodotus, the Ionian Greek writing father of history, was a subject of the Achaemenid Empire, while the language of the Persepolis Tablets, payment receipts to the laborers who built the Achaemenid palace-complex, is Elamite. The idea of uniformity alongside local diversity was extended not only to economics, mentioned above, but also to cultures.

The same was obviously true in the field of religion. The Mazda worshipping Great King never forced his Babylonian subjects to pray to Ahuramazdā. In the tradition of Cyrus who declared Marduk to be the god who prompted him to conquer Babylon, Darius and his successors respected the local gods and left them in their places, and even gave state support to the rebuilding and repair of the places of worship such as the Temple in Jerusalem or the sanctuaries in Egypt. Religion, as an important determinant of people's identity, was then included in the administrative policies of the Achaemenids.

Something must be said of the world-view of the Achaemenid Persians as it ties equally with their religious. In Old Persian we come across another terms, *fraša* that Darius describes for his palace complex at Susa which may be translated as "excellent" or "perfect".²⁶ But this word carries an important religious and spiritual connotation for the Iranian world which help illuminate Achaemenid conception of their function in the world. This term first appears in the *Gāthās* of Zarathustra and is used to define the time after the apocalypse and the end of the world, when all evil withers away and the world becomes perfect as it was once was. For Darius his palace and the Persian *pari-daiza-* (Greek παράδεισος, perhaps Artaxerxes II's **p-r-i-d-i-d-a-m* / **pari-daidām*)²⁷ or walled gardens was the corporeal representation of this perfection on earth. In a similar way the king attempted to provide a heaven on earth, i.e., the Achaemenid Empire for its entire people.²⁸

In terms of political view the Achaemenid Empire embodied the idea of justice and order. The Old Persian term used for this concept is *arta* which carries cosmic notion of order amidst chaos. The king's law was established to do justice to Ahuramazdā's benevolent creation where there would be "good horses, good men" and there would be no "(enemy) army, nor crop failure nor Falsehood".²⁹ The King of Kings was also one who administered justice and his (Old

²⁵ DNa Ins. 10-11; R. Schmitt, *The Old Persian Inscription of Naqsh-e Rostam and Persepolis*, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part I Inscriptions of Ancient Iran, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 2000, transliteration p. 25, transcription p. 29.

²⁶ For example see Dsa, R.G. Kent, *Old Persian Inscription, Text and Grammar*, New Haven, 1953, p. 141. Also DSf 56; Dso 4; DSs1 in the corporeal sense and DNb 2 for the cosmic sense.

²⁷ P. Lecoq, *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide*, Gallimard, 1997, p. 116.

²⁸ P. Lecoq, "Paradis en vieux perse?," *Contribution à l'Histoire de l'Iran, Mélanges offerts à J. Parrot*, Paris, 1990, pp. 209-213; and most recently B. Lincoln, *Religion, Empire & Torture: The Case of Achaemenian Persia, with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib*, The University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 64-65 and pp. 74-75.

²⁹ DPd 5-24; Schmitt, transliteration p. 57; transcription p. 58.

Persian) *dātā*- "law" was held supreme. He in fact upheld the democratic institutions for the Greek inhabited cities on the Ionian coast and the tradition of other Satrapies while the Persian monarchy upheld an all encompassing law which did not interfere with the local tradition.³⁰ This is what is meant by a sense of justice and order which had been established in the Achaemenid Empire.

Thus, it is the success of the Achaemenid emperors, from Cyrus to Artaxerxes I - and despite all their mistakes, even that of their successors - and their well-oiled administrative system that distinguished the empire as a truly nouvelle imperial system. The territory of the Achaemenids, as mentioned in Darius Behistun inscription, kept and followed a centrally uniform and locally diverse system of administration, economy, and culture, and thrived under it. It was the success of this system, even more than its tolerance that made it a lasting force in its territories and guaranteed its continuation in the political and cultural sphere of the region.

³⁰ P. Briant, "L'histoire de l'empire achéménide aujourd'hui: l'historien et ses documents," *Annales HSS*, septembre-octobre 1999, no. 5, p. 1135.