Legitimization of War

Roel Konijnendijk

The Persian Empire was a creature of war. The product of an impressive string of conquests, it survived for over two centuries in large part due to its highly effective military system. But how did it justify its wars? How did its kings legitimize their campaigns to the people who shouldered the cost?

This question has received limited attention from scholars. There is a widely held belief that imperialist aggression is in the nature of the thing – that the cycle of power and conquest sustains itself. As Cawkwell (2005: p. 87) put it, "there is no need to ask why empires expand." For Kuhrt (1995: p. 671), it was enough to state that Persian expansion into the Aegean "was logical"; all other explanations are retrospective. The Persian Empire, being an empire, did not need to justify its constant desire for more.

Yet, even though no one at the time would have denied the unstoppable power of Persia (Harrison 2011: pp. 67–68 n.13), even the mightiest empires are loath to present their policies in coldly realist terms. The dictum that might makes right tends at least to be coated with a veneer of more palatable reasoning. The question here is to what extent that reasoning may be recovered.

It is a regrettable fact that Persian evidence does not allow anything like the comprehensive work of Oded (1992) on Assyrian justifications for war. Relevant royal inscriptions are rare, and only one – Darius I's inscription at Bisotun – dwells in any detail on the campaigns of a known king; most other texts are frustratingly generic (Briant 2002: p. 550; Sancisi-Weerdenburg

1999: pp. 92, 95; 2002: pp. 588–90). However, the Assyrian material provides invaluable comparative evidence. It can be used to illuminate the official legitimization of Persian wars wherever traces of such communications remain. Greek narrative sources sometimes do concern themselves with motivations for particular campaigns, and if used with appropriate caution they may yield some helpful information – as long as we keep asking to what extent the Greeks were able to perceive the Persian Empire as a fundamentally different sort of state than the ones in which they themselves resided.

What follows is only a brief attempt to fit the available evidence into something like a coherent picture of Persian justifications for war. Why did they march, and how did they legitimize doing so? Hopefully this overview will encourage studies into this aspect of the history of the Achaemenids – rulers whose wars served a range of different purposes beyond merely taking what they could.

Royal Ideology

The Persian ideology of kingship, founded on centuries of Mesopotamian and Iranian tradition, was a powerful legitimizing force. The peoples of the empire were told (DB 60–61; Rollinger 2014; Llewellyn-Jones 2013: pp. 26–28) that the king was created by Auramazda as the supreme protector of divine order and peace. The entire earth owed him tribute. This claim to universal dominion, made earlier by the Assyrians and other Mesopotamian rulers (Oded 1992: pp. 163–176), put the Persian king in a unique relationship with the world (Xen. *An.* 1.7.6; *Cyr.* 8.6.21; Aesch. *Pers.* 74–80). Rollinger (see Chapter 58 Empire, Borders, and Ideology) provides a more detailed assessment of the claim. What concerns us here is how it affected official reasoning when the king of kings went to war.

First of all, divinely ordained world domination automatically justified campaigns against any lands that were not already under Persian control. As Oded put it for the Assyrians, they "in principle did not recognize the political independence of regularly organized states" – these were "either submissive or rebels" (1992: pp. 164–165; note Diod. 9.31.3, 9.35.3). Persian attacks on states outside the empire could simply be seen as the king "claiming his own" (Cawkwell 2005: p. 49). More ingeniously, since the king's supreme position was legitimized as the will of a higher power, anyone else's claim to independent rule could be condemned as a rebellion against truth itself. No one ruled but the king of kings; those who denied this were liars (Wiesehöfer 1996: p. 33; Raaflaub 2011: pp. 7–8). Darius I boasted that he had crushed the revolts of nine liar-kings, who had dared to defy Auramazda (DB 52–55); his campaigns against them were restorations of divine order, constructive acts that

paved the way for the triumph of truth and justice. This reasoning could be brought to bear both against rebels within the empire and against all peoples who had at any point entered into communications with Persia (Kuhrt 1988: pp. 95–98). Any nation the Persians encountered was assumed to be subject to the king's demands; any act of defiance or aggression on its part would naturally constitute a violation of order and truth.

The right to punish such violations was entirely taken for granted, and no actual *reason* is ever offered for these campaigns. Darius I repeatedly sends his forces to "smite" a rebel army "which does not acknowledge me" (DB 25, 26, 38, 50) – that is, the rebels had to be crushed because they were rebels. Xerxes' inscription at Persepolis tells us no more than that "there was among the countries inscribed above (one, which) was in turmoil… By the favor of Auramazda I defeated that country" (XPh 4a). Perhaps surprisingly, Greek sources rarely elaborate. When Thucydides and Xenophon described late fifth century Persian involvement in Greek affairs, they offered no more justification than that by the king's orders the cities of Ionia were to resume paying tribute (Thuc. 8.5.4–5; Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.9, 3.1.3, 3.4.5–6). Responses to revolts elsewhere are described even more casually (Hdt. 7.1, 7.7; Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.19; Diod. 15.41.1); of course the king simply "had to" fight all the perpetrators of the supposed "Satraps' Revolt" (Diod. 15.90). These bland treatments may be the result of the Greek authors' lack of Persian sources, but they may very well reflect the official stance of the Persian court. Ctesias in particular may have had access to detailed information – yet in his work, too, as Tuplin has pointed out (2011: p. 450 n.3), "reasons for warfare are rarely explicitly discussed." The king was obliged to put down rebellions and punish aggression in the name of the divine will (as elaborated in Assyrian texts: Oded 1992: pp. 45, 95–99). War served to restore order. No further legitimization was needed.

The Duties of the King

Yet royal ideology did more than merely justify campaigns. The king's position as ultimate protector and overlord at least theoretically depended on his ability to show himself worthy; the empire could present itself as a beneficial force only if the king could prove that he used the countries' combined resources to secure prosperity and attain glory. Inscriptions boasted of "the spear of a Persian man," the king as a warrior, conquering far and wide (DNa 4; Kuhrt 1995: pp. 681–682; Briant 2002: p. 213; Llewellyn-Jones 2013: p. 29). The king himself had to present evidence for this. Cyrus the Younger in fact seems to have legitimized his bid for the Persian throne by claiming to be more suited for it than his brother, King Artaxerxes II: a better rider, a braver hunter, a paragon of generosity and honor (Xen. *An.* 1.9; Plut. *Art.* 6.3;

Briant 2002: p. 621). Xenophon added that Artaxerxes would be no proper Persian if he gave up his throne without a fight (*An.* 1.7.9). If Plutarch preserves a genuine tradition, the king actually sought to prove his own worth by spreading the tale that he had personally charged and killed Cyrus at the battle of Cunaxa; he went to horrid lengths to keep those who knew the truth from speaking out (*Art.* 14.3–16.1). This was how a king could show himself able to protect his subjects and to carry out the will of the gods.

Needless to say, the best proof of a king's worth was conquest. In this sense royal ideology both legitimized and actively *demanded* war. Many modern authors have argued that the Persians invaded Greece mainly because the requirements of kingship forced Xerxes' hand; he had recently come to the throne and, to put it bluntly, he had to conquer something (Cook 1983: p. 125; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2002: p. 586; Cawkwell 2005: p. 49; Evans 2006: pp. 126–128, 137; Raaflaub 2011: pp. 10, 22; Harrison 2011: pp. 65–66). Both Darius I and Xerxes I, the only kings to have their deeds inscribed (Rollinger 2014), stress that their greatest victories occurred at the start of their reign. As a convention of royal propaganda, the purpose of this is clear: to immediately affirm the new king's right to rule. Oded (1992: p. 145) has noted that the necessity for an Assyrian king to prove himself in war was especially strongly felt early in his reign, and it is likely that the Persians continued the practice of proving their king's merit in this way. The Greeks certainly thought so: Herodotus envisioned Darius' wife urging Darius to go to war "so that the Persians will know their king is a man" (3.134), while Aeschylus had Xerxes taunted by his nobles for his lack of conquests (*Pers.* 753–758). The first task of the early Achaemenids was to crush any rebellions that had broken out; the second was to march, no matter where, and add more land to the empire.

In Herodotus' account, each king's career is suspiciously similar. They enjoy an unbroken string of victories until they set out against some remote area that is beyond the boundaries put in place by nature and the gods, and these campaigns invariably fail. It has been argued that this is Herodotus' warning against the dangers of unbridled imperialism, which can only end in misery (Cobet 1986: p. 16; Raaflaub 2002a: pp. 20–21; 2002b: pp. 172–173, 177; 2011: p. 24). Yet these tragic tales find striking justification in Assyrian royal inscriptions. Assyrian kings derived special glory from conquering places that had hitherto been considered out of reach – in mountainous regions, across rivers, or beyond the desert (Oded 1992: pp. 161, 165). It is in this light that we should see Cambyses' march against Ethiopia, Darius' bridging of the Hellespont and the Danube, and Xerxes' efforts to take his fleet and army into Greece. Again, if Plutarch is correct, the tradition persisted down to the reign of Artaxerxes II, who marched against the barren lands of the Cadusians but was forced to turn back (*Art.* 24–25). Royal propaganda would of course

deny any setbacks. The text of XPh, for instance, gives no indication that Xerxes failed to conquer Greece, and Dio Chrysostom related a "Persian version" denying that this failure ever occurred (11.149; Briant 2002: p. 541). The people had to know that a campaign was undertaken; it would never be officially admitted that it had come to naught.

Persian royal ideology appears to have shifted over time to focus more on the king as a timeless reality rather than an individual (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1999: p. 110), removing the need for each new king to personally prove himself. Yet the history of Cyrus the Younger and Artaxerxes II suggests that the values of the old ideology lingered, and Persian kings never stopped responding forcefully to any rebellion in their realm (Diod. 16.43.1, 16.46.4). Driven by the demands of their position, they would find some place to take, or to take back; their ideology legitimized their wars, and their wars in turn legitimized their rule.

The Conquest of Greece

Our most detailed examination of Persian reasons to go to war actually comes from a Greek source. Herodotus describes at length the considerations that led Xerxes to embark on an invasion of Greece after the failure of his father's earlier expedition; we hear nothing of this from any Persian source beyond the open-ended phrases of XPh. Luckily, the Greek material does not simply represent the perspective of an outsider with no clue how the Persian empire worked. As many modern authors have pointed out, there are signs that Herodotus had a reasonable idea of the intricacies of Persian kingship (Gould 1989: p. 69; Raaflaub 2002a: p. 17; Evans 2006: pp. 79–80, 124; Harrison 2011).

Some elements may make us doubt this view. For one thing, Herodotus places great emphasis on revenge. This form of justification is applied to almost every military campaign: Cyrus planned to attack Egypt because it had supported Croesus against him (Hdt. 1.153), Cambyses invaded Egypt to avenge a slight (3.1–3), Darius attacked Scythia because the Scythians had once seized Asia (4.1.1, 4.4, 4.119), and Xerxes meant to conquer Greece "to punish the Athenians for what they did to the Persians and to my father" (7.8b.1). The predominance of revenge as a motive has been explained as a result of the fact that the Greeks of Herodotus' time would have easily recognized and accepted it as a driving force (Gould 1989: pp. 82–85; Lendon 2000: pp. 13–17). It is the reasoning of a Greek; some scholars have therefore dismissed it, along with the entire council scene where Xerxes decides to march against Greece, as a Herodotean invention (Briant 2002: pp. 158–159; Cawkwell 2005: pp. 87–88, 92; Evans 2006: p. 82). But it may not be so.

Oded has pointed out the importance of revenge against slights and aggression in Assyrian legitimization of war (Oded 1992: pp. 139–143, 180); it is also a central feature of a late seventh century BCE Babylonian "declaration of war" against Assyria (Gerardi 1986: pp. 31–32). Kuhrt has noted that other Mesopotamian sources appear to confirm Herodotus' picture (1988: pp. 89–90; Raaflaub 2011: p. 10). Insults were keenly felt by a people who claimed supreme power over the world – and no one would argue that a war to avenge insult or injury was not justified. In each of the cases mentioned by Herodotus, vengeance may well have been one of the reasons offered by royal propaganda. Seen in this light, it appears that by their actions in the 490s BCE the Athenians had painted a target on their backs. While Kramer (2004) has argued that Athens never really gave earth and water in 507 BCE – and thus never formally recognized Persia as its overlord, only to rebel later on – the Athenian contribution to the Ionian Revolt probably sufficed to mark them for future submission to Persia (Cook 1983: pp. 92–93; Kuhrt 1988: pp. 91–92, 98–99). Their victory at Marathon practically guaranteed that a greater Persian expedition would be sent their way.

Of course, even Herodotus and his contemporaries realized that revenge against Athens was only a pretext for the conquest of Greece (6.94, 7.138–139; Aesch. *Pers.* 233–234; Cawkwell 2005: p. 103; Raaflaub 2011: p. 22). This, according to Herodotus, was bald-faced greed. The archetypal bad advisor Mardonius is made to encourage it, saying Persians do not need reasons to take what they can, and lying to make the Greeks seem like easy targets (Hdt. 7.9; Konijnendijk 2016). Yet even here the historian is willing to acknowledge other factors. He has Xerxes argue that by invading Greece he is simply obeying the Persian custom never to be at peace; "it is the will of the god," and besides, it is Xerxes' duty to match his ancestors' achievements (Hdt. 7.8a.1–2). Herodotus is offering a range of reasons for him to go to war, and they are precisely the justifications derived from royal ideology: the claim to world empire and divine favor, the need for the king to prove himself, and even the role of the king as protector of the realm. It may seem absurd to find Xerxes arguing that his strike against Athens is preventive, that he must "either do or suffer" (Hdt. 7.11.3; Raaflaub 2002a: p. 16; Cawkwell 2005: p. 7) – but this sort of reasoning fit exactly within the framework of "official" legitimization. The survival of any independent state was a potential threat to the world order the king was meant to protect. While the greed of the king of kings could not be justified, in Herodotus' version he seems hardly to blame; rather, he was bound by duty to undergo his royal fate (Cobet 1986: p. 16; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2002: pp. 586, 588).

This fate, in fact, was to make a show of leading his peoples in arms across the Hellespont, defeating the Greeks in battle at Thermopylae, burning Athens to the ground, and returning home, job well done (D. Chr. 11.149).

As with Darius' campaign against the Scythians, lasting conquest was probably the aim, but it may not have been necessary for the king to achieve this in order to claim victory (Cawkwell 2005: p. 47). Due vengeance had been exacted; the reach of royal power had been effectively put on display. Herodotus' account up to this point seems perfectly in line with what we know of Persian legitimization of war, and we must assume he was well aware of the royal Persian perspective on the campaign. Perhaps his only blind spot was his failure to recognize – or his need to obscure from Greek readers – when the demands of Persian kingship had been met.

The Interests of Persia

The final form of justification to be considered is the cold logic of political expedience. With modern authors often taking a critical view of Greek sources and attempting to reconstruct the "real" motives of Persia by crediting the king with a shrewd grand strategy, it is somewhat ironic that Persian sources tell us nothing about such a strategy, and we rely exclusively on our interpretations of Greek narrative accounts. There was no place for Realpolitik in royal propaganda; it insisted, as far as we know, that the king played the game by the rules.

Throughout the first decades of its existence, the empire expanded in all directions, but the Persians seem to have realized that further conquests would lead them too far afield, and Persia eventually began to consolidate (Lloyd 1988: p. 63; Kuhrt 1995: p. 676). This change of focus may have been triggered, not by Xerxes' defeat, but by the success of the Athenian counteroffensive, coinciding with successive revolts in Babylon, Bactria, and Egypt. Strategic goals had to be reconsidered. The Greeks lived in fear of the king's return, but he never came (Cawkwell 2005: pp. 128–135).

No Persian or Greek source provides any evidence of the cognitive dissonance required for a king to both claim universal dominion and accept the independence of Greece. As far as we know, the practical limits of Persian power were quietly accepted. On only one occasion did a king press his claim to parts of mainland Greece: the first version of the treaty between Persia and Sparta insisted that "whatever land or cities the king has, or the king's ancestors had, shall be the king's" (Thuc. 8.18.1). However, when Sparta protested, the ambitious term was dropped (Thuc. 8.37, 8.58). The Persians instead fell back on their ancient claim to rule the whole of Asia – a claim that had long been known to the Greeks (Aesch. *Pers.* 762–771; Hdt. 9.116; Xen. *Cyr.* 8.8.1) – to justify campaigns of limited means and with limited ends. It is clear from Greek accounts that Persian support for Sparta in the Ionian War was tailored to suit their own interests (Thuc. 8.46.1–4; Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.9; Hyland 2007: pp. 8–11). Their entire policy in the region, up to and including

the eventual war against Sparta, served to recover the Ionian cities and thereby pacify the western fringe of the empire.

This was how strategic interests could serve as a legitimization for Persian diplomatic and military activity. The Persians may no longer have been free to dream of overseas conquest, but when warning signs appeared in the late 390s BCE that Athens might recover her naval power, King Artaxerxes II made sure straight away to impose the King's Peace, which effectively paralyzed the states of Greece and firmly secured his hold on Ionia (Seager 1974: pp. 36–37; Cawkwell 2005: pp. 169, 182). This was divide and rule at its finest. As long as the Greeks in their mutual suspicion guarded the terms of the peace, none of them would have the strength to stir trouble in Asia Minor. This allowed the king to concentrate on what was truly important: the ideologically necessary, strategically important, and self-evidently justified crushing of any rebellion within his domain.

The pragmatic policy implemented by the Persians in Asia Minor illustrates their priorities. Royal propaganda legitimized their wars primarily in the old ways: as the spread of god-given truth and justice and as the righteous punishment of those who had sinned against it. By embarking on such campaigns, the kings in turn legitimized themselves. It was no use taking risks or overstretching the empire's resources if there were more efficient ways to prove a king's worth – and no wars were easier to justify than those against liars and traitors.

REFERENCES

Briant, P. (2002). *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Cawkwell, G. (2005). *The Greek Wars: The Failure of Persia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cobet, J. (1986). Herodotus and Thucydides on war. In I.S. Moxon, J.D. Smart, and A.J. Woodman (eds.), *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–18.

Cook, J.M. (1983). *The Persian Empire*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons.

Evans, J.A. (2006). *The Beginnings of History: Herodotus and the Persian Wars*. Campbellville: Edgar Kent.

Gerardi, P. (1986). Declaring war in Mesopotamia. *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 33, pp. 30–38.

Gould, J. (1989). *Herodotus*. London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Harrison, T. (2011). The long arm of the king (Hdt. 8.140–142). In R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler (eds.), *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich – Herodotus and the Persian Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 3). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 65–74.

Hyland, J.O. (2007). Thucydides' portrait of Tissaphernes re-examined. In C. Tuplin (ed.), *Persian Responses*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, pp. 1–25.

Konijnendijk, R. (2016). Mardonius' Senseless Greeks. *Classical Quarterly*, 66 (1), pp. 1–12.

Kramer, N. (2004). Athen: Keine Stadt des Grösskonings! *Hermes*, 132 (3), pp. 257–270.

Kuhrt, A. (1988). Earth and water. In A. Kuhrt, H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (eds.), *Method and Theory* (Achaemenid History 3). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, pp. 87–99.

Kuhrt, A. (1995). *The Ancient Near East: c.3000–330 BC.* New York/London: Routledge.

Lendon, J.E. (2000). Homeric vengeance and the outbreak of Greek wars. In H. van Wees (ed.), *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*. London: Gerald Duckworth, pp. 1–30.

Llewellyn-Jones, L. (2013). *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559 to 331 BCE.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lloyd, A.B. (1988). Herodotus on Cambyses: some thoughts on recent work. In A. Kuhrt, H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (eds.), *Method and Theory: Proceedings of the London 1985 Achaemenid History Workshop* (Achaemenid History 3). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, pp. 55–66.

Oded, B. (1992). *War, Peace and Empire: Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions.* Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag.

Raaflaub, K.A. (2002a). Herodot und Thukydides: Persischer Imperialismus im Lichte der athenischen Sizilienpolitik. In N. Ehrhardt, L.M. Günther (eds.), *Widerstand – Anpassung – Integration: Die Griechische Staatenwelt und Rom*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, pp. 11–40.

Raaflaub, K.A. (2002b). Philosophy, science, politics: Herodotus and the intellectual trends of his time. In E.J. Bakker, I.J.F. de Jong, and H. van Wees (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 149–186.

Raaflaub, K.A. (2011). Persian Army and warfare in the Mirror of Herodotus's interpretation. In R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler (eds.), *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich – Herodotus and the Persian Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 3). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 5–37.

Rollinger, R. (2014). Thinking and writing about history in Teispid and Achaemenid Persia. In K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Thinking, Recording and Writing History*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 187–212.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. (1999). The Persian kings and history. In C.S. Kraus (ed.), *The Limits of Historiography*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 91–112.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H. (2002). The personality of Xerxes, king of kings. In E.J. Bakker, I.J.F. de Jong, and H. van Wees (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 579–590.

Seager, R. (1974). The King's peace and the balance of power in Greece, 386–362 B.C. *Athenaeum*, 52, pp. 36–63.

Tuplin, C. (2011). Ctesias as military historian. In J. Wiesehöfer, R. Rollinger, and G.B. Lanfranchi (eds.), *Die Welt Des Ktesias – Ctesias' World* (Classica et Orientalia 1). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 449–488.

Wiesehöfer, J. (1996). *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD* (trans. A. Azodi). London: J.B. Tauris & Co.

FURTHER READING

There are no works dealing specifically with the subject of this chapter. Works referenced above help to illuminate various aspects. Of particular interest are:

Briant, P. (2002). *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Still the main handbook on Achaemenid Persia and an excellent starting point. Comments on the nature of and ideology behind Persian warfare scattered throughout.

Farrokh, K. (2007). *Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing. Not a flawless work by any measure, it remains perhaps the only sizable monograph dedicated to Persian warfare as such.

Hyland, J. (2018). *Persian Interventions: The Achaemenid Empire, Athens, and Sparta, 450–386 BCE*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press. A detailed and up-to-date study of Greco-Persian diplomacy and warfare in a short period rich in sources.

Oded, B. (1992). *War, Peace and Empire: Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag. For lack of Persian evidence, this indulgent survey of relevant Assyrian sources helps the reader identify forms of legitimization and examine continuities.

Raaflaub, K. (2011). Persian army and warfare in the mirror of Herodotus's interpretation. In R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler (eds.), *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich − Herodotus and the Persian Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 3). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 5–37. Thorough and critical treatment of Herodotus on Persian warfare, tested against Persian evidence.

CHAPTER 80

Structure of the Army and Logistics

Christopher Hassan

Research on the structure and logistics of the Achaemenid army has been rather limited. This chapter offers an overview of its organization by examining the division of military powers and analyzing the individual components of the Achaemenid army and its logistical support over a 230-year period. The Persian military probably began as a collection of warriors who were obligated to perform military service for their *primus inter pares*, but over the duration of the Persian Empire the army evolved into a complex institution which included a regimented hierarchy, efficient logistical support, and soldiers from many lands distinct in their languages as well as their combat doctrines. It was their high level of structured organization that allowed the Persian kings to unify such a diverse army and project their military power over such great distances.

Whilst many elements of military organization and equipment in the Persian army were developed and enhanced over 230 years of Achaemenid rule, the position of the king as the commander in chief of the army remained constant. From Cyrus II's first victory over the Medes around 559 BCE to the defeat of Darius III by Alexander of Macedon in 331 BCE, the armies of Persia answered unequivocally to the Great King. This does not mean that the Achaemenid kings commanded every Persian army in the field; the size of the empire made this impossible. But each major campaign of conquest and defense fell under the king's authority, even if he was acting through subordinates. This is prominently highlighted in the second attempt to reconquer Egypt in 373 BCE when Pharnabazus, the Persian commander, referred many of his decisions

back to the king in order to have his commands ratified by royal order (Diodorus 15.41). Nevertheless, the demands of maintaining such a large empire made the appointment of lower military commanders a necessity. This was first realized by Cyrus II who, after conquering the kingdom of Lydia at an uncertain date during the second half of the sixth century BCE, was forced to split his military forces to deal with a Lydian rebellion that had arisen after his departure. According to Herodotus, Cyrus entrusted a considerable army to the Median Harpagus who went on to pacify Lydia and conquer the Greek, Carian, and Lycian cities of Asia Minor whilst Cyrus took the main army on to the conquest of Babylon (Herodotus 1. 156–1.177). Building on the success of Cyrus II, in 522/21 BCE Darius I used the same principle to secure the Persian realm and quash nine separate revolts in the course of a single year that involved 19 victorious military engagements. In his *Behistun Inscription* Darius tells us how he assigned various elements from the loyal Persian army to several subordinate generals who, through the coordination of Darius as high commander and the occasional cooperation with the royal army that accompanied the king, were able to quell multiple rebellions from prominent provinces in very short order (DB, lines 16–54). It is also important to note that two of the generals mentioned in this inscription go on to become the only satraps ever mentioned by name in a Persian inscription. By the end of his reign Darius I was confident in assigning entire campaigns of conquest and retribution to his generals on the borders of the empire and successful generals could hope to be rewarded with lucrative positions as satraps. The Aegean campaign of 490 BCE, which culminated in the battle of Marathon, illustrates how military power could be bestowed upon noble and competent Iranians even if they were not members of the royal family. Datis, ostensibly the senior of the two generals in charge of the Aegean campaign, was not even a Persian but, like Harpagus before him, was a Mede who had proved himself worthy of the position. A tablet from Persepolis may indicate that Datis was involved in the suppression of the Ionian Revolt in 494 BCE and may well have caught the king's attention in this action (Briant 2002: p. 148). He was, however, accompanied by Artaphernes, a nephew of the king, with whom he held joint command, and although Datis is continually described as the chief decision-maker, it is likely that Artaphernes was sent as a royal representative (Hdt. 6.94–6.119). In preparation for the invasion of Greece in 480 BCE, Xerxes had planned his strategy with a full command staff of subordinate generals, admirals, engineers, and quartermasters. Following the sack of Athens and the battle of Salamis, Xerxes handed over military command to his general Mardonius, whilst he returned to Asia in order to focus on maintaining the political harmony of the empire (Hdt. 8.101–8.103). Although more power was granted to subordinate generals in later years, there are still many examples of kings such as Artaxerxes II taking the field and campaigning in hostile

territory such as Cadusia (Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 24.1), as well as Artaxerxes III's reconquest of Egypt (Diod. 16.40.3). The military role of the king is highlighted further by the responses of both Artaxerxes II and Darius III marching at the head of their armies when Persia was faced with the major invasions of the Macedonians in 333 BCE and the civil war between Artaxerxes and Cyrus the Younger in 401 BCE.

During the reign of Darius II the continued conflict with the city-states of mainland Greece had created enough problems for the western Asiatic satrapies to be placed under a regional commander with authority over multiple governors and their troops. This marshal was referred to as "Karanos" and held great authority (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.1). It is possible that Cyrus the Younger was the first "Karanos" to be given command of a set of satrapies in Asia Minor rather than a specific expedition, such as that of Otanes in his mission to conquer Samos for Darius I (Hdt. 3.141), and he appears to have been entrusted with overseeing the reconsolidation of Persian territories in Asia Minor. Perhaps surprisingly, in the wake of Cyrus' failed rebellion in 401 BCE, the position of "Karanos" was not dissolved but instead handed to Tissaphernes, the satrap of Lydia, presumably because the threat from cities such as Sparta was still a concern to Achaemenid authority. Over the course of the Achaemenid Empire military power became increasingly decentralized as individual satraps could gain more power and military marshals from outside the royal family were appointed more frequently. For the reign of Darius III, Arrian reports that Memnon, a Greek mercenary commander who had married into Persian nobility, had been appointed as "commander of lower Asia" (Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 1.20). The appointment of a non-Persian to such an influential post marks the potential ability of the Persian military to recognize competence before breeding, but the presence of Pharnabazus, a high-born Persian, at Memnon's side is a reminder that the Achaemenids were keen to maintain their grasp on military matters.

The diffusion of military power down through the Persian army's hierarchy was facilitated in order to respond better to the multitude of minor conflicts that arose within the Persian Empire's borders. This system of decentralizing the military power of the empire and alleviating responsibility from the Great King was also embodied politically in the formation of the various satrapies that made up the empire's provinces. Wiesehöfer (1996: p. 56) explains that the satraps were charged primarily with the protection of the king's lands and were given remit to raise military forces of their own in order to enforce Achaemenid authority. In addition, subordinate garrison commanders were controlled by the satraps within their provinces (Briant 2002: pp. 340–343). Xenophon describes these garrisons and the military forces which the satraps maintained as subject to an annual military review from the central authority (Xen. *Oeconomicus* 4.5–4.6). It is important to note that according to

Xenophon, the king was concerned not only that the satraps had enough capable troops at their disposal but also that they did not have too many soldiers under arms in case they might become too strong. Tuplin (1988: pp. 67–68) adds that the satraps had a number of smaller collections of colonist troops distributed throughout the satrapy that were ready to muster alongside the separate soldiers who were charged with maintaining and defending urban garrisons.

The satrapal armies could be assembled to supplement the royal army if an expedition or major battle was anticipated. An example of a minor satrapal army can be found in Xenophon's *Anabasis* where the satrap of western Armenia attempts to ambush the retreating Greek mercenary army with his own force bolstered by local mercenaries from the Chalybes and Taochi peoples (Xen. *Anab.* 4.4). A satrap was expected to handle minor incursions and disturbances in his province without having to resort to appealing for royal reinforcement, but in cases of major invasions neighboring satraps could unite their local forces and form a relatively powerful temporary coalition. During the Spartan invasion of Persia in 398 BCE, Tissaphernes, satrap of Lydia, and Pharnabazus, satrap of Phrygia, combined their forces to confront the Greek army of Dercyllidas (Xen. *Hellenica* 3.2.12–3.2.18). A larger example of a satrapal coalition was the force assembled to face Alexander of Macedon's invasion of Persia in 334 BCE. Arrian describes the Persian satraps during a war council in which they are reluctant to adopt a scorched earth policy, perhaps due to their remit as protectors of the realm (Arr. *Anab.* 1.13). Yet the satraps were not entirely left to their own defenses. It was possible for a satrap who was threatened by hostile forces to request royal reinforcement, as was the case of Tissaphernes, satrap of Lydia, in 395 BCE (Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.11). But it was more common for satraps to send their troops to the king's aid for a royal expedition or to mount a defense of the realm. Arrian's account of the Persian forces assembled for the battle at Gaugamela includes several satraps present for the muster with troops from their provinces, most notably Bessus, the satrap of Bactria, who commanded the Persian left wing (Arr. *Anab.* 3.8).

An Achaemenid royal army formed a very clear hierarchical structure. The king, or general at the head of the army, would be surrounded by his personal retinue of kinsmen and retainers who would normally be mounted on horseback but could also be present as selected infantry companies. The lesser nobility and their retainers would then form the bulk of the Persian cavalry and the common Persians then made up the infantry. This Persian nucleus was supported by foreign auxiliaries and mercenaries commanded and mustered by the Persian satraps who governed them. The army of Xerxes on the march to Greece illustrates this organization extremely well as the king proceeds surrounded by selected bodies of Persian infantry and cavalry. Behind the retinue of the king comes the main body of Persian troops and following the honored

Persian soldiers at a distance are the auxiliary foreign contingents (Hdt. 7. 40–7.41). This distinguished organization is repeated at Cunaxa where the Persians, with their king and his retinue, held the central position whilst the auxiliaries took position on the wings (Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.9–13), and also in the battle at Gaugamela (Arr. *Anab.* 3.11). This system is repeated on a smaller scale by Persian commanders who lead expeditionary forces, as illustrated by Datis at Marathon where the Persians hold the center of the line (Hdt. 6.113). The main exception to this deployment is that of Mardonius at Plataea where the Persian troops were placed on his left wing due to its critical position facing off against the formidable Spartan hoplite army (Hdt. 9.47). But the structural ideal of the Persian army remains as the ethnic Persians are simply given what is judged to be the most critical position in a battle line, or in the case of the circumvention of the Thermopylae defenses, the most critical missions (Hdt. 7.215–7.218). This prestige within the army could also have damaging effects on the morale of a force if the Persians failed in a task, as we see at Plataea where Herodotus remarks that all the hopes of the war rested on the shoulders of the Persian soldiers and their flight from the Spartans heralded the end of the battle for the pro-Persian troops (Hdt. 9.68).

The actual contingents that made up a Persian army appear to have been rigidly organized with a clear chain of command from at least the time of Xerxes. A regiment of troops was recruited to stand up to 10 000 strong according to Herodotus' estimation of the largest Persian contingents that invaded Greece (Hdt. 7.81). He goes on to describe these regiments of 10 000 as divided into 10 companies of 1000, which were further divided into 10 groups of 100, and then 10 squads on 10. Head (1992: p. 17) argues that the repeated presence of companies of 1000 Persian soldiers in Aramaic and Greek sources provides good support for Herodotus' description, including the survival of the Persian word '*hazarapatish*' ('commander of a thousand men') through Greek accounts. Herodotus also reports that the commanders of 10 000 and 1000 would then select commanders for each group of 100 soldiers and within those groups, commanders for the squads of 10. This clear and all-encompassing chain of command provided Persian officers with the means to organize their troops quickly and efficiently even in the heat of battle. At Plataea the cavalry under the overall command of Masistes is reported to have attacked in squadrons rather than en masse (Hdt. 9.22), and the infantry is even described as attacking in groups of ten (Hdt. 9.62). The creation of this chain of command is attributed to Cyrus II by Xenophon, but there is no corroborating evidence for this assertion (Head 1992: p. 17).

According to Herodotus, by the time of Xerxes the command structure included six high marshals (7.82). They would form the advisory body to Xerxes during war councils and could step up to overall command should the Great King depart the expedition. This top-level general staff is seen again in

Persian armies, particularly during the Macedonian invasion where Arrian (*Anab.* 2.6–7), Diodorus (17.30.1–3), and Curtius Rufus (3.8.1–11) describe the decision to move against Alexander at Issus as a matter decided by the king amongst noble Persians and commanders. However, it is not clear how widespread this chain of command was amongst the foreign auxiliaries in the imperial armies. The overall commanders of the foreign divisions appear to always be Persian or Median so as to facilitate better translation of orders, but the hierarchy within foreign contingents was likely to be as diverse as their fighting styles. Due to the Persian ideal of allowing foreign states to maintain their traditional religions and customs, they were also recruited as soldiers fighting in their native fashion. This lack of any attempt to train a unified and cohesive army allowed the Persians to maintain an image of benevolence; it also meant that the quality and capabilities of foreign auxiliaries were varied (Head 1992: p. 16).

Within the Persian elements of the Achaemenid imperial armies there appear to be a number of elite units, the most famous of which are the so-called "Immortals" that Herodotus describes as the finest infantry at Xerxes' disposal (Hdt. 7.83). Sekunda (1992: pp. 6–7) regards the "Immortals" as the primary regiment of 10 000 Persian infantry, a standing force that was made up of professional soldiers and always maintained at full strength where other regiments would gradually dwindle in numbers over time until they were mustered out of the army. He also differentiates these 10 000 troops from the other 1000-man bodies of elite spearmen that Herodotus describes in the march to Greece (Hdt. 7.40–7.41). Of these smaller selected companies the group that follows directly behind Xerxes is notable for carrying golden apples on their spear pommels and being drawn from the noblest of the Persians. Sekunda (1992: pp. 6–7) believes these "Apple-Bearers" to be the personal bodyguard of the Great King as they are not only the most distinguished troops in the passage but Darius I is also mentioned as a spear-bearer to Cambyses (Hdt. 3.139). These two guard units are particularly worthy of note since they both appear in the armies of Darius III. The "Immortals" are seen again in Curtius Rufus' description of Darius III's march to Issus (Curt. Ruf. 3.3.13), although their lack of mention in any of the actual fighting may betray this mention as a reference to Herodotus' original passage on the march of Xerxes. The "Apple-Bearers" are mentioned by Diodorus (17.59.2–17.59.3) and Arrian (Arr. *Anab.* 3.11) as a royal bodyguard in their accounts of the Persian line at Gaugamela. It is possible, then, that these guard units made up the heart of the Achaemenid military with the levies from the non-professional Persians as support and finally the foreign auxiliaries mustered by the satraps as the main body of troops at the Great King's disposal.

Head describes the muster of non-professional Persians in the Achaemenid army as "a sort of militia … not a universal levy, rather a reserve force holding

land in exchange for military service" (Head 1992: p. 12). Using Strabo's, Herodotus', and Xenophon's accounts of Persian military training, Sekunda (1992: p. 5) argues that every Persian male was obligated to serve in the army between the ages of 20 and 24, at which point they would be demobilized but would remain on call for active duty. This interpretation is supported by the many examples of military land grants found in Mesopotamia during Achaemenid rule. Using the evidence from contemporary Babylonian documents, Briant explains the *Ḥaṭru* system of land granted by Achaemenid authority as estates that were given to tenant farmers in exchange for military service (Briant 2002: p. 405). The size of the allotment would also determine the level of military participation required of the tenant as it appears to be the case that the reserve forces were obliged to provide their own military equipment, whilst according to Xenophon (Xen. *Oec.* 4.5–4.6), the garrison forces and professional soldiers were maintained at the expense of the state. Head (1992: pp. 14–15) agrees that the *Ḥaṭru* were used for more than just Persian nationals since many different ethnicities are recorded in Babylonian documentation as holding land grants in Mesopotamia, although it is not always clear whether they provided taxes or troops. Head also points out that very little of the recruitment system is known to us but that the experience of the Macedonians fighting against various satraps and tribal leaders in Bactria suggests that an ad hoc system of tribal loyalty was widespread amongst the Iranian peoples. As for the coastal regions, Wallinga (2005: p. 35) argues that it was the Persian king who ordered the construction of fleets according to requirement and then crewed them with able seamen such as the Phoenicians or Greeks. With this in mind it can be established that the Achaemenids maintained a core of standing troops which was supplemented by garrison forces on active duty throughout the empire. In times of crisis, a levy could be mustered from those Persians who were obliged to serve in the military, as well as from the non-Persians recruited by their satraps.

The logistical arm of the Persian army is less well known than its combat elements. It is first attested by Herodotus in his description of the Persian siege of Sardis (Hdt. 1.80). This is, however, only a small description of the camels used in the Persian army's baggage train. A better picture of the logistical preparations that preceded a campaign can be found in Cambyses' invasion of Egypt in 525 BCE. Cambyses made sure to utilize intelligence gathered from enemy defectors such as Phanes, a Greek mercenary formerly in the employ of the Pharaoh (Hdt. 3. 4). Due to the advice of Phanes, Cambyses was able to plan the necessary logistics for an attack. An alliance was secured with the Arabian king who controlled the lands that led to Egypt and this agreement provided the Persian army with water stashed in caches along the desert route (Hdt. 3.9). Cambyses was also informed of the difficulty of attacking Egypt via land alone and thus ensured the submission of

the Phoenician and Cyprian cities with their powerful navies before attacking the Egyptians (Hdt. 3.19). This allowed not only the amphibious transport of his fighting troops but also the use of a sea-borne supply line to support his army alongside the baggage train. But the greatest example of the Persian logistical arm is to be found in Xerxes' invasion of Greece. The system of supply for the imperial army is well described by Herodotus during the Persian march. He reports multiple supply depots stocked with food, water, and fodder for the baggage animals and horses in a similar manner to the caches provided for Cambyses (Hdt. 7.25). Moreover, he also describes the heavy tithe of supply that Xerxes demanded from the nations that he passed through (Hdt. 7.118–7.120). Lazenby (1993: p. 96) argues that although it is implied that there was a large fleet of support ships delivering supplies for Xerxes, it is likely that these supplies were intended for the combat elements of the navy. The success of transporting a large force into Greece without suffering from major supply disasters is a testament to the logistical planning and execution of the Achaemenid army's support staff. Engels (1978: pp. 44–46) goes so far as to suggest that logistics were such a crucial factor to an army's success that Darius III based the deployment of his army on the requirements of supply.

Xerxes also had a large engineering corps at his disposal both during and before the invasion began. The construction of the Athos canal was engineered to allow the navy safer passage through Greece's treacherous coastal waters (Hdt. 7.22), and the bridge of boats across the Hellespont (Hdt. 7.33–7.37) demonstrated the high degree of competence that his engineers possessed. Indeed, boats were also used as a bridge to cross the Danube by Darius I, who highly commended his chief engineer, Mandrocles, for the work (Hdt. 4.87–4.89). Beyond the realm of transportation and supply there was still the corps of combat engineers that the Persians employed for siege work. In the Persian attack on the town of Barca in 516 BCE, Herodotus describes the Persians attempting to undermine the walls of the city by tunneling underneath them (Hdt. 4.200). In Harpagus' campaign against the Ionian cities he is described as constructing mounds of earth in order to overcome the walls of Teos (Hdt. 1.168), and Xerxes ordered a similar mound of earth to be constructed from the mainland to the island of Salamis after his naval defeat in 480 BCE (Hdt. 8.97). Persian logistics were, then, capable of combat operations as well as of supply and transportation.

The Persian military remains a much understudied topic which deserves further scholarly engagement, especially in regard to its strategic and tactical doctrines. This may allow us to form a better understanding of the conquests and defeats of the Achaemenids.

REFERENCES

Briant, P. (2002). *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Engels, D.W. (1978). *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Head, D. (1992). *The Achaemenid Persian Army*. Stockport: Montvert Publications.

Lazenby, J.F. (1993). *The Defense of Greece 490–479 B.C.* Oxford: Aris and Phillips.

Sekunda, N. (1992). *The Persian Army 560–330 B.C.* Oxford: Osprey Publishing.

Tuplin, C. (1988). Persian garrisons in Xenophon and other sources. In A. Kuhrt, H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (eds.), *Method and Theory* (Achaemenid History 3). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, pp. 167–246.

Wallinga, H.T. (2005). *Xerxes' Greek Adventure: The Naval Perspective*. Leiden: Brill.

Wiesehöfer, J. (1996). *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD*. London: I.B. Tauris.

FURTHER READING

Head, D. (1992). *The Achaemenid Persian Army*. Stockport: Montvert Publications. An in-depth but accessible analysis of the Persian army with a great deal of excellent illustrations.

Jacobs, B. (2003). Mechanismen der Konfliktbewältigung in der Verwaltungsorganisation Kleinasiens zur Achämenidenzeit. In W. Henkelman, A. Kuhrt (eds.), *A Persian Perspective: Essays in Memory of Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg* (Achaemenid History 13). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, pp. 239–263. A detailed examination of satrapal authority and the management of conflict resolution in the Achaemenid Empire's administration of Asia Minor.

Sekunda, N. (1992). *The Persian Army 560–330 B.C.* Oxford: Osprey Publishing. A straightforward overview of the Persian army with a focus on the ethnic Persian core troops.

Lazenby, J.F. (1993). *The Defense of Greece 490–479 B.C.* Oxford: Aris and Phillips. A fantastic discussion of the Greco-Persian wars with attention given to both the Greek and Persian perspectives as well as sober discussion of their relative forces.

Drews, R. (2004). *Early Riders: The Beginnings of Mounted Warfare in Asia and Europe*. New York: Routledge. An excellent discussion of the rise of cavalry including an in-depth discussion of Iranian horsemen as well as the necessary maintenance a horse requires and the techniques needed to be a cavalryman.

Wallinga, H.T. (2005). *Xerxes' Greek Adventure: The Naval Perspective*. Leiden: Brill. An excellent account of the often overlook naval elements to the Persian invasion of Greece including an examination of the combatants relative forces.

Engels, D.W. (1978). *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*. Berkley: University of California Press. An invaluable guide to the logistics required to transport and maintain an army. Also provides valuable insight into the tactical decisions made during the Macedonian conquest of Persia.

Military Organization and Equipment

Christopher Tuplin and Bruno Jacobs

General Considerations

The Achaemenid Empire was the product of violent conquest and its survival presupposed the credible threat of military force. But the Persian army is hard to define and describe. Authentic Persian sources are disappointing. Royal monuments eschew active warfare, contenting themselves with images of inactive guards. Royal texts avoid description of fighting, except at Behistun – a formulaic and militarily uninformative narrative. Soldiers appear in Fortification archive texts, but straightforward cases are few and neither they nor speculative ones say much germane. More helpful are sealings on Fortification and Treasury documents with images of armed men. But searchers for the soldiers of the Achaemenid dispensation must also look to (i) other pictorial sources, (ii) documentary sources from Bactria, Babylonia, the Levant and Egypt, and (iii) the narratives of Persian imperial history in classical texts.

One such text may seem an obvious *entrée*: Herodotus' catalog of Xerxes' invasion force (7.61–7.98). But this is extremely problematic. The army that attacked Greece was reportedly organized into nation-based contingents (7.60; for this cf. Hdt. 4.87; Xen., *An.* 1.8.9; Arr., *An.* 2.8.8; Diod. 11.2.1; 11.8.1; 17.19.4; 17.58.1; Nep., *Dat.* 8), and the number of nations is large (46). The military diversity is less than this might suggest: for example, most (non-Indian) people east of the Zagros represent one of two models (west and east Iranian), one more heavily armed than the other. But diversity there

undoubtedly is, some of it rather folkloristic – fighters with pelts, clubs, wooden helmets, or crane-skin shields. Taken literally, this is an army vulnerable to poor internal communication and lack of operational cohesion.

But the catalog (though perhaps containing responsibly sourced material) is not to be taken at face value. As a list of nations, it rearranges the 20 tribute *nomoi* of 3.89–3.94 (also contentious), and Armayor (1978) already questioned its historical integrity, while Briant (1999: p. 119) saw its folkloristic elements as merely a parade contingent for ideological display. Actual narratives of battles involving royal armies present a more sober picture, without precluding ethnically labeled contingents (Gaugamela is a well-documented case). At the same time, organization of any particular battle array is determined by topography, tactics, and appropriate positioning of cavalry, chariots, archers, and spearmen. That battle array may be viewed as a collection of troop types or of national groups, and the relationship between these perspectives probably varies from occasion to occasion – though there will be ongoing associations between troop type and region (e.g. northeastern satrapies and cavalry) – but in trying to characterize a typical Persian army our real interest is in the range of forms each basic troop type might take in real combat situations and (specifically) in the distinctively "Persian" forms that might have formed the core.

In the second half of Achaemenid history, satrapal and royal armies defending Persian interests regularly included Greek mercenaries. That is a capital fact about military recruitment and prompts questions about the perceived advantages of such soldiers, but (beyond the consequences of addressing such questions) Greek infantry equipment is not this chapter's business: Greek foot soldiers may be typical of Persian armies, but it is misleading simply to call them Persian soldiers. Nor is this just because they are Greek. Chaldaean, Chalybian, and Taochian mercenaries (Xen., *An.* 4.3.4; 4.4.18) are no different in principle. Nor are native non-mercenary soldiers locally levied in Lydia, Phrygia, Egypt, or Babylonia (Tuplin 2016). The Achaemenids might have mobilized all sorts of military resources from the territory they controlled, as might any superpower controlling that territory. The diversity of the Herodotean army list has a certain poetic justice. But our starting point must be with soldiers that enter the picture because it was precisely *Persians* who were the salient superpower. For, if there is such a thing as the Persian army (a virtual entity transcending particular events), it consists in the conjunction of distinctive products of a Persian dispensation (at its narrowest, soldiers from Persia itself) with other resources, typologically similar (from other Iranian peoples) or dissimilar (from other areas). Of course, particular soldiers of distinctively Persian type might or might not be Persians or even Iranians: debate about the ethnic identity of the protagonist on the Çan sarcophagus (Jacobs 2014: pp. 353–355) is a separate issue from recognition that he is a

"Persian soldier" insofar as he is a member of the empire's elite equipped in a manner fitting for a Persian army – a figure that could never have appeared on a monument from northwest Anatolia were it not for the existence of the Achaemenid Empire.

The characteristics of Persian soldiers can theoretically be inferred from: (i) written texts about Persian or Median soldiers; (ii) mural images of armed men at Persepolis and Susa; (iii) other images in which soldiers are identifiable as Persian because of overlap with the first two categories and/or other indicators including (where combat is shown) the identity of the adversaries. The sources for the first category are in practice largely Greco-Roman. Texts from other environments rarely *describe* soldiers and, when they do, do not necessarily describe Persian ones. The Murašu text itemizing the equipment of the cavalryman Gadal-iama going to Uruk in fulfillment of a royal order is well-known (Kuhrt 2007: pp. 14, 38). But does it describe a Persian or a Babylonian soldier? Gadal-iama is not Iranian, the service obligation affects horse land in Nippur, and the equipment terminology is challenging, but some detect resonances with better-established examples of Persian cavalry (Casabonne and Gabrielli 2007). The sources for the last category include seal-stones/sealings of various provenance, coins, and paintings and relief sculpture from funerary or other monuments in the Levant, Western Anatolia, and Greece (Tuplin 2010: pp. 104–120; 2020). Such material is not characteristically produced by or specifically for Persians, and its documentary integrity may be variable. Monuments with salient pictorial representations cited below include the Alexander Sarcophagus (von Graeve 1970), Attic vases (Raeck 1981), the Athena Nike frieze (Harrison 1972), the Çan sarcophagus (Sevinç et al. 2001), Clazomenae sarcophagi (Cook 1981), the Karaburun tomb painting (Mellink 1972; Miller 2010), the Limyra heroon frieze (Borchhardt 1976) and equestrian monument base (Borchhardt and Ruggendorfer 2001), the Miho pectoral (Bernard 2000), the Nereid Monument (Childs and Demargne 1989), the Payava sarcophagus (Demargne 1974), and the Tatarlı tomb painting (Summerer and von Kienlin 2010. For seal-stone combat images see Tuplin 2020).

Basic Clothing

Pictorial source material reveals a fundamental distinction between figures wearing the "Persian robe" and those wearing riding costume (tunic and trousers) – Herodotus' "Median" dress (1.135; 7.62; Jacobs 1994). The former is very much more common among soldiers at Persepolis, and the robe may have been acceptable for ceremonial guard duty, but it is hard to believe it was worn in battle (Tuplin 2013: pp. 229–230). The possibility is never entertained in

Attic vase painting or relief sculpture from the western empire (or in narrative texts), but it does occur at Tatarlı (on a crowned figure) and in a number of seal-stone images (with various headgear: Tuplin 2020: pp. 352, 366–367). The robe is, of course, the garment of the king, the royal/heroic protagonist of face-to-face encounters with beasts and monsters (Figure 55.4), a trope reflected in some seal-stone combat scenes (Figure 21.6; 56.1b) and at Tatarlı (Tuplin 2020, pp. 354–355), and the armed figure on darics/*sigloi* (Kuhrt 2007: fig. 11.35; here Figures 57.2–57.6), and its appearance in military combat has a symbolic quality resonant with these parallels. Seal-stones combining it with the heavy cuirass and close-fitting headgear proper to trouser-wearing infantry display a peculiarly extreme intersection of symbol and reality.

We may take it that trousers were the norm for Persian soldiers in real warfare (Hdt. 5.49). With what regularity and intention these and the accompanying tunics were variegated by color or other decoration we do not know. Xen., *Cyr.* 8.3.3 envisages different colors in a ceremonial context. Hdt. 7.83 and Curtius 3.3.13 note the Immortals' opulent appearance; and Herodotus 8.113 assigns all Mardonius' Persians necklaces and armbands. The phenomenon attracted Greek criticism (Plut., *Aristid*.16; Curt. 3.2.12; 3.3.14; 3.10.9–10.10). For speculation about unit differentiation by color/design see Sekunda 1992. That differently colored *epithorakidia* could differentiate friend and foe is noted by Plutarch *Artoxerxes* 11 (Jacobs 1994: pp. 148–149). The *kandys*, a long coat with false sleeves, does not appear in combat images (though other cloaks sometimes appear on Attic vases and items showing strong Greek influence), but it will have been worn at other times: cf. the principal rider on the Limyra heroon frieze (Borchhardt 1976) or Darius at Issus (Arr., *An*. 2.11.5).

Offensive Weapons

Axes are poorly attested textually (Xen., *An*. 4.4.17) but appear in the hands of the king's weapon-bearer (Walser 1980: pl. 42, 44), on several seal-stones (normally carried in the back of an infantryman's cuirass but once used to execute a prisoner), and on some Attic vases (though only twice in use). They may have figured originally in combat scenes on the Alexander Sarcophagus and the Athena Nike balustrade. Slingers, by contrast, are well attested textually from the late fifth century BCE (Xen., *An*. 3.3.6, 15–17; 3.4.17; 7.8.18; *Oec.* 4.5; *Cyr.* 1.1.5; Nep., *Dat*. 8; Curt. 3.9.1; 4.4.15; 5.3.19; 5.6.18; 5.8.3; 7.6.2; Diod. 17.59, 110; Polyaen. 4.3.27; Strab. 15.3.19) but are absent from pictorial sources, at least in the hands of apparent Persian soldiers. (Achaemenid era sling bullets: Foss 1975; Weiss 1997; Brelaz 2007. But the slingers were not necessarily Persians.)

Swords/daggers come in various forms. A dagger with a distinctive assymetrical scabbard (Figure 81.1) carried slantwise in the belt of the Persian robe (Yoyotte 2010: p. 261 fig. 282–83; *here* Figure 94.8; Walser 1980: pl. 59–63, 75, 107 etc.; *here* Figure 94.6) is perhaps shown in use by quasi-royal figures at Tatarlı, on a combat seal (BM 132505), and on Type IV darics/*sigloi* (Kuhrt 2007: fig. 11.35; *here* Figure 57.5), though only the first has a scabbard and it is rather inaccurately represented. More important is the *akinakes*, a short weapon associated with the riding costume (Figures 50.1 and 55.5). The sheath hung from the belt and was tied to the leg, as we see from illustrations, read in Pollux 1.138, and might infer from Hdt. 7.61 (a detached sheath tip could be dangerous, as Cambyses discovered: Hdt. 3.64). The *akinakes* appears alongside clothing and jewelry among royal gifts (Xen., *An.* 1.2.27; 1.8.29; Hdt. 8.120; *here* Figure 50.2), is often associated with non-battlefield contexts – good for assassinations and brawls, though hardly, despite Polybius, fr. 54, lion killing – and is only occasionally visible on combat images (Tuplin 2020: pp. 353, 354, 369). Nonetheless it *is* a real military weapon. Its wide incidence among Iranians is evident from the subjects on royal tomb facades (Kuhrt 2007: fig. 11.5; *here* Figure 94.4) but not reflected in Herodotus' army catalog.

The *akinakes* is not the only salient sword type. Many sources refer to *sagareis*, *makhairai* or *kopides* (slashing swords) in the hands of cavalry and infantry
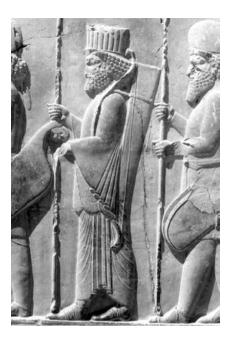

Figure 81.1 Persepolis, So-called Apadana, Eastern stairway, Delegation 2, detail (DAI Abt. Teheran, W Neg. KB 63-28).

(Xen., *An.* 1.8.7; 4.4.17; *Cyr.* 1.2.13; 2.1.9; 2.1.16; 2.3.17; 4.5.58; 5.2.1; 7.1.2; *RE* 12.11; Arr., *An.* 1.15.8; Plut., *Alex.* 16; Strab. 15.3.9), and they appear occasionally on Clazomenae sarcophagi (Cook 1981: G1, G11: horsemen) and seal-stone images (Tuplin 2020: pp. 348, 353, 369: infantry), and are rather common on Attic vase paintings (infantry). At Granicus, cavalrymen throw spears and then attack with swords (Arr., *An.* 1.15–16; Diod. 17.20); but sword-wielding horsemen are pictorially rare (Samarian coin: Mildenberg 1993: pl. 7.29; Meshorer and Qedar 1999: nos. 15, 40). Diodorus 17.53 says swords were lengthened before Gaugamela, and Curtius 3.3.6 claims Darius adjusted the *akinakes* sheath to a Greek model – two different versions of a basic idea that Persians belatedly sought to match their adversaries' weapons. Oddly, Xenophon had already said (*An.* 1.8.7) that Persian cavalry used Greek *makhairai*.

For Darius, spear and bow were the weapons in whose use a Persian should excel (DNb §9), and the spear's importance is evident from the observation that the "spear of the Persian man" went far (DNa §4). There are more spears than bows at Persepolis (Figures 81.2, 81.3, and 94.7), and elite infantrymen were "apple-bearers" (Hdt. 7.41; Heraclid. 689 F1; Arr., *An.* 3.11.5; Diod. 17.59.3) because of a feature of their spears – a special version of a feature perhaps found more widely. The Greek stereotype in which Hellenic spearmen confronted Persian archers (Aesch., *Pers.* 239–240, 803–822; Hdt. 9.62–9.63) is misleading (Konijnendijk 2012), and was not even much exploited in Attic vase painting, though the bow *was* a standard battlefield weapon for Persians

Figure 81.2 Persepolis, So-called Apadana, Eastern stairway, Inside parapet, Soldiers (DAI Abt. Teheran, Neg. R-1981-609).

Figure 81.3 Persepolis, Hall of 100 Columns, Door jamb, Soldier (Photo Jacobs 96-5-18).

in a way it was not for Greeks: hence the Cunaxa army, for example, divides into cavalry, shield-bearers, and archers (Xen., *An.* 1.8.9).

Spears are omnipresent in textual and iconographic sources, used both by infantry and cavalry and as both thrusting and throwing weapons. Actual spear heads of both types are known from Persepolis, and Deve Hüyük (Schmidt 1957: pl. 76; Moorey 1980: pp. 60–64). Herodotus (5.49, 97; 7.61, 211) intimates that Persian (infantry) spears were shorter than Greek, and Diodorus 17.53 claims that spears, not just swords, were lengthened before Gaugamela. But Attic vase painters do not reflect such claims, and other iconographic data do not obviously validate them: pictures at Persepolis and Naqš-i Rustam *do* make Persian spears look longer than those of some subject peoples, but unfortunately there are no spear-carrying Yaunā. Of course, even a small *differentia* could be significant. Greek sources regularly call the cavalryman's spear a *palton* (Xen., *An.* 1.8.27; *RE* 12.12; *Hell.* 3.4.14; *Cyr.* 1.2.9; 4.3.9, 12; 6.2.16; 7.1.2; 8.8.22; Arr., *An.* 1.15.2, 5), though *akontion* is also used (e.g. Hdt. 9.17, 43), and they sometimes indicate that he carried two (Xen., *An.* 1.5.15; 1.8.3; *Hell.* 3.4.14; *RE* 12.12; *Cyr.* 1.2.9). This also happens in the Murašu document cited earlier, but the phenomenon is rare in relevant iconographic evidence (Tuplin 2020: p. 349), where riders normally wield a single spear as a thrusting weapon, and cavalrymen regularly have a single *palton* in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (6.2.16; 7.1.2; 8.8.22).

Bows appear with two different quivers. In one model – attested at Susa and Persepolis and on seal-stones and coins, characteristically with the Persian robe – the soldier has a quiver hanging from his shoulder and when not using his bow, slips it over his arm so that quiver and bow are adjacent (Figure 81.3; cf. Figure 94.7). In the other model the soldier uses a combined bow-and-arrow case normally carried at the hip (Hdt. 7.61; Figures 50.1–50.2, 55.5, 56.2a, and 74.1). This object (*isuva-* in Persian, *apte* in Elamite: DNd; PF 1560) is now normally called a *gorytos*, although the word first appears in Homer (*Od.* 21.54) and is rarely used in Persian contexts, and our evidence about it is essentially pictorial. The *gorytos* is characteristically associated with riding costume – though some "nobles" on the Apadana frieze wear Persian robes but have a *gorytos* – and is thus appropriate to cavalrymen as well as to foot soldiers (Figure 94.6). But although examples of the former appear on the Athena Nike frieze, Attic vase paintings, Clazomenae sarcophagi, the Tatarlı painting, and occasional seal-stones (combat: Tuplin 2020: pp. 369, 423, 440; non-combat: Legrain 1951: nos. 772–773; BE 8.107 [Balzer 2007: D1a.5]; Bregstein 1993: no. 167 [Balzer 2007: U4b.9]) and coins (Casabonne 2004: Pl. 2.10; Debord 1999: VII 2), they are relatively rare (the Miho Persian horse archer has no *gorytos*, whereas his adversary does). This is unsurprising, as images of Persian horse archers in military contexts are rare, and their incidence in texts only modest (Hdt. 9.49; Xen., *An.* 3.3.10; *Cyr.* 4.3.12, 7.1.39; DNb does envisage the king shooting his bow on horseback). The *gorytos* is worn by many Persian infantrymen on Attic vase paintings, but not often in other media – one may note figures at Limyra (Zahle 1979: p. 343 no. 66) and Taymā' (Jacobs and Macdonald 2009; *here* Figure 38.1) – and neither on Attic vases nor (especially) elsewhere are Persian foot soldiers frequently shown shooting arrows at human adversaries. The Tatarlı painting, with 11 Persian warriors, of whom 10 shoot bows, is exceptional.

Persian bows were large (Hdt. 7.61; Xen., *An.* 3.4.16) and distinctive (Xen., *An.* 4.4.17), though how is unstated: they outshot Cretan archers, but the latter reused Persian arrows, so their bows were not radically different in type/size (3.4.16–3.4.17). The "Median" bows at Hdt. 7.66 should not logically differ from those of the Persian contingent (cf. 7.61–7.62), but many other Iranians are assigned distinct "native" styles of bow. Pictorial evidence pertinent to Persians offers two models. Both are recurve bows, but in one the overall profile is a simple convex curve, while in the other it is recessed around the hand-hold, producing a reversed-sigma effect. Both types appear at Tatarlı, the former wielded by infantry, the latter by cavalry as well as by the Persians' adversaries. Elsewhere the first type is characteristic of Susa guards and their Persepolitan equivalents (Zutterman 2003 thinks the latter have a smaller sub-type) and appears on several vase paintings and most combat-image seal-stones that figure a bow (Tuplin 2020: pp. 368–369), while the other type appears on the Miho jewel, is preferred on vase paintings (the sigma effect is not

always pronounced) but is less common on seal-stones – and never seen on royal monuments. Since the more elongated model accompanies the shoulder quiver and Persian robe, the other model belongs with the *gorytos*. Attic vase painters sometimes get this wrong, since the shoulder quiver is unknown to them. When Herodotus 7.61 speaks of "large" bows but of quivers worn at the waist he may be guilty of a similar category confusion. Zutterman 2003: p. 139 suggests Persians also used a smaller antecedent to the Parthian-era Baguz (Yrzi) bow, but the evidence seems debatable. In any event, the bows they did use were equal or superior to those of earlier Near Eastern powers (Zutterman 2003: p. 148).

Defensive Weapons

Hdt. 9.63 sees Persians as light-armed troops compared with hoplites. Actual light-armed troops occasionally appear in satrapal forces (Nep., *Dat.* 8; Polyaen. 7.27.1; Hell. Oxy. 14.4,6; Diod. 14.99; cf. Ctes. 688 F9[5]), though whether these are Persian is debatable. In any case, as a general categorization of Persian fighters (Diod. 14.23) "light-armed" risks misapprehension. The general thrust of *Cyropaedia* is that Persians had more solid troops than other easterners.

   Pictorial evidence records four shields: (i) a large, nearly man-high rectilinear shield made of vertical poles or narrow planks (Persepolis doorways, some vase-paintings: Head 1992: fig. 9); (ii) a figure-of-eight shield (a few guard figures at Persepolis: Schmidt 1953: pl. 22, 25A, 26A, 62F; Head 1992: fig. 6d; *here* Figure 81.2); (iii) half-moon *peltai*: the most common type on vase paintings (sometimes with wicker effect); also seen on the Alexander sarcophagus (von Graeve 1970: pl. 27–30; Head 1992: fig. 29bc). Some think this is a real Persian weapon (Sekunda 1992: pp. 21–22), others may suspect a purely iconographic borrowing from Scythian-Amazonian imagery: cf. Miller 2011; (iv) a round shield, seen on the Alexander Sarcophagus (von Graeve 1970: pl. 32–34, 42, 44–45; Head 1992: fig. 29), a couple of vase paintings, the Kinch Tomb (Pfrommer 1998: pl. 27), a Samarian coin (Meshorer and Qedar 1999: no. 50). In the textual evidence Herodotus' Persians have no *aspides* (5.97, 7.61) – the word for a Greek shield – but only *gerrha*, a term he later uses for objects that make a wall to shelter archers (9.61–9.62, 99, 102). Xenophon calls these "large *gerrha*" (*Cyr.* 8.5.10). Ordinary *gerrhon*-carriers (*Oec.* 4.5; *An.* 1.8.9; *Cyr. passim*) evidently carry something more like ordinary shields (and appropriate to cavalry as well as to infantry: 4.5.58). Since all Herodotean Persians carry *gerrha* but only some can have formed a shield wall, one wonders whether others carried smaller *gerrha*. Other authors occasionally ascribe *aspides* to Persians (Arr., *An.* 2.11.6; 3.15.5; 7.13.2; Diod. 11.7.2–11.7.3) or envisage Persian peltasts (Xen., *Cyr.*

5.3.38–5.3.41; 5.5.3; 6.3.24–6.3.26; 8.5.10; Ctes. 688 F9; Heraclid. 689 F2; Plut., *Art.* 24; Diod. 11.7.2–11.7.3). Xenophon sometimes implicitly pictures peltasts with *gerrha* (*Cyr.* 1.2.13; 1.5.5; 2.1.9, 16), so peltasts and *gerrhophoroi* may not be fundamentally different, even if not all small *gerrha* were half-moons. (Strabo 15.3.19 calls them rhomboid.) We do not know whether Persians ever used a bossed shield resembling the head gear of so-called *Yaunā takabarā* (Rollinger 2006), or what characterized the *tukšu* attributed to Iranian troops in the Nabonidus Chronicle iii 16. That horsemen carried shields (textually attested, but not pictorially, unless on a "Persian Rider" figure from Memphis: Petrie 1909: pl.xxix.84) is doubtful (Tuplin 2010: pp. 169–170).

Herodotus assigns Persians scale-covered cuirasses (7.61; 9.22; Strab. 15.3.19), claiming this imitated Egyptian practice (1.135), and armor scales do survive at Persepolis (Schmidt 1957: pl. 77) and Pasargadae (Stronach 1978: fig. 96). The apparent imputation of 8.113 that Immortals were *not* cuirass-wearers (perhaps even that few *were* in that class) is disconcerting. In Xenophon, the cuirass is a feature of infantry (*Cyr.* 1.2.13; 2.1.9,16; 2.3.17; 6.3.24; 7.1.10; 7.5.3 and 8.5.11-12 even speak of *hoplitai*) and cavalry (Xen., *Cyr.* 4.3.9; 4.5.58; 7.1.2; 8.8.22; *An.* 1.8.9, 26; 3.4.35; cf. Diod. 14.22.6; Plut., *Artox.* 9,11); in the Alexander historians, of cavalry (Arr., *An* 1.15.2,5,8; 2.11.3; Diod. 17.20.5; Plut., *Alex.* 16) but not infantry, apart from the "hoplite" Cardaces (below). Pictorial evidence offers a distinctive cuirass with neck guard worn by cavalry (Çan, Miho, and several seal-stones [Tuplin 2020: pp. 366, 367, 369, 386] – but in others the neck guard seems to be missing) and infantry (seal-stones only). This model – distinct from the thing in Xen., *RE* 12.2, for which cf. a non-Persian figure from Bozkir: Sekunda 1992: p. 95 – is ignored by Attic vase painters, though may occur in the Alexander Mosaic (Pfrommer 1998: p. 77 n. 518). The Çan example was leather-covered wicker (Sevinç et al. 2001: p. 395 Fig. 12), and there were no scales. For that one looks to an Attic vase (Raeck 1981: P580: infantry) and the tentative restoration of a Persian-garbed figure from Limyra (Borchhardt and Ruggendorfer 2001); but other vase paintings put Persians in Greek-style cuirasses, as do the Alexander sarcophagus (Gable D) and Nereid Monument (BM 879). Arm and leg protectors (cf. Xen., *RE* 12.5) may be discerned on non-combat figures on a Cilician coin (Mildenberg 1993: pl. 11.92; Casabonne 2004: pl. 3.23), a vase painting of an Amazon (Sekunda 1992: p. 28), and two seals (Collon 1987: no. 741; Sekunda 1992: p. 49). More certain is the appearance at Karaburun, Yeniceköy, and Xanthus (Bernard 1964) of the horseman's thigh guard (*parameridion*) of which Xenophon speaks (*RE* 12.8, *An.* 1.8.7; *Cyr.* 7.1.2; cf. 6.1.50, 6.4.1, 8.8.22), while the horse's forehead and chest protector (also in Xenophon) have been detected on some terracotta "Persian riders" (e.g. Erlich 2006: p. 47) – a problematic category

(Moorey 2000; Tuplin 2010: pp. 107–108) – and the Çan sarcophagus (Sevinç et al. 2001: p. 396, fig. 11–12). The Issus horsemen whose heavy armament hampered flight (Arr., *An.* 2.11.3) presumably had the full range of helmet, cuirass, and other accoutrements. But the horses with scale armor in Curtius 3.11.15, 4.9.3 arguably represent a late Achaemenid model more intimately connected with Central Asia (Arr., *An.* 3.13.4). We touch here on the antecedents of Parthian cataphracts (Potts 2007. For the implications of armor for breeds of horse used by the Persian military see Gabrielli 2006: pp. 25–34).

Herodotus ascribes Persian infantrymen a form of soft hat he calls the *tiara* (7.61). This corresponds to a headgear associated with the Iranian riding costume, and – in many variants – widely represented in pictorial evidence. But there are other possibilities. Herodotus (7.84: strangely circumlocutory) and Xenophon (*An.* 1.8.9; *Cyr.* 7.1.2) indicate that Persian cavalrymen had metal helmets (cf. the Murašu text above; and perhaps Diod. 17.83.5; Curt. 7.4.33), and *Cyr.* 6.4.1 *might* imply infantry sometimes did too. Military wearers of the Persian robe at Susa and Persepolis have a rope-like diadem (perhaps Herodotus' Cissian *mitra*; *here* Figure 94.7), a feather crown (Figure 81.3), or a low, plain head band. Similar things occur on coins (Casabonne 2004: fig. 2.4, 9; 3.3; Debord 1999: pl. VII 4, 5; VIII 6) and seal-stones (PTS 24; Frankfort 1939: pl. XXXVIIc; von der Osten 1934: no. 462; Boardman 2007: fig. 289, pl. 877; Ghirshman 1964: fig. 330), where we also find a close-fitting cap of rounded profile, especially alongside the neck-guard cuirass (Tuplin 2020: p. 366). Seal-stone cavalrymen with neck-guard cuirass (and trousers), by contrast, often have close-fitting headgear of square profile, seen also on the Çan sarcophagus, where it may be reinforced leather (Sevinç et al. 2001: p. 395 Fig. 12). There is an infantry/cavalry distinction here that is unreflected in written sources: admittedly the Miho cavalryman does not entirely conform, the headgear being slightly rounded. One seal-stone horseman is given a Greek-style crested *pilos* (Tuplin 2020: pp. 336–337, 367) – possibly an artistic sport, but conceivably justified by the quasi-conical headgear on the Yeniceköy stele (Nollé 1992: F5), a similar thing lost at Marathon (Head fig. 17[a]), and Xenophon's helmets with white crests (*Cyr.* 7.1.2). The "tower-like felt hat" (*pilēma purgōton*) in Strab.15.3.19, where we expect a Herodotean *tiara*, is puzzling.

The Elements of an Army

Discussion of clothing and equipment disaggregates military events, which involve an intersection of equipment, troop types and tactical deployment. How were Persian fighting forces constituted and used on the battlefield?

One answer is that they must include distinctively Persian soldiers but might include distinctively non-Persian and non-Iranian ones. This is true not only of armies from the center (e.g. Hdt. 6.43, 95; Diod. 11.60, 75): Aristagoras' expedition against Naxos (Hdt. 5.32) or Aryandes' against Cyrene/Barca (4.167) are examples, as is Autophradates' army (Nep., *Dat.* 8), and intra-satrapy defensive forces probably characteristically mixed Persians – especially (not necessarily entirely: cf. Xen., *Hell.* 3.2.16) cavalry – and others (Tuplin 2016). Our focus here is on Persians, but so far as use goes, narratives rarely say anything that individuates the performance of the others: the report that Sacan cavalry excelled at Plataea (Hdt. 9.71) characteristically corresponds to nothing in the actual narrative. Sometimes the secondary importance of the variegated mass of soldiers is explicit (Arr., *An.* 2.8.8), but once a battle narrative begins, ethnicity normally recedes behind troop type as the organizing principle. (A partial exception is "mercenary," which may have ethnic implications, though they are not always articulated.)

Scythe-bearing chariots appear at Cunaxa (1.7.10; 1.8.10, 20), Gaugamela (Arr., *An.* 3.8.6; Diod. 17.53; Curt. 4.9.4; 4.12.9–4.12.12; 4.15.14–4.15.17; Front. 2.3.19; FGrH 151 F1 [12–13]), and in a skirmish near Dascylium (Xen., *Hell.* 4.1.17–4.1.19), and figure as a novel military resource in *Cyropaedia* (6.1.27–6.1.30; 7.1.29–7.1.32). Their effectiveness as a means of disrupting the enemy's battle order seems limited: Xen., *An.* 1.8.20; Arr., *An.* 3.13.5–3.13.6; Diod. 17.57.5–17.57.6; 17.58.2–17.58.5; Curt. 4.15.14–4.15.17 (see Nefiodkin 2004, for whom – following Xenophon, Nic.Dam. 90 F66 [31] and Arr., *Tact.* 19 – the scythe chariot is a Persian invention). Contemporary pictorial evidence does not show such chariots. Instead at Tatarlı the chariot is a fighting platform for archers, and at Limyra a conveyance for Perikle (Borchhardt and Ruggendorfer 2001) – and it was both for Darius at Issus and Gaugamela (Arr., *An.* 2.11.5; 3.15.5; Plut., *Alex.* 20; Diod. 17.34.3; 17.60.1; Curt. 3.11.7; 4.15.30).

The chariot's varied character and function has parallels in other army elements. In the case of infantry we note (i) the 10 000 "Immortals" and smaller elite groups with spear butts formed as pomegranates/apples (Hdt. 7.41), (ii) the Cardaces, and (iii) the broad distinction between archers and spearmen.

At Thermopylae, Immortals are deployed only when Medes and Elamites fail (Hdt. 7.211), and are equally unsuccessful at uphill attack on a restricted front. Their contribution is not clearly delineated at Plataea (if they *were* central, this may be partly an accident of pre-battle maneuvers and distinctive topography), and thereafter Immortals as such disappear from battle narratives, rendering discussion of their tactical function problematic. But the Apple-bearers with Darius at Gaugamela (Arr., *An.* 3.11.5; 3.16.1) should be a sub-section or a separate unit recruited from their number, and the 40 000 infantry

and 3000 bodyguard cavalry with him at Issus (Curt. 3.9.4) sound like an inflated version of the royal entourage in Hdt. 7.41 and may include the Immortals (cf. 3.3.13 for their continued existence). At Cunaxa, by contrast, we only hear of cavalry with the king (1.7.11; 1.8.24): this is a particular case of the surprising absence of Immortals and Apple-bearers in Xenophon – unless the former appear untitled in *Cyr.* 7.5.68. The royal "patrolling army" of Isocrates 4.145 perhaps had Immortals as its core. The idea that not all Persian troops were of equal status/quality is already assumed in Hdt. 9.31. The role of the 1000 Apple-bearers as the king's most personal guard reflects their commander's role as principal controller of access to the king (Keaveney 2010). It is reasonable to assume some link between these elite units and soldiers depicted at Susa and Persepolis (some archer-spearmen, others just spearmen), though precise identifications can only be speculative.

Cardaces are encountered in narrative sources only in Nepos, *Datames* 8 (foot soldiers, slingers), and, as "barbarian hoplites," in Arrian's account of Issus (Arr., *An.* 2.8.6). Strabo (15.3.18) associates the name with young Persians undergoing military training, Hellenistic sources report Cardaces in Seleucid armies (Polyb. 5.79.11; 5.82.11; Segre 1938: p. 150), and lexicographers gloss them as guards, mercenaries, or soldiers undefined by nation/locality (Photius s.v., Hesychius s.v., Eustathius ad *Iliad* 2.289). We might infer that Cardaces were recruited from across ethnic groups into uniformly trained barbarian infantry regiments (Briant 1999: pp. 120–122; 2002: pp. 1036–1037). Charles (2012), meanwhile, assimilates them to the (provincial) archers, slingers, and *gerrhophoroi* of Xen., *Oec.* 4.5. Either way, their rare appearance is puzzling, their equipment is presumably of standard Persian sort (but unknown in detail: Callisthenes (FGrH 124 F35) *may* imply they could be categorized as peltasts as well as hoplites), and they may have been annihilated at Issus (see further Tuplin 2014).

Herodotus imagined Median infantry divided into spearmen and archers (1.103), but the Susa guardsman is both, as are the Persians of Hdt. 7.61 and other pictorially-attested figures (primarily those following the Susa Guard model; *here* Figure 94.7), as well as the royal hero of Type III darics/*sigloi* (Kuhrt 2007: fig. 11.35; *here* Figure 57.4). Moreover, the men who fire from behind a shield wall also fight hand to hand (Hdt. 9.62). But Xenophon distinguishes between *gerrhon* carriers and archers at Cunaxa and in *Oec.* 4.5 (adding slingers), and between cuirass wearers and peltasts/archers in *Cyropaedia*; Heraclides 689 F2 has *doruphoroi* and peltasts at the royal court, and the pictorial evidence outside Susa/Persepolis invites a distinction between cuirass wearers and others, though this does not map simply onto a non-archer/archer distinction, partly because of the comparative paucity of bow users in military images. In Herodotus there is a tactical distinction between those who use *gerrha* to create a shield wall and those (more numerous) who

fire arrows from behind. The shield wall disappears after Mycale, but Xenophon (*Cyr.* 6.3.23–6.3.24) imagines a battle order in which archers and spearmen shoot from behind a line of cuirass wearers (cf. 8.5.12). In reality, notwithstanding Dieneces' witticism (Hdt. 7.226), the arrow barrage is not especially effective at Marathon (the Athenian run neutralized it), Cunaxa (the enemy fled before the Greeks were in bow shot: Xen., *An.* 1.8.19), or Issus (Arr., *An.* 2.10.3; Diod. 17.33), and the primary impression created by battle-order descriptions is of distinct categories of effective troops being adjacent to one another, so that (Arr., *An.* 3.11.3) cavalry and infantry might be intermixed. Of course, ineffective troops were behind the main line (Arr., *An.* 2.8.8) and chariots in front of it as at Cunaxa and Gaugamela. Curtius' javelin throwers and slingers in front of the main line at Issus (3.9.5) are aberrant. The "separate" cavalry at Plataea (Hdt. 9.32) is hard to relate to the battle narrative. When harassing the enemy from a distance, archers and javelin throwers have a significant role. Otherwise ballistics are not demonstrably strategically central. The lance and sword mattered as much as the bow.

There were elite cavalry units (Hdt. 7.41; Curt. 4.9.7, 25; 4.12.1, 18; Diod. 17.59.2), but nothing indicates that they had special military characteristics. Pictorial evidence suggests a general distinction between heavy and light cavalry: the distinguishing feature is the cuirass, shown in some actual combat scenes but not in others, and never seen elsewhere – the iconic charging horseman on West Anatolian tetradrachms of late Achaemenid times (Mildenberg 1993: fig. 13.116–13.123) is unarmored. Textual evidence indicates that cavalry might skirmish or attack an adversary head-on. But does this distinction, explicit in Arr., *An.* 3.15.1–3.15.2 and implicit elsewhere, reify a pictorial distinction of cavalry type that is not at all plain in those narratives? Arguably not (Tuplin 2010: pp. 165–171), at least where properly Persian cavalry is concerned. But Iranian-style cavalry might also be Sacan, Hyrcanian, Bactrian, Median, Dahan, or Arachosian (Hdt. 8.113; 9.71; Xen., *An.* 7.8.15; Diod. 17.19.4; Arr., *An.* 3.10.3; Curt. 4.11.6–4.11.7), and typological variation was possible – Scythians could be heavily armored (Arr., *An.* 3.13.4), Hyrcanians perhaps were not (Xen., *Cyr.* 4.2.21) – so a strictly Persian perspective may be misleading here. At the same time cavalry use in pictorial images varies little with difference in armament (except that the rare cavalry-archers are not heavily cuirassed); and the message about real-world tactics to take from images of a single horseman attacking a single foot soldier or the horseman's occasional accompaniment by a light-armed companion (Karaburun, Çan, Miho) is debatable. Cavalry does figure in a good proportion of recorded military actions; and, by contemporary Greek (and perhaps other) standards, it sometimes formed a very high proportion of the fighting men present, as at "Second Marathon" (sch. Dem. 4.19), Granicus, and perhaps Gaugamela. But there is little sign of tactical imagination or of flexibility or

specialization in the combination of cavalry with other arms (the latter often ill-defined anyway); and although narratives of Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela may over-privilege the cavalry, one suspects that fine-tuning such combinations was not a special consideration. But, in truth, the evidence is simply not granular enough for us to be sure. The contrast between Diodorus' Issus, where the entire front is apparently cavalry – as at Centrites (Xen., *An.* 4.3.3) or Granicus – and other sources, where it is not, typifies the challenge of analyzing Persian battle tactics.

The Persian approach to fighting was uncomplicated: advance against or await the adversary and fight hand to hand once contact was made. Each occasion has distinctive features, but it is difficult to say anything substantial about the precise way in which specific troop categories, infantry or equestrian, contributed in the heat of battle. Herodotus' remark about spear-breaking and loose-order sallies at Plataea (9.62) offers an unusual degree of detail. Arrian's characterization of cavalry fighting at Granicus (1.15.4) and Gaugamela (3.15.1–3.15.2) as abnormal is interesting – but one wonders whether Issus was that dissimilar (Arr., *An.* 2.11.2–2.11.3). The deliberate retention of cavalry for a deadlock-breaking intervention at Malene (Hdt. 6.29) is an exceptional piece of tactical planning. Assyrian parallels suggest that the shield wall should be conjoined with flanking cavalry movements (Fagan 2010: p. 96), but Herodotus does not indicate that at all clearly, and it cannot have applied at Mycale, where there was no cavalry. The accounts of Plataea, Gaugamela, or Cunaxa do convey that a large battle is the sum of distinct engagements dictated by planning, reaction, and chance. Granicus is much simpler, Issus somewhere in between. In all we get single-combat vignettes and imaginative general evocations. But here and elsewhere the strategic and tactical calculations, and their relationship to troop categories, seem banal – when observable at all: the overwhelming majority of Persian military actions reach us in narratives that provide no material for analysis. Herodotus imagines Mardonius criticizing the way Greeks fought battles (7.9), but he may be meant to be talking nonsense, and we can infer no Herodotean insight into the (different) way in which Persians did so. The underlying contrast between those who fight to conquer and those who do it for conflict resolution is a different matter.

Fleet

Given the length of their coastline, Herodotus' view that Persians were not sea-farers (1.143) cannot have been entirely accurate. But, in the absence of evidence about operations in the Gulf, it is true that the only specifically Iranian contribution to naval warfare comes from the Persian, Median, and

Sacan infantrymen carried on each ship (Hdt. 7.96). The ships themselves and those who operated them came from Anatolia, Cyprus, the Levant, and Egypt, and the only issue is whether the ships were the property of the king or the nations from whose harbors they sailed. The only text that addresses this question, Diod. 11.3.7, affirms the former solution: the king provided hulls, the subjects crews (for defense of this view, with arguments of varying weight, cf. Wallinga 1987). Otherwise, though the king may order shipbuilding (Hdt. 6.49, 95; Xen., *Hell.* 3.4.1; Diod. 11.2.3; 11.62.1; 11.71.6; 11.75.2; 14.98.3–14.98.4; 17.7.2), our narratives label fleets or their components Greek, Phoenician, Cilician, Egyptian, or Cypriot (when they apply labels at all), and the Persians' acquisition of naval military capacity – by Cambyses (Hdt. 3.13; 4.19, 44) – was certainly predicated on existing eastern Mediterranean resources and skills. Of course, Persian money and ambition enabled a greater realization of those resources and skills. Over the following two centuries fleets contributed in varying degrees to military operations in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Transdanubian Scythia, Cyprus, the Levant, coastal Anatolia, and mainland Greece. Herodotus imagined a war fleet of 1207 ships in 480 BCE. Numbers for other substantial fleets vary from 600 (Hdt. 4.87; 6.6, 9, 95; Phanodemus ap. Plut., *Cim.*12) to 200 (Hdt. 5.30), with 300 a favorite figure (Ctes. 14[37]; Xen., *Hell.* 3.4.1; Diod. 11.75.2; 15.2.1; 15.41.3; 16.22.2; 16.40.6; 17.29.2), and stray examples of 350 (Ephorus ap. Plut., *Cim.* 12) and 400 (Arr., *An.* 1.18.5, 7). After the collapse of the Athenian Empire and (especially) the King's Peace, Persia had the naval advantage but failed to exploit it against Alexander, despite the latter's disbandment of his fleet. A special cachet attached to Phoenician ships (Hdt. 3.19, 136; 6.6, 14; 7.44, 100; 9.96; Arr., *An.* 2.17.3), though Cilicia could be an operating base (Hdt. 5.108; 6.43, 95; Diod. 11.75.2; 11.77.1; 14.39.4; 15.2.2; Wallinga 1987), and something similar is said of Cyme/Phocaea (Diod. 11.2.3; 11.27.1; 15.2.2). Persian warships were always triremes, but some believe that Phoenicians built them differently from Greeks (notably in not having an out-rigger), so that a mixed Persian fleet would combine distinct models, and some "Persian" ships would differ from, for example, Athenian ones. A few written texts suggest – if not consistently (and never in reference to out-riggers) – a distinction in appearance/performance between all "Persian" ships and Greek/Athenian ones (Hdt. 8.10, 60a; Plut., *Them.* 14; Diod. 11.61.1–11.61.2; Polyaen. 1.34; Front. 2.9.10) and, complicatingly, there is an issue about post-479 BCE changes in Athenian trireme design (Thuc. 1.14,49; Plut., *Cim.* 12), which intersects with Plut., *Them.* 14. Debate is hampered by lack of clear contemporary images and uncertainty about the technical exactitude of such images as there are – warships from the Persian sphere appear on sealings from Persepolis (PTS 32) and Susa (Amiet 1973: pl. 16.73) and coins from

Sidon, Byblos, and Aradus, but those who think Phoenician ships had a different oarage system are in the minority. It is unlikely that all triremes from the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean were always identical, and differences might have extended beyond decorative matters (e.g. the presence of *pataeci* or shield rows on Phoenician ships) to the lateral extent of decking or height above water level. But outside Salamis (a special case topographically and historiographically), the admittedly uncircumstantial narratives do not suggest that such variations made a significant difference to tactics or outcomes when "Persian" fleets clashed with "Greek" adversaries.

REFERENCES

Amiet, P. (1973). Glyptique élamite, à propos de nouveaux documents. *Arts Asiatiques*, 26, pp. 3–64.

Armayor, O.K. (1978). Herodotus' catalogues of the Persian empire. *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 108, pp. 1–9.

Balzer, W. (2007). *Achaimenidische Kunst aus Babylonien: Die Siegel der Keilschriftarchive: Ikonographie. Stile. Chronologie* (Doctoral Dissertation). München.

Bernard, P. (1964). Une pièce d'armure perse sur un monument lycien. *Syria*, 41, pp. 195–212.

Bernard, P. (2000). Un torque achéménide avec une inscription grècque au Musée Miho (Japon). *Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres – Comptes rendus des séances de l'année*, pp. 1371–1437.

Boardman, J. (2007). *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* (new expanded edition). London: Thames & Hudson.

Borchhardt, J. (1976). *Die Bauskulptur des Heroons von Limyra: Das Grabmal Königs Perikles*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag.

Borchhardt, J., Ruggendorfer, P. (2001). Neufunde zur reliefierten Basis des Reiterstandbildes von Zêmuri. In T. Bakir (ed.), *Achaemenid Anatolia* (Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 92). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, pp. 135–146.

Bregstein, L.B. (1993). *Seal Use in Fifth Century B.C. Nippur, Iraq: A Study of Seal Selection and Sealing Practices in the Murašu Archive*, Pt. 2, UMI Dissertation Information Service.

Brelaz, C. (2007). Des balles de fronde à Daskyleion: armes de guerre ou armes de chasse? *Anatolia Antiqua*, 15, pp. 71–82.

Briant, P. (1999). The Achaemenid empire. In K. Raaflaub, N. Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica* (Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia 3). Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, pp. 105–128.

Briant, P. (2002). *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Casabonne, O. (2004). *La Cilicie à l'époque achéménide* (Persika 3). Paris: de Boccard.

Casabonne, O., Gabrielli, M. (2007). A note on Persian armours. In I. Delemen (ed.), *The Achaemenid Impact on Local Populations and Culture in Anatolia*. Istanbul: Turkish Institute of Archaeology, pp. 265–270.

Charles, M.B. (2012). Herodotus, body armour and Achaemenid infantry. *Historia*, 61, pp. 257–269.

Childs, W.A.P., Demargne, P. (1989). *Fouilles de Xanthos VIII: Le Monument des Néréides. Le décor sculpté*. Paris: Klincksieck.

Collon, D. (1987). *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*. London: British Museum Publications.

Cook, R.M. (1981). *Clazomenian Sarcophagi* (Kerameus 3). Mainz: von Zabern.

Debord, P. (1999). *L'Asie Mineure au IVe siècle (412–323 a.C.): Pouvoirs et jeux politiques* (Ausonius – Publications: Études 3). Bordeaux: de Boccard.

Demargne, P. (1974). *Fouilles de Xanthos V: Tombes-maisons, tombes rupestres et sarcophages*. Paris: Klincksieck.

Erlich, A. (2006). The Persian period terracotta figurines from Maresha in Idumea: local and regional aspects. *Transeuphratène*, 32, pp. 45–59.

Fagan, G.G. (2010). "I fell upon him like a furious arrow": toward a reconstruction of the Assyrian tactical system. In M. Trundle, G.G. Fagan (eds.), *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare* (History of Warfare 59). Leiden: Brill, pp. 81–100.

Foss, C. (1975). A bullet of Tissaphernes. *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 95, pp. 25–30.

Frankfort, H. (1939). *Cylinder Seals*. London: Macmillan.

Gabrielli, M. (2006). *Le cheval dans l'empire achéménide* (Studia ad Orientem Antiquum Pertinentia 1). Istanbul: Ege Yayınları.

Ghirshman, R. (1964). *Persia: from the Origins to Alexander the Great*. London: Thames & Hudson.

von Graeve, V. (1970). *Der Alexandersarkophag und seine Werkstatt* (Istanbuler Forschungen 28). Berlin: Gebrüder Mann.

Harrison, E.B. (1972). The south frieze of the Nike temple and the Marathon painting in the Painted Stoa. *American Journal of Archaeology*, 76, pp. 353–378.

Head, D. (1992). *The Achaemenid Persian Army*. Stockport: Montvert Publications.

Jacobs, B. (1994). Drei Beiträge zu Fragen der Rüstung und Bekleidung in Persien zur Achämenidenzeit. *Iranica Antiqua*, 29, pp. 125–167.

Jacobs, B. (2014). Bildkunst als Zeugnis für Orientierung und Konsens innerhalb der Eliten des westlichen Achämenidenreichs. In R. Rollinger, K. Schnegg (eds.), *Kulturkontakte in antiken Welten: Vom Denkmodell zum Fallbeispiel. Proceedings des Internationalen Kolloquiums aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstags von Christoph Ulf, Innsbruck, 26.-30. Januar 2009* (Colloquia Antiqua 10). Leuven: Peeters, pp. 343–368.

Jacobs, B., Macdonald, M.C.A. (2009). Felszeichnung eines Reiters aus der Umgebung von Taymā'. *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie*, 2, pp. 364–376.

Keaveney, A. (2010). The chiliarch and the person of the king. In B. Jacobs, R. Rollinger (eds.), *Der Achämenidenhof – The Achaemenid Court* (Classica et Orientalia 2). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 499–508.

Konijnendijk, R. (2012). 'Neither the less valorous nor the weaker': Persian military might and the Battle of Plataia. *Historia*, 61, pp. 1–17.

Kuhrt, A. (2007). *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period*, 2 vols. London/New York: Routledge.

Legrain, L. (1951). *Seal Cylinders* (Ur Excavation 10). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mellink, M. (1972). Excavations at Karataş-Semayük and Elmalı, Lycia, 1971. *American Journal of Archaeology*, 76, pp. 256–279.

Meshorer, L., Qedar, S. (1999). *Samarian Coinage* (Numismatic Studies and Researches 9). Jerusalem: Israel Numismatic Society.

Mildenberg, L. (1993). Über das Münzwesen im Reich der Achämeniden. *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 26, pp. 55–79.

Miller, M.C. (2011). Imaging Persians in the age of Herodotus. In R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler, *Herodot und das persische Weltreich – Herodotus and the Persian Empire* (Classica et Orientalia 3). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 123–158.

Miller, S.G. (2010). Two painted chamber tombs of Northern Lycia at Kızılbel and Karaburun. In L. Summerer, A. von Kienlin (eds.), *Tatarlı: Renklerin Dönüşü/The Return of Colours/Rückkehr der Farben*. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, pp. 318–329.

Moorey, P.R.S. (1980). *Cemeteries of the First Millennium BC at Deve Hüyük, Near Carchemish* (British Archaeological Reports – International Series 87). Oxford: BAR Verlag.

Moorey, P.R.S. (2000). Iran and the west: the case of the terracotta Persian riders in the Achaemenid empire. In R. Dittmann, B. Hrouda, U. Löw, et al. (eds.), *Variatio delectat: Iran und der Westen. Gedenkschrift für Peter Calmeyer* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 272). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, pp. 469–486.

Nefiodkin, A.K. (2004). Origins of the scythed chariot. *Historia*, 53, pp. 369–378.

Nollé, M. (1992). *Denkmäler vom Satrapensitz Dasyleion* (Antike in der Moderne 2). Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

von der Osten, H.H. (1934). *Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 22). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Petrie, W.F.M. (1909). *The Palace of Apries (Memphis II)* (Publications of the Egyptian Research Account XVII). London: School of Archaeology in Egypt.

Pfrommer, M. (1998). *Untersuchungen zur Chronologie und Komposition des Alexandermosaiks auf antiquarischer Grundlage* (Aegyptiaca Treverensia 8). Mainz: von Zabern.

Potts, D. (2007). *Cataphractus* and *kamāndār*: some thoughts on the dynamic evolution of heavy cavalry and mounted archers in Iran and Central Asia. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute – New Series*, 21, pp. 149–158.

Raeck, W. (1981). *Zum Barbarenbild in der Kunst Athens im 6. und 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Habelts Dissertationsdrucke – Reihe Klassische Archäologie 14). Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag.

Rollinger, R. (2006). *Yaunā takabarā* und *maginnāta* tragende Ionier: Zum Problem der griechischen Thronträgerfiguren in Naqsch-i Rustam und Persepolis.

In R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg (eds.), *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante – Festschrift Peter W. Haider* (Oriens et Occidens 12). Stuttgart: Steiner, pp. 365–400.

Schmidt, E.F. (1953). *Persepolis – I. Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 68). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Schmidt, E.F. (1957). *Persepolis – II. Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 69). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Segre, M. (1938). Iscrizioni di Licia. *Clara Rhodos*, 9, pp. 181–208.

Sekunda, N.V. (1992). *The Persian Army, 560–330 BC*. London: Osprey.

Sevinç, N., Körpe, R., Tombul, M., Rose, C.B., Strahan, D., Kiesewetter, H., and Wallrodt, J. (2001). A new painted Graeco-Persian sarcophagus from Çan. *Studia Troica*, 11, pp. 383–420.

Stronach, D. (1978). *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Summerer, L., von Kienlin, A. (eds.) (2010). *Tatarlı: Renklerin Dönüşü/The Return of Colours/Rückkehr der Farben*. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

Tuplin, C.J. (2010). All the King's horse: in search of the Achaemenid Persian cavalry. In G.G. Fagan, M. Trundle (eds.), *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 101–182.

Tuplin, C.J. (2013). Intolerable clothes and a terrifying name: the characteristics of an Achaemenid invasion force. In C. Carey, M. Edwards (eds.), *Marathon: 2500 Years. Proceedings of the Marathon Conference 2010*. London: ICS, pp. 223–239.

Tuplin, C.J. (2014). From Arshama to Alexander: reflections on Persian responses to attack. In S. Gaspa, A. Greco, D. Morandi Bonacossi, S. Ponchia, and R. Rollinger, (eds.), *From Source to History: Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond, Dedicated to Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 412). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, pp. 669–696.

Tuplin, C.J. (2016). The Persian military establishment in western Anatolia: a context for Celaenae. In A. Ivantchik, L. Summerer, and A. von Kienlin (eds.), *Kelainai-Apameia Kibotos: une métropole achéménide, hellénistique et romaine*. Bordeaux: Ausonius éditions, pp. 15–27.

Tuplin, C.J. (2020). Sigillography and soldiers: cataloguing military activity on Achaemenid period seals. In E.R.M. Dusinberre, M.B. Garrison, and W.F.M. Henkelman (eds.), *The Art of Empire in Achaemenid Persia – Studies in Honour of Margaret Cool Root* (Achaemenid History 16). Leiden, Leuven: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, pp. 329–459.

Wallinga, H.T. (1987). The ancient Persian navy and its predecessors. In H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (ed.), *Sources, Structures and Synthesis* (Achaemenid History 1). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, pp. 47–77.

Walser, G. (1980). *Persepolis: Die Königspfalz des Darius*. Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth.

Weiss, P. (1997). Schleuderbleie und Marktgewichte. *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, pp. 143–156.

Yoyotte, J. (2010). La statue égyptienne de Darius. In J. Perrot (ed.), *Le palais de Darius à Suse: Une résidence royale sur la route de Persépolis à Babylone*. Paris: PUPS, pp. 256–287.

Zahle, J. (1979). Lykische Felsgräber mit Reliefs aus dem 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.: Neue und alte Funde. *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, 94, pp. 245–346.

Zutterman, C. (2003). The bow in the ancient Near East: a re-evaluation of archery from the Late 2nd millennium to the end of the Achaemenid era. *Iranica Antiqua*, 38, pp. 119–165.

FURTHER READING

Wiesehöfer, J. (1996). *Ancient Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD*. London: I.B.Tauris, and Briant, P. (2002). *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Touch on this chapter's topic in the context of historical overview.

Sekunda, N.V. (1992). *The Persian Army, 560–330 BC*. London: Osprey, and Head, D. (1992). *The Achaemenid Persian Army*. Stockport: Montvert Publications. Address this chapter's topic in detail; the latter offers a particularly valuable collection of illustrations.

Sekunda, N.V. (1988). Achaemenid military terminology. *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 21, pp. 69–77. Deals with military terminology as used especially in Greek sources.

Tuplin, C.J. (2020). Sigillography and soldiers: cataloguing military activity on Achaemenid period seals. In E. Dusinberre, M.B. Garrison, and W.F.M. Henkelman (eds.), *The Art of Empire in Achaemenid Persia – Studies in Honour of Margaret Cool Root*. Leiden, Leuven: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, pp. 325–459. An overview of the rich iconography of combat images on sealstones.

Charles, M.B. (2011). Immortals and apple bearers: towards a better understanding of Achaemenid infantry units. *Classical Quarterly*, 61, pp. 114–133, and Charles, M.B. (2012). Herodotus, body armour and Achaemenid infantry. *Historia*, 61, pp. 257–269, and Tuplin, C.J. (2010). All the King's horse: in search of the Achaemenid Persian cavalry. In G.G. Fagan, M. Trundle (eds.), *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 101–182, and Nefiodkin, A.K. (2004). Origins of the scythed chariot. *Historia* 53: pp. 369–378. Contribute to our understanding of the main divisions of the Persian army, infantry, cavalry, and chariots.

CHAPTER 82

Mercenaries

Christopher Tuplin

Introduction

A mercenary fights to promote state interests, is paid to do so, and is not also prompted by other ethnic or community affiliations. There is a general overlap between "mercenary" and "foreign" – hence early texts call mercenaries *xenoi*. Dissociation from community affiliation may not be total. People can shift from politically-determined to mercenary employment. Some Persian mercenaries in 334–330 BCE may also have been anti-Macedonian. The Athenian Chares called his mercenaries' victory over Tithraustes a Second Marathon (sch. Dem. 4.19, FGrH 105(1), Diod. 16.22, 34). Mercenary groups can become institutionalized: the Semitic troops in Elephantine were outside the market while Persian authority held. But, though fuzzy at the edges, the conception of the mercenary as a paid outsider basically works.

Persian-employed mercenaries may appear in non-textual evidence: they have been detected on the Alexander Mosaic, the Alexander sarcophagus, the Karaburun tomb-paintings, the Çan sarcophagus, and elsewhere, and Persian-associated Anatolian or Levantine coin issues may reflect the hiring of soldiers. But the heart of the evidence is textual, and the present sketch is based on a dataset of some 125 items.

The core (about 50%) is supplied by texts that use key terms (*misthophoroi, epikouroi, mercenarii*) or disclose troops receiving pay and apparently serving for no other reason.

Assigning texts to the core is not always straightforward. There are no unambiguous non-Greco-Latin terms for "mercenary soldier." Semitic troops at Syene-Elephantine count as mercenaries because they receive pay/rations but not colony-style land allocations. Babylonia discloses individuals hired privately to fulfill another's military-service obligation, but we do not know that the state spent tax income (from bow fiefs or elsewhere) on hiring mercenaries en masse, and the case of Carians (from Egypt) and Jews living off hypothecated tax income in Borsippa (Waerzeggers 2006; VS 6.128) is of debatable relevance. Classical texts containing key words do not always reveal mercenaries (Xen.*Hell*.1.3.17, Thuc.8.50, *Hell. Oxy*.20[15]) and not all soldiers present in contexts that do contain mercenaries necessarily count (Xen. *An*. 7.6.15, Curt. 4.5.18, Arr. 2.13.4–5). Other uncertainties include whether Heraclides 689F2 means to categorize soldiers paid in food as mercenaries, or the claim that the mysterious *Kardakes* (Tuplin 2014: pp. 686–688) were "barbarians serving for pay" (Eustath. *ad Iliad*. 2.289) is reliable, or Xenophon actually thought countryside *phrouroi* (*Oec*.4.6, *Cyr*.8.6.3) were mercenaries like those in citadels (Tuplin 1987: pp. 173–174).

The rest of the dataset deals with soldiers who – because of their ethnic identity, their commander's other associations with known mercenaries, or other indications – seem analogous to those in core texts. Some cases are more uncertain than others: examples of uncertainty might include Athenodorus (Ael.*VH* 1.25, Plut.*Phoc*.18), Clearchus (Justin 16.4.1–10, Suda s.v. *Klearkhos*), Menelaus (Tod 1948: no.148), the Argive, Boeotian, and "King's Greeks" in Egypt in 343 (Diod.16.44), Pharnabazus' Mysians (Xen.*Hell*.4.1.20), and Autophradates' Pisidians and Aspendians (Nep.*Dat*.8). Some at least of four commanders in non-Greco-Latin texts were probably mercenaries (Naqman: TADAE D22.7; 'Armapiya: A6.8; Trkmnh: D22.25,27; Payava: TL 40b) and the Tel el-Maskutah Arabs are generally so classified (TADAE D15.1–5). I am less sure about the Egyptians Xenophon (thought he) encountered in Babylonia in 401 BCE (*An*. 1.8.9). Cilician and Syrian booty-seeking "volunteers" in Diodorus 16.42 lie between ordinary soldiers and ordinary mercenaries. The Hyrcanian, Median, and Bactrian horsemen at Granicus (Diod.17.19) recall the Hyrcanian royal mercenaries Xenophon met 65 years earlier (*An*. 7.8.15). If Mausolus were a better attested mercenary employer, we would readily see soldiers affected by his "gate-drachma" tax (Ps.-Arist. *Oec*. 1348a25) as mercenaries. As it is, the question is open.

Important though it is to insist that in Achaemenid contexts "mercenary" is not coterminous with "Greek mercenary," we must acknowledge that in the available evidence, "mercenary" is very much a Greek category, and that particular examples amenable to analysis are likely to be Greek.

Geographical Location

Evidence for Persian mercenary use predominantly relates to East Aegean Islands, Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt. Apart from the Ten Thousand, there are no certain Greek mercenaries beyond the Euphrates until after Issus. Non-Greek mercenaries do appear in Babylonia but not demonstrably in Persepolitan or Bactrian archives, and Heraclides' ration-receiving royal soldiers (689F2) are presumably Persian. The isolation of the Indian Oxydracae (Megasth.715F20) – employed in the east? – may reflect an unpropitious source base, but the Alexander historians' representation of the heartlands and eastern portion of the empire notably avoids the label "mercenary."

Date Range and Early Patterns of Use

In the light of evidence from Syene-Elephantine and Babylonia, the time frame of some sort of mercenary use is nearly co-extensive with the empire's history. (Both contexts involve continuity from pre-Persian conditions.) But the earliest unequivocal Greek mercenaries are those of Pissuthnes at Notium in 428 BCE (Thuc.3.34), and the earliest probable ones were acquired by Megabyzus c. 450 BCE (Ctesias 688F14[40]). The Saites' Greek and Carian mercenaries disappear after 526 BCE, and there is no call to classify the Ionians/Aeolians of Herodotus 1.171 as mercenaries or to discover the category in 3.139–140 or 8.26. Megabyzus' perhaps modest Greek mercenary force was an accidental by-product of the Egyptian rebellion, his son's (688F15[52]) a continuation of family tradition. Meanwhile, the practice had appeared in western Anatolia by 428 BCE, by imitation or independently. Use of barbarian mercenaries there is as early as of Greek ones: it is explicitly attested in 428 BCE and 412 BCE (Thuc.3.34, 8.25), and the mercenaries in Samos in 440 BCE (1.115, Plut.*Per*.25) could have been wholly or partly non-Greek. At the end of the century Cyrus represents a new stage, at least in scale. Whether it was a new stage in proportions of Greek and non-Greek is another matter. The known non-Greek element among the Ten Thousand is small, but Xenophon might be misleading, and it is conceivable there were entirely separate non-Greek mercenaries elsewhere in Cyrus' army. In any event, explicit co-use of Greek and non-Greek mercenaries is rare in later evidence. For the pattern of mercenary use after Cyrus see below.

Ethnicity

The majority of mercenary sources refer clearly or very plausibly to Greeks or a Greek commander – not that a Greek commander guarantees a wholly Greek force (Thuc.3.34, Xen. *An.* 1.2.9, *Hell. Oxy.*20[15], Curt. 4.5.22, Polyaen.

6.10) – but many indicate no ethnicity at all. Doubtless the soldiers involved were often largely or entirely Greek, but our database is not quite as explicitly dominated by Greek mercenaries as sometimes assumed. Core items give us mercenaries labeled as Arab, Aramaean, Assyrian, Bactrian, Caspian, Chaldaean, Chalybian, Chorasmian, Egyptian, Hyrcanian, Jewish, Macronian, Mysian, Oxydracan, Taochian, or Thracian, as well as others of indeterminate non-Greek origin. The more speculative half of the database might add Aspendians, Babylonians, Carians, Lycians, Pamphylians, Pisidians, and Scythians. (Given the early association of Carians and mercenary service, the elusiveness of explicit Carian mercenaries in Persian service is remarkable.)

Achaemenid mercenaries were not necessarily complete outsiders. But there is an element of marginality: Oxydracans, Chorasmians, Bactrians, Hyrcanians, Caspians, and Scythians from the eastern or northeastern edges, Arabs, and Thracians from the southwestern and northwestern edges respectively. Chalybians, Taochians, and Chaldaeans are groups just outside the frontier whose employment assists local stability (cf. Xen. Cyr. 3.2.25–31). Any Pisidian and Mysian mercenaries are part of a story of internal independence that was sometimes confrontational. (Onomastically non-Iranian "Caspians" in Elephantine evoke Cadusians, another problematic group.) *Mutatis mutandis* Caria and Lycia may fit the pattern. The North-West Semites of Syene-Elephantine originated within the empire, but as a Saite inheritance, they constitute a special case. So (for similar reasons) do Babylonians in Babylonia. From the 540s BCE onward the empire always had Greek subjects, but the numbers were largest before 478 BCE and after 386 BCE, and the latter period coincides with substantial use of Greek mercenaries. But it is hard to prove many were of eastern Greek origin, and I suspect that Persians thought of Greek mercenaries as characteristically from an area outside the empire that they had tried and failed to conquer.

Some mercenary environments were ethno-culturally mixed: that is true of Syene-Elephantine and, with varying security, in some other cases (Thuc. 3.34, 8.28, Xen. *An.* 1.2.19, 4.4.18, 7.8.15, Arr.1.29.1, 2.13.4–5, Curt. 4.5.18). But most sources suggest that mercenaries present on a particular occasion were of a single ethnicity (normally Greek, if specified) or entirely ignore the question. Some of the latter cases may conceal ethnic mixture, whether within command units (as at Elephantine and in Clearchus' force) or between them.

Numbers

Some sources provide numbers, but most (more than 80%) do not. Where figures are available, the major aggregations represent a gradual upward trend: 12 000 mercenaries in Cyrus' expedition in 401 BCE (Xen. *An.* 1.2.9),

12 000 or 20 000 in Egypt in 373 BCE (Nep. *Iph.* 2, Diod. 15.41), 10 000 or 20 000 associated with rebel satraps in the 360s BCE (Diod.15.91, Polyaen. 7.14.3), 20 000 at Granicus (Arr. 1.14.4), 30 000 at Issus (2.8.6). Fitting other figures into this pattern is hard because they appear unsystematically, we cannot assess continuities between successive mercenary forces or the total number of Persian-employed mercenaries at a given moment, and the dataset embraces mercenaries used for and against the king. But it is possible that the upward trend was punctuated by attempts to cut back after the 373 BCE Egyptian fiasco and in the early 350s BCE; and our picture of the start of the trend can be nuanced: since Cyrus' pre-401 BCE mercenary complement was probably no more than 5000, a similar number of "hoplites" appears with Struthas in 392 BCE (Diod. 14.99), and we have no figures for Persian mercenaries in the Evagoras war, we may wish to stress Artaxerxes II's concern to maximize Greek recruitment for the Egyptian War of 373 BCE (Diod. 15.38). This was the first point at which the king sought to change the scale of mercenary use. (He had rejected an earlier chance by not employing Cyrus' Greeks after Cunaxa.)

Mercenary Employment Relations

We cannot always precisely identify a mercenary group's employer. Sometimes nothing salient is recorded. Sometimes the question is meaningless because, as at Syene-Elephantine, the documentation is ill-designed to address it. Sometimes mercenaries have a named commander but no defined superior/employer. When employer identity is a meaningful question, the answer is normally a person of satrapal or similar status – usually Iranian, occasionally Greek (Diod.16.50, 17.29) or Carian (16.42, 46). Xenophon's account of garrisons (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.6.1–3, 9, 16, 8.20, *Oec.* 4.5–11) and Artaxerxes III's disbandment of Anatolian mercenaries (schol. Dem.4.19) also picture satraps as the proximate source of remuneration. Babylonian mercenaries on private one-to-one contracts represent a very different model, but mercenary employment is normally a high-level activity. Whenever mercenaries are not used by a rebel, one could regard the king as ultimate employer. But he is rarely named unless playing an unusually direct role, as in Arrian's statement that the mercenary commander Hegesistratus defended Miletus in 334 BCE as a royal appointee (1.18.4).

Sometimes there is no further detail about the employer–mercenary interface. In other cases sources show both a Persian employer and other relevant individuals, either military commanders (quite often) or third-party beneficiaries (Thuc.1.115, 3.34), or the employer's hierarchical subordinates (e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.13, 7.1.27, Dem. 23.142,154, Diod. 16.50). Such

subordinates may initially look like the primary employer but are probably at most the actual hirer.

The recruitment process is usually unaddressed. The biggest exception is Cyrus' expeditionary army, assembled by various means from existing and new resources (Xen. *An.* 1.1.6–7, 9–11; Roy 1967: pp. 296–309). The result was the largest aggregation yet in the Aegean/Anatolian world and perhaps anywhere. (Isocrates 5.96 claims assembling such an army was hard in 401 BCE: in the 340s BCE there were many potential soldiers and a well-developed market, whereas in 401 BCE specialist hiring agents were needed and had to be rewarded with bounties. Isocrates is not an objective witness, but there is probably truth in what he says.) Elsewhere we hear of recruitment for specific purposes (Xen. *Hell.*4.8.7, Diod. 15.38,91, 16.50, 17.29, schol. Dem.4.19, Arr.2.25), encounter unusual cases – Megabyzus' Greek mercenaries; Syrian and Cilician "volunteers" (Diod. 16.42); sailors turned mercenary (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.25-26) – and Mania's performance-related rewards (*Hellenica* 3.1.13) probably affected recruitment. Some mercenaries were acquired as groups (Xen. *An.* 1.1.9–11,4.3, Diod. 15.91,16.45, sch.Dem.4.19, Polyaen.3.9.56), though not normally directly from defeated enemy armies (cf. Diod. 16.49): Persia's allies and opponents were more open to that practice (Thuc. 8.28, Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.23, Arr. 1.19.5, 3.24.2; Curt. 4.5.18). One curious detail is that men could prove how long they had served with the Persians (Arr. 3.24.2). Perhaps they carried a (payment-related?) record-of-service document.

Few texts are more than banal in dealing with pay. At Elephantine, silver and rations came from the "royal house" (TADAE B3.13, B4.3/4, B5.5). The silver is unquantified. In Babylonia, military silver payments might range from 2 to 10 shekels per month (Jursa 2007: p. 259). Only 10 shekels matches the order of magnitude of the basic (non-officer) one daric monthly pay rate in Greek sources. But the comparison is complicated, as mercenary employers in the west did not usually supply free rations (or equipment). Greek texts report interesting anecdotes – Cyrus produces overdue pay thanks to cash from the Cilician queen and raises salary levels after a mutiny (*An.* 1.2.12, 3.21), Datames satisfies mercenaries with silver from Cappadocian temples (Polyaen. 7.21.1, Ps.-Arist. *Oec.* 1350b16), Autophradates justifies a full army parade as a numbering exercise prior to payment (Polyaen. 7.27.3), the Mausolan "gate-drachma" might thwart fraudulent pay claims (Ps.-Ar.*Oec.*1348a25), Iphicrates' men expect payment from Persian-speaking functionaries (Polyaen. 3.9.59) – but these make only a tangential contribution to our understanding of the mechanisms involved.

Basic pay was supplemented by performance-related rewards (Theop. 115F124, Xen. *An.* 1.4.15, 7.4–8, 9.7–29, *Hell.* 3.1.13, Diod. 15.9,91) and booty (Xen. *An.* 1.2.19,26, 2.4.27, Diod. 16.22,42, Diod. 17.7, Polyaen.

5.44.5, FGrH 105[4]), although the dataset is rarely interested in the latter: *Anabasis* reveals men intent on amassing wealth, and we may read that mentality into all mercenaries, and even allow that Isocratean visions of mercenary violence encoded a truth about their appetitive urges. But the record does not damn Persian-employed mercenaries particularly severely in this respect.

Types, Combinations, and Contexts of Use

Although mercenary cavalry appear occasionally (Xen. *An.* 1.5.7, 2.2.7, 7.8.15, *Oec.* 4.5, *Cyr.* 8.8.20, Diod. 17.19, TL 40b, Kuhrt 2007: 722[38]), Persian-employed mercenaries are mostly infantry. But the dataset is largely unconcerned with further specification: exceptions include Xenophon's garrison soldiers (archers, slingers, *gerrhophoroi*: *Oec.*4.5), Chaldaeans (lances, large *gerrha*: *Cyr.* 3.2.7, 25–7), Chalybians (linen breastplates, greaves, helmets, knives: *An.* 4.4.18, 7.15), and Assyrian "hoplites" (7.8.15). Few relevant texts outside *Anabasis* refer specifically to Greek hoplites or to any sort of peltasts (perhaps peltasts were not what Persians needed), though light-armed soldiers are occasionally present (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.18, Polyaen. 5.16.2) – rare cases where a mercenary infantry force explicitly contains more than one type of soldier. More frequently a (homogeneous) mercenary force operates with non-mercenary troops, characteristically cavalry. But even when substantive military narrative exists, such cases rarely provide clear indications of genuine combined tactical use. This is variously true at, for example, Miletus (Thuc. 8.25), Cyzicus (Diod. 13.50–51), Cunaxa (Xen. *An.* 1.8.11–29), Centrites (4.3.3), Caicus (7.8.15), Egyptian delta (Diod. 15.42), Granicus (17.19–20, Arr. 1.13–16, Plut. *Alex.*16), Halicarnassus (Diod. 17.23-27, Arr. 1.20–23), and Issus (2.8–11, Curt. 3.8.1–11.27, Diod. 17.33–34): mercenaries and others are present on the same occasion but there is nothing special about the way they work together.

The protection of countryside evoked in *Oeconomicus* and *Cyropaedia* (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.6.1–3,16, *Oec.* 4.5–11) is exemplified in the Caicus Valley but rarely elsewhere: Orontes and Tiribazus in Armenia (4.3.3–4,4.7,18) are not comparable, and, although military commanders often defend territory, cases known to us generally involve higher-level political considerations than those in *Anabasis* 7.8.12–19. Most mercenary episodes involve (i) defence of or attack upon cities, towns, or forts, or (ii) relatively substantial encounters in open country between properly formed armies, and although these broad categories cover a range of possibilities, mercenaries do not appear in contexts that diverge much from the generality of ancient military activity. It would be hard to maintain, for example, a special link with operations making unusually heavy demands on high professional skills. There are several stories about

mercenary or part-mercenary forces mounting surprise attacks, but there is no broad association between mercenaries and the use of stratagem or trickery, even if men such as Memnon and Mentor liked to achieve their goals without too much fighting (Dem. 23.154, Diod. 16.52,17.7, Polyaen. 5.44.3,5). Natural *déracinés*, mercenaries were suitable for long-distance undertakings, but in such contexts they are normally alongside others who were probably being taken away from stronger local links. The Cypriot campaign of the 340s BCE (Diod. 16.42,46) is the only case in which an army originating some distance from the theater of events is entirely mercenary. The contemporaneous preparations for Levantine and Egyptian campaigns may explain this special case.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Disadvantages are plain. Mercenaries can be troublesome about payment (*Hell. Oxy.*23, Polyaen.3.9.59, 7.21.1,27.3, Ps.-Arist. *Oec.* 1350b16) or food supplies (Diod. 15.3) or otherwise (Xen. *An.* 1.3.1–20, 4.12, Diod. 15.9, TADAE A6.8). Stories or threats of disloyalty (Ctes. 688F15[52–53], Xen. *An.* 1.4.3,7,9, *Cyr.* 8.2.19, Diod. 15.43, 17.23, Curt. 4.5.16,22, Polyaen. 3.9.56, 6.10, 7.3.22, Dem. 14.31, 23.154, Just. 16.4.1–10) outnumber the reverse (Ctes. 688F15[52], Diod. 15.91, Arr. 1.19.6, Curt. 3.1.8, 5.8.3). Relations between employers-commanders and troops could veer between good and bad – or even fatal (Diod. 17.30). Still, mercenaries were a potentially valuable military resource, although we cannot objectively demonstrate that (increasing) mercenary use was in general a systematic response to actual or perceived shortfalls in other recruitment. (Rebels, of course, had obvious cause to fill the ranks with soldiers whom pay made careless of issues of loyalty to the king.) At the same time, merely having more soldiers is not enough: there is no point in spending money on poor ones. A decision to hire mercenaries presupposes competence, even excellence.

Sources rarely offer unequivocal qualitative assessments – the "valiant" and warlike Chaldaeans (Xen. *An.* 4.3.3, *Cyr.* 3.2.7) were also undisciplined (*Cyr.* 7.2.5–8) – and occasional references to *epilektoi* or *aristoi* (Polyaen. 7.14.2, Diod. 15.70, 17.26,27) add little. Texts about the Persians' dependence on Greek mercenaries (pp. 10–11) are less concerned to praise the latter's skill than criticize the former's moral failings, but they do entail a Persian judgment that such mercenaries were a high-quality resource. To reject that inference entirely would be to take anti-Persian rhetoric too seriously; putative moral decline had hardly left Persia with no viable military resources of its own.

Outcomes of actual mercenary use are not substantially more positive than negative. Failure can be due to surprise or deception, disaffection, inferiority

in firepower or numbers, inadequate tactical support, carelessness, or to no specifically obvious cause. Occasionally there are hints of inferior mercenary quality (Thuc. 8.25, Diod. 17.27, Xen. *An.* 4.3.21, *Hell.* 3.2.18). But Orontes' disguise of non-Greeks as Greeks (Polyaen.7.14.4) faked the arrival of reinforcements rather than exploiting expectations of Greek superiority. Reasons for success include numerical advantage, enemy disaffection, or confusion, successful stratagems, psychologically astute leadership, unexpected attack, tactical opportunism, and visibly superior discipline. Some outcomes may reflect higher quality (Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.3, *An.* 1.8.19, Diod. 15.42, 16.48 Polyaen. 3.9.63, 7.14.3, 27.1). But it is characteristic that the most remarkable victory enabled by Persian-employed mercenaries (Chares' "Second Marathon": schol. Dem. 4.19) is unexplained. Where mercenary ethnicity is (reasonably) clear, Greeks do get the better of barbarians slightly more often than vice versa. But some would see that as the bias of a Greek dataset.

Persian employers operated in a constrained market. They hired the mercenaries available where they were: Greeks were not systematically exported east nor non-Iranian mercenaries west. So where Greeks are concerned what matters is the quality of western alternatives. The rare appearance of Carians, Mysians, Lycians, Pisidians, Aspendians, or Pamphylians, the unidentifiability of Pissuthnes' (Thuc. 3.34) or Tissaphernes' (8. 25) "barbarian" mercenaries, and the sources' tendency to speak simply of "mercenaries" impede objective assessment of this question. Still, the issue is not entirely ethnic. Preference for Greek mercenaries is preference for a certain type of soldier. Most were hoplites and although later classical hoplites were lighter and more tactically flexible than their Persian Wars counterparts, Herodotus' articulation of hoplite advantages (9. 62) remained relevant in combat against lighter armed infantry – and they were unlikely to encounter infantry with heavier body armor. They also had as good a chance as anyone of dealing with the challenges presented by cavalry. So the decision to use Greek hoplites was rational in any predictable tactical situations.

But if Greeks were potentially useful employees, why are they so elusive before the mid-fifth century BCE?

When Persians reached Anatolia they encountered no local mercenary establishment. (No such thing is predicated of the Lydian kingdom.) Greeks and Carians were in mercenary employment – but in Egypt. When Persians reached Egypt, they inherited Semitic soldiers at Syene-Elephantine (and elsewhere?) but – perhaps because of strong identification with the Saite regime (Agut-Labordère 2012) – dispensed with Greeks and Carians: the communities survived (though some individuals ended up in Babylonia: above) but without military allure. The Saite military colonies (Hdt. 2.154) were in any case no precedent for hiring cash-economy Greek soldiers elsewhere; and the Greeks of Anatolia were subjects, those further west potential

targets of conquest. In this perspective Megabyzus' somewhat accidental acquisition of Greek mercenaries seems appropriate. But there were salient positive trends too. The post-478 BCE political environment (an imperial interface in Anatolia) probably provided earlier contexts for mercenary use than Samos or Notium (Thuc. 1.115, 3.34); it was now clear (unlike before Marathon) that Greek soldiers deserved respect, and a market in such soldiers existed (as Sicilian tyrants knew).

But if the Persians turned to mercenaries somewhat late and initially modestly, they could eventually be seen as embarrassingly and self-destructively dependent upon them. The relevant testimonies here are remarks by Plato, Xenophon, and Isocrates.

Persian Dependence on Greek Mercenaries

Plato (*Laws* 697E: c.350) says the Persians must rely on foreign mercenaries as their own subjects are completely alienated. Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 8.8.20–26: late 360s BCE) sees dependence on Greeks as the consequence of a military collapse which provokes more extensive mercenary use and reflects moral decline and the failure of the "rich" to play their role in the military establishment. These observations evoke three Isocratean texts. *On Peace* 47 (355 BCE) presumes extensive Persian use of mercenaries but is primarily criticizing Athenians. *Panegyricus* 135 (c. 380 BCE) says Tiribazus' most useful forces in the Evagoras war were Greek, but does not affirm that Persians habitually act on the assumption of being ineffective without such contingents. But this does appear in *Philippus* 125 (346 BCE): in all their wars the Persians get generals and soldiers from Greece because they have no useful ones of their own. (This time no reasons are given.)

Surviving assertions of Persian dependence do not, therefore, predate the late 360s BCE. There were potential earlier contexts for such statements (Diod.15.38, Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.38), but it remains possible that Isocrates *Panegyricus* is a *terminus post quem* for widespread interest in the topic; and we should not over-hastily assume that *Cyropaedia* rehearses a long-established cliché. (Moreover, Plato's comments reflect the intertextual relationship between *Cyropaedia* and *Laws* and may prove nothing about general contemporary discourse.)

More than a decade after Isocrates' *Philippus*, Darius allegedly relied primarily on his Greek mercenaries (Curt. 3.3.1). The assertion comes from a tradition reasonably suspected of lack of objectivity. Still, if the contrast in the tactical use of mercenaries between Issus (centrally important) and Granicus (completely sidelined) has any reality, Darius' strategy for fighting Alexander differed from that of his Anatolian satraps; and Memnon's appointment after Granicus as overall commander in the west is not only consistent with Darius'

tactics at Issus but makes it not simply absurd to say that Memnon's premature death was a major blow.

The observations of Xenophon, Plato, and Isocrates are not a reasoned assessment of whatever data might have been available and relevant. The Alexander historians may come closer but only made a judgment about 334–333 BCE. Can we better them in scope and better Xenophon and the others in reason and balance? Given our unsystematic and often unnuanced dataset, it is hard to deal with such a question with much confidence.

The Overall Incidence of Mercenary Use

To get a handle on real mercenary use we must see it against the background of all known Persian military activity. One approach is to assess its incidence in texts that refer to Persian forces in a specific historical context (stories of actual use, not institutional generalizations or documentary inferences) and relate to a period from the mid-fifth century to late 331 BCE (the limits of narrative attestation of mercenary activity). The answer turns out to be that mercenaries appear around 45% of the time.

The relevant dataset certainly understates the number of military forces and/or occasions already known to us where mercenaries were present. Persian grandees known as employers/commanders of mercenary forces probably used them on at least some occasions when surviving sources ignore the fact. With even a few more details about the same dataset, we could reasonably expect the figure to rise to 50–55%. However, we can also be certain that (even in areas of interest to Greco-Roman authors) there were many more forces and/or events of which we might have heard but do not: but predicting their mercenary characteristics is barely possible. One becomes conscious here of the difficulty of dealing with Xenophon's remarks about protection of the imperial landscape. Such generalizations are theoretically a basis for predicting what non-extant sources might have said about specific military contexts – but one needs unequivocal faith in and understanding of the generalization for it to be of use. In the end, if we are to play this sort of statistical game, it has to be with the dataset that we have got.

Forty-five percent is quite a high figure. To maintain that it is seriously misleading we must insist either that it applies to only part of the empire or that, in the part to which it does apply, the sources systematically over-report mercenary forces or under-report non-mercenary ones. The former approach is a pointless evasion: whatever the case elsewhere, it is valid to ask about levels of use in Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean. The latter approach asks a more serious question. Existing sources do not over-report actual mercenaries: they could have reported more without adding any new groups or episodes to the dataset. But is the sort of military story-telling they are interested in liable

to over-privilege certain types of forces and episodes? And (more pertinently), if so, are they selecting forces/episodes that are relatively peripheral to the real Achaemenid military agenda? I think it is difficult to say the answer to both of these questions is yes. What could this hidden "real" agenda possibly be?

Another possibility is that the 45% figure is misleading because when mercenaries played a role, their number relative to other units was normally small. But we lack the data to validate such a claim. On the one hand, the headline mercenary figures increase over the seven decades from Cyrus to Issus – and, if there were reductions in the interim, this may be actual evidence of a Persian judgment that too many mercenaries were being employed. On the other hand, systematic assessment of the relative numerical importance of mercenary and non-mercenary components on a case-by-case basis is impossible because figures are lacking or (when provided for non-mercenary elements) liable to irreparable exaggeration.

In the end one has to say that at least after c. 450 BCE, mercenaries were a standard feature of the Achaemenid military environment in the west. Using them became a norm, whether among loyalists or rebels. (That said, it is oddly difficult to find battles between Persian grandees in which both sides demonstrably used mercenaries.) There is a degree of dependence here, but to see it as reprehensible is perhaps unfair. The Persians had to find infantry soldiers somewhere. There were never enough native Persians for that empire-wide requirement, so supplementation from elsewhere was a necessity. We remain ill-informed about other models for achieving this (native levies; proper military colonies, Iranian or otherwise) and can only speculate about the problems that attended their use. If outsiders were available for hire and likely to be no worse (perhaps better) at fighting than the alternatives, their employment was sensible. We should not infer otherwise from the fact that neither they nor anyone else succeeded in protecting the empire against Alexander. Or, at least, we should concede that judged by the criterion of defeat by Macedonia, Persians deserved contempt for use of mercenaries no more than people in the cities of central and southern Greece who were also apt to be excoriated (by fellow Greeks) for their willingness to let hired men fight their battles for them. Most of those defeated at Chaeronea were citizens, and most of these defeated at Issus were not mercenaries. Honors (or dishonors) are more or less even.

REFERENCES

Agut-Labordère, D. (2012). Plus que mercenaires! L'intégration des hommes de guerre grecs au service de la monarchie saite. *Pallas*, 89, pp. 293–306.

Jursa, M. (2007). On aspects of taxation in Achaemenid Babylonia: new evidence from Borsippa. In P. Briant, M. Chauveau (eds.), *Organisation des pouvoirs et contacts culturels dans les pays de l'empire achéménide* (Persika 14). Paris: de Boccard, pp. 237–270.

Kuhrt, A. (2007). *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period*, 2 vols. London/New York: Routledge.

Roy, J. (1967). The mercenaries of Cyrus. *Historia*, 16, pp. 287–323.

Tod, M.N. (1948). *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions II: From 404 to 323 BC*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Tuplin, C.J. (1987). Xenophon and the garrisons of the Achaemenid empire. *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran, Neue Folge*, 20, pp. 167–246.

Tuplin, C.J. (2014). From Arshama to Alexander: reflections on Persian responses to attack. In S. Gaspa, A. Greco, D. Morandi Bonacossi, S. Ponchia, and R. Rollinger (eds.), *From Source to History: Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond* (Festschrift for Giovanni B.Lanfranchi). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, pp. 668–696.

Waerzeggers, C. (2006). The Carians of Borsippa. *Iraq*, 68, pp. 1–22.

FURTHER READING

Seibt, J. (1977). *Griechische Söldner im Achaimenidenreich*. Bonn: Habelt. Specifically deals with (Greek) mercenaries in Persian service.

Parke, H.W. (1933). *Greek Mercenary Soldiers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, and Bettalli, M. (2013). *Mercenari: Il mestiere delle armi nel mondo greco antico*. Rome: Carocci. General treatments of mercenaries within which Persian employees form a significant part of the subject matter.

Tuplin, C.J. (2014). The sick man of Asia? In G. Parmeggiani (ed.), *Between Thucydides and Polybius. The Golden Age of Greek Historiography*. Cambridge (MA) and London: Center for Hellenic Studies, pp. 211–238. Includes supposed dependence on Greek mercenaries in discussion of perceptions of Achaemenid imperial weakness.

Tuplin, C.J. (2018). Warlords and mercenaries in the Achaemenid Empire. In T. Ñaco de Hoyo, F. López-Sánchez (eds.), *War, Warlords, and Interstate Relations in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 17–35. Investigates the relationship between mercenaries and satrapal dissidence.

Rop, J. (2019). *Greek Military Service in the Ancient Near East, 404–330 BCE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Contests the view that Persian and Egyptian use of Greek troops was driven by a belief in their superior quality and contextualizes their employment within an international system based on political patronage and reciprocity.