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ACHAEMENID BABYLONIA

(Summary of the articles: «Контракты о сдаче внаем скота, принадлежащего сатрапу Аршаму» ["Contracts for Leasing Cattle Belonging to the Satrap Aršam"], Проблемы социально-экономической истории древнего мира. Сборник памяти А. И. Тюменева, Moscow-Leningrad, 1963, pp. 127-148, and «Храмовая десятина в поздней Вавилонии» [The Temple Tithe in Later Babylonia"]. VDI, 1965, No. 2, pp. 14-31).

In 550 B.C. the Persian tribes invaded Media. Twenty five years later, in 525 B.C., the Persians conquered Egypt. The period separating these events was marked by wars of conquest which resulted in the formation of the great Achaemenid empire extending from the Central Asiatic satrapies in the East to the Aegean Sea in the West, and from Armenia in the North to the First Cataract of the Nile in the South. For its dimensions, and for the rapidity of its formation, the Achaemenid state stands unrivalled in the entire history of the Ancient Orient. And nevertheless, the relations between the Persians and the various nations under their rule have not so far, been sufficiently elucidated. Neither has it yet been found possible to characterize with any finality those social, economic and political changes which were caused by the Persian domination in the countries forming the constituent parts of the Achaemenid empire. It is known that side by side with a common code of laws, gold currency, royal measures of weight and the use of Aramaic as the official language throughout the entire territory of the empire, there continued to exist in every satrapy of the Achaemenid state old local laws, customs, traditions, religions, measures of length and weight, systems of currency, local writing systems and spoken languages. In other

words, each satrapy of the Achaemenid empire remained an independent socio-political unit with social institutions and an internal structure of its own.

The Persian conquest, to all appearances, did not cause any interruption in the normal functioning of law or economy in the countries under the Persian rule. However, under the Achaemenids extremely favourable conditions for the development of international commerce were created, changes in the economics and administrative structure took place, and Babylonian law rose to the importance of international law in all the countries of the Near East. The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, Elam, as well as of other countries, continued to develop. At the same time, while the Aramaeans acquired great importance from the standpoint of ethnical conditions, politically the Persians played the main role, holding in their hands the administration of the state ruled by means of a bureaucratic machinery. This machinery involved the employment of large numbers of Aramaeans, Egyptians, Babylonians, Elamites, Hebrews and Greeks who had good knowledge of chancery practice and of local conditions.

Furthermore, there are reasons to believe that the fiscal system and the agrarian relations under the Achaemenids underwent considerable changes, at least in the countries of the Near East. These changes may be traced with the help of the Babylonian business documents drawn up during the Persian rule.

In the sixth century B.C., prior to the Persian conquest, Babylonia was already a country of mixed population comprising, in addition to people of native stock, Aramaeans, Hebrews, Egyptians, and others. After 539 B.C., when Babylonia was incorporated in the Achaemenid empire, the territory of this fertile country became available for immigration. Besides, in Babylonia, as well as in other countries, military colonies were organized which included representatives of different nations. Thus began an infiltration of Iranians, Lydians, Greeks, Phrygians, Western Semites, Arabs, Egyptians, etc.¹ who finally settled upon the land. The result was an agglomeration of nations, a syncretization of their cultures and religious beliefs, proceeding with much intensity. Among this ethnically very mixed population, a privileged position belonged to the Iranians (Persians, Medes, Sacae, Achaemenians, etc.), and the Persian aristocracy formed the upper stratum.

Babylonian business documents of the Achaemenid period

¹ Cf. H. V. Hilprecht and A. T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashu Sons of Nippur Dated in the Reign of Artaxerxes I*, BE, IX, Philadelphia, 1898, p. 28.

contain not a few Iranian names; there are dozens of such names in the archives of the trading house of Murašū of Nipur, dating from the fifth century B.C. It is, however, not always a simple matter to establish the ethnic background of the persons to whom the names belonged, for in a number of cases people with Babylonian names had parents or children bearing names of non-Babylonian origin.² W. Eilers supposes that the bearers of Persian names living in the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses must have been Persians; but later the names were given without any connection with the ethnic background.³ We are prepared to agree with Eilers in respect of the first of his suggestions,⁴ since Iranian nouns and proper names hardly ever occur in Babylonian sources of a date prior to the Persian conquest. Thus, persons referred to by Iranian names in the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, and at least in the first half of the reign of Darius I, could only be Iranian by birth, for no less than two or three decades must have elapsed since the conquest of 539 B.C., before the Babylonians who were given Iranian names grew up and could be mentioned in the documents as officials or contracting parties.

To judge by the documents, in the fifth century B.C. Babylonians sometimes gave their children Iranian names, a practice partly due to the influence of the ruling ethnos in both social and private life, and partly to mixed marriages. Probably several criteria may be suggested for the definition of the ethnic background of persons bearing Iranian names. They were Persians (sometimes Medes, etc.) if relatively many Iranian names occur together in one document and if their bearers are owners of land, houses, or other property; if both the father and the son, or several brothers and other relatives have Iranian names; and lastly, if persons bearing Iranian names occupy a high place in the official hierarchy.

Though about 2,000 texts from the reign of Cyrus and Cambyses have been published, the number of Iranian names found in them is not large, the bearers being mainly officials. The Iranians are mentioned somewhat more often beginning with the reign of Darius I, many of them as owners of immovable property.

² J. Kohler und A. Ungnad, *Hundert ausgewählte Rechtsurkunden*, Leipzig, 1911, p. 68¹.

³ W. Eilers, review of O. Krückmann, *Babylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden aus der Zeit Alexanders und der Diadochen*, OLZ, 1934, Sp. 93, Anm. 2.

⁴ It seems appropriate to mention here that the bearers of Iranian names in Babylonian documents are generally regarded as Persians; but, in fact, there were representatives of other Iranian nations (Medes, Achaemenians, Saces, etc.) among them as well.

As seen from the documents, Babylonian in particular, the way of life of the Persian nobility changed greatly in a decade or two after Persia embarked upon the career of world conquest. In the sixth century, when the Persians first began to play their part in the history of mankind, their society still retained pronounced traces of old gentilic conditions, and the structure of the family was yet of the patriarchal type. At this time, the Persians were famous for their temperate habits, abstention from luxury, personal courage and high solidarity. According to Herodotus,⁵ they wore leather garments, drank no wine, and ate not as much as they liked, but as much as they had. On the testimony of Isaiah, they attached no value to silver, and did not lust for gold.⁶

But soon this frugal simplicity in food and clothing became an ideological relic surviving merely as part of the coronation ceremony of Persian kings; an Achaemenid ascending the throne had to put on the clothes Cyrus had worn before he became king, and to partake of dry figs, washing them down with a bowl of sour milk.⁷ Kings and noble Persians used to have with them, when on campaign, tents with gold and silver couches, tables, washing sets, vases, bowls, as well as expensive carpets, etc.⁸ The Persian nobles used also to take with them, when going to the wars, large numbers of slaves, bakers, eunuchs and cooks to serve them. The Persians began to wear rich Median clothes, adorned themselves with necklaces, and carried a golden *akinakās* at their side. Fresh fish from distant seas, fruit brought from Babylonia and Syria, were served at the royal table. The Persians became increasingly involved in business operations, acting through their agents who were mainly Babylonians, Aramaeans, Hebrews, Egyptians, etc. It appears from one of the Babylonian documents that Cambyses, son of Cyrus, already in his father's lifetime was involved in usurious practices, lending money on security through his manager.⁹ The Persians entered into different transactions according to Babylonian law, borrowing and lend-

⁵ Her. I, 171; IX, 122.

⁶ Is. XIII, 17. Though the text refers to the Medes, it is the Persians that are really meant. Persians are frequently called Medes in the Bible and in the works by Greek and Roman authors.

⁷ Plut., *Art.*, 3.

⁸ Her., IX, 80-82.

⁹ J. N. Strassmaier, *Cyr.*, No. 177. The document, dated 535 B.C., records a loan from "the property of Cambyses, son of the king" of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minas of silver, the debtor giving his house as security. The creditor is not to pay rent for it; the debtor, in his turn, pays no interest on the silver. Persian princes practised other usurious operations as well. There is a document (A. Ungnad, VS, III, Leipzig, 1907, No. 210) referring to a loan to one Dadia of 10 *kurru* of barley (approximately 1500 litres) belonging to "the house of the king's son" (i.e., the prince royal).

ing money, buying and selling houses, parcels of land, slaves, etc. A document of the reign of Cambyses mentions a Persian by the name of Artarūšu who was head of the merchants.¹⁰

An idea of the Persians' business operations may be got from the document UET, IV¹¹, 99.

- 1 4 kūr uṣṣatu šā mBa-gi-šū
 2 amēlū-zu-ut-la-bar-ra šā qūte^{m.d} Bēl(?)-ha-na-a
 3 amēl-rab bīti šā mBa-gi-šū ina muh-ḥi
 4 mNi-din-tum-dSamaš māri šā m.d Palil-šār-ušur
 5 apil m.dSin-ilāni^{mēs} ina arahAḫari uṣṣata-a,
 6 4 kūr ina kī^sma-ši-ḥu šā mBa-gi-šū
 7 ina Uri^{kl} ina bāb ka-lak-ku
 8 i-nam-din
 9 amēlmu-kin-nu m.dBēl-šū-nu mārū šā m.dSin-rība
 10 mSu-qa-a-a mārū šā mE-riš mMu-ra-šū-ū
 11 mārū šā mNu-uh-dA-nim m.dSin-rē'ū-šū-nu
 12 mārū šā m.d Sin-šār-ušur
 13 m.dNi-din-tum-dSamaš amēlṣupsarru mārū šā m.dPalil-šār-ušur
 14 apil m.dSin-ilāni^{mēs} Uri^{kl} arahKislimu āmu 8^{kām}
 15 šattu 28^{kām} mDa-ri-i-muš
 16 šar Bābili šar mātāti

Translation: "4 kurru¹² of barley belonging to Bagiš, the uzuttabarra,¹³ (and) being at the disposal of Bēl(?)-hanā, manager to Bagiš, (lent) to Nidintu-Samaš, son of Palil-šār-ušur, descendant of Sin-ilāni. In the month of Ayāru, the barley, 4 kurru, with the measure of Bagiš, in Ur, in the granary, he (i.e., debtor) must return. (Witnesses. Scribe.¹⁴). Ur, the month of Kislimu, 8th day, 28th year of Darius, king of Babylon, king of countries".¹⁵

Thus, according to the document in question, Bagiš lent 600 litres of barley through his manager. The debtor was to return the barley, using the measure of the creditor, at the end of five months.

Although it is possible that the king was nominally regarded as the supreme owner of all the land in the Achaemenid empire, the sources contain no incontestible proofs of this.¹⁶ As new territories were conquered, some of the lands—presum-

¹⁰ J. B. Strassmaier, Camb., No. 384, 11: amēl-rab tamkārūmēs.

¹¹ H. H. Figulla, *Business Documents of the Neo-Babylonian Period*, UET, IV, London, 1949. The document has not yet been transcribed and translated.

¹² About 600 litres.

¹³ An Iranian title, the meaning of which is yet unknown.

¹⁴ The scribe is the debtor himself.

¹⁵ 494 B.C.

¹⁶ Cf. G. Cardascia, *Les Archives des Murašā*, Paris, 1951, pp. 6-7. W. Eilers (OLZ, 1934, Sp. 95) is inclined to the opinion that the conquest of Babylonia by the Persians was followed by a redistribution of the land, so

ably, the best—were taken away from the vanquished population and distributed in large estates as inalienable and hereditary property among the members of the royal family, the friends, table companions and relatives of the king, important officers of the administration, and persons who had rendered distinguished services to the king. Cyrus and Cambyses had not yet effected complete consolidation of their empire, and retained the local institutions and customs; but after 521 B.C., the year which witnessed the enactment of Darius' administrative and fiscal reforms, the Persians occupied all the key positions in the army, in the main strategic centres and in the administration of the conquered countries, holding the posts of satraps, fortress and garrison commanders, governors of towns, judges, etc.¹⁷

Our sources contain evidence of the existence of a multitude of large landed estates owned by the Persian nobility. It appears from private deeds and letters in Babylonian and Aramaic that Persian nobles settled in the two richest satrapies of the Achaemenid empire, namely in Babylonia and Egypt, where they obtained large landed estates cultivated by means of slave labour or put out on lease. These documents give a complete picture of the seizure of lands belonging to the subjugated peoples, by the Persian aristocracy. The lands around Nippur were distributed to Persian nobles.¹⁸ The situa-

tion that all of it, or its larger part, became royal, i.e., state property. It is, however, probable that the Achaemenids did not dispose of all the land in the subjugated countries arbitrarily but merely confiscated the latifundia of the former kings when the latter did not submit to the conquerors of their own free will, and of the nobles of their immediate environment.

¹⁷ Cf., e.g., O. Krückmann, *Neubabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungstexte*, TMHC, Vol. II/III, Leipzig, 1933, No. 185; BE, IX, 9:12, 12:12; A. T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashā Sons Dated in the Reign of Darius II*, BE, X, Philadelphia, 1904, 8, 8, Lo. E.: 18, 14, U.E.: 20, 12, Lo. E.: 22, 9, U.E.: 24, 11, Lo.E.: 25, 11; 26, 15, R.R.; 92, 14, Lo.E.; A.T. Clay, *Legal and Commercial Transactions Dated in the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods Chiefly from Nippur*, BE, VIII, Philadelphia, 1908, 107, 19; G. Contenau, *Contrats néo-babyloniens, II. Achéménides et Séleucides*, TCL, XIII, Paris, 1929, 193, 31; J.N. Strassmaier, *Dar.*, 435, 15; R.C. Thompson, *CT*, XXII, London, 1906, No. 74.

¹⁸ Cf. W. Eilers, IBKU, I, Leipzig, 1940, p. 12. Thus, e.g., Artamarga, Bagamiri and other Persians, as well as the queen Parysatis and "ladies of the palace", possessed large estates in the area of Nippur, BE, IX, 28; 32; 50; 74; BE, X, 50; A. T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashā Sons of Nippur Dated in the Reign of Darius II*, UM, II, 1 Philadelphia, 1912, 77; 106; 116; 122; 192; TMHC, 185. Sometimes Babylonian farms had Persian names which they owed to their owners: *Bit-mBa-ga-a-da-a-ll* (BE, IX, 65, 3); *Bit-mUsta-na-a'* (UM, II, 1, 105, 8, 11); *Bit-amēlpar-sa-a-a* (VS, IV, 87/88), *Bit-amēlpar-ri-sa-a-a* (BE, X, 101, 13), meaning 'the house of Bagadāt, of Ustāna, of the Persians', etc. These farms were situated in the district of Nippur, Babylon, and probably in other places. Cf. W. Eilers, IBKU, p. 43; G. Cardascia, *Les Archives...*, pp. 82-83.

tion in other regions of Babylonia was more or less the same. Near the town of Opis in Babylonia there were villages belonging to Parysatis, wife of Darius II;¹⁹ we may infer from the words of Xenophon²⁰ that the land there was tilled by slaves. Satraps and other important officers owned palaces, parks with hunting preserves, gardens, meadows and large manors²¹ in Persia, Asia Minor, Syria, Phoenicia and other countries. They employed slave labour on their estates.²² The way in which the affairs of the estates of this type were conducted, is clearly illustrated by the letters of the Egyptian satrap Aršam and other Persian nobles, to their managers. The letters are mainly instructions to the manager concerning the collection of dues and the management of slaves. The documents show that Aršam possessed large landed property in Lower and Upper Egypt, and also in six different regions on the way from Susa to Egypt, among them, in Arbela and Damascus.²³ Large landed estates in Egypt were likewise owned by the princes Warōhi and Warfiš, and by other noble Persians.²⁴ The estates were managed by Egyptians, and cultivated with the help of *garda* who were recruited from people made captive during the suppression of the uprisings in Egypt, or from foreigners brought from other countries by force and enslaved.

In addition, Aršam owned in Nippur large herds of sheep and goats, which he hired out to his tenants. For instance, in 413 B.C. Aršam let, through his manager, 2381 heads of sheep and goats²⁵ to various herdsmen in the course of five days; and in 403 B.C. he let 1333 heads of sheep and goats²⁶ during a single day.

In Babylonia, Egypt, and probably in other countries as

¹⁹ UM, II, 1, 50; 60; 75; 133; TMHC, 185; Xen., *Anab.*, II, 4, 27.

²⁰ Xen., *Anab.*, II, 4, 27.

²¹ Her., III, 125; Xen., *Hell.*, III, I, 25-27; III, II, 12; IV, I, 15-16; 33; Xen., *Anab.*, I, 2, 7; IV, 4, 2, 7; Xen., *Oec.*, IV; Plut., *Them.*, 30; Plut., *Alic.*, 24; Nepos, *Agesil.*, III, 1; UM, II, 1, 105; 133; 202; BE, IX, 15; BE, X, 59, 95.

²² Cf. И. М. Дьяконов, «Рабовладельческие имения персидских вельмож» [I. M. Djakonoff, "Slave Estates of Persian Nobles"], VDI, 1959, No. 4, pp. 70 sq.; M. Dandamayev, "Foreign Slaves on the Estates of the Achaemenid Kings and their Nobles", *Труды XXV Международного конгресса востоковедов*, II, Moscow, 1963, pp. 147-154.

²³ G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1957, Nos I, VI, XII. Document TCL, XIII, 203 also mentions a field of Aršam's in the neighbourhood of Nippur, cf. G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, p. 90.

²⁴ G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, X, 1-4; XI, 1-4, XII, 1-7.

²⁵ For comparison it may be interesting to note that the satrap of Babylonia, Thrítantachmes, possessed 16,800 horses, not counting war horses. Four large villages situated in the plain were relieved from any other taxes and duties to enable them to furnish provisions for the dogs of an Indian breed kept by this satrap (Her., I, 192).

²⁶ BE, IX, 1; BE, X, 130; 131; UM, II, I, 145; 146; 147; 148.

well, Persians figured as big slave-owners²⁷ and land magnates.²⁸ They also owned residential houses, storehouses and other immovable property.²⁹ The Persians felt so safe in Babylonia that a certain Bagamiri, son of Mihrdates, leased to the trading house of Murašū, for a term of 60 years, a cultivated grain field of his own and a field inherited by him after the death of his uncle (his father's brother) Rušundāt. Both fields were situated on the banks of the Canal of Sin and the Silihli canal, next to the field of the Persian Rušunpatiš. Bagamiri also let dwelling houses "in (the locality of) Galia". The agents of the house of Murašū pay the whole rent on the signing of the contract, the rent amounting to 1,200 *kurru* of dates (i.e., about 180,000 litres). In addition, the Murašū undertake to turn all the leased fields into orchards.³⁰

Another document³¹ dated in Babylon in 423 B.C., records the lease of his grain field (*eqlu ša šezēri*) by the Persian Uheigam, son of Parnak, from the locality of Kugurdi, residing at the moment in the locality of Huššēti.

Especially vast landed possessions were owned by princes (*mār bīli*), crown princes (*mār šarri*), and queens. As attested by documents from Babylonia and Egypt, they had their own courts, as well as a staff of officials, managers, bodyguards, and also judicial and administrative officers of their own,³² sculptors and others artists.³³ The prince Aršam had even armed troops at his disposal.

²⁷ G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, VII; IX; XII; *Camb.*, 384; *Dar.*, 476, 7-8; BE, IX, 4, 3; 6, 3; 13, 4; 72, II, R.E.; 80, 7; 83, 20, L.E.; BE, X, 58, 8; 60, 2, 8; 88, 9; 114, 16; U.E.; 130, 27; R.E.; 131, 27; UM, 95, 19; 105, L.E.; 109, 13; 128, 16; 201, 6, U.E.

²⁸ UM, II, 1, 84; 93; 95; 105; 172; 192; 193; 201; 202; 205; BE, IX, 11; 32; 15; 106; BE, X, 50; 58; 59; 66; 95; *Dar.*, 296, 527.

²⁹ According to a contract from Babylon, dated 485 B.C., the Persian Arbatēm let some storehouses through his manager, a Babylonian (VS, IV, 191); in 486 B.C. the Persian Arbamihr, son of Partasamu, let a house at Borsippa (R. C. Thompson, *Catalogue of Late Babylonian Tablets in the Bodleyan Library*, London, 1927, A. 124); the Persian Partammu bought a house in Babylon (*Dar.*, 379; 410). Tirakam, son of Bagapān, let his storehouse in Nippur at 2 *kurru* (300 litres) of barley a year (BE, IX, 54).

³⁰ BE, IX, 48. The contract is drawn up in Nippur in 429 B.C., in the presence of Bagamiri's mother, Esagil-bēlet, a Babylonian woman who was the widow of the Persian Mihrdates. Cf. G. Cardascia, *Les Archives...*, p. 133.

³¹ UM, II, 1, 5.

³² UM, II, 1, 50; 60; 75; 133; 202; TMHC, 185; BE, IX, 75; 83; 84; BE, X, 31; 45; 59; 95; 101; G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, X; XII. Cf. B. Meissner, "Parysatis", *OLZ*, 1904, Sp. 384.

³³ For instance, prince Aršam had sculptors of his own. One of them worked in Susa where he had been sent from Egypt to make a mounted statue. Later he returned to Egypt at Aršam's order to work at more statues (G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, IX, I, 3). Prince Cambyses had a slave stone-carver, *Cyr.*, 325, 5.

Documents from Nippur provide testimony of the fact that business connections were maintained between Persian princes and queens and the trading house of Murašū. The princes, queens and ladies of the palace often leased their houses and gardens to the house of Murašū or to other persons.³⁴

The Persians themselves, as can be seen from the letters of Aršam and other documents, lived in large cities: Babylon, Susa, etc. Unwilling to devote themselves to business, they preferred to lead a luxurious life in places far removed from rural localities, on incomes from their landed property which was administered by their managers.³⁵

Landed property belonging to members of the Persian nobility was, to judge by the documents, tax-free. However, there existed under the Achaemenids a system of land tenure based on grants of parcels of land by the king to his warriors on condition of service; the warriors received the parcels collectively, by whole districts. They were liable to military service, and paid taxes to the state. Land was likewise granted, on condition of service, to state officials, down to those of the lowest ranks.³⁶ Such holdings were designated by the Iranian term *bāga*.³⁷ The holders had to pay taxes.³⁸ In Babylonia service due from such land was termed *ilku*;³⁹ in

³⁴ A document from Nippur dated in the year 31 of Artaxerxes I (BE, IX, 28) records the lease of the lands and orchards belonging to the "house of a lady of the palace", to the house of Murašū. According to another document (THMC, 185), 317 *kurru* 2 *pan* 3 *sātu* of barley (about 19,095 litres) and 5 *kurru* 2 *pan* 3 *sātu* of wheat (about 835 litres) were paid to the queen Parysatis and her manager as rent for part of the leased land. The contract was signed in the presence of Išubazan, judge of the Canal of Sin, and Nabū-mit-uballī, judge of the house of Parysatis. Cf. G. Cardascia, *Les Archives...*, pp. 95-96. See also UM, 50; 60; 75 recording the lease of lands effected by Parysatis through her manager. According to the document BE, X, 59 a field of the "son of the king" was taken on lease by his manager Lābāši who paid 294 *kurru* (about 44,100 litres) of barley as rent.

³⁵ Thus, one of the letters written by the prince Warōhi who resided in Babylon, contains a complaint that the income of his Egyptian estate has been held back (G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, I, 2). The letters of Aršam and other nobles show that at the moment of writing they were not in Egypt but in Babylon or Susa (G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, IX, 1, 3; XI, 3, 5; A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B. C.*, Oxford, 1923, Nos 27, 2-3; 30, 4-5; cf. G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, VIII, p. 11).

³⁶ G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents...*, VIII.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39-40.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII.

³⁹ Vide, e.g., J. N. Strassmaier, "Elnige kleinere babylonische Keilschrifttexte aus dem Britischen Museum", *Actes du Huitième Congrès International des Orientalistes*, II, 1, Leiden, 1893, No. 30: 10 sq.: *ilki ša šarri ša ana muhhi tezerētīmes an-ne-tum...* (*il-lak*) "(to) the (royal) service for the cultivated fields... he [is liable]". The contract is dated in 525 B.C. Cf. also TCL, XIII, 203:29: *man-nu ina muh-ši zitti-šu šarri t-pal-laḫ* "each (of the holders) will serve the king for his (hereditary) share". It is further stipulat-

Aramaic documents it was described by the related term *hātūk*.⁴⁰

The redistribution of land effected by the Achaemenids resulted in the appearance of different types of holdings designated in Babylonian documents as *bit qašti*, *bit sisi*, *bit nar-kabti*, etc. These holdings of land were granted to military colonists liable to military service as archers, cavalrymen and charioteers⁴¹ respectively. Persons in possession of such holdings were also obliged to pay taxes in money or in kind: in wine, oil, flour, etc.

The military service was introduced in the reign of Cambyses, if not in that of Cyrus; the view that it is not mentioned in the documents before the reign of Darius I,⁴² seems erroneous. Thus, the term *bit qašti* in the meaning of "a land holding" occurs in a document dated in the reign of Cambyses.⁴³ Another document of the time of Cambyses⁴⁴ contains the term *bit as-pa-tum*, which is partly equivalent to the Akkadian *bit sisi*.⁴⁵ The opinion of W. v. Soden that the word is a misspelling for *as-pa-<as>-tum* and should be translated as "alfalfa, lucerne",⁴⁶ does not appear convincing. The document in question deals with a piece of land belonging to the king, but the use of which was granted to one Ili-aqabi. The latter leased it out for a term of six years. Part of the land was cultivated and the rest of it was virgin soil. There are no grounds for regarding the land as a meadow of lucerne, and the word *aspātum* is probably formed from the Iranian *aspa-* with the Akkadian plural suffix *-ūtum*. Besides, no documents recording the lease of lucerne meadows have so far come to my knowledge. Part of the field in question has not been ploughed at all, which precludes the possibility of the whole field being described as "plot of lucerne". Evidently, the piece of land mentioned in the document is a holding granted to Ili-aqabi on condition of military service. Apparently, during

ed in the document that each holder of those to whom the fields in the neighbourhood of Nippur have been allotted, must pay taxes to the king from his share of land. The contract is dated in 463 B.C. in Nippur. Sometimes work for the king is termed *dullu ša ekalli* "work for the palace", see A. T. Clay, *Neo-Babylonian Letters from Erech*, YOS, Babylonian Texts, Vol. III, 133, 8; or *dullu ša šarri* "work (for) the king", CT, XXII, 244, 17.

⁴⁰ Ezr., IV, 13, 20; VII, 24.

⁴¹ W. Eilers, OLZ, 1934, Sp. 94.

⁴² E. Kotalla, "Fünzig babylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden aus der Zeit des Königs Artaxerxes I", BA, IV, 1092, p. 560-561; G. Cardascia, *Les Archives...*, p. 8, n. 7; R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia*, London, 1962, p. 113.

⁴³ Camb., 85, 1: *sezēru bit es qašti* "the cultivated field, a holding of the bow". The document is drawn up in Babylon.

⁴⁴ VS, V, 55, 2. The document is dated in 523 B.C. in Sippar.

⁴⁵ G. Cardascia, *Les Archives...*, p. 8, n. 7.

⁴⁶ W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden, 1959, p. 75.

the early part of the Achaemenid rule, the land whose possessor was liable to military service as a cavalryman, was in Babylonia designated by an Iranian word, the entire existing system of land tenure connected with service being evidently introduced by the Persian administration.⁴⁷ Later the Iranian term,⁴⁸ which sounded strange in the Semitic ear, was replaced by its Akkadian equivalent *bit sīsī*. It is also noteworthy that in the text under discussion the land is regarded as part of the king's property, while later documents never indicate that such land is owned by the king. Probably, holdings of this kind were originally understood to belong to the king; later they began to be mortgaged⁴⁹ and alienated, although still on condition that the new owners should continue to pay the royal taxes and carry the obligation of service.

Lastly, part of the lands constituted property which really belonged to the king.⁵⁰ These lands were tilled by the king's slaves, or, more often, put out on lease. Thus, according to a contract⁵¹ dated 420 B.C. in the locality of Ellil-ašabtu-iqbi, in the area of Nippur, Rimūt-Ninurta, a member of the house of Murašū, approached Liblut, who had been appointed manager of the king's cultivated fields lying along the banks of several canals, with a request to lease him the field between the canals of Paḥāt-adi-Turnu and Nergal-dānu for a term of three years. He undertook to pay an annual rent of 220 *kurru* of barley (about 33,000 litres), 20 *kurru* of wheat (about 3,000 litres), 10 *kurru* of spelt (about 1,500 litres), and also one ox and 10 rams.⁵² The leased *uzbarra*-lands sown with cereals and other cultures also belonged to the category of royal land.⁵³ All these lands, being situated along the banks of royal ca-

⁴⁷ Services connected with land grants existed in Babylonia since the earliest times; but the Achaemenids introduced practically a new system, cf. G. Cardascia, *Les Archives*... , p. 8.

⁴⁸ The word *aspa-* is a Median form, and it is quite possible that the system of land tenure under obligation of service originated in Media and was borrowed by the Achaemenid administration.

⁴⁹ W. Eilers, *OLZ*, 1934, Sp. 94.

⁵⁰ On royal estates in Babylonia see, e.g., *TCL*, XIII, 203, 15; *sezēru nakkan-du šā šarri* "cultivated field of the king's treasury" which was in the neighbourhood of Nippur; *UM*, 172, 12: *eqlu šā šarri* "field of the king"; *BE*, IX, 46: *še zēru šā šarri* "cultivated field of the king".

⁵¹ *TMHC*, 147. See G. Cardascia, *Les Archives*... , p. 160.

⁵² Documents from Nippur show that the trading house of Murašū often leased royal lands in small plots to their dependants or subtenants. See *UM*, 124; 150; 158; *BE*, IX, 65.

⁵³ *BE*, IX, 67, 4, 8, 10, 12; 71, 1; *UM*; 124, 2; 150, 7; *sezēru uz-bār-ra šā šarri*. [On *uzbār-ra*-land in Parthian times see И. М. Дьяконов и В. А. Лившиц, «Парфянское царское хозяйство в Нисе I в. до н. э.» [I. M. Diakonoff and V. A. Livshits, "A Parthian Royal Estate in Nisa, 1st cent. B.C."], *VDI*, 1960, No. 2, pp. 19, 25-30.—Ed.]

nals, brought large incomes to the king. The total area of royal lands under the Achaemenids had increased so much as compared with the preceding period that sometimes, when purchasing immovable property, a guaranty was required that the land did not belong to the king.⁵⁴

Besides, the king owned many large canals.⁵⁵ Babylonian documents show that the king's managers put these canals out on lease for a very high rental. In the neighbourhood of Nippur the royal canals were rented by the house of Murašū who, in their turn, leased them to groups of small landowners. Thus, according to a document⁵⁶ dated in 439 B.C. in the locality of Ridimḥu in the Nippur area, seven landowners signed a contract with Ellil-šum-iddin, "son" of Murašū, Bēl-nāšir, son of Bēl-ušēzib, and Iddin-Bēl (his patronymic has not survived, part of the tablet being broken off). The contract gave the landowners the right to water their fields during three days monthly (from the 12th to the 15th day), using the water of the canal which was "in the property of the king" (*ina šibit-tū šā šarri*). In payment the landowners were to give $\frac{1}{3}$ of the crops and fruits as "water tax" for irrigated lands; $\frac{1}{3}$ of a shekel of silver for every *kurru*⁵⁷ of the irrigated land, and $\frac{2}{3}$ of a shekel for every *kurru* of "scooped(?) land".⁵⁸ Should the farmers use the water for the irrigation of lands not specified in the contract, the rent would rise accordingly. In case they should use the water over and above the term specified in the contract, they were to pay a fine of 5 minas of silver without court order. According to another document from Nippur,⁵⁹ the rent for irrigation amounted to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the crop of dates.

The data contained in the works of Greek and Roman authors, in the Bible, and in Egyptian documents, show that Persian kings also owned the canal of Akes in Central Asia, forests in Syria, incomes of fishing in Lake Moeris, Egypt; as well as storehouses in the different countries of the empire, at least in Babylonia and Egypt.⁶⁰ There is also reason to believe that in Babylonia there were poultry farms belonging to the king.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Thus, e.g., in a document from Dilbat dated in the reign of Darius I, recording the sale of a cultivated field, a guaranty is given that the field is not the king's property, *VS*, VI, 171: *sezēru lā šā šarri šū-ū*.

⁵⁵ On royal canals in Babylonia, see *BE*, IX, 7, 6, 14; *UM*, 2, 16; 58, 13, 20; 59, 10; 73, 5; *VS*, III, 68; *Dar.*, 411, 17.

⁵⁶ *BE*, IX, 7.

⁵⁷ 13,000 square metres.

⁵⁸ The meaning of this term is obscure.

⁵⁹ *BE*, IX, 7.

⁶⁰ *Her.*, II, 117; II, 149; *Neh.*, II, 8; *Camb.*, 256.

⁶¹ E.g., the documents *BE*, X, 128, 15-16; *UM* II, 1, 63, 25, U.E.; 76, 27, L.E.; 133, 21, L.E. mention one Hannania who was appointed to tend the poultry belonging to the king: *iššurātū šā šarri*.

The data given above are evidence to the fact that Persian nobles seized land and other property originally owned by the population of the conquered countries. According to the Egyptian Demotic Chronicle,⁶² after the conquest of the country by the "Medes" (i.e., by the Persians) the land and the islands were filled with weeping, and there was no one left in Egyptian houses to live there. The "Medes" thus took possession of the houses of the Egyptians, and lived in them. The Book of Nehemiah⁶³ tells us that in the Persian district of Judah many people mortgaged their fields, vineyards and houses to stave off hunger, or borrowed silver to pay the king's taxes, giving away their sons and daughters into slavery. The people of Judah complained that they had no possibility to redeem their children from slavery, or their vineyards and fields from the creditors. Documents from Babylonia show that many inhabitants of this satrapy too had to mortgage their fields and orchards to get silver for the payment of taxes to the king. In many cases they were unable to redeem their property, and became landless hired labourers; sometimes they were compelled to give away their children into slavery. According to some Egyptian data,⁶⁴ the taxation was so heavy that the peasants escaped to the cities, but were arrested by the nomarchs and brought back by force.

The fact that the countries conquered by the Persians had to pay 7,600 Babylonian talents in silver⁶⁵ out of the total amount of taxes which reached the sum of 14,560 talents, also told heavily on the possibilities of local economic development. The greater portion of this sum reached the royal treasury and stayed there for scores of years. Only an insignificant part of the silver found its way back to the countries under the Persian rule, in the form of salaries paid to the warriors and to the royal functionaries.⁶⁶ This stood in the way of the normal development of commodity- and money-market relations. As seen from a number of Babylonian documents, during the time of Achaemenid rule the shortage of silver sometimes caused people to resort to barter, for instance, to exchange dates for barley, etc.

⁶² W. Spiegelberg, "Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik des Papyrus 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris", *Demotische Studien*, Heft 7, Leipzig, 1915, p. 18-20, Col. III, 18, 20, 23; IV, 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13; V, 1.

⁶³ Neh., V, 3-5.

⁶⁴ E. Seidl, "Aegyptische Rechtsgeschichte der Saiten- und Perserzeit", *Aegyptologische Forschungen*, Heft 20, Glückstadt-Hamburg, 1956, p. 31 (reference to Pap. Rylands IX).

⁶⁵ Her., III, 89 sqq.

⁶⁶ F. Althelm und R. Stiehl, *Die Aramäische Sprache unter den Achaimeniden*, I, Frankfurt am Main, 1961-1962, p. 109 sq.

In addition to the payment of taxes in silver and in kind, the subjects of the Achaemenid kings had to send their children into slavery for labour in the households of Persian kings and nobles as bakers, cooks, cup-bearers, door-keepers, physicians, eunuchs, etc. Babylonia alone was obliged to furnish the Persian king with 500 boys annually, as a form of tax.⁶⁷ Other countries were in the same position.⁶⁸ The Book of Esther informs us that the subjects of the Achaemenids had to send hundreds of women to the Persian king as concubines. Lastly, the Achaemenids enslaved entire tribes and the population of many regions and towns whenever they rose against the Persian domination, making their lands state property.

The numerous officials and businessmen were far removed from the sphere of productive labour, and lived parasitically, exploiting the labour of the peasants and craftsmen. All these circumstances affected the development of the productive forces in these countries. It should also be borne in mind that large areas of fertile land had become property either of the Persians, or of military colonists. This resulted in a sharp increase in the quantity of people alienated from property in means of production, and probably served as one of the causes which brought about the 50% rise in prices for different articles of consumption noted by Dubberstein⁶⁹ in Babylonia under the Persian rule.

The Achaemenid period was marked by considerable changes in the system of temple taxes. If the Chaldaean kings and the members of their families paid an annual tithe to the temples in gold, silver, cattle, etc., the Achaemenids paid no tithe. The kings of the Chaldaean dynasty seldom interfered with the affairs of the temples; the contribution of the latter to the annual revenue of the state was small; on the contrary, it was the temples that received lands, slaves, etc. as gifts from the kings. Under the Achaemenids the picture was quite different. The temples were now obliged to pay to the state considerable amounts of taxes in natural produce: sheep and goats, cattle, barley, sesame, dates, wine, beer, spices, oil, butter, milk, wool, and also to furnish fodder for the royal cattle, and provisions for state officials and for the labourers of the royal estates. Large temples had to supply regularly hundreds of heads of cattle and hundreds of thousands of litres of grain for the royal table (*ana naptāni ša šarri*).

Besides this, the temples were liable to labour service, having to send gangs of 500 and more slaves (farmers, herds-

⁶⁷ Her., III, 92. See also BE, IX, 51.

⁶⁸ Her., VI, 9, 32; Plut., *Them.*, 26, 27; Plut., *Art.*

⁶⁹ W. H. Dubberstein, "Comparative Prices in Later Babylonia", *AJSL*, LVI, 1939, p. 20 sq.

men, gardeners, carpenters, etc.) for labour in the royal household. Temple slaves tended royal cattle, fed and sheared it, manufactured bricks for the palace, cut reeds, etc.

To ensure the fulfilment of their obligations to the state, special representatives of the king and royal fiscal agents were introduced into the temple administration and saw to it that all taxes were paid in due terms and in full, and all services were duly fulfilled. The control of temple property was likewise entrusted to royal officials, and they often made inspection of it. Royal functionaries also controlled the labour of the temple slaves sent to perform compulsory work for the state.

These facts are in complete accord with the general policy of the Achaemenids with regard to the temples; they strove to reduce the incomes of the temples without wounding the religious feelings of the population of the subjugated countries. Thus, having conquered Egypt, Cambyses stopped the continuous flow of gifts which had been showered upon the temples in the reign of the pharaohs of the XXVIIth Dynasty. Only three temples were suffered by him to retain their incomes.⁷⁰

The changes in agrarian relations and in the system of taxation, discussed above, seem to have been characteristic not only of Babylonia, but also of at least the majority of the other countries with a high level of economic development which were incorporated in the Achaemenid empire.

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See also p. 296.

⁷⁰ W. Spiegelberg, "Die sogenannte Demotische Chronik...", p. 33.