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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

Until about 20 years ago, the archaeology of the Achaemenid Empire was by and large the domain of those scholars and teams who excavated the major palatial centers of the Persian rulers in Iran. While the results of such researches were valuable for understanding Achaemenid practices in the Persian homeland and the material culture of the Achaemenid court, Persian everyday culture remained largely obscure. Simultaneously, the circumstances of Persian rule in the provinces were glimpsed almost exclusively through a lacunose and problematic written record, whose testimony stood in apparent opposition to then-known archaeological realities. Literary accounts and Achaemenid inscriptions and reliefs conveyed the impression of rigorous Achaemenid political and economic control over subject provinces. Archaeology in contrast supplied meager testimony about Persian presence and rule in conquered territories, raising questions as to whether the material evidence could shed light on imperial realities and casting doubt on the notion of tight imperial rule or pervasive Persian influence. The colloquium "*L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide: nouvelles recherches*" (Collège de France, 21-22 novembre 2003) organized and published under the direction of Pierre Briant and Rémy Boucharlat, was conceived on the premise that the apparent "archaeological void" -- the lack of artifacts that could be adduced as markers of Persian presence -- was the result of earlier research preferences, in which the Achaemenid period had claimed little attention outside Iran.

Setting the background for this initiative were a number of recent

developments. As the editors explain in their introduction, changing political circumstances led archaeologists formerly working in royal Achaemenid sites to re-direct their research from the homeland to the provinces.

Archaeological research strategies were also shaped by major salvage projects (e.g., the construction of dams in Syria, Iraq, Turkey) and by a more recent reorientation from single site excavations towards studies and surveys of a larger, regional scope (e.g., in Bactria and in the Kharga Oasis in Egypt). These new initiatives necessitated the collaboration of specialists working in different periods and set the parameters for a more equitable treatment of traditionally less favored periods, including the Persian, which earlier excavators had often neglected.

Scholarly publications and colloquia devoted to the history of the empire or to particular provinces reflect a growing interest in the Persian period in the archaeological domain and a parallel revival of the study of the Achaemenid Empire among historians over the past two decades. Earlier attempts to draw attention to the growing volume of researches in the different regions of the empire are exemplified, for instance, by U. Weber's and J. Wiesehöfer's *Das Reich der Achaimeniden: Eine Bibliographie* (AMI Ergänzungsband 15, Berlin, 1996) as well as by the introduction of the *Bulletin d'histoire achéménide* by Pierre Briant since 1996. The present volume represents the first parallel exploration of the archaeological record for the Persian period in a number of the distinct and geographically diverse areas and cultures of the empire. The expressed aim of the colloquium has been to assess the present state of our knowledge about the Persian period and to trace changes in the associated material culture.

The areas of focus are Lycia (Thomas Marksteiner), Cilicia and Hatay (Charles Gates), the Coastal Plain of Palestine (Oren Tal), Egypt (Michel Wuttmann and Sylvie Marchand), Northeast Syria (Bertille Lyonnet), Southeast Anatolia (Jésus Gil Fuensanta and Petr Charvat), Northern Iraq (John Curtis), the Caucasus (Florian S. Knauss), Iran (Rémy Boucharlat; Shahrokh Razmjou), and Central Asia (Henri-Paul Francfort). The papers are arranged in rough geographical order from West to East. Five of the eleven contributions are in English, five in French, and one in German, each with a separate bibliography. Many papers provide useful maps for locating sites of Achaemenid date or occurrences of Persian-related artifacts (although some deficiencies can be noted in the missing numbers 1-5 and 7-8 on the map of Achaemenid sites in the region of Birecik-Carchemish on p. 153 and in the omission of a map in Curtis' review of Northern Iraq).

Methods of presentation and results vary due to the disparity of extant testimony and to the limited, unevenly distributed, and often poorly studied or inaccessible archaeological information across the vast territory of the Persian realm stretching from the Indus to the Mediterranean. Thematic presentations on the Achaemenid impact on local coinage, economy, settlement patterns and roads, epigraphy, architecture, art, burial customs, ethnicity, and demography are provided for Lycia and the Coastal Plain of Palestine, where archaeological evidence and earlier studies of the material

of the Persian period are more plentiful. In the case of Central Asia, a similar approach is motivated by artifacts (e.g., fortresses, secular and religious edifices and luxury objects) with a possible bearing on Achaemenid territorial control or cultural influence during the Achaemenid and subsequent periods. Shahrokh Razmjou's re-examination of the largely unpublished finds from Farmeshgan in western Iran, the only paper dealing with a single site, offers a vantage point for reflecting on the little-known circumstances of the Achaemenid presence in the Iranian homeland beyond the major palatial centers of Pasargadae, Persepolis and Susa. The remaining papers present relevant information in the form of inventories of sites (in the Caucasus and Northern Iraq), often grouped by sub-regions defined by natural geographical subdivisions (Egypt, Northeastern Syria, Birecik-SE Anatolia, Iran), and one (Cilicia and Hatay) by periods of archaeological exploration.

Not every inventory aims at a comprehensive overview of Persian period sites and finds. In the case of Egypt, uncertainties resulting from incompletely recorded cultural sequences at a plethora of sites excavated in the Nile valley in the past render exhaustive presentation impractical. There is, however, a welcome emphasis upon more recent excavations and surveys in less explored districts of the Western Oases, which have yielded documents that shed light on contemporary architecture, agricultural and water management/qanâts, etc. (e.g., "Ain Manâwir in the Kharga Oasis). A systematic coverage is successfully attempted for Iran, resulting in a valuable manual of sites with traces of Achaemenid period occupation (however minute or ambiguous the available evidence may be in some instances), a historic overview of archaeological exploration of the country, as well as succinct, critical commentaries on longstanding problems (e.g., the identification of different local/regional ceramic types diagnostic of the Achaemenid period, the precise chronology of artifacts, monuments, settlement patterns, and other detectable phenomena of acculturation on the Iranian Plateau) that bear simultaneously on the study of Persian culture in the center of the empire and on first millennium Iranian archaeology as a whole. The systematic overview of earlier archaeological activity in Cilicia-Hatay underlines the neglect of the Achaemenid period in the context of regional research projects. While usefully describing the current state of research, reviews of relevant evidence from other western regions (e.g., from southeastern Anatolia, northern Iraq, northeastern Syria), once again highlight the scarcity of evidence, and even the lack of secure guidelines, for identifying and studying the Persian period.

The preoccupation with chronology evident in a number of the surveys stems from the basic need to identify the two centuries of the Persian period on the ground in the face of floating dating schemes and the uncertain chronological boundaries of the preceding and following periods. Independently dated items (e.g., datable texts, Attic pottery, coins) are generally rare. On closer inspection, particular artifacts (e.g., Lyonnet: terracotta figurines of the so-called Persian rider and Ashtarte types; Frankfort: arrow heads) are shown to be less reliable markers of Persian period contexts or Persian ethno-cultural

affiliations than was previously thought to be the case. In most instances identification of the period depends on ceramic typologies which are not infrequently unavailable in publications of local pottery assemblages from stratified contexts or may be in need of sharper definition. In Egypt, where ceramic materials do not attest clear typological or technical differences from the preceding Saite period, pottery is generally attributed to the "Late" or "Saite" period. In Cilicia-Hatay, current hopes for defining the regional ceramic profile of the period between the sixth and fourth centuries would appear to depend, above all, on the introduction of further systematic studies of the architectural levels and the associated ceramic and other finds from the Achaemenid period levels (Periods 4-2) at Al Mina and at Kinet Hüyük (Periods 5-3, currently under excavation). In Central Asia, the entire Iron Age is treated as a block from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period. Although remains of Achaemenid date have been identified in a number of the sites investigated by the Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project in northern Iraq, publications of extensive local ceramic assemblages that are characteristic of the Persian period are still awaited. In central Fars, periodization of sites on the basis of pottery continues to remain very imprecise from the end of the seventh century to the post-Achaemenid period.

The unequal attention paid to the question of Achaemenid impact is a sign, as the editors note, of the difficulty in identifying it. From Central Asia to Anatolia, coastal Syria and Egypt, the recurring general pattern is one of the continuity of local cultures (with reference, e.g., to building plans, building materials, and burial customs). The rich Achaemenid imprint on local monumental architecture and craftsmanship in the Caucasus, adroitly summarized by Knauss, stand in contrast to findings from other areas. The picture is still obscure in Cilicia. At the hilltop fortress of Meydancikkale, thought to have been the residence of a regional governor, blocks with reliefs that directly evoke Persepolitan sculpture offer a tantalizing glimpse into connections between Achaemenid and Cilician material culture. Charles Gates's systematic overview of excavations and surveys conducted in Cilicia-Hatay before and after World War II underlines, however, the limited number of sites with identifiable Achaemenid remains and the rarity of artifacts that bare any imprint of an Achaemenid presence and influence. Achaemenid connections in northern Syria, occurring in the form of figurines, pottery types current in Iran, and isolated tablets and architectural elements and decoration, are rare overall, but a settlement of a military nature at Tell Ahmar/Til Barsip, represented by tombs with materials similar to those from Deve Hüyük, seem to at least underline an Achaemenid concern for control of the upper Euphrates crossings. The sparse textual record still forms the starting point for any discussion of Persian rule in Egypt and the Assyrian heartland. In the former area, objects of Achaemenid or mixed type are rare. The "fort" of Tell Kedoua offers perhaps a rare instance of Achaemenid architectural influence (98). In northern Iraq, an erstwhile Achaemenid presence in the relatively well explored former capital centers of Nimrud, Khorsabad, Nineveh, and Assur is attested almost exclusively in the form of a limited number of small diagnostic finds (e.g.,

jewelry, precious vessels and seals). Achaemenid objects are barely reported from sites in the Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Area that are otherwise tentatively identified as belonging to the Achaemenid period. In Central Asia there is "little or nothing to be seen as signs of an Achaemenid presence and domination" (334), while rich assemblages of jewelry from the same region (including Achaemenid materials) "rarely speak of Achaemenid influence on local metalwork" (338).

As the editors admit, the colloquium's goals were perhaps overly optimistic given the present state of research, and attempts at synthesis can be seen to raise more questions than answers. This well-edited collection of essays ought not to be judged, however, by its ability to provide a net picture of Persian rule across the empire. Its more important contribution lies in bringing together disparate (and often not easily accessible) archaeological patterns of research, in offering a wealth of comparative materials (both primary archaeological evidence and extensive bibliographies) and in providing a valuable research tool for regional specialists. Without covering the entire territory of the empire, it still succeeds in defining important gaps in our knowledge and in exposing problems, especially with reference to chronology and methodology, across a wide spectrum. Not least, it focuses attention on directions of research that could be profitably explored in the course of future inquiries. The archaeology of the Persian Empire is still very much a field in the making.

CONTENTS

Pierre Briant, Rémy Boucharlat, Introduction

Thomas Marksteiner, Das achämenidenzeitliche Lykien

Charles Gates, The Place of the Achaemenid Persian Period in Archaeological Research in Cilicia and Hatay (Turkey)

Oren Tal, Some Remarks on the Coastal Plain of Palestine under Achaemenid Rule--an Archaeological Synopsis

Michel Wuttmann, Sylvie Marchand, Égypte

Bertille Lyonnet, La présence achéménide en Syrie du Nord-Est

Jesús Gil Fuensanta, Petr Charvat, Birecik achéménide et l'âge du Fer IIIB dans le Sud-Est anatolien

John Curtis, The Achaemenid Period in Northern Iraq

Florian S. Knauss, Caucasus

Rémy Boucharlat, Iran

Shahrokh Razmjou, Notes on a Forgotten Achaemenid Site at Farmeshgan:
Iran

Henri-Paul Frankfort, Asie centrale.

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