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Pre-Achaemenid Persians:
An Elamite Point of View

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בְּנֵי שֵׁם עֵילָם וְאַשּׁוּר וְאַרְפַּכְשַׁד וְלוּד וַאֲרָם:

Shem, the third of Noah's sons, had five sons, who inhabited Asia as far as the Indian Ocean, beginning at the Euphrates. Elymus had for his descendants the Elymaeans, ancestors of the Persians (Ἔλυμος μὲν γὰρ Ἐλυμαίους Περσῶν ὄντας ἀρχηγέτας κατέλιπεν).

Commenting on chapter 10 of the *Genesis* (the Table of Nations), Josephus, in his *Jewish Antiquities* written about 90 AD, made this connection between Elymaeans and Persians. The Greek term ἀρχηγέτης, meaning 'first leader, founder of a city or family', reverses the chronological time-line we are used to, even if, according to Briant, Elymaeans were present in eastern and north-eastern Khuzistān in Achaemenid time. Though it is attracting recognizing a relict of the ancient Elamite civilization in the mountaineers accounted by Strabo with the name of Ἐλυμαῖοι, Josephus here was simply thinking of Elam and Persia as recounted by biblical texts. Notwithstanding, it is clear that Josephus would not have understood essays such as *Persians and Medes* by Culican or 'Medes, Scythians and Persians' by Vogelsang, neither a conference entitled *Assyria Media Persia: Continuity of Empire (?)*.

Obviously, the witness of Josephus is not relevant as to a proof of an ethnic kinship between two old peoples, but relevant regarding what was considered Elamite or Persian in the 1st century AD. In the last years many scholars raised a debate on the effective meaning of labels worn-out by scholarly usage: so Kurash (Cyrus) might have been an Elamite, at least not an Achaemenid, the most prominent superintendent in neo-Elamite Susa bore an Iranian-like name (ku-ud-da-ka₄-ka₄), the Median "empire" has turned out to be only a feeble political organization, and so on. The link between a label and its content(s) is not objective, and being subjective is subjected to the point of view of the author, his historical period and his social context. The fact itself that the exact label had been choosen, either by its writer or by those who needed to use it, is meaningful. Our essays sometimes follow a name just to show that its meaning changed; sometimes they focus on a subject which assumed many names with time.

From this respect, the search for early (pre-Achaemenid) Persians is somewhat emblematic: which people is hidden under the slightly different labels ^{KUR}par-su-a, ^{KUR}par-su-aš, ^{KUR}par-su-maš etc.? Inside information is provided by Elamite sources, probably a bit too late for many historians. A homogeneous *corpus* of administrative tablets from the Acropolis of Susa and several scattered documents (letters, legal texts, dedicatory inscriptions and even a text of *omina*), are known from the end of the neo-Elamite period. Unfortunately, the dating of these documents is much debated; for the administrative tablets, it ranges from 685 BC as proposed by Hinz (on the ground of the mention of ^{BE}ma-ak-iš-tur-ri as Cyaxares in MDP 9, 132; restored also in MDP 9, 95) to the first

quarter of the 6th century BC according to Vallat, even till the reign of Cyrus the Great and Cambyses, i.e. down to the Achaemenid period, in Cameron's opinion. So it is not easy to draw historiographic consequences from the data we are going to review.

Collective designations in the Acropolis tablets

The Elamite administrative documents, found in 1900 by the French archaeologist Jacques de Morgan on the Acropolis of Susa (near the temple of Inšušinak built by will of Šutruk-Nahhunte II (717-699 BC)), counts about 300 tablets in fairly good status of preservation with an average of a dozen lines of text. Father V. Scheil (1858-1940; a Dominican friar, as the late M.-J. Steve), who published the tablets in 1907 (Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse, vol. 9), believed they were the product of a cosmopolitan city.

In fact, skimming through the texts, we encounter a lot of collective designations, formed by adding the delocutive singular *-r* or plural *-p* suffixes to proper names, either personal or geographical ones. These two classes are generally differentiated by the preceding determinative, <u>BE</u> before anthroponyms and <u>AŠ</u> before toponyms. However, in some instances, <u>BE</u> seems to replace <u>AŠ</u> – after all a toponym followed by a delocutive suffix points to people from that place, and the idea of 'people' could have overcome the idea of 'place'. As a consequence of this degree of variability, the role of determinatives was not recognized till Vallat suggested that designations consistently marked by <u>BE</u> might refer to people grouped under the name of their eponym, people who was not acknowledged to belong to a single place.

A comprehensive analysis of the morpho-syntactical context of the collective designations has pointed out three different type of occurrences, according to the suffixes attached to the anthroponym or locale:

- ✎ the plural delocutive suffix *-p* points to a group of people, marking the name of their leader or the place where they come from. This I call 'P (plural) type';

- ✎ the singular delocutive suffix *-r* points to an individual from a group, marking either a toponym or an anthroponym as in P type. This individual can be singled out only in this way or can be named explicitly. In the first case, the suffix *-r* follows the plural delocutive *-p*, so to speak 'one among the many of this group'. This I call 'S (singular or single) type', 'S0 type' if not followed by the individual's anthroponym;

- ✎ the plural delocutive suffix *-p* (usually spelled as <u>ip-pè</u>) in genitive concord with the preceding word, following another plural delocutive suffix *-p*. The preceding word represents a typology of (textile) products: even if not marked by the suffix *-p*, I think that it should be regarded as plural; then the syntagm would have the meaning 'products in the garb or manner of that people'. This I call 'O (object) type'.

Altogether, we find 234 occurrences of 93 different collective designations in 137 out of 298 tablets.

Persians in the Acropolis tablets

Among these, the most attested is the gentilic designations derived from *parsa*: <u>pár-sir(-ra)</u> 'Persian' and <u>pár-sìp</u> 'Persians', occuring altogether 17 times. Ghirshman mistook for proof of a Persian enclave in Susa what was bare evidence for relationships between Persian people and Susan administration; moreover, having found three Elamite tablets similar to those from the Acropolis in the eastern Susan suburb he was excavating, Ghirshman named it 'Village perse-achéménide'.

Reviewing the occurrences of *parsa*, we will see the three above-mentioned morpho-syntactic constructions at work.

Table 1: Occurrences of the collective designations derived from the name *parsa* in the Acropolis tablets from Susa. The column 'type' points to the morpho-syntactic classification described above (PN = proper name).

products	MDP 9	type	spelling	context	formula
180 *kuktu* BABBAR.BABBAR	11	P	pár-sìp	^{BE}pár-sìp ^{AŠ}za-am-pe-gìr-ip	*humaka ... duhšta*
60 *kuktu* ^{AŠ}a-a-pír-ip-pe	47	PN (S0?)	pár-sir-ra	^{BE}[pár]-sir-ra DUMU bar-ru	*... lipka*
...	49	P	pár-sìp	^{BE}pár-sìp ^{AŠ}hu-ri-ip	*... duš* (?)
...	51:r5	P	pár-sìp	[^{BE}pár-s]ìp da-at-ya-na-ip	*... duš* [*humaka*]
11 *kuktu dabantina* 2 *kuktu* BABBAR.BABBAR	94:r13	P	pár-sìp	^{BE}pár-sìp za-am-pe-[gìr]-ip	*... duš humaka*
2 *maktina* ul(?)-kur(?)-kak(?) ??	97	PN (O?)	pár-sir-ra	ma-ak-ti-na ul(?)-kur(?)-kak(?)... ^{BE}pár-sir-ra-na	(?)
1 ^{GIŠ}šu-kur-ru-um	117:5	PN (S0?)	pár-sir-ra	^{BE}pár-sir-ra	*... duš humaka*
x *tukli tain* / 60 lik-ki-na BABBAR.BABBAR / 60 ri-tú.hu-el-ip	121:4	S	pár-sir-ra	^{BE}za-man-du-iš pár-sir-ra	*... duš humaka*
	166:4	O	pár-sìp	(uk-ku-r[a-ap ...]) ^{BE}pár-sìp-ip-pè	...
	166:25	O	pár-sìp	ša-mar-ráš ^{BE}pár-sìp-ip-pè	...
...	185:13	?	pár-sir-ra	[...]-man-da [pár]-sir-ra ...	...
tukli ta-in, *kuktu dabantina*, ^{GIŠ}BAN^{MEŠ}, *kuktu* BABBAR.BABBAR *sunpalakki*	187:r2	P	pár-sìp	^{BE}pár-sìp ^{AŠ}da-at-ti-ya-na-ip	<u>PAP</u> *... duš humaka*
...	233:4	?	pár-sir-ra	[...] ^{BE}pár-sir-ra ...	...
tukli tain, kuktu	246:r7	P?	pár-sìp	PAP 6 ^{BE}pár-s[ìp...]	<u>PAP</u> ... [*duhš*]
...	272	S?	pár-sir-?	[^{BE}pár-sir ^{BE}]da-at-ti-ya-na-ra	[*humaka*]
120 sa-ah ^{GIŠ}GI^{MEŠ}	281:20	P	pár-sìp	^{BE}pár-sìp a-ráš gi-ri-ih	*... duš humaka*
6 *tukli tain*	281:29	P	pár-sìp	[^{BE}]pár-sìp da-ad-ya-na-ip	*... duš humaka*

P type

parsa is the only collective designation accompanied by a further qualification when occurring in P function: in 6 cases out of 7 not fragmentary, *parsip* is followed by a toponym (determinative <u>AŠ</u>) as if delimiting a comprehensive gentilic designation specifying the provenance from a given town or area. The attested toponyms are Zampegir, Huri and Dat(t)iyana.

Zampegir occurs 2 times after *parsip* (plus one occurrence alone).

In tablet MDP 9, 11, the three named individuals who received <u>60 ku-uk-tu₄ BABBAR.BABBAR</u> ('white overalls') each, are probably grouped under the syntagm ^{BE}<u>pár-síp</u> ^{AŠ}<u>za-am-pè-gìr-ip</u> closing the text. According to Hinz and Mayrhofer, their names are Iranian (e.g., ^{BE}<u>ba-ag-ráb-ba</u> is a '*Baga*-Name').

In MDP 9, 94 the anthroponym ^{BE}<u>ma-da</u> appears in a list of <u>12 ^{BE}pu-hu sa-ma-tip</u>_e; then two 'product' items received to <u>13 ^{BE}pár-sìp za-am-pè-[gìr]-ip</u> follow. It is this text that caused Cameron to say: '[in the Acropolis tablets,] "Persians" and "Medes" are often designated, sometimes in the same text'; Henkelman convincingly showed that ^{BE}<u>ma-da</u> is an anthroponym without any meaning such as 'Median'.

Zampegir appears alone (i.e. without 'Persians') in tablet MDP 9, 238:3 where it points to the provenance of an individual whose name is given (S type); here we can surmise a deliberate omission of 'Persians'; the context is: <u>list of products</u> [^{BE}]iš-pu-gur-da [^{AŠ}z]am-pe-gìr-ra du-iš. On this ground, we cannot exclude that other independent designations could be referred to other groups of Persians.

Huri occurs only in MDP 9, 49:1. The suffix -*p* in ^{AŠ}<u>hu-ri-ip</u>, as in the case of Zampegir, forms the genitive concord with the preceding *parsip* ('Persians of Huri').

Dat(t)iyana occurs 3 times after *parsip* (and 1 time after a restored *parsir* in S function).

In MDP 9, 281, [pá]r-sìp da-at-ya-na-ip follows an unusual "double" total PAP 6 tuk 6 'total 6 *tuk* 6'. On the obverse (line 4), we find the similar construction PAP 13 13 ᴬˢti-ip-na-ip du-iš; here the product is missing because the preceding 'product' items are different (4 *tukli* and 9 *kuktu*); the meaning seems to be '13 are the people from Tipna (ᴬˢti-ip-na-ip) who received (du-iš) a total (PAP) of 13 (different) products (as detailed above)'. Therefore PAP 6 tuk 6 [pá]r-sìp da-at-ya-na-ip could be translated as '6 *tuk(li)* for 6 Persians of Datiyana'.

The first section of the tablet MDP 9, 187 regards five groups of products related to five different individuals through the formula PAP ᴮᴱ| proper name | (du-iš) (in case of different products) or the proper name alone (otherwise). After the last anthroponym, the syntagm PAP 5 ᴮᴱpár-sìp ᴬˢda-at-ti-ya-na-ip qualifies the preceding individuals as 'Persians from Datiyana', avoiding a five-time repetition. The five anthroponyms are probably all Iranian: among them, the '*Baga*-Name' ᴮᴱba-ag-ba-du (from **bagabāδu-* according to Hinz) is attested also in the Persepolis tablets; ᴮᴱmi-ti(?)-lak-šar goes back to **Miθraxšara-* through **Mitirakšar-* (by dissimiliation) according to Mayrhofer. Already Scheil noted that most proper names in the tablet seem Iranian: for example, the first name after the five Persians, ᴮᴱba-ak-si-en-da (line r3), is a '*Baga*-Name' in Mayrhofer's opinion (from **baxšyanta-* according to Hinz). Altogether, in the Acropolis tablets Iranian names are the 14% of the attested anthroponyms (65 out of 470), nearly the same percentage of Elamite names in the Persepolis tablets.

A fourth occurrence of Datiyana could be restored in MDP 9, 246. The right side of the tablet is missing but I guess that ᴮᴱpár-s[ìp...] was qualified by Datiyana. The concomitance with the name ᴮᴱba-ak-ba-[du] as in MDP 9, 187 seems meaningful enough, even if here it is not part of the Persian group. Unfortunately we cannot know whether each of the 6 'product' items (with amount 1) was followed by an Iranian proper name on the missing part of the tablet.

S type

If we leave aside the occurrences of S0 type, only one occurrence of S type is attested. In MDP 9, 121:4, pár-sir-ra follows the anthroponym ᴮᴱza-man-du-iš and has probably the value of gentilic designations. Hinz and Koch preferred the reading ha-du-iš for the anthroponym (the sign HA being formed by za followed by man), suggesting an Iranian etymology from Old Persian **āδuš*.

Occurrences of S0 type sometimes leave us the doubt that they are instead simple anthroponyms (maybe a gentilic adjective become proper name, like the Italian first name 'Romano'). I exemplify this type discussing the clearer case out of 5 occurrences.

On the reverse of MDP 9, 47, we find the text 60 ku-uk-tu₄ ᴬˢa-a-pír-ip-pè / ᴮᴱ[pár]-sir-ra DUMU bar-ru. Since the reference to 'a Persian son of Barru' seems not suitable to the administrative singling out of a person, I think that here *parsirra* is a proper name. 'A Persian' should be properly pár-sìp-ra, i.e. 'one among the Persians', as li-ib-ba-li-kaš-ra-pè-ra or it-ra-a-a-pè-ra in MDP 9, 97. I understand ᴬˢa-a-pír-ip-pè as a O type designation, then '60 overalls in the garb of the people of Ayapir: (colon) Parsirra son of Barru'. Barru, if we are not facing a case of homonymy, had other sons: ᴮᴱhu-ban-nu-kaš in MDP 9, 119 and ᴰᴵˢnap-du-ur in MDP 11, 307; from MDP 9, 282, we know also that Barru is son of te-[... (gap)]. According to Zadok, Barru is a name etymologically Elamite, hypocoristic for *par*.

Two additional scraps of evidence for the type S0 should be mentioned here. The first is provided by a neo-Elamite seal found in Susa, bearing the following text:

> pár-sir-ra DUMU kur-lu-iš-na

The second is provided by a late neo-Elamite legal text from the Apadāna of Susa (MDP 11, 307). Here we face a little puzzle. The first three of the 5 gi-nu-ip 'witnesses' (line 13) are:

^{DIŠ}nap-du-ur DUMU bar-ru
^{DIŠ}pár-sir-ra taš-šup
^{DIŠ}ki-li-li KI.MIN

According to Hinz and Koch pár-sir-ra means 'a Persian', as could be confirmed by the following word taš-šup 'people'. Notwithstanding, two kinds of objections can be raised: the first, if ki-li-li in the following line is a proper name (an Elamite hypocoristic) even according to Hinz and Koch, how could KI.MIN 'ditto' be referred to taš-šup?; second objection, how could it be that a witness of a contract is singled out recurring to a collective designation? Both the signs taš and šup have another value: ur the first and ru for the second, both occuring just in the preceding line, so that Hinz and Koch preferred the transliteration nap-du-taš instead of nap-du-ur. My feeling is that *parsirra* is an anthroponym (Vallat did not list it in his *Répertoire géographique*) and that the following two signs are a scribal oversight instead of DUMU bar-ru; perhaps for this reason the scribe wrote KI.MIN in the following line (notice also that the taš sign could be an uncompleted KI.MIN, while the šup sign can be read ru). If this is the case, three Barru's sons were among the witnesses, and Parsirra would have been the same son of Barru mentioned in MDP 9, 47.

O type

Occurrences of type O are only two, both in the same tablet MDP 9, 166. ^{BE}pár-sìp-ip-pè appears inside a long list of 'product' items, each item preceded by the relative amount, without intervening proper names. On line 4, ^{BE}pár-sìp-ip-pè follows KI.MIN, recalling uk-ku-r[a-ap ...] on line 1, while on line 25 it follows šá-mar-ráš, a kind of valuable vessel. Both kinds of products occurred elsewhere; *šamarraš* generally points to the product resulting from the manufacture of the raw material specified immediately before (e.g. in MDP 9, 19:1 and 30:5). It should be noted that in the same tablet two other products are qualified by ^{AŠ}ša-la-ip-pe (O type) with AŠ determinative, while 'Persian' is always preceded by BE.

* * *

Summing up, out of a total of 17 occurrences, in 8 instances *parsa* is arranged as a P type, in 1 as a S type, in 2 as a O type; 3 occurrences are too much fragmentary. The remaining 3 occurrences seem rather proper names, reducing the actual occurences of *parsa* to 14 (the same number of the second most attested collective designation, *unsak*); alternatively, for two of these a S0 type can be recognized, for one a type O.

Ghirshman held that the inhabitants of the 'Village Perse-achéménide' were engaged in agricultural and pastoral activities, and supplied the royal warehouse with their products, both as raw materials and manufactured products. Jusifov emphasized that, according to the texts, the Persians were receivers of products, not suppliers, so we cannot think about a group of artisans at work. The administrative formulae attested in concomitance with Persian collective designations recur to the verbs *du-* 'receive' or *humaka* 'it has been withdrawn (from the warehouse)', with the only exception of MDP 9, 47 having *lipka* 'it has been deposited' (literally 'to be present'). Here, all the more reason, I suggest to recognize a proper name instead of the hazy 'a Persian son of Barru'.

Concluding remarks

Four centuries before (about 1000 BC), the previous extant Elamite administrative *corpus*, found at the other pole of Elamite civilizations, the ancient city of Anšan, dealt only with individuals. The tablets from Susa reflect probably a widening in the administrative range: both individuals and groups are interlocutors of the administration.

Thanks to the studies by de Miroschedji, it is known that the nomadic or semi-nomadic component, though not prodigal in archaeological evidence, was strong in neo-Elamite period. According to Vallat, the Acropolis tablets themselves provide evidence for a tight web of relationships between these semi-nomadic groups and the central administration in Susa. Vallat suggested that the collective designations, constantly based on an anthroponym (determinative BE), were nothing else than references to the eponym or leader of a nomadic group. In some instances, such as that of the people of Appalaya (a Babylonian name attested both as collective designation and independent proper name), members of these groups were designated with a reference to the name of their leader or "king". Nomads could not be labelled recurring to a permanent toponym, neither they could identify themselves in it. According to Henkelman, these "tribes" are responsible for the impression of fragmentation of power, which for long time had a relevant role in our perception of this part of Elamite history; a careful analysis of the Acropolis tablets reveals instead that the central power was able to develop convenient way of political control over these flickering entities.

The geographic range of these relationships perhaps extended well beyond the borders of Susiana and Khuzistān. The recent recovery of precious vessels with Elamite labels from Kalmākarra, a remote mountain town in Luristān, seems meaningful: both the Susan tablets and the Kalmākarra inscriptions mention the realm of Samati together with the same anthroponyms.

The presence of these nomadic aggregations will come back on the stage of written history towards the end of the Achaemenid period, becoming a peculiar component of Seleucid and Parthian Elymais. Briant explained the relationships between the last Achaemenid kings (4th century BC) and the Uxioi and Cossean tribes recurring to the categories of "regulated hostility" and "gift exchange": a strategy which is not proof of weak state power, but shows the ability to control groups founded on means of subsistence different from its own. From this point of view, Elamite people living in unsettled lands of the upland under the kings of Anšan and Susa were really forerunners of the Persians, as noticed by Josephus six centuries afterwards.