

Cyrus the Great in Armenian Sources and Armenia

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Abstract: The Achaemenid period plays a uniquely important role in the millennia-long history of Armenian-Iranian relations. During the two hundred years of Persian rule, Armenia played a significant role in the Achaemenid state's governance system, and apart from the rebellion against Darius I in 522-521 BC, there are no other historical records of Armenian uprisings against Persia.

According to accounts by Movses Khorenatsi and Thovma Artsruni, Armenians and Persians maintained allied relations in the 6th century BC, working together to free themselves from Median domination. Medieval Armenian historians speak highly of the friendly relationship between Cyrus the Great and Tigran Haykazn. Thovma Artsruni notes that Armenian auxiliary forces actively participated in the Persian army's wars against the Medes, Lydians, and Babylonians.

Remarkably, both Tigran Haykazn and Cyrus the Great are portrayed by Movses Khorenatsi and Thovma Artsruni as wise rulers, guided by wisdom and, in some ways, connected to Ahura Mazda. The comparison of the relationship between Tigran and Cyrus suggests that, in ancient times, Armenians and Persians were not seen as opposing forces, and the Persians did not assert dominance over the Armenians. In the "we" vs. "them" dichotomy, Armenians were positioned in the "we" category alongside the Medes and Persians, while those living farther away were seen as "them".

Keywords: Cyrus the Great, Tigran Haykazn, Armenia, Movses Khorenatsi, Thovma Artsruni, Wisdom, Persian Rule

Introduction

The Achaemenid period holds exceptional importance in the thousand-year history of Armenian-Iranian relations. During the 6th-4th centuries BC, while under Achaemenid rule, Armenia managed to accumulate vast financial and human resources through economic and demographic development. These resources enabled King Tigran the Great of Armenia in the 1st century BC to establish his empire.

Armenia as an Achaemenid Satrapy

Before its conquest by Cyrus, Armenia had an extensive territory and, according to ancient sources, first became part of the Median Kingdom and then joined the Achaemenid Persian Kingdom as part of the 13th satrapy (Khorikyan 2014, Chapter I). As a result of the administrative reforms of Darius I, Armenia was included in the 13th satrapy: “From Pactyice, the Armenians and the neighbours as far as the Euxine Sea got four hundred talents: this was the thirteenth province” (Herodotus 1928, 120). Pactyice corresponds to the eastern part of Katpatuka-Cappadocia, located in the later region of Caesaria-Mazaka (Khorikyan 2014, 22, 30-31). The Persian court’s organization of satrapies was based on the principle of unifying various ethnic groups, and it is evident that Pactyice served as a geographical name. As for the unnamed neighbours of the Armenians, they correspond to the Cappadocians (=Leucosyrians) north of Pactyice, reaching areas along the Black Sea from the river Thermodon to the Yasun cape (Khorikyan 2014, 26-27, 79). Thus, among the peoples of the 13th satrapy, only the Armenians are mentioned by name, and this satrapy is referred to in scholarly literature as the Armenian Satrapy or Satrapic Armenia, named after the Armenian people who were central to this administrative unit.

The Greek historian Xenophon provides extensive information about Satrapic Armenia. From Xenophon’s accounts, it becomes clear that at the end of the 5th century BC, Armenia was a large and prosperous country ruled by Orontas (Xenophon 1980, 251). At that time, Armenia was divided into two sub-regions - western and eastern - under the leadership of hyparchs Tiribazus and Artuchas¹, who served as Orontas’s deputies (Khorikyan 2014, 58-59).

During the Achaemenid era, Armenia was almost ethnically homogeneous, a characteristic not commonly found in other satrapies of the kingdom. The basis for forming the Armenian satrapy was also the existence of an ethnic group - in this case, the Armenians. However, as an administrative and tax-paying unit, the 13th satrapy was combined with Pactyice and its neighboring regions. This vast, Armenian-populated land and satrapy is mentioned as *Armina* in Achaemenid inscriptions, highlighting its importance to the Achaemenid dynasty. Orontas, for example, was married to the sister of

¹ It is a distorted form of the name of Artashes (see Krkyasharyan 1979, 130).

Artaxerxes II (Xenophon 1980, 136, 228), and Darius III Codomannus, before being crowned king of kings, served as satrap of Armenia (Justin 1853, 90). The commander of the Armenian troops in Xerxes's army during his campaign in Hellas was Artochmes, who was the husband of the daughter of Darius I (Herodotus 1938, 385). Artochmes's name, in fact, is Artashes (Krkyasharyan 1979, 129), suggesting that he was essentially an Armenian general by ethnicity. Strabo considers Yervand the Last - Orontes, King of Armenia - a descendant of Hydarnes (Strabo 1969, 337; Orlov 2016, 778), one of the noblemen of Darius I, which indicates that Armenia was directly connected to the Achaemenids. Darius I awarded Armenia to Hydarnes, who had helped him ascend to the throne. It is possible that, following Armenia's anti-Persian uprising in 522–521 BC, Hydarnes received control over Armenia, creating familial ties between the Armenian royal family - the Haykides - and Hydarnes's family. This connection likely led to the notion that the Eruandunis descended from the lineage of Hydarnes (Harout'yunyan 2005, 144).

We should also note that, as a result of ethnic migration, Armenians had extended beyond the borders of the Armenian Highlands, bringing the northwestern part of Mesopotamia under the Armenian satrapy (Khorikyan 2005, 50-56). This area, later known as *Mijagetk' Hayots* (Armenian Mesopotamia), eventually became an integral part of the Kingdom of Greater Armenia. The center of Satrapic Armenia was the city of Van, which simultaneously served as the toparchy center for the northern satrapies of the kingdom, making Armenia a regional super-satrapy for the northern regions of the kingdom. It is also possible that Van, the center of the ancient civilization of Urartu, was one of the residences of the Achaemenid kings, similar to Susa, Babylon, Ecbatana, Persepolis, or Bactra (Khorikyan 2021, 38-39).

The following information from Herodotus is of significant importance for the study of the administrative division of the Achaemenid Kingdom: "He (= Darius I - H. Kh.) united each nation with its closest neighbours, and, beyond these nearest lands, assigned those that were farther off some to one and some to another nation" (Herodotus 1928, 117). This passage contains a key emphasis (Khorikyan 2019, 20-28): the Persian court would incorporate the same people within a single administrative unit, rather than dividing them across different satrapies. Therefore, researchers who see Armenia as split between the 13th and 18th satrapies are mistaken. Armenia and the Armenians were included in the 13th satrapy by the Achaemenid court, which also comprised Eastern Armenia. Meanwhile, the non-Armenian tribes of the 18th satrapy - the Matieni, Saspiri, and Alarodii (Herodotus 1928, 123) - resided on the left bank of the Kur River and likely had Scythian origins.

During the two hundred years of Persian rule, Armenia held an important position within the administrative system of the Achaemenid state, and, apart from the rebellion against Darius I in 522-521 BC, historical sources provide no other accounts of Armenian uprisings against Persian authority. Moreover, in 331 BC, at the Battle of Gaugamela, the Armenian contingent positioned on the right flank of the Persian army offered significant

resistance to the Macedonian forces. Only with Alexander the Great's intervention, the Persian army's right wing was ultimately defeated (Arrian 1967, 257, 269). Armenia maintained its significant role within the sphere of Iranian civilization during both the Parthian and Sasanian eras.

Cyrus the Great in Armenian Sources

Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Kingdom, is also mentioned in medieval Armenian sources. Although briefly, Armenian historians provide essential information about Cyrus. For instance, Movses Khorenatsi writes that the Armenian king Tigran Eruandean or Haykaznean assisted Cyrus in overthrowing the rule of the Median king Astyages (referred to as Azhdahak in Armenian) (Khorenatsi 1997, 103).² The Armenian historiographer also notes that Astyages feared an alliance between the Persian Cyrus and the Armenian king (Khorenatsi 1997, 105, 111). Later in his work, Khorenatsi mentions that King Tigran campaigned against Astyages and killed him in battle (Khorenatsi 1997, 109). However, this detail from the "Father of Armenian History" is not supported by classical sources, as the Armenian king did not kill Astyages. Nonetheless, Khorenatsi's record is significant for understanding that in the 6th century BC, the Armenians and Persians were in an allied relationship, working together to free themselves from Median rule.

Khorenatsi's accounts of the close relationship between Cyrus and Tigran Haykazean are further corroborated by information from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Although *Cyropaedia* is often considered less historically reliable in scholarly literature, the information it provides about Armenians and Armenia has a certain historical foundation. For instance, Xenophon also speaks of the close relationship between Tigran and Cyrus the Great, mentioning that Tigran was Cyrus's hunting companion (Xenophon 1960a, 220). Essentially, Tigran and Cyrus were hostages at the Median court. While Xenophon attributes the suppression of an Armenian rebellion to Cyrus the Great, the rebellion was suppressed by Cyrus I in 609 BC (Harout'yunyan 1998, 73-74). Nonetheless, the reference to Tigran, the Armenian crown prince, demonstrates that the Greek historian situates Armenian-Persian relations in the latter half of the 6th century BC. In fact, Khorenatsi's and Xenophon's accounts complement each other, and it is worth noting that Xenophon had passed through Armenia with the Greek army and could have heard oral traditions about Armenia's past. The Armenian and Greek historians' accounts suggest that Cyrus the Great showed goodwill toward the Armenians. It is therefore unsurprising that the founder of the Achaemenid Kingdom, Cyrus II, is warmly remembered in the historical memory of the Armenian people.

² According to Khorenatsi, Tigran's sister, Tigranuhi, was married to Astyages. The latter tried to use Tigranuhi against her brother, but did not succeed (Khorenatsi 1997, 107-108).

Khorenatsi also notes that Cyrus killed Croesus, king of the Lydians, and fought against the Mask'uts (Khorenatsi 1997, 133-134), whom Herodotus calls the Massagetae (Herodotus 1975, 253). When examining the Armenian historians' accounts, it should be noted that they drew upon the works of foreign historians and oral traditions. However, the historical memory regarding Armenian-Persian relations was passed down through the centuries, despite some confusion in historical facts. For example, the 9th-10th century AD historian Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi not only attributes the killing of Astyages to Tigran Eruandean but also states that the same Tigran captured Cyrus and subjected both Median and Persian authorities to his rule (Draskhanakerttsi 1996, 25). Undoubtedly, Tigran could not capture Cyrus or subdued Median and Persian authorities³; thus, Draskhanakerttsi appears to have confused Tigran Eruandean with Tigran II the Great, king of kings of Armenia, whose supremacy was acknowledged by the Parthian king in the 1st century BC.

The founder of the Achaemenid Kingdom, Cyrus the Great, is remembered in highly positive terms by another Armenian historian of the 9th-10th centuries AD, Thovma Artsruni. Thovma Artsruni reports that the kingdoms of the Assyrians and Medes were overthrown by Cyrus (Artsruni 1985, 100), referring to the Babylonian kingdom under the name of the Assyrians. The historian of the Artsruni family writes that King Tigran Haykazn, upon learning of King Astyages's (Ašdahak) intention to invade Armenia, took the initiative and moved towards the region of Makan (the later Mughan), encamping on the plains of the Medes (Artsruni 1985, 100). The historian continues:

“Then no little danger befell Ashdahak from the arrival of Tigran to attack him with a massive army. Furthermore, the very astute Cyrus the Persian marched up with his own mounted warriors to aid Tigran. For Cyrus and Tigran had become mutual allies and were similar in every respect; they were like-minded, very intelligent, and endowed with many noble qualities. But before Tigran and Cyrus had joined forces, Ashdahak sent gifts to Cyrus and promised to give him control of a fourth part of [the lands of] the descendants of Senek'erim: the regions of Nineveh and Tmorik' with its fortress. That he did not just once but often, sending ambassadors with messages and presents.” (Artsruni 1985, 100-101)

The historian portrays Cyrus in such positive tones that his highly favorable attitude towards the Persian king is unmistakable. Moreover, the Armenian historian uses the same adjectives to describe King Tigran of Armenia, further indicating the respectful attitude Armenians held toward the Persians in ancient times. This respect was rooted not only in the close religious, cultural, and customary ties and interactions between the two

³ Babken Harout'yunyan's opinion is more likely, suggesting that the information from Khorenatsi, and consequently from Draskhanakerttsi, should be interpreted to mean that it was with Tigran's support that Cyrus seized the Median and Persian authority (Harout'yunyan 1998, 12). Samuel Anetsi notes that Cyrus killed Azhdahak (Anetsi 2014, 97).

neighboring peoples but also in the political wisdom of the powerful Persian king, which the Armenian people had not forgotten.

From further information provided by Thovma Artsruni, it becomes clear that the Artsruni princes, descendants of the Assyrian King Senek'erim (= Sinakherib), informed Tigran about Astyages's intentions. Following this, the Senek'erimians received a decree from Tigran and set out with gifts to meet Cyrus (Artsruni and Anonymous 1985, 65): "Taking him they returned to Tigran. With urgent speed they pressed the combat, heroes opposing heroes. Xerxes hurried up from the rear and seized the bronze-hammered muzzle of Ashdahak's horse, knocking him back onto its croup. Tigran with swift hand struck him in the heart with his lance, pulling out his lungs. Cyrus, pursuing the army, wrought no little slaughter, putting all Ashdahak's forces to the sword. Then he reigned over the Medes and Persians" (Artsruni 1985, 101). Then Tigran settled Astyages's two sons, identified with Xerxes and Arshēz (Darbinyan-Melikyan 2006, 29), in Armenia and established them with the rank of nobility.⁴ Thovma Artsruni, as the historian of the Artsruni princely family, gives significant importance to his ancestor Xerxes (an ancient Persian name equivalent in Armenian to Artashēs) in the battle and war against Astyages. Interestingly, the Artsrunis, who claimed Assyrian descent, also bore ancient Persian names.

It is not particularly important to us that Armenian historians attribute the killing of Astyages to Tigran Haykazn. What is important is that Armenians actively participated in the downfall of Media⁵, and if we believe Khorenatsi and Thovma, the war against Media was initiated by the Armenians, who were then joined by the Persians.

Continuing his account, Thovma Artsruni writes that Croesus, the king of Lydia, gathered a large army to wage war against Cyrus. Cyrus requested auxiliary troops from Tigran, and the Armenian king provided these support forces. Thovma Artsruni gives a fairly detailed account of the war against Croesus:

⁴ "Two of Ashdahak's offspring were captured by Tigran; he brought them to Armenia and reduced them to the rank of slaves. Since they demonstrated obedient devotion, he appointed them to serve as bearers of eagles and falcons. Promoting them to the position of cupbearers at feasts, he eventually raised them to noble status and settled them in the province of Ałbag, later settling them in Jołakhel, in Vranjunik' and in Hakhrām. He waited some time, because he had previously given them in service to his sister Tigranuhi, wife of Ashdahak, before settling them in the places just mentioned" (Artsruni 1985, 101; see also Khorenatsi 1997, 109-110).

⁵ According to Xenophon, the Armenian army, led by Tigran and Embas, actively participated in Cyrus's campaigns (see Xenophon 1960a, 327, 331, 345, 381; Xenophon 1960b, 59). It should be noted that Xenophon could have learned detailed information about the military alliance between Cyrus and Tigran during his time in Armenia. Additionally, Tigran not only provided military assistance but also paid tribute to Cyrus (see Xenophon 1960a, 241).

“In rapid haste [Tigran] entrusted the armies of the South and North to Xerxes and Arshēz, the latter’s son, [with orders] to reach there quickly. They marched off and met him at Dmbuind in Persia. Advancing to Cyrus’s vanguard, they engaged battle. They came to grips, attacking the main force of the Lydian army by shooting arrows at each other; after the battle had lasted for a long time, King Cyrus and Xerxes arrived. Arshēz surrounded the Lydian king with his shield-bearing soldiers, and great tumult ensued. For the Lydian king had covered his horse all over with bronze armour from foot to head without a chink, so that he was impregnable in his armour. Likewise on his own person he wore a plated cuirass, backpiece, shin guards, leg greaves, and helmet, so that he seemed almost entirely covered in bronze; and when disposed in his massive army you would think him unapproachable. The troops, attacking like champions, made the battle rage. Then Xerxes and Arshēz, full of cunning, shouted out - as if they were from the Lydian army - “Cyrus’s army is defeated and the king has fled.” Rejoicing at the report, they (= the Lydians) abandoned their fortified positions and rushed after Cyrus, jostling each other, while the king of the Lydians marched proudly behind his army. Then Xerxes and Arshēz rapidly advanced to encounter the Lydians. They captured [Croesus], stripped him of his armour and his horse’s armour, and brought him before Cyrus. Cyrus brought him back to Khorasan, and from there he returned to Babylon, taking the Lydian with him. He ordered his treasuries to be pillaged. When tortured cruelly, [Croesus] gave him even his secret treasure; he was put to death on Cyrus’s orders, bringing to an end the Lydian kingdom.” (Artsruni 1985, 102-103)

We have extensively quoted Thovma’s account of the Lydian war. It is interesting that the name of Xerxes’s son, Arshēz, is also ancient Persian. Moreover, one of the Achaemenid kings bore the name of Arses, who ruled from 338-336 BC (Dandamayev 1989, 313) after Artaxerxes III Ochus. Incidentally, while listing the Achaemenid kings, Thovma mentions Zarsēs after Ołok’os (Artsruni 1985, 104), which is the same as the name of Arshēz ([Z]Arsēs). Dmbuind or Dnbuind is Dumbavand, located in Tabaristan, in the area of Mount Demavand (Marquart 1901, 127-128). Regardless of whether Xerxes and Arshēz met Cyrus at Dmbuind, it is clear that such a meeting would have taken place after the conquest of Media.

The information from the Armenian historian suggests that Xerxes and Arshēz actively participated in the Lydian war and distinguished themselves with their bravery, which Cyrus valued highly. For his services, Xerxes received the fortress of Tmorik’ and the river banks of Nineveh as gifts (Artsruni and Anonymous 1985, 67). The Armenian king likely granted Xerxes these lands by order of Cyrus (see also Artsruni 1985, 106), as the Persian king was the suzerain of the Armenian king. According to Babken Harout’yunyan, the mention of Tmorik’ indicates that it was captured by Artashes I in the 2nd century BC (Harout’yunyan 2001, 281). In our view, it might be more accurate to suggest that Artashes I liberated Tmorik’, since, until the end of the 4th century BC, Tmorik’ was most likely an integral part of Armenia. Tmorik’ was located in the upper reaches of the Eastern Khabur, while “the river banks of Nineveh” probably refers to the area where the Tigris meets the Eastern Khabur (Khorikyan 2014, 44).

It should be noted that, according to Classical sources, the Armenians had extended beyond the borders of the Armenian Highlands to the south. Strabo mentions that the Armenians reached as far as Calachanê and Adiabênê (Strabo 1969, 231). Strabo reiterates this in another passage, stating that some of Armenus's companions settled in Acilisenê, which had previously been under the rule of Sophene, while others settled in Syspiritis, reaching as far as Calachanê and Adiabênê, which lay outside the Armenian Highlands (Strabo 1969, 333). The location of Calachanê is thought to be southeast of present-day Khabur-Su, between it and the Great Zab River, while Adiabênê was located south of Calachanê in northern Assyria (Manandyan 1984, 292). It is no coincidence that Strabo considers the Medes, Armenians, and Babylonians as the most prominent tribes living in Adiabênê (Strabo 1954, 225), indicating that the Armenians had constituted a significant portion of the region's population since ancient times.

The following information from Thovma Artsruni about subsequent Armenian-Persian allied relations presents certain historical challenges:

“Now when Cyrus had become sole ruler of the Persian Kingdom, he captured Babylon and released the Jewish captives. The house of Gag, the nation of the Galatians, raised an army of 120,000 men to oppose him. Then Cyrus wrote to Tigran asking him to provide him with help: “For a wild barbarian race has attacked to wage war and to wrest from me the Jewish captives.” In order to preserve intact his bonds of friendship with him, he sent this same Xerxes and Arshêz his son with 40,000 men. They went to meet him at the summit of the Taurus mountain. They protracted their march as far as Arzn in Ałdznik‘, where the prophet Ezra, King Sałat‘iel, died and is buried in Marbakatina in a hilly spot. There they gave battle for not a few days, about a month, during which time the Armenian troops [performed] many acts of valiant heroism, astonishing the whole Persian army and the barbarians too. The army of the Galatians was destroyed, from the greatest to the least, and not a single one of them survived. Xerxes and Arshêz brought the sons of Israel to their own country, leading them as far as the holy city of Jerusalem. They entrusted the leadership of the Jews to Zorababel, son of Sałat‘iel, of the tribe of Juda. Then they returned in great strength and notable victory. These are the Gog and Magog mentioned in the books of the prophets Amos and Ezekiel.” (Artsruni 1985, 103)

The term “Gaga House” should be corrected to “Gała House” since the author likely refers to the Galatians (see Artsruni and Anonymous 1985, 512n48), who established their state in Asia Minor, centered in Ancyra, in 278-277 BC; therefore, they could not be contemporaries of Cyrus the Great. There is also geographical confusion in the information provided. Surprisingly, Xerxes and Arshêz are mentioned as meeting Cyrus at the foothills of the Taurus Mountains. Here, *Taurus* likely refers to the southern slopes of the Korduk‘ (Corduene) Mountains, leading to the Arzn district of Armenia. Then, the bravery of the Armenian army and the defeat of the Galatian forces are mentioned. It is unclear why the Galatians would attempt to seize Jewish captives or why the captives would be located in southern Armenia. Additionally, the mention of Ezra and Zorababel's father, Sałat‘iel,

does not fit in this context, as Ezra died and was buried in Jerusalem. The name Marbakatin is comparable to the name of the city Martirosupolis-Nprkert (Darbinyan-Melikyan 2002, 62). Essentially, for the Christian Armenian historian, it was important to highlight the participation of the ancestors of the Artsruni family in the story of the return of the Jewish captives, thereby identifying the Galatians with Gog and Magog. It is possible that the mention of these groups as a collective barbarian entity was added by later scribes, and under the name of the Galatians, we should consider the Massagetae from ancient sources, against whom Cyrus the Great fought and ultimately perished. The Armenian historian, who was well-acquainted with Greek historical works, does not mention the death of Cyrus, from which it can be inferred that the king of the Persian Aršavrean (Artsruni and Anonymous 1985, 69) dynasty (as Thovma refers to the Achaemenids) was respected by Armenian Christian historians, also because he liberated the Jews from Babylonian captivity. Let us also note that Thovma presents historical events in chronological order, first mentioning the conquest of Media, then Lydia, and finally Babylonia.

In scholarly literature, Thovma's information in I.5 has been interpreted from a different perspective. Babken Harout'yunyan compares the cited information from Thovma with Khorenatsi's account stating that the Armenian king Artashes I captured the Lydian king Croesus, although Khorenatsi writes that according to some accounts, it was Cyrus who killed Croesus and dismantled the Lydian kingdom (Khorenatsi 1997, 132-133). The mention of Rome, Artashes's conquests in the West, and subsequent escape and death in Khorenatsi's account led Babken Harout'yunyan to conclude that this Artashes is not related to the Armenian king Artashes I who ruled in the 2nd century BC but refers to King Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus, who, having been adopted by the heirless King Antipatrus of Armenia Minor, took the name Artashes following Armenian tradition. Khorenatsi was also aware that Xerxes - Artashes had captured Croesus and confused him with the renowned Armenian king Artashes I (Harout'yunyan 2016, 26). King Mithridates VI Eupator did indeed fight against the Galatians.

The name of Cyrus the Great was so cherished by the Senek'erimyan-Artsruni family that one of them, Šahak, named his son after Cyrus, in honor of Cyrus's bravery and the friendship his ancestor Xerxes had with him (Artsruni and Anonymous 1985, 73). For Armenian historians, the epithet *brave* was associated with the god of war, Vahagn (Old Persian: **Varθragna* or **Vrθragna*), and the Armenian kings, as well as foreign rulers, were called "*brave*" for their military victories and conquests.

Notably, Tigran Haykazn and Cyrus the Great are regarded as very wise kings by Movses Khorenatsi and Thovma Artsruni (Artsruni and Anonymous 1985, 63; Khorenatsi 1997, 103), as both rulers are portrayed as being guided by wisdom in their political decisions, somewhat associated with Ahura Mazda. Eznik Koghbatsi highlights Cyrus's honesty in his character (Koghbatsi 1994, 135). The description of Tigran's moral virtues and governance skills (Khorenatsi 1997, 104) suggests that Cyrus the Great also possessed

similar qualities (just, balanced, and moderate in bodily desires), as Tigran's friend could not have had different attributes. Without exaggeration, we can say that Cyrus the Great is admired by Armenian historians for his friendship's role in strengthening Armenia. For both Khorenatsi and Thovma, Cyrus and Tigran are allies, a relationship maintained until Cyrus's death. After Cyrus's death, Armenia gradually became more integrated into the administrative system of the Persian Kingdom, forming a major part of the 13th satrapy while still preserving its internal autonomy and royal dynasty.

The comparison of the relationship between Tigran and Cyrus reveals that, according to Armenian historians, Armenians and Persians were not opposing forces in ancient times, and the Persians did not hold a dominant position over the Armenians. From this perspective, the following information from Herodotus is particularly interesting:

“They honour most of all those who dwell nearest them, next those who are next farthest removed, and so going ever onwards they assign honour by this rule; those who dwell farthest off they hold least honourable of all; for they deem themselves to be in all regards by far the best of all men, the rest to have but a proportionate claim to merit, till those who dwell farthest away have least merit of all. Under the rule of the Medes one tribe would even govern another; the Medes held sway over all alike and specially over those who dwelt nearest to themselves; these ruled their neighbours, and the neighbours again those who came next to them, on the same plan whereby the Persians assign honour; for according as the Median nation advanced its dominion farther from home, such was the measure of its rule and suzerainty.” (Herodotus 1975, 175)

According to geographical proximity, respect towards neighbors was driven by a shared sense of kinship, customs, traditions, and religious beliefs among the Medes and Persians, which naturally extended a special political regard towards Armenia and the Armenians. This suggests that the Medes and Persians governed their subject peoples according to proximity. Herodotus's account reflects the vassal administrative system of the Persian Kingdom, within which Armenia held considerable importance for the Achaemenid dynasty. This indicates that, within the “us” vs. “them” dichotomy, Armenians occupied the “us” domain for the Medes and Persians, while those living further away belonged to the “them” sphere. Undeniably, the influence of Iranian civilization on Armenia is undeniable (Khorikyan 2021, 38). In this context, it is also noteworthy that among the subject peoples depicted in the reliefs of Persepolis, Armenians occupy the third position, following the Medes and Elamites (Dandamayev and Lukonin 1980, 195), underscoring the significance of Armenia's place within the Persian administrative system and resonating with Herodotus's information in 1.134 (see Herodotus 1975, 175). Of course, following Darius I's administrative reforms, the Persians came to be perceived by subject peoples as the predominant ethnicity.

Conclusion

The examination allows us to conclude that the historical figure of Cyrus is perceived positively in our medieval historiography. Armenian historians praise Cyrus for his wisdom, bravery, and honesty. Tigran and Cyrus are portrayed as similar in character and noble personal qualities. It can be argued that the source where Cyrus and Tigran are mentioned by our historians is the historical memory of the Armenian people, preserved over millennia. Certainly, it was not merely an act of goodwill but a vassal obligation that Tigran provided troops (and paid tribute) to Cyrus and participated in his campaigns. Nonetheless, the Armenian-Persian alliance also contributed to the strengthening of Armenia. It is no coincidence that Armenia later became part of the 13th satrapy with its vast territory, holding significant military-political importance for the Achaemenid dynasty.

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