

Crowns, hats, turbans and helmets

The headgear in Iranian history

volume I: Pre-Islamic Period

Edited by
Katarzyna Maksymiuk & Gholamreza Karamian

SIEDLCE-TEHRAN 2017

Institute of History and International Relations, Faculty of Humanities, Siedlce University
Department of Archaeology and History, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran Azad University

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The Use of the Tiara as symbol of Persian Achaemenid Kingship: why Alexander the Great didn't adopt it?

Abstract

This study has as focus the political significance of the headgear worn by ancient Iranian royalty (namely the high crown called by the Greeks *tiara* or *kidaris*) and the reason why Alexander the Great did not or rather could not adopt it. The precise nature of Alexander's kingship in Asia (including Egypt) is unclear for modern scholars: the most secure assumption is that his rule over the former Achaemenid Asia was based on naked military hard power alone. A more subtle analysis of the sources available could suggest that his sway over the conquered Persian Empire rested not only on the spears and swords of his soldiers, but also on his willingness to adapt the court protocol and his so called "court image" of the traditional Macedonian King to the customs and laws (written and unwritten) of his Asian subjects. He thus became by using "soft power" not only a foreign Macedonian-Greek conquering King, but also a kind of Egyptian Pharaoh, a Babylonian King, and even a "King of Asia" who can rule over subjected lesser kings, dynasts, princes, and satraps (regional governors of noble blood). He even tried twice in Iran to become accepted by the Iranian religious and political-military elites, the Magi priests and the warrior Iranian princes and aristocrats. Both his main attempts, in 330 BC and in 324 BC proved eventually unsuccessful. Alexander tried hard to adopt a mixed Median-Persian-Macedonian royal dress and a mixed Macedonian-Persian headgear, in order to conciliate both his new Iranian subjects and his old Macedonian comrades in arms. He finally failed with both: the Macedonians rebelled twice against his never ending desire (*pothos*) for conquest and his perceived pro-Iranian policy (at Hyphasis in 326 BC and at Opis in 324 BC). The Persian and Median Magi and the Iranian princes and noblemen never properly crowned and accepted him as "King of Kings" of Iran. This article in short reflects the unsolved dilemma of Alexander's Kingship in Asia.

Keywords: Tiara, Kidaris, Kausia, Chlamys, Kandys, Anaxyrides, Basileus tes Asias

The idea of this brief communication (and hopefully also of this article) is to analyze why Alexander of Macedon, according at least to the Greek and Latin sources available to us nowadays, did not adopt the *tiara* (τιάρη) as symbol of his (supposedly) Iranian Kingship, after his decisive victory over Darius III at Gaugamela (1st of October 331 BC). His subsequent conquests of Babylon, Susa, Persepolis and Pasargadae apparently entitled him to assume the Iranian royal title. He could become "King of Persians and Medians" after the conquest of the last free Achaemenid royal town, Ecbatana, the capital city of the satrapy of Media in North-western Iran, in the late spring or early summer of the year 330 BC. It still remained, however, a very true obstacle: Darius III Codomanus, as long as he was still alive, was the lawful and rightful Iranian "King of Kings". First and foremost, what was the *tiara* in the Iranian world of Darius and Alexander?! Judging by the Persepolis reliefs, it was

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a kind of headgear, something in between an approximately cylindrical hat and a crown. In the palace reliefs representing the Persian “King of Kings” (be it Darius I or Xerxes etc.) at Persepolis palace, this was the distinctive cap reserved to the Iranian monarch. The trouble is that, if we look attentively to these reliefs, the same headgear is also worn by other characters, such as part of the “Immortals” (the elite soldiers of the Royal/Imperial Persian Guard) and some high royal dignitaries. Because of lack of proper and accurate descriptions, either figurative or from literary sources, we cannot decide what a Persian royal *tiara* really was and truly looked like in Achaemenid times. The figure which stands behind the throne of the Persepolis “Great King” (be him the “Great Vizier”, his secret counsellor, or the Crown Prince, the designated Son and Heir apparent to the Persian throne, the King’s successor in other words) is also wearing the same type of headgear as the seated “King of Kings”, and as well some of the Palace Guards and dignitaries. Looking at this type of archaeological and iconographical testimonies as the Achaemenid Palace reliefs, we are still in the dark of how a Persian royal *tiara* truly looked like in Achaemenid times. We however know, from Greek-Latin literary sources that crowning an individual with the *tiara* was an essential ritual element in the crowning rite of Persian “Kings of Kings”. We should therefore return to our sources. Plutarch¹ wrote that after the battle of Gaugamela, Alexander has been proclaimed king of Asia (βασιλεὺς τῆς Ἀσίας).² This happened after the burning of Persepolis (in fact of the palace of Xerxes in Persepolis), allegedly done at the request of the courtesan Thais (the mistress of Ptolemy son of Lagus), according also to Plutarch,³ in order to avenge the misdeeds suffered by the Greeks by the hands of the Persians, during the Persian Wars of the 5th century BC.

It is obvious that after the burning of Persepolis, there was great trouble for Alexander to be able to proclaim himself King of Persia. The problem here is twofold: why has Alexander remained so long in Persepolis (from December 331/January 330 BC until April/May 330 BC)? The responses differ: the thesis of Engels⁴ is that he has been retained by the ice and snow blocking the mountain passes of Zagros (Western Iran), while Green⁵ supposes that Alexander patiently waited for the Persian (and Iranian generically speaking) aristocrats and Magi to recognize Alexander as the “King of Kings” of Iran.⁶

¹ Plut. *Alex.* XXXIV.1.

² HAMMOND, 2003: 137-130: Alexander has assumed from the landing on the Anatolian shore and the casting of his spear or javelin into Asian soil the quality of conqueror of Asia. At Gaugamela after victory, this quality of overlord of Asia, assumed by Alexander after Issus in his correspondence with Darius III Codomanus, has been fully recognized by Alexander’s troops that proclaimed him “King of Asia”. HAMMOND, 2003: 137-139 stresses the importance of this Kingdom of Asia in Alexander’s political ideology, because he tried to focus the allegiance of his heterogeneous army and of the heteroclite populations of his empire upon himself as their King; it was neither his intent to conquer an Asian empire for Macedonians and/or Greeks nor to replace Darius with himself as the new Persian “King of kings”. For the first possibility he had not the available Macedonian and Greek manpower in order to colonize in depth all the lands of the Persian Empire; as for the second, he moved not the supreme capital of his Asian Empire at Susa, Persepolis, Ecbatana, or Pasargadae (although he continued to use these Persian royal residences, even the ravaged and half burnt Persepolis, as important satrapies’ capital cities), but at Babylon. The reasons for his choice were manifold and we shall not discuss them here.

³ Plut. *Alex.* XXXVIII.1-4 and especially Plut. *Alex.* XXXVIII.2-3.

⁴ ENGELS, 1978-1980.

⁵ GREEN, 1991.

⁶ ENGELS, 1980: 71-73 and 74-78; GREEN, 1991: 318-321. For Bessus becoming Artaxerxes IV or the V (if we consider Arses the successor of Artaxerxes III Ochus as Artaxerxes IV.), As for

The idea was essentially that Alexander patiently waited to be crowned by the Magi and acclaimed by the noblemen of Persia as their Great King (*i.e.* of the Persians and Medians). This fact, however, did not happen. Darius III Codomanus, although hidden in the mountains of Media, in North-western Iran and present day Azerbaijan, was still recognized by the majority of Iranian nobles as the true and lawful Iranian “King of Kings”. As long as Darius was still breathing, he was the rightful Persian King, although deprived of the heartland of his Iranian Kingdom, *Persis* to the ancient Greeks or *Parsā* to the ancient Persians (present day province of Fars in Iran). This explained perhaps both the extreme action of Alexander the arsonist, the burning down of the palaces of Persepolis (on the contrary, when he first entered Persepolis, in the early winter of 331/330 BC, Alexander only allowed his soldiers to plunder the sacred city of Persia, but not to burn down the town), and the pursuit of Darius across Media, Hyrcania, and Parthia (*Parthyene*) by Alexander’s troops. The capture (or killing) of Darius, Alexander thought, will free the Persian throne of the King still considered legitimate by the great majority of Iranian nobility. The killing of Darius by the hands of his satraps freed Alexander of a problem: he would not have been endeared by the Persians if he directly killed or ordered Darius to be killed. A captured Darius (even held in honourable captivity or turned into a high vassal prince of the Macedonian King), on the other hand, would have been a nuisance on the long term to Alexander, as the focus of Persians’ true allegiance and resistance to Macedonian conquest.⁷ Only after the conquest of Hyrcania (placed by Plutarch⁸ after the finding of Darius dying, who allegedly bestowed his Kingdom to Alexander, in his discourse addressed to the Macedonian soldier Polystratus; an account however different from Arrian⁹ to Plutarch¹⁰ and eventually to Curtius,¹¹ who placed the death of Darius after the conquest of Hyrcania by Alexander), in Parthia, Alexander has adopted for the first time the mixing of Persian and Median clothes,¹² but not the anaxyrides (trousers), and neither the sleeved tunic or vest (named kandys), nor the tiara. This is explainable by Alexander’s quality of King of Asia, but not (or not yet) as King of Persia.¹³ His subsequent story is traversed by this contradiction.

Alexander’s using two signet rings, his own for Europe and Darius’ for Asia, (GREEN, 1991: 327-334). Alexander’s coinage and later the so called Sidon sarcophagus are also portraying Alexander as a young Heracles (GREEN, 1991: 246-247) and therefore we cannot see any Iranian elements in Alexander’s iconography whatsoever.

⁷ Plut. *Alex.* XLII.3-43.3.

⁸ Plut. *Alex.* XLIV.

⁹ Arr. *Anab.* III.21.9-10.

¹⁰ Plut. *Alex.* XLIII.1-3.

¹¹ Curt. V.12-13.

¹² Plut. *Alex.* XLV.2.

¹³ HAMMOND, 2003: 136-140 for the assuming by Alexander of the quality of βασιλεὺς τῆς Ἀσίας (“King of Asia”) starting from the very beginning of the expedition and reinforced especially after the victories against Darius III at Issus and Gaugamela. The first victory at Granicus established not only Alexander’s military reputation, but it has also made him master of the “spear conquered land” (γῆ δορίκτῆτος) in North-western Asia Minor. Alexander has never assumed the title “King of kings” specific of the Persian King (βασιλεὺς βασιλέων), because on the one hand it alienated him from his fellow comrades in arms, Macedonians and Greeks alike, and on the other hand the title of King of Asia, if backed by decisive military victories, signified that he could subject to his rule the Persian “King of kings”. Alexander as King of Macedon can be also King of Asia, like once Midas, the King of Phrygia, could claim himself overlord of Asia (for Gordion and Midas that Asia was reduced to Anatolia). NYLANDER, 1993: 145-159; HAMMOND, 2003: 140 even thinks that Alexander would

Alexander's quality of "King of Asia" is mentioned by the Greek and Latin narrative sources used by Prof. N.G.L. Hammond in his study and is profusely quoted in this article; his quality as a "King of Kings" *i.e.* his function of Great King of Persia is not specifically mentioned by any ancient/antique historical sources whatsoever; we encounter here a problem, because Alexander has been of course mentioned as King of Macedon (or rather, King of the Macedonians), as King of Babylon, as Pharaoh of Egypt, by various literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources. He appears also as the King of Asia after winning his three battles of Granicus, Issus, and especially of Gaugamela. He appeared mentioned nowhere as the "King of Kings" of Persians and Medes. The title of "King of Asia" has been used in mythical times by the Phrygian Kings Gordion and Midas, although they ruled only a part of Anatolia and not even the whole of Asia known to the Greeks in the 12th-8th centuries BC, the time span when they were supposed to have lived. This title has been granted upon them by the will of Zeus (*vide* the legend of the Gordian knot in Herodotus' *Historiae* and in Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri*).¹⁴

The idea advanced by Hammond in his above quoted study is even more extreme than the general thesis of Alexander acting as the rightful successor of Darius III and even of him as "the last of the Achaemenids", a claim that started with J.B. Bury's first edition of *A History of Greece*¹⁵ and is brilliantly defended and upheld by Professor P. Briant in his many books and studies devoted to this theme.¹⁶ It stated that Alexander wanted only to be recognized as "King of Asia" by all Iranians, Darius III Codomanus included, and that his adoption of a mixed Persian-Median attire when he reached Parthia-Hyrcania¹⁷ was designed to accommodate the Asians with that idea, although it does not mean that he was the heir of Darius as Persian "King of Kings". It further implies that there was (in Achaemenid Asia, including Egypt) still in use the idea of a "Kingship of Asia" that was, in the minds of Darius' former subjects, superior to the dignity of the Persian Great King or "King of Kings". Moreover, when Darius had been decisively bested in battle by Alexander at Gaugamela, he had lost for good this title (if Darius ever held this title) of "King of Asia" (known to us only from Greek sources) in favour of Alexander. Plutarch's source in this respect is considered to be Eratosthenes, who is at the distance of a century or so after Alexander, and it is thought of as a source worthy of respect; on the other hand, the testimonies of Diodor,¹⁸ Justin¹⁹ and Curtius,²⁰ as well as Arrian's²¹ regarding the adoption by Alexander of Persian dress or of favouring the Persian way of dressing above the Macedonian, are seen as most probably deriving from Cleitarchus' story of Alexander gradually deteriorating from a moral point of view under the Asian pernicious influence and of his growing despotic whims,

have let Darius III to continue as Persian "King of kings", under the sovereignty of Alexander as overlord and "King of Asia", an allegation which seems to me at least debatable.

¹⁴ Hdt. VIII.136; Arr. *Anab.* II.3.4-6; HAMMOND, 2003: 140: "When Alexander claimed on the shore of Troad to be accepting Asia from the gods, he was speaking as as King of Macedon. He intended to combine that Kingship with the Kingship of Asia".

¹⁵ BURY, 1900.

¹⁶ HAMMOND, 2003: 140; BRIANT, 2001: 108-119; 118-119 although this very fact does not contradict the primarily conqueror nature of Alexander the foreign warrior king who plundered the Iranian Empire.

¹⁷ Plut. *Alex.* XLV.2.

¹⁸ Diod. XVII.77.4.

¹⁹ Just. *Epit.* XII.3.8,

²⁰ Curtius. VI.6.4.

²¹ Arr. *Anab.* IV.9.9.

designed to humiliate his fellow Macedonians.²² Other measures of Alexander's, such as using the signet ring or the seal of Darius for the letters destined for Asia and his own seal ring for those destined for Europe, his enjoying of the pleasures of Darius' harem of three hundred and sixty or three hundred and sixty five concubines, his indulging in the pleasures offered by the eunuchs (the Bagoas case), even his (almost clearly invented) affair with the Amazon Queen Thalestris,²³ all these are seen as clear proofs of the unreliability of Cleitarchus' testimony: after all, the same will write that Alexander at Babylon had only one seal ring and not two (*anulum quo ille regni atque imperii res obsignare erat solitus*)²⁴.

There are different clues pointing to Alexander either assuming the title of "King of Asia" or of him trying to supplant Darius as "King of Kings". Immediately after the battle of Issus, the Macedonian victor ordered that gold coins were issued; these monetary issues represented on the obverse the helmeted head of Athena and on the reverse a standing goddess Nike. On the helmet of Athena has been represented a gryphon: although usually the gryphon was represented as a fantastic bird-headed creature, the gryphon of Alexander's coins was a lion-headed fantastic animal. This lion-gryphon on Athena's helmet and in Greek Art in general has been seen by G.F.Hill and by W.W.Tarn after him as a mythical creature enemy of Persia and therefore Alexander's coins with the lion-gryphon on Athena's helmet symbolized Alexander's sovereignty over Persia. N.G.L. Hammond, on the opposite side, thought (more correctly) in my opinion that the coins issued by Alexander after Issus and figuring on the one side the goddess Athena with helmet and lion-gryphon and on the other side the goddess of Victory (Nike), represented only the victory of Alexander against the Persians and against Darius III Codomanus (ultimately the victory of Macedon against Persia) and therefore the enmity of the lion-gryphon (symbol of Macedon and Greece or symbol of Alexander himself) against Persia and the Persian "King of Kings" (at least in this phase of Alexander's campaign, immediately after the battle of Issus in 333 BC)²⁵. Hammond further based his argumentation on the last eighteen months of Alexander's life, when he did not act (at least ritually) as the successor of Darius III Codomanus. Alexander had nevertheless restored the tomb of Cyrus the Great, the founder of Persian Empire and he distributed money to the Persian women, when he returned from India to Persia.²⁶ All these symbolic gestures were characteristic gestures of a Persian Great King or "King of Kings" of Iran. Other symbolic gestures of a Great King of Persia Alexander did not perform. He has not driven a royal Persian war chariot dragged by Nisaeen grey stallions and, although he did sit on the throne of Darius at Susa in 331 BC,²⁷ he has never sat in full Iranian kingly attire on the Persian royal throne, under the winged Sun Disk of Ahura Mazdā, receiving the *proskynesis* of his subjects and royal vassals (satraps, dynasts, and princes of the realm). Even more so, by his burning of the Xerxes' Palace at Persepolis in the spring of the year 330 BC he had cut short any possible full identification between him and his Persian Achaemenid predecessor, the unfortunate "King of Kings" Darius III Codomanus. Most interesting between these pros and cons remain the homage and honor paid by Alexander to

²² HAMMOND, 2003: 140.

²³ Curt. VI.5.32.

²⁴ Curt. VI.5.32.

²⁵ HAMMOND, 2003: 142, n.51 and n.52.

²⁶ Plut. *Alex.* LXIX.1 and Arr. *Anab.* VI.29.8.

²⁷ After the battle of Gaugamela, (Plut. *Alex.* XXVII and LVI) for the episode of Demaratus of Corinthus weeping in seeing Alexander on the Persian royal throne and Alexander being too short and in need for a stool to rest his feet when sitting on Xerxes' or Darius' throne and the sadness of Alexander's eunuchs at this pitiful sight (Diod. XVII.66.3-7 and Curt. V.2.13).

the memory of Cyrus II the Great, as “founder of the Persian Empire” and “King of Asia”.²⁸ The Persian Empire and Asia appear as identical political and territorial entities and by becoming “King of Asia” Alexander could become ruler and monarch of the Persian Empire without having to be ritually crowned by the Persian and Median Magi and noblemen as “King of Kings” of Iran. There is also the obvious propaganda story of Darius III praying that Alexander should sit on the throne of Cyrus²⁹ and the *logos* quoted by Arrian³⁰ that Alexander should inherit Darius’ power as King of Asia. We see this title of “King of Asia” used as a substitute or even as more encompassing than the title of “King of Kings” or “Great King” of Persia. Curtius³¹ even records that the Persians mourned Alexander at Babylon in June 323 BC as being “the most righteous and most gentle master” and even as “the most righteous king of their race”, a claim dubious at least in Hammond’s eyes (he sees that as a story concocted after the event for propaganda reasons).³² The portent of the unknown man sitting on Alexander’s royal throne at Babylon was described by Aristobulus and his tale has been preserved by Arrian.³³ The eunuchs seeing this event happening under their eyes (the unknown person sat on Alexander’s empty throne and this very fact, *kata de tina nomon persikon*, according to some Persian custom, made the Asian eunuch attendants to beat their breasts in desperation and rent apart their clothes, but dared not to interfere. This fact happened during a military parade, when Alexander and his Companions oversaw the drafting of the new Persian and Iranian troops into the existing Macedonian units or into the Macedonian army as a whole (the Iranian units keeping thus their separate ethnic identity, although by this date they have been clearly trained and armed according to Macedonian discipline and training standards and equipped with Macedonian weaponry).³⁴ This event of the unknown man who dared to sit on the empty royal throne, just before Alexander’s death, has been variously interpreted.³⁵ The Asian eunuchs, trained into the rigors of Persian etiquette and court protocol concerning the royal throne, dared not to interfere with the unknown man (who proved to be a mentally deranged person) and therefore did not attempt to stop him, but only lamented the bad omen.³⁶ The moment when this event took place was just before Alexander’s death, but after the Macedonian mutiny at Opis and the weddings of Susa, where and when the alleged *Verschmelzungspolitik* (policy of fusion) of Alexander was in full swing. We shall not dwell here on the disputed issue of *Blutvermischung* (the mixing of Macedonians and Asians or at least between Macedonians and Iranians) deliberate policy between Macedonians and Iranians, but on the issue of Alexander’s mixed court dress. Plutarch in his *Vita*

²⁸ Arr. *Anab.* VI.29.8.

²⁹ Plut. *Alex.* XXX.

³⁰ Arr. *Anab.* IV.20.3.

³¹ Curt. X.5.9 and X.5.17.

³² GREEN, 1991: 307-308 for Alexander’s sitting on Darius’ throne at Susa and for the weaving purple cloth sent in good faith as a present from Alexander to the Persian Queen Mother Sisygambis and the daughters of Darius and Sisygambis’ reaction to Alexander’s gift seen by her as an insult and Alexander’s quick reaction to apologize, because he needed the captured Achaemenid royal ladies in his future political designs; HAMMOND, 2003: 143 for the symbolic gestures done and not done (*res gestae et non gestae*) by Alexander in order to legitimize his royal rule over Persia .

³³ Arr. *Anab.* VII.24.1-3.

³⁴ GREEN, 1991: 307-308.

³⁵ It has been interpreted as a case of a kind of substitute king (ROSS, 2016: 96-100; FOX, 2016: 103-115). For a complete view on the link between Greek-Macedonian and Babylonian-Assyrian methods of divination (UŁANOWSKI, 2016: 59-87).

³⁶ HAMMOND, 2003: 143.

*Alexandri*³⁷ described that in Parthia or Hyrcania the Macedonian King has for the very first time adopted some mixed elements from the Median and Persian kingly dress. In the *De Alexandri fortuna aut virtute* I 8 (330 a)=FGrH 241 F 30, Plutarch explicitly quotes on this very topic Eratosthenes.³⁸ By closely reading Arrian³⁹ one can see that after the quelling of the Opis Macedonian mutiny (the late summer of the year 324 BC), Alexander has publicly prayed and sacrificed to the gods for the *homonoia te kai koinonia tes arches* (the mutual understanding and the community of dominion) between Macedonians and Persians in ruling the empire. The Macedonians did not appear as taking lightly to heart this line of action of Alexander's and the so called reconciliation and harmony between the Macedonians and the Iranians at Alexander's court and in his army was fragile, to say the least.⁴⁰ Alexander's marriage to Roxane in 328 BC in the midst of his Bactrian-Sogdian campaign of conquest and terror, the subsequent creation of the Iranian soldiers trained and armed in the Macedonian fashion (the so called heirs or *Epigonoi*), the mixed banquet between the Macedonian and Iranian comrades in arms after the end of the Opis revolt of the Macedonian soldiery, and eventually the mass weddings of Susa were all steps seen by modern historians of a deliberate policy of Alexander to reconcile and finally unite the Macedonians and the Persians. There could be also an alternative thesis; all these supposed steps of Alexander are being contingency measures in dealing with punctual moments of crisis. We do neither intend to dwell here at length of the existence or non-existence of Alexander's master plan in the creation of future imperial elite and army with mixed origins nor on the *Hypomnemata* (Memoirs) read by Perdiccas in front of the Macedonian soldiers at Babylon in June 323 BC, just after Alexander has died. Diodorus Siculus, most probably drawing from his main source Hieronymus of Cardia, writes that Alexander intended (according to the *Hypomnemata* read by Perdiccas at Babylon) to mix the peoples of Europe and Asia and therefore create a cultural and racial unity of mankind. This last point, the unity of humankind achieved by mixed marriages and transfer of people, is in itself highly debatable as Alexander's original design.⁴¹ The innovations in the Macedonian simple court protocol and the adoption by Alexander of the elaborate and complex Persian ceremonial at his itinerant royal court could be a sign for Alexander trying to imitate and emulate his Persian royal predecessors. That does not make him outright a Persian Achaemenid "King of Kings", but is a step or a bridge being built between the Macedonian royal conqueror and the conquered but still noble born Iranian aristocrats. Alexander firstly took into his entourage Asian staff bearers (*rabdouchoi Asiageneis*) as chamberlains, Asian eunuchs as royal attendants; he used the services of the harem of 360 royal wives and concubines of the defeated Darius III. He adopted from the Median and Persian royal costume the diadem, the white stripped tunic, and the girdle (and also Darius' ring seal). He surrounded himself with a body guard of distinguished Iranian noblemen, along with his Macedonian *somatophylakes*, and Oxyathres the brother of Darius, who distinguished himself with conspicuous bravery in the battle of Issus was among Alexander's noble body guards. Alexander had also distributed Persian scarlet robes

³⁷ Plut. *Alex.*

³⁸ BOSWORTH, 2003: 208-210, n.23.

³⁹ Arr. *Anab.* VII.11.8-9.

⁴⁰ Arr. *Anab.* VII.6.1-5; VII.8.2; VII.11.1-4; VII.11.8-9; Curt. X.3.5-6; Diod. XVII.109.3; Plut. *Alex.* LXXI.4; Just. *Epit.* XII.12.1-6 *apud* BOSWORTH, 2003: 209, n.8-9.

⁴¹ BOSWORTH, 2003: 209, n.15 for Diod. XVII.110.2 and the creation of a mixed Macedonian-Iranian phalanx. There is also the possibility that Perdiccas has tampered with Alexander's original plans and inserted some ideas to make the King's last plans the least palatable to his Macedonian troops.

and Persian horse harness to his Macedonian Companions (*hetairoi*). He is described as more and more inclined to Asian license and luxury (*tryphe*).⁴² His mixed Macedonian and Median-Persian attire in some occasions (such as combining the Macedonian hat or *kausia* with the royal Persian diadem, the royal clothes which were the royal Persian tunic and girdle, but not or not yet the upright *tiara* or *kidaris/kitaris*, and neither the purple trousers nor the long-sleeved *kandys* shirt) could as well suggest that he has become the “King of Kings” and “King of Asia” as well, but also that he was in his hard core a Macedonian King assuming also the Kingship of Asia (Persia included); the wearing of the Macedonian *kausia* with the Persian royal diadem suggested just that: the hat was Macedonian, but the superimposed diadem (a royal strip of cloth) was Persian.⁴³ Alexander went even further and he even recreated the Persian royal military guard of *melophoroi* for his own personal close protection and protocol use (as both a guard of honor and a body guard of elite Persian soldiers).⁴⁴ In all these respects, Alexander has acted in fact as a Persian “King of Kings”. Moreover, at least according to Ephippus of Olynthus, a source usually hostile to the Macedonian King, Alexander’s mixed court dress has been a target of his Macedonian soldiers’ complaints at Opis in 324 BC.⁴⁵ According to this narrative source, Alexander has worn the Persian royal diadem on and around the Macedonian hat (*kausia*) and he adopted also the Persian white-striped tunic, but over this Persian tunic he also wore a Macedonian mantle or cloak, the *chlamys*.⁴⁶ His mixing of traditional Macedonian and Iranian attire was most probably intentional, in order to symbolize both the Macedonian-European and the Iranian-Asian kingship, in fact a double kingship, of Macedon and of Asia (or Persia in the sense of the former Achaemenid Empire). The ambiguity of his Asian royal power is thus reflected and signified by his mixed royal costume. This Macedonian-Iranian mixed costume and the other court innovations were however a late phenomenon, dating from the years 324-323 BC. In order to truly understand these protocol innovations introduced by Alexander at his (after all) Macedonian itinerant royal court, one should return to the summer of 330 BC after the assassination of Darius by his satraps Nabarzanes, Barsaentes, Bessus, and Satibarzanes, as well as the adoption by Bessus (who immediately fled to Bactria) of the high crown or royal *tiara* of the Achaemenid “King of Kings” and his assuming the royal name of Artaxerxes. He immediately turned to pursue Bessus to Bactria, he captured and punished him, putting him to death as a regicide, a traitor to Darius, and as an usurper. When he returned from India to Iran in 325-324 BC and learned that a certain Orxines, descended directly from Cyrus II the Great has usurped his royal power in Persis, while a certain Ordanes rose up in arms as leader of an insurrection in Southern Iran and the Mede Baryaxes has assumed the royal *tiara* in the satrapy of Media, he immediately reacted and punished them all by death.⁴⁷ Apart from the challenge against his royal

⁴² BOSWORTH, 2003: 211, n.29-30 see Diod. XVII.77.4-7; Curt. VI.1-10; Just. *Epit.* XII.3.8-12.; Plut. *Alex.* XLV.1-4 and Arr. *Anab.* IV.7.4-5. Even more so, Arr. *Anab.* IV.7.4 and the *Itinerarium Alexandri* 88 stated that Alexander has allegedly adopted the upright royal *tiara* that is the *kitaris* of a true Persian King. This in turn would have lead to Alexander being properly crowned by the Iranian religious and lay aristocratic elite as a “King of kings”, a fact that does not appear in any of the preserved ancient Classical sources.

⁴³ BOSWORTH, 2003: 213. According to Arr. *Anab.* IV.7.4 and VII.29.4, this adoption by Alexander of the Persian dress (or of elements of it) was a stratagem, a *sophisma* or a trick to win over the so called (by the ancient Greeks, of course) Persian barbarians (BOSWORTH, 2003: 211, n.31).

⁴⁴ BOSWORTH, 2003: 215.

⁴⁵ BOSWORTH, 2003: 214, n.60.

⁴⁶ BOSWORTH, 2003: 214, n.60.

⁴⁷ BOSWORTH, 2003: 212-213 and 213-214.

authority, it appears that the wearing of the high *tiara* meaning Kingship over Iran was seen particularly offensive and dangerous by Alexander the Great. Other measures of Alexander, such as the attempts to the introduction of the *proskynesis* ritual and his argument at Maracanda in 328 BC with Cleitus the Black that resulted in the killing of this leading Companion (*hetairos*) and Macedonian warrior or the trial and execution of Hermolaus and of the Royal Children (*Basilikoi Paides*) involved in the conspiracy (327 BC) and the subsequent imprisonment and death of his personal historian and biographer Callisthenes, all these were reactions of the most conservative faction of his Macedonian-Hellenic entourage against his increased so to speak "Iranization".⁴⁸ The creation of a close protection body guard unit of Persian noblemen (numbering among them the brave Iranian noble warrior Oxathres, Darius' own brother, who has distinguished himself at Issus by covering with his own body and heroic fighting the flight of his royal brother and who has killed in combat many a Macedonian) as well as a Persian royal guard of *doryphoroi* or *melophoroi* (exactly as Darius III once had besides his so called "Immortals") and thus doubling his Macedonian *somatophylakes* and his Macedonian *agema* (the Guard Battalion/*taxis* of the *Hypaspistai*/Shield Bearers or *Argyraspides*/Silver Shields and possibly also the *Ile Basilike*/Royal Squadron of the Companion Cavalry/*Hippeis Hetairoi* and the Phalanx Guard Battalion of the *Pezetairoi*) was a clear step towards Alexander's increased "Persianization" and a measure which enraged or at least outraged his Macedonians. Adding insult to injury, he distributed also among his Macedonian noble warriors and courtiers (his *hetairoi* from Macedon) the traditional purple robes of the Persian Achaemenid courtiers and high born or high ranking Iranians⁴⁹. Professor A.B. Bosworth sees more in Alexander's adorning of Macedonian aristocrats with Persian robes and pageantry a sign that the Macedonians are the victors and conquerors, while the Iranians remained the vanquished party, the defeated and the conquered people. Be it as this may, but the symbols of the courtiers, their most visible sign and symbol being dress, were Persian and very soon after Darius' death in Parthia Persian and Median aristocrats entered Alexander's service in his army as royal guards and even body guards and even as satraps (starting with Mazaeus at Babylon, immediately after Gaugamela). After the Hyrcanian expedition in the summer of 330 BC and after the death of Darius, during the rest of his troops in Parthia, Alexander started to use the mixed Median-Persian royal dress. It was now autumn 330 BC and Alexander was apparently the sole ruler of Iran and Asia. Suddenly he received back then news that the regicide and traitor Bessus, now a fugitive towards his native satrapy of Bactria, has assumed the royal *kitaris* or high *tiara* and the kingly name of Artaxerxes. He therefore moves immediately his army and himself in pursuit of Bessus. During his stay at Susa, Persepolis, Pasargada, and Ecbatana, the four capitals of the Persian Empire, we do not know that Alexander was ever recognized as a Persian King and he in all probability was not ritually crowned at Pasargadae as the heir and successor of Cyrus II the Great (his burning of the Persepolis Xerxes' Palace is a hint of his frustration with Persian nobility and especially with Persian and Median *Magi*, the Iranian religious elite).⁵⁰ The last great acts

⁴⁸ First Cleitus at Maracanda in Sogdiana and then Hermolaus had even openly reproached Alexander just that during his trial (Plut. *Alex.* LI.2 cf. 71.3 and Curt. VIII.7.12 and VIII.10-13; BOSWORTH, 2003: 214, n. 57, 58).

⁴⁹ The *Phoinikistai* or *Purpurati* Persian noblemen (Xen. *An.* I.2.20 and V.7-8; Curt. III.2.10, III.8.15, III.13.13; BOSWORTH, 2003: 212, n.33).

⁵⁰ BOSWORTH, 2003: 212, n.34-39 for the ancient sources used. For example, Hephaestion has been appointed to the command of the Companion Cavalry in late 330 BC, after the murdering of Philotas and Parmenion (Arr. *Anab.* III.27.4) and at an unknown date he also became *chiliarchos* or Grand Vizier, a Persian title meaning „Commander of the One Thousand" (*chiliarchus* in Old Persian was

of internal policy of Alexander which hinted at a reconciliation and future cooperation of Macedonian and Iranian elites were the peace banquet after the mutiny of Opis and the weddings of Susa. It is worth mentioning that at Opis it was indeed a *symposion* and prayers to the gods in order to insure the future (not present day yet) *koinonia tes arches* between Macedonians and Persians. As for the weddings of Susa, Professor Bosworth is here, in my humble opinion absolutely right: it was not an equal matrimonial union between Macedonians and Iranians, but a union where only the Macedonian and Greek high ranking army officers and courtiers (some eighty or ninety bridegrooms) were given Persian and Iranian noble born ladies, Alexander himself marrying two Achaemenid princesses and Hephaestion one Achaemenid princess; no Persian or generally speaking Iranian nobleman was given any high born Macedonian or Greek lady, nay, not even a lower ranking Macedonian or Greek woman. The bridegrooms were exclusively Macedonian (and in a lesser proportion Greeks naturalized in Macedon like Nearchus of Crete) and the brides were exclusively high born girls from the Iranian nobility. No Persian, Bactrian, Sogdian or Median lord ever married then a Macedonian aristocratic lady or even a Greek noblewoman. This divide was further reinforced lower in the military hierarchy by recognizing as lawful the free unions contracted by Macedonian and other Balkan soldiers of Alexander's (Illyrian and Thracian auxiliary men, Greek mercenaries and so on) and Asian girls and women; there were around ten thousand of such European-Asian couples acknowledged by Alexander as rightful marriages at Susa, where the male was always an European born soldier and the female an Asian girl: European husband and Asian wife always, not the other way around. This can be hardly seen as an equal footing between Macedonians and Europeans on the one side, and Persians, Iranians, and Asians on the other. In wedding they remained separated by the cutting line between vanquishers and vanquished, where the conquerors always took the women of the conquered and the opposite was never true. Even the disposition in space of the troops around the central rallying point of the royal tent of Alexander was revealing, the innermost ring of soldiers being always Macedonian and the second circle being of Iranian warriors that entered Macedonian service. More so, the Iranian counter army (*antitagma*) prepared by Alexander from fresh Iranian recruits trained and armed in Macedonian style (the 30000 *Epigono*i or Iranian youthful conscripts), the Iranian cavalry of the *Euakes* or *Euakai*, his new mixed Macedonian-Iranian phalanx, his Iranian body guards and so on and forth, all these military innovations Alexander used only at Opis to frighten his own rebellious Macedonian veterans with displacement and replacement. After the formal reconciliation between the King and his old Macedonian warriors, the Iranian youths trained in Macedonian military ways were relegated to their usual secondary position with respect with the older Macedonian fighters. Alexander trusted more after all his elderly European and especially Macedonian fighting men than his newly recruited Iranian boys and young men, brave warriors but inexperienced on the battlefield and especially not so reliable as the Macedonians were and have proved to be. After all, they have been conscripted first and foremost to deplete their satrapies of a potential source of armed rebels and insurgents, to serve as hostages ensuring the loyalty of their respective families, and to supply a trained force for the type of warfare the Iranians of the Upper Satrapies practiced (especially in the case of the Eastern Iranian cavalrymen). The Persian and Iranian brides served a wholly different purpose: they were destined to become the future mothers of a mixed blood offspring and their sons and daughters will provide the new elite for Alexander's brave new world, replacing in time both the older Macedonian and Iranian

known as *hazarapatis*). Alexander's assuming some trappings of Persian royalty in Bactria is recorded by Diod. XVII.77.4; Curt. VI.6.1; Plut. *Alex.* XLV.1.

nobility, too much linked to the Macedonian traditions and to the Achaemenid Persian past respectively.⁵¹

To sum things up: it is unclear whether Alexander has ever assumed or not the high *tiara* or *kidaris/kitaris* crown of the Achaemenid Persian “King of Kings”. His pretensions to Persian Kingship were dubious, to say the least, and entitled only through right of conquest or the law of the sword. Might was and still is right, only as long as the conquered and ruled think the conquerors are stronger than themselves and feel weak enough not being able to rise up in arms, defeat their oppressors, and govern themselves. In all probability, Alexander had not been ritually crowned by the Persian and Median *Magi* as “King of Kings” and acknowledged as such by the Iranian aristocracy. His title as “King of Asia” (*Basileus tes Asias*) received by the acclamation of his victorious army at Gaugamela was after all the result of a military *pronunciamiento* of his Macedonian troops, the only soldiers of his army with the constitutional rights to acclaim their King as such. We ignore how much this royal title signified a thing to his new Asian subjects. His stays in Egypt and Babylon had nevertheless given him the aura of Egyptian Pharaoh and Babylonian King, monarchs who were thought by their subjects as being world rulers. His (Alexander’s) headgear appeared to have been a mixed one, combining the Macedonian hat (*kausia*) with the Persian royal diadem (a strip of cloth worn around the head or around the headgear of the king; be it helmet, hat, or “crown”). His mixed headgear, as well as his mixed royal dress (combining Median, Persian, and Macedonian elements) signified both his double quality as Macedonian King and as “King of Asia” (by Asia meaning mainly the former Persian Achaemenid Empire, the borderlands of Egypt, Northwestern India, and Eastern Iran-Southwestern Central Asia being also under his sway, as they were in the heyday of Persia, during the reign of Darius I) and his unsolvable dilemma: he could not play forever these two roles,

⁵¹ GREEN, 1991: 446-447 (and 453-457 about the Opis mutiny) for Alexander’s policy of not letting the Iranian ladies to marry Iranian noble born men, in order not to let very powerful and tremendously rich Iranian families to form matrimonial alliances with one another and sometime in the not so distant future to threaten to militarily displace the Macedonian conquerors. Every Iranian highly born aristocratic lady married to a Macedonian high ranking gentleman meant less opportunity for an Iranian nobleman to find a female match in an Iranian family equal or at least comparable to his rank. He was therefore forced, in order to continue his lineage, to marry in the lower rank nobility of Iran. As for the children resulted from the free unions between the Macedonian (and generally European) soldiers and Asian concubines (and wives after the Susa mass marriages), the boys were destined to become the new generation of Alexander’s soldiers and middle and lower rank bureaucrats, knowing nothing other than Alexander’s military camp and itinerant royal court, knowing no other allegiance than that due to Alexander himself. For the dilemmas of Alexander’s kingship (BADIAN, 1996: 248-256). Alexander has married in fact a few Iranian aristocratic women, who served also his purpose of binding their families to him: first the Iranian noble lady Barsine the widow of Memnon of Rhodes and the daughter of Artabazus, who became short time after Issus his mistress and almost his wife (out of this union was probably born his alleged son Heracles; GREEN, 1991: 245) and then his hypothetical liaison with Stateira the captured wife of Darius, a love affair denied by all the ancient Greek and Latin sources on Alexander (GREEN, 1991: 287); only after these dalliances followed his marriage with Rhoxane in Bactria or Sogdiana in the year 328-327 BC and in the end his twofold marriage at Susa with Stateira the daughter of Darius III Codomanus and with Parysatis the daughter of Artaxerxes III Ochus (in order of being the royal husband of two Achaemenid Princesses, from two different branches or lineages of the same Achaemenid royal family), while Hephaestion married the youngest daughter of Darius III, named Drypetis (GREEN, 1991: 369-372), for Alexander’s policy in Bactria and Sogdiana in marrying Rhoxane and drafting the 30.000 Iranian youths in the Macedonian army (GREEN, 1991: 447-448; SUCEVEANU, 1993: 148).

as the mutinies at Hyphasis first (326 BC) and Opis later (324 BC) showed him. We can see that the so called “rebels” of Iranian aristocratic background, like Bessus in 330 BC or Baryaxes and Orxines in 325-324 BC were obviously more entitled to the royal Persian title in the contemporary Iranian eyes than Alexander ever truly was; every time when a so called Iranian “rebel” or “insurgent” ring leader or warlord assumed the attributes of Persian Kingship (the high *tiara* crown called *kidaris* or *kitaris*), Alexander high geared his offensive and decisively dealt with the so called “usurper” (in fact a freedom fighter chieftain and an Iranian dynast in his own right, perhaps even kin to the former Achaemenid ruling Royal House). Those facts signal the fundamental weakness of Alexander’s own pretensions to rule not the Achaemenid Empire as a whole, but Persia or Iran, including Fars (*Parsā* or *Persis*): in Persian and Iranian eyes, despite some collaborators from the high aristocracy of Iran (and who remained a few at the end of Alexander’s reign), the Macedonian conqueror king never was a true “King of Kings” during his lifetime. Alexander’s untimely death at Babylon in early-middle June 323 BC spared him from the disillusion of a failed world empire, which could not be kept alive except from the horse’s saddle so to speak; but, as one of Cinghiz-Khan’s Chinese or Turkic advisers once said (a long time after Alexander) that an empire is conquered on horseback, but it can never be ruled always sitting on the saddle of the war horse, so Alexander’s final plans of conquering the rest of the known world meant only that his empire was too brittle and frail to last.⁵² Alexander has died in the chosen centre of his newly conquered empire, as the Indian sage once told him to return from the edge of the known world to its centre and consolidate his empire, a huge task even for Alexander the Great. He nevertheless could not stand still and become the peaceful empire ruler and chief manager; he, as his ancestor Greek heroes Achilles and Heracles, lived only for warlike deeds and conquest and died young because of disease and possibly also foul play. In death, after a millennium or so, he became what he always yearned for during his lifetime: the *Šāh Gahandar* and the *Šāhānšāh* in Persian Epics.

⁵² BADIAN, 2003: 258 states that Alexander has basically “had to remain content with an insecure claim to the heritage of the Achaemenids”. As for the admonition of the Turkic-Chinese counselor to Cinghiz or Gengis Khan, see BRĂTIANU, 1988: vol. 2.

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