

# The Second after the King and Achaemenid Bactria on Classical Sources

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## ABSTRACT

*The government of the Achaemenid Satrapy of Bactria is frequently associated in Classical sources with the Second after the King. Although this relationship did not happen in all the cases of succession to the Achaemenid throne, there is no doubt that the Bactrian government considered it valuable and important both for the stability of the Empire and as a reward for the loser in the succession struggle to the Achaemenid throne.*

## KEYWORDS

Achaemenid succession – Achaemenid Bactria – Achaemenid Kingship  
Crown Princes – *porphyrogenesis*

Beyond the tradition that made of Zoroaster the King of the Bactrians, *Rege Bactrianorum, qui primus dicitur artes magicas invenisse* (Justinus 1.1.9), Classical sources sometimes relate the Satrapy of Bactria –the Persian Satrapy included Sogdiana as well (Briant 1984, 71; Briant 1996, 403 s.)– along with the princes of the Achaemenid royal family and especially with the ruled out prince in the succession, the second in line to the throne, sometimes appointed in the sources as “the second after the King” (ὁ δεύτερος μετὰ τὸν Βασιλέα; *secundus a rege*) (Volkman 1937–8; Benveniste 1966, 51–65; García Sánchez 2005, 228 s.; 2009, 166 s.). The Greek and Roman authors, Herodotus, Pompeius Trogus–Justin, Arrian or Plutarch, pay special attention to the fratricidal struggle

and harem royal intrigues among the successors to the throne in the Achaemenid Empire (Shahbazi 1993; García Sánchez 2005; 2009, 155–175). It is in this context where we might find some explicit references to the reward for the prince who lost the succession dispute: the offer of the government of Bactria as a compensation for the damage done after not having been chosen as a successor of the Great King (Sancisi–Weerdenburg 1980, 122–139; Briant 1984, 69–80).

In this particular case and in the Achaemenid Bactria on the whole, our documentary dossier takes the sources from the Classical authors (Briant 1984, 10), whose mental picture of Bactria, *natio antehac belatrix et potentissima*,

*Persisque semper infesta, antequam circumscitos populos omnes ad dicionem gentilitatemque traheret nominis sui* (Ammianus Marcellinus 23.6.56), is partly *une vision égéocentrique* and *quasi fantasmatique* (Briant 1984, 64 s.). On the one hand, archaeologists can not dare to date a satisfactory synthesis due to the dispersed character of the discoveries or to the lack of them; and, on the other hand, these discoveries have not always been published or they are not easily accessible (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 131–134; Briant 1984, 102; *Bactriane* 1985, 241 ss.; Holt 1989, 27 ss., 33; Vogelsang 1992, 270–280; Genito 1996; Gardin 1998; Francfort 2005, 316). An *alabastron* of Bactria with the name Artaxerxes in cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing (Schmitt 2001) could be, as Francfort (2005, 324) points out, a royal gift for a local dignitary, a recycled object that may have arrived there accidentally or as part of booty. It could confirm the postulate of the Persian miracle about the Achaemenid administration (Briant 1984, 9) the archaeological remains of irrigation canals or *qânat*s (PTF 1947: 59, 62; Briant 1982a, 486–488; 1984, 49–55, 92; 1996, 87 s.; Francfort & Lecomte 2002), that show again the Achaemenid interest in the farming exploitation of the Empire's satrapies, in Bactria's case for the growing of lucerne (*medicago sativa*), that was known in Greece like βοτάνη μηδική or μηδική πόα (Strabo 11.13.7), a fodder plant for the pastures with which to graze the large Bactrian equine population (Curtius 7.4.30) and the famous Bactrian camels (*camelus bactrianus*) (Gabrielli 2006, 25; Francfort 2005, 325; Tuplin 2010; Llewellyn-Jones 2013, 85 s.). The grain's production, vineyards and fruit trees (Strabo 11.11.1), along with the pistachio nuts (*pistacia vera*), brought to the west from Bactria after Alexander's conquest (Theophrastos, *HP* 4.4.7),

proved the fertility of the land, a fact which was later stressed by Curtius –*Bactrianæ terræ multiplex et varia natura est* (Curtius 7.4.26–27; Strabo 11.11.1: πολλή δ' ἐστὶ καὶ páμφορος πλὴν ἐλαίου... διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν τῆς χώρας... τῆς συμπάσης Ἀριανῆς πρόσχημα εἶναι τὴν Βακτριανήν; Ammianus Marcellinus 23.6.56: *humi gignentium fertiles, et pecus quod illic per campestria loca vescitur et montana*– next to the desert which was part of his territory –*terræ steriles harenae* (Curtius 7.5.1–16). We know about the Bactrian barbarian customs (Strabo 11.11.3), about Bactrian silver and gold (*DSf* § 36) like the treasure of the Oxus (Barnett 1968; Francfort 1988, 185; Briant 1996, 411), the lapis lazuli in Sogdiana (*DSf* § 37) (Tarn 2010, 103), or some archaeological remains of ancient royal Persian palaces or residences, sacred architectural framework and fortresses (Francfort 1985; Sarianidi 1985, 424; Gardin 1998, 143; Francfort 2005, 334–6), or pottery (Lyonnet 1997; Gardin 1998, 24; Francfort 2005, 318–322), although the more illuminating data about the possible dating of the Achaemenid Bactrian administration might be the Aramaic documents which are connected with the court of the Satrap of Bactria of the fourth century BC, Akhvamazda, and with its governor (ὑπαρχος) Bagavant, at least through part of the period of Artaxerxes III and edited by Naveh and Shaked (Shaked 2004; Naveh & Shaked 2012, 17). Finally, we have the depicted Bactrians on the staircases of the *apadana* and between the throne-bearers of the Throne Hall of Persepolis, on the Darius Statue from Susa and on royal Achaemenid tombs, but maybe the relationship between the iconographies and their ethnic historical reality was not accurate and perhaps only an idealization (Vogelsang 1992, 138 ss.; Genito 1996, 409 s.). However apart from some hypothesis that might allow us to

formulate very carefully and provisionally the nature of these Aramaic documents of Bactria; we have little information, apart from the information coming from Classical sources, about the period that lasts between the connection of Bactria and the question of the Achaemenid succession.

The first time that this connection appears in our sources, beyond the legend of Semiramis (Briant 1984, 25–33) or Zoroaster (Ctesias *FGrHist.* 688, F 1; Diodorus Siculus 2.1–19; Herodotus 1.184; Strabo 15.2.5; 16.1.2; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.5.2; Justinus 1.1.9) (Tarn 2010, 114; Holt 1989, 34–37), it goes back to the rise of the Achaemenid Empire, the conquest of Bactria by Cyrus (Ctesias, *FGrHist.* 688, F 9, 2), the succession of Cyrus the Great by Cambyses and the compensation for Tanyoxartes (Bardiya in the Behistun Inscription) with the government of Bactria (σατράπης of Media, Armenia and Cadusians in Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.7.9–11). A Ctesias' passage (Ctesias, *FGrHist.* 688, F 9, 8) reports us that Tanyoxartes obtained the government of the Satrapy of Bactria (δεσπότης Βακτρίων), Chorasmia, Parthia and Carmania, duty-free (ἄτελεῖς ἔχειν), either while Cambyses was Babylon's viceroy and was still living in Cyrus, or when Cambyses was crowned as the new Great King after his father's death in the battlefield and after Cyrus had conquered most of modern Afghanistan and Central Asia, known nowadays as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, and had fought against the Sakai Massagetae (Herodotus 1.201–216; Strabo 11.8.6), the Scythian people from the Empire's frontier in the North of Bactria, Sogdiana and beyond the Jaxartes river (Syr Darya) (Vogelsang 1992, 181–189; Briant 1996, 49 s.) and while he attempted to extend the territory of

his empire eastward beyond the Oxus river (Amu Darya). P. Briant has expressed his doubts about the passage of Ctesias, especially because these territories were not in 522 BC under the same command and it was more likely that Tanyoxartes received the government of Bactria and some complementary revenues from outer regions to the Satrapy (Briant 1984, 71). Somebody (Boardman 1970, fig. 877) used to defend a gem showing three crowned Kings with the same type of crown the hypothesis of the possible existence of a triarchy made up by Cyrus, Cambyses, as Babylon's viceroy, and Tanyoxartes of Bactria. Even someone pointed out that the sister of Atossa and daughter of Cyrus, Roxana (Ctesias *FGrHist.* 688, F 13, 14), bore the most famous royal name in Bactria's history (Holt 1989, 40).

In the case of Darius I some scholars have related their ancestors to the former Bactrian rulers who also were the early patrons of Zoroaster and they have even provided evidence to prove that this Satrapy did not rebel against the Achaemenid when he came to the throne or that the name of Bactria's satrap given in the Behistun Inscription (*DB* § 38) was *Dadaršiš*, unknown in Classical sources (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 129; Vogelsang 1992, 126 s.) although some scholars have interpreted it as the same name of Darius or they have even conjectured that Darius' father, Hystaspes, was a Bactrian because Vishtâspa is a throne name frequently connected with Bactriana (Holt 1989, 39–41; Vogelsang 1992, 125 s.). We also know that the *Irdabanuš* which appears in the Fortification Tablets of Persepolis (*PFT* 1287, 1555 Hallock), Satrap in Bactria 500/499 BC, may be the brother of Darius I and the uncle of Xerxes (Benveniste 1966, 107 s.; Lewis 1977, 19, n. 96; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 124).

Among the sons of Darius and Atossa we find again the association between the Satrapy of Bactria and the Crown Princes. Nevertheless, the case is more complex as in the struggle for the succession after Darius I's death we find in Classical authors the names of some other important princes (García Sánchez 2005, 228 s.; 2009, 165–170): Artobazanes, Darius' eldest son in Herodotus (πρεσβύτατος, Herodotus 7.2.3), Ariamenes in Plutarch (Plutarchus, *Reg. et. imp. apophth.* = *Moralia* 173B–C; πρεσβύτατος, Plutarchus, *De amore fraterno* 18 = *Moralia* 488D–F), and even not always the loser won the government of the same Satrapy. Our main source of the documentary dossier is Plutarch because he is the one who mentions Bactria as the Satrapy given to Ariamenes (Ξέρξης ἐκέλευε τὴν δευτέραν μεθ' ἑαυτὸν ἔδωκε τάξιν, Plutarchus, *Reg. et. imp. apophth.* = *Moralia* 173B–C), although other sources assign him the government of Media (Plutarchus, *De amore fraterno* 18 = *Moralia* 488 D–F; cf. Themistius, *Or.* VI, 74c). To make things even more confusing Plutarch says that Ariamenes was appointed “the Second after the King” (μέγιστος, Plutarchus, *Reg. et. imp. apophth.* = *Moralia* 173 B–C; δεύτερος μεθ' ἑαυτόν, τὰ δευτερεῖα, Plutarchus, *De amore fraterno* 18 = *Moralia* 488 D–F; cf. a. p. *pasā tanūm maθišta*, *XPf* § 4), although we cannot clarify if this title was given to the Crown Prince, the greatest after the king, the successor to the throne and exceptionally the first son born in purple or *porphyrogenesis* (Wieshöfer 1994, 54), as it is revealed in the Xerxes' Persepolis Inscription (*XPf* § 4) or to the Second after the King, a rank second or the second in line to the throne (García Sánchez 2005, 228; 2009, 165). We find Bactria again related to the Crown Prince of the royal Achaemenid house with another Darius I' son, Masistes, appointed as

satrap of Bactria (Herodotus 9.113) and it is stated that he came with Xerxes during the invasion of Greece (Herodotus 7.82), although it was their brother Hystaspes, the commander of the Bactrians and Sacae (Herodotus 7.64) (Burn 1962, 333). Masistes started a rebellion from Bactria against his brother Xerxes, already crowned as the Great King (Dandamaev 1989, 85; Briant 1982b, 207), but to some scholars the name Masistes brings back the Old Persian word *maθišta* which appears in the Persepolis' harem Inscription and when Xerxes stated how his father Darius I appointed him as his heir: *Other sons of Darius were there, but unto Ahuramazda was the desire Darius my father made me the greatest after himself (maθišta)* (*XPf* § 4. 28–32 KENT; cf. *PF–NN* 1657; Calmeyer 1976, 83; Llewellyn–Jones 2013, 18). This case is at once confusing and very interesting. For some scholars, Masistes' story resembles a *novella* and should not be regarded as an historical reporting of events (Sancisi–Weerdenburg 1980, 48 ss.; 268; cf. Wieshöfer 1994, 86; Llewellyn–Jones 2013, 139), and Masistes could be the same person or the double of the Plutarch's Ariamenes and the story a popular rendering of a revolt against the throne by Xerxes' full brother Masistes (Sancisi–Weerdenburg 1980, 126, 268). If this interpretation was correct and Ariamenes and Masistes were the same person we could complement the passage of Plutarch, the passage of Herodotus (Herodotus 7.82; 9.107) and Xerxes' Persepolis Inscription: Ariamenes was appointed as “the Second after the King” (μέγιστος, Plutarchus, *De amore fraterno* 18 = *Moralia* 488 E–F) and Masistes could be the Greek translation of a title or noble rank by Herodotus or his sources, *maθišta*, meaning “the Second after the throne”, “the greatest after the King” or maybe a *temporary vice-royalty*

(Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 268; García Sánchez 2005, 229; 2009, 167 s.; Llewellyn-Jones 2013, 17). Nevertheless, the problem in this case is that in the Xerxes' Persepolis Inscription *maθišta* is a term to name the Crown Prince but not the Second after the King as a brother of the Great King or the second in line to the throne and never as a satrap of Bactriana or viceroy (Briant 1996, 540; García Sánchez 2005, 228 f.; 2009, 164–168). Another not easy problem to answer is this: if Ariamenes and Masistes were really two different Xerxes' brothers: when and why Ariamenes was replaced by Masistes as Bactrian satrap? Finally, we do not know the real motive that drove Masistes to rebel against his brother coming down from Bactria and the Herodotus' Masistes story (Herodotus 9.108–113), but the fact that Xerxes was crazy for his brother's wife and daughter and that this was the real cause of the revolt gives the story a commonplace of an oriental harem appearance where Persian Kings are crazy about women and the constraints of desire, typical anyway of the Classical sources (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 267; García Sánchez 2009, 177–203).

Xerxes appointed his son Hystaspes as satrap of Bactria too (Diodorus Siculus 11.69.2; Artapanus in Ctesias, *FGrHist.* 688, F 14, 35) in the place of his murdered brother Masistes or Ariamenes. But after Xerxes' death, Hystaspes disputed his right to the Persian throne to his brother Artaxerxes I. Maybe Hystaspes won the satrapy of Bactriana because he was not chosen as the Crown Prince instead of the firstborn Darius, since Justin (Justinus 3.1.5–9) is quite clear on this matter when he asserts that Darius was designated as the successor of (*quo maturius regno potiretur*). Hystaspes, probably, he was not very happy with his luck and, after

the assassination of Darius, who was accused of treason, he rebelled against his brother Artaxerxes I, a brother crowned as the new Great King but maybe in favor of Hystaspes, Xerxes' third son, who had no necessarily inheritance rights over him (Briant 1996, 587; García Sánchez 2005, 232; 2009, 170). It is in this context that we find Ctesias' passage about the insurrection of Artapanus, satrap of Bactria too (Ctesias, *FGrHist.* 688, F 14, 35) in 465 BC, but there might be nothing else but a divergent tradition (Briant 1984, 76). Maybe Ctesias only uses the name of Artapanus to make a comparison (ὁ σατράπης, ἄλλος Ἀρτάπανος) (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980, 127; Lenfant 2004, 266, n. 452), we do not know if it is either his relationship with the Achaemenids or simply the briefness of Ctesias' note which does not allow us to go further away.

Bactria disappears of the struggles of succession between Achaemenid princes until the end of the dynasty and the treachery of οἰκειότης (Arrianus, *An.* 3.21.5) Darius III, Bessus, the satrap of Bactriana (Diodorus Siculus 17.73.2, Arrianus, *An.* 3.21.5; Naved & Shaked 2012, C1), over Darius III, and that *haud sane aequo animo in secundo se contiens gradu* (Curtius 4.6.4). Finally defeated in Gaugamela, Darius III decided to find safety in Bactria (Diodorus Siculus 17.73.2), but he was murdered by Bessus before he could be helped by Bactrian, Sogdian and Scythian supporters (Arrianus, *An.* 3.21.4–5; 3.21.10; Diodorus Siculus 17.73.2; Curtius 6.6.16). Once again Bactria was the key satrapy for the ambitions of usurpers (Briant 1982b, 209). P. Briant also considers the use of the term οἰκειότης by Arrian (Arrianus, *An.* 3.21.5) we are not allowed to conclude with absolute certainty that Bessus was a close relative of the Achaemenid family (Briant 1984,

7; Briant 1996, 801). It is true that this term can be related to a friend or simply to a close person of Darius III, but its semantic field covers the relationships too (Chantraine s.v.) and then Bessus could have also perfectly been a close relative of Darius III who got the government of the Bactrian satrapy for his position *in secundo* (Curtius 4.6.4). We also have concurrently the case of another close to the Great King, the royal kinsman Hystaspes (*propinquus*, Curtius 6.2.7; Naved & Shaked 2012, C2, 1), *κάρανος* or an Achaemenid military official that maybe conducted operations against the warlike nomadic Scythian incursions on the margins of Bactria and Sogdiana (Hyland 2013).

Alexander appointed the Persian Artabazus as satrap of Bactria and got married to Roxana, according to Arrian (Arrianus, *An.* 7.4.4) a Bactrian princess, the daughter of the *ὑπάρχος* Oxyartes, *praetor Bactrianorum* (Curtius 9.8.10; Strabo 11.11.4), a political marriage if we have in mind the hard campaigns of the conquest of Bactria and Sogdiana (Briant 1982b, 232).

P. Briant is somewhat skeptical about the relation between the Bactrian's satrap and the close relatives to the Great King and he considers *utile de dissiper quelques illusions sur le caractère privilégié des rapports des satrapes bactriens avec le Grand Roi* (Briant 1984, 75) and the author calls that phenomenon *myopie bactrienne*. For this French scholar the relation between Bactriana and the Second after the King is not very different from the government of the other satrapies of the Empire for the *grande famille achéménide*: the son of Darius I and the brother of Xerxes Achemenes in Egypt (Herodotus 7.7), the prince of the royal family Aršama in Egypt too (Grelot 1972, 300), the

half-brother of Darius I Artaphernes in Sardes (Herodotus 5.25.30) or Cyrus the Younger, the brother of Artaxerxes II and satrap of Lydia and Caria and *κάρανος* of troops of Lydia, Phrygia and Cappadocia (Xenophon, *An.* 1.1. 2; Xenophon, *HG* 1.4.3) (Petit 1983), Artairos, brother of Artaxerxes I and as satrap of Babylon (Ctesias, *FGrHist.* 688, F 14, 41; Stolper 1974, 164), Hystaspes, Darius' father, as satrap of Parthia or Hyrcania (*DB* § 3.36; Herodotus 1.209; 3. 70–71), Ochus, the future Great King Darius II as satrap of Hyrcania (Ctesias, *FGrHist.* 688, F 15, 47), Codoman, the future Great King Darius III (Justinus 10.3.4) in Armenia and finally Bessus, the member of Darius' own household (*οικειότης*) (Diodorus Siculus 17.73.1; Arrianus, *An.* 3.21.5) in Bactria. The conclusion would be obvious and we should have *relativiser ce qu'on appelle fréquemment l'irrégentisme bactrien: il paraît risqué –pour parler en litote– de conclure que la Bactriane était choisie à cet effet de préférence à d'autres satrapies* (Briant 1984, 75) and the nomination of a King's son as satrap of Bactria only it is due to avoid the inheritance struggle and *à désamorcer le conflit qui s'annonce avec l'héritier choisi* and it provides *de disposer des moyens financiers propres à lui assurer un train de vie princier et surtout d'utiliser les forces militaires de sa satrapie pour entrer en lice dans la lutte dynastique* (Briant 1984, 76). Really, P. Briant is right when he relativizes the Bactrian irredentism and of course no all satraps' insurrections in Bactria respond to a secessionist will of the satrapy, but that *il s'agit bien plutôt d'objectifs «achéménides»* and neither the power of the Great King nor the unity of the Empire or the control of Central Asia were at risk *par une révolte authentiquement «bactrienne»* (Briant 1984, 77). Nevertheless, it is true too that

Bactria was a prominent assignment to the ruled out Princes in the inheritance struggle and in any case the fact that several brothers of Great Kings ruled in this satrapy shows its great importance for their political career and for the security of the Empire too, among other things to defend the Eastern frontier and to stem the raids of the warlike Scythian nomads (Briant 1982b, 205; 1984, 71–74; 1996, 914), Bactriana was always a buffer between the sedentary and the nomadic world (Strabo 11.11.3; Francfort 1990; Gardin 1990; Genito

1996, 407), and if they had great dynastic aspirations for their political ambitions and supports too, but definitely and unlike the satrap Diodotus I in the second half of the third century BC, he formally proclaimed himself King of the Seleucid Bactria (Holt 1999), to be only crowned as the Great Kings of the Achaemenid Empire.

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