

KHAETVADATHA MARRIAGE IN IRAN

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The earlier Achaemenid kings married into the families of the high aristocracy in order to secure their loyalty and later on sought to secure a direct link to the founder of the empire, Cyrus. Darius' successors tried to establish firm alliances within the royal family itself. Endogamous unions, such as marriages between brother and sister or father and daughter, however, preoccupied the Greeks who seemed ever so eager to find faults in the "barbarians".

Weisehoffer finds Herodotus' description of Cambyses' marriage with his sister, as another of his crimes, as unhistorical and warns us to be rather cautious about Herodotus' other remarks about it: "his marriage with Phaidyme – the daughter of Otanes – had apparently remained childless (or without a son) which would have made his brother Bardiya and the latter's descendants his successors to the throne. Neither Atossa nor Roxane were full sisters of Cambyses, they were his half-sisters, and only this kind of 'brother-sister marriage' was contracted by the Achaemenids, if they did not marry altogether more distant members of the clan or family." He further clarifies: "The union between Artaxerxes II and his daughter Atossa too, which Plutarch so fiercely criticized as incestuous (thereby also censuring the unlimited power of the king), only becomes intelligible at a second glance. If it had taken place at all, and if Atossa did not simply assume the position of a 'wife of the king' (the actual 'wife of the king' (Greek *gyne tou basileos*) was always the mother of the heir to the throne), then the reason for this 'marriage is to be seen in the king's wish to have a loyal person holding the position of 'wife' of the king' after the death of Parysatis, and thus to secure the status of the heir to the throne at court." (*Ancient Persia*, I.B. Tauris, London – New York, 1996, pp. 84-85). As I have pointed out elsewhere, Herodotus is not right in holding that Cambyses introduced consanguine marriages in Iran as they were routinely prevalent in Elam long before the Persians ever entered Elam which later came to be known as Iran.

Besides the ladies of the royal house (Elam, *duksis*) mentioned in the Persepolis tables, "There was Artystone, who owned several estates, Artazostra, the wife of Mardonius, Radushdukka, the wife of Gobryas, and Radushnamuya. For Artabama, who also owned an estate, hundreds of labourers (*kurtash Irdabamana*) worked in Litu, Hidali, Hunar and Shiraz. She herself was often on the move and received huge quantities of provisions. She issued receipts for all her expenses by using her seal."

Weischoffer finds all these ladies as “positively active, enterprising and resolute,” as they actively participate in all royal occasions and freely travel across the country for managing their estates and workers and often joined the king in his campaigns. However, some Greeks who ideally assigned the role of women to the household also portrayed royal women as house confined.

The PFT tablets, however, prove that there was hardly any such house confinement. This kind of opinion, unfortunately, however, prevailed up to our own times.

The Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PFT) reveal that thousands of workers received rations which depended more on their training and type of activity than on their sex. The female workers stand out among them and they were not only in charge of all the royal manufacturers, but even of male workers and functioned as a ‘manageress’.