

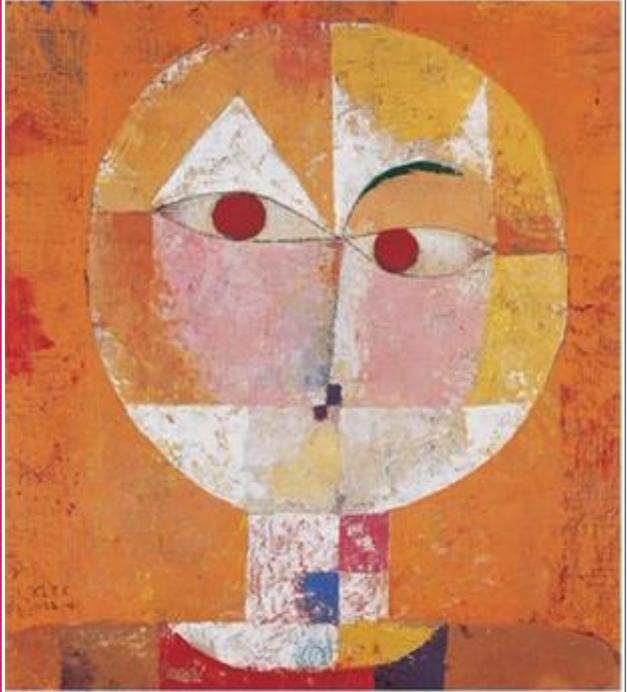
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Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

The gold diplomacy in Greco-Persian relations

Eduard Valerievich Rung¹

¹Kazan Federal University

Eduard_Rung@mail.ru

Elena Aleksandrovna Venidiktova²

²Kazan Federal University

Elena_Venidiktova@mail.ru

Igor Vladimirovich Vostrikov³

³Kazan Federal University

Igor_Vostrikov@mail.ru

Abstract

In article, the authors focus on goals, methods and means of the Persian Gold diplomacy towards the Greeks, and collect all relevant data from Greek sources, which deal with different aspects of Persian diplomatic dealings with the Greeks via comparative qualitative research methods. In result, the Persian Gold Diplomacy was a sequence of the Achaemenid gift-given tradition. It did not reflect some peculiarities of the Persian relations with the Greek world. In conclusion, coercive Earth-and-Water Diplomacy and Gold Diplomacy were the implementation of a stick and carrot approach by the Achaemenid in their relations with the foreign countries and rulers.

Keywords: History, Greeks, Persians, Achaemenid, Diplomacy.

La diplomacia del oro en las relaciones greco-persas

Resumen

En este artículo, los autores se centran en los objetivos, métodos y medios de la diplomacia del oro persa hacia los griegos y recopilan todos los datos relevantes de fuentes griegas, que abordan diferentes

aspectos de los tratos diplomáticos persas con los griegos a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, la Diplomacia Persa de Oro fue una secuencia de la tradición de obsequios aqueménidas. No reflejaba algunas peculiaridades de las relaciones persas con el mundo griego. En conclusión, la diplomacia coercitiva Tierra y Agua y la Diplomacia del Oro fueron la implementación de un enfoque de palo y zanahoria por parte de los aqueménidas en sus relaciones con los países y gobernantes extranjeros.

Palabras clave: historia, griegos, persas, aqueménidas, diplomacia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship of the Persian Kings with their subjects was based on the tradition of gifts ex-change. The Persians did not only give the gifts to the King, but received them from his. Earth and water also were specific gifts to the King, demanded from foreign rulers and peoples. They meant subjugation to the Persians. The Persian gold diplomacy also may be included in the gift-given process in which money was a kind of gift and the King was a gift-giver. The Great King of Persia sent their gifts to all people who were to recognize the superiority of a Persian monarch in around the world. The Persian King as a result of his diplomatic dealings with the Greeks got some of them as his subjects when demanding from them earth and water (they were defined by the Greeks as slaves of the King), and others as the King's clients when rewarding them for their loyalty by sending some royal gifts (they thereby became friends of the King and benefactors or guest-friends of the King).

2. METHODS

The article is built up on the comparative analysis of the different Greek sources that enables us to give a detailed consideration of the Achaemenid imperial diplomacy towards the Greeks from the Sixth to the Fourth Century B. C. from the Greek perspective.

This method is applied to the investigation of Greek narrative sources reporting of the diplomatic contacts between the Greeks and the Persians. It enables us to evaluate the reliability of sources about Achaemenid imperial diplomacy towards the Greeks and to take into consideration a technical correct source of information, which does not depend on authors' bias (RUNG, 2004: ROOHANI ET AL, 2017: ABDURRAHMAN ET AL, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some scholars attract attention to the gift-giving process in the Achaemenid Empire, in center of which was the Great King of Persia. SANCISI-WEERDENBURG (1989) points out that the man who can give away the most valuable gift is the most powerful man in the community, and the King always took care to pay his own debts and to give a gift in return that was of greater value than the gift given, thus putting the giver in a state of debt to the KING. MITCHELL (1997) further comments: Persian exchange was marked by inequality. The King gave more than anyone else, which, by keeping the recipients in

his debt, created a power imbalance in the relationship. The King was the dominant partner in any relationship and was able to direct the relationship and to abandon it whenever he wanted to.

The scholarly detailed analysis, however, did not include the foreign policy, though it is clear that the gift-given process had an impact on foreign relations of the Achaemenid. The most usual way of inclusion the people into King's clients was coming of some foreigners to the royal court under King's protection or patronage. There were some other ways of becoming King's clients. Plutarch in his treatise *De malignitate Herodoti* reports that Demaratus the Spartan, who had already been in Persia, made his guest-friend Attaginus, the chief of the Theban oligarchy, the King's friend and guest-friend. Other ways of getting in the list of the King's clients were a reception by the King of embassies and sending the Persian emissaries with gold to Greece.

The classical sources refer to the reception by envoys of different kinds of gifts from the Great King of Persia. For contemporaries, it was hard to make the differentiation between gifts and bribes. Some scholars suggest the patterns and types of exchange of gifts were not always in accordance with the expectations of Greeks, which caused the disappointment or accusation of bribing. The Greek envoys visiting Persia got from the King not only money and some splendid gifts, but material things which meant the privileged status in the Persian Empire.

Aelian lists some status gifts given by the King to any foreign envoys, but not only the Greek: The gifts, which the King gave to envoys who came to him either from Greece or elsewhere were these: To everyone a Babylonian Talent of finest silver; two silver Cups, each weighing a Talent. The Babylonian Talent makes twenty-two Attic mines. He gave them also a Scimitar and Bracelets, and a Chain, all which were valued at a thousand Darics. Likewise, a Median Dress, which they called a Donative. Lysias reports that Demus, son of Ppyrilampes... received a gold cup as a credential from the Great King. Aristophanes makes his character Dikaiopolis to be surprised with the Median Dress by the Athenian envoys who had come back from Persia. Likely, someone who had obtained symbols from the Great King earlier may have acquired some status at the royal court, for example, of a friend of the King or benefactor of the King and served as the King's clients in the Greek poleis on his returning. Some people continued to receive the gifts from the King, when the Persian emissaries brought money to Greece.

The classical sources record many cases of envoys' gifts from the King. According to Demosthenes, Callias, son Hipponicus was accused by his fellow citizens and fined in the fifty talents for taking gifts from the Persians had been the ambassador. The Comic poet Plato represents the envoys Epicrates and Phormisius receiving from the King many bribes—the gilt and silvered plates. In fact, these plates were not probably the bribes in their own right, but rather the status gifts, the symbols of hospitality and King's reward to the envoys. The

Greeks, however, considered them as bribes due to their value as a source of wealth (PERLMAN, 1976).

According to Plutarch's *Life of Pelopides*, the people only laughed at the joke when Epicrates not only confessed to the people that he had received gifts from the King, but made a motion, that instead of nine archons, they should yearly choose nine poor citizens to be sent ambassadors to the King, and enriched by his presents. Pelopidas, as Plutarch says, according to the custom, received the most splendid and considerable presents, and the King granted him his desires. More extravagant were the gifts given to Timagoras as Plutarch in his *Life of Artaxerxes* reports: He not only took gold and silver, but a rich bed, and slaves to make it, as if the Greeks were unskillful in that art; besides eighty cows and herds-men, professing he needed cow's milk for some distemper; and, lastly, he was carried in a litter to the seaside, with a present of four talents for his attendants (BROSIUS, 2011).

These gifts, however, attested of Timagoras' reputation at the King's eyes and exceeded all other gifts, which the King usually sent for everyone, but they were not unique. Athenaeus, for example, cites a case of Entimus the Cretan from Gortyn who was not ambassador, but received the extraordinary honors like Timagoras from the King. Meanwhile, the Athenians condemned and executed Timagoras, but not only for receiving so many presents from the King, as Demosthenes stresses. Xenophon in his *Hellenica* goes so far to say that Timagoras, on the indictment of Leon, who proved that his fellow-

envoy not only refused to lodge with him at the King's court, but in every way played into the hands of Pelopidas, was put to death. Plutarch in his *Life of Artaxerxes* notes, that Artaxerxes was so gratified with some secret intelligence, which Timagoras sent into him by the hand of his secretary Beluris, that he bestowed upon him ten thousand darics (RUNG, 2015).

Demosthenes mentions that the sum that Timagoras has got for some promises to the King, was 40 talents. The lexicon *Suda* sums up all information on Timagoras: This man, sent as an envoy by the Athenians to king Artaxerxes, took from him not only gold and silver but also an expensive couch and soldiers in attendance and 80 cows, and was conveyed to the coast in a litter; and the wage given to those who had conveyed him from the king was 4 talents. So the Athenians destroyed him. Others, though, say that he had promised to undermine the existing friendship between Sparta and Athens. Consequently, this Timagoras was destroyed by the Athenians after he had prostrated himself before the Persian king, contrary to Greek customs, and accepted bribes. According to TAVERNIER (2014), it was indeed a royal duty to promote the people who had been of assistance to the king.

The Persian diplomatic missions were an opportunity for the Great King of Persia to recruit his agents and to strengthen his influence. When the Greeks defeated the Persians at Salamis in the summer 480 some Greeks from the Persian side attempted to convince Mardonius to change the tactics of war and to rely more on bribery of the

Greeks to persuade some of them to abstain from prosecuting the war against the Persians. Herodotus attributes this advice to several Thebans in the Persian service: but if you do as we advise, said the Thebans, you will without trouble be master of all their battle plans. Send money to the men who have power in their cities, and there-by you will divide Hellas against itself; after that, with your partisans to aid you, you will easily subdue those who are your adversaries.

Same thoughts were expressed also by Artabazus at the Persian military council on the eve of the decisive battle of Plataea in 479. According to Herodotus, Artabazus recommended to the Persians that they could take the great store they had of gold, minted and other, and silver drinking-cups, and send all this to all places in Greece to the chief men in the cities. Let them do this, he said, and the Greeks would quickly surrender their liberty. Herodotus concludes that this opinion of Artabazus was the same as the Thebans. During the First Peloponnesian war Artaxerxes I, the Great King of Persia, sent a Megabazus the Persian to Sparta with the gold. According to Diodorus, the King sent some of his friends with a large sum of money to Lacedaemon and asked the Lacedaemonians to make war upon the Athenians.

The purpose of the mission as it is stated by our sources, was to bribe Spartans and to incline them to invade Attica and so draw off the Athenians from Egypt. In spite of hostile relations between Athens and Sparta, Megabazus' mission failed. Thucydides says: Finding that the matter made no progress, and that the money was only being wasted, he (the King) recalled Megabazus with the remainder of the money.

Diodorus confirms that the Lacedaemonians neither accepted money nor paid any attention whatever to the requests of the Persians. The reason for this unsuccessful outcome of Megabazus' mission is that the Spartans, despite their enmity with Athens, were not inclined to discredit themselves by cooperation with the Persians. The Persians could hope to get some new King's clients in Sparta since they remembered Pausanias' collaboration with them almost twenty years earlier and that he had taken 500 talents from Artabazus, the satrap in Dascylaeum, to recruit new Persian agents in Greece.

On the eve of the Corinthian War in 396 or 395 B.C. Timocrates the Rhodian has been on his unofficial mission to Greece sent jointly by Tithraustes, the Persian commander-in-chief, and Pharnabazus, the satrap in Asia Minor. The goal of Timocrates' diplomatic mission to Greece was to deliver Persian gold in the worth of 50 silver talents and distribute them among the leading Greek politicians at Athens, Thebes, Corinth and Argos. Surely, Timocrates' money was a bribe to the politicians in the Greek city-states. Plutarch records an episode that before Alexander's invasion of Asia, some Ephialtus, the Athenian ambassador to Persia, returned from the Persian king in 340 B.C. with the order to raise his fellow citizens to the war with Philip and delivered the royal gold to Athens.

The Great King of Persia sent his gifts also to all population of a Greek community. Herodotus says that when Xerxes has come to Acanthus, he declared the Acanthians his guests-friends, and gave them Median clothing, praising them for the zeal with which he saw

them furthering his campaign, and for what he heard of the digging of the canal. He also comments on Abdera: When Xerxes came to Abdera in his return, he made a compact of friendship with its people and gave them a golden sword and a gilt tiara. Herodotus says that the Argives established the friendship with Xerxes and requested Artaxerxes whether this friendship would have been reaffirmed. Recently Waters (2014) came to the conclusion that Persian insistence on submission of earth and water no longer appears to have been an expected component of Persian-Greek relations after Xerxes' invasion of Greece.

Subsequent Persian-Greek diplomatic relations involve other reciprocal exchanges in addition to (or instead of) *philia*, such as treaties or guest-friendship. This assumes that the change in terminology reflects a change in dynamics as well. For the Persians, the context is no longer an impending or in-progress assault on mainland Greece but one of maintaining the integrity of the empire in Ionia and elsewhere. A shift then implies a change in royal ideology or at least any components thereof associated with submission of earth and water. The change is first traceable in the Argive-Persian *philia* under Artaxerxes, initiated with Xerxes. However, HYLAND (2018) rightly challenges to this interpretation: Some scholars question the relevance of expansionist ideology after the momentum behind Persia's western conquests dissipated. Yet it is doubtful that military setbacks in the Aegean caused the Achaemenids to discard aspirations to universal power.

It seems the King's friendship towards the Greeks was not the consequence of the Achaemenids' abandon of the imperial policy.

Some Greek authors, cited in Didymus' commentary on Demosthenes' orations, referred to Artaxerxes III Ochus' offer to retain the ancestral friendship that has been existed between the Athenians and the Persian Kings. Plutarch in his *Life of Pelopides* mentions that the Thebans have been proclaimed by Artaxerxes II the ancestral friends of the King at the conference in Susa in 368/7 B.C. The information provided by Diodorus is even more striking: The Thebans alone of the Greeks were honored as benefactors by the Persian kings, so that the ambassadors of the Thebans were seated on thrones set in front of the kings. According to Diodorus, during the Third Sacred War, the Thebans sent ambassadors to the King of the Persians urging him to furnish the city with a large sum of money (ANANE & ADU-MENSAH, 2019)

Artaxerxes III Ochus, readily acceding to the request, made a gift to them of three hundred talents of silver. LEWIS (1989) comments on this episode: This was a response to a direct Theban request. Aeschines comments on the curious episode when the King, probably Darius III Codomannus, had refused to send gold to the Greek city in spite of another direct request: Not long before Alexander crossed over into Asia, the king of the Persians sent to our people a most insolent and barbarous letter, in which everything was expressed in the most ill-mannered terms; and at the close he wrote, I will not give you gold; stop asking me for it; you will not get it.

4. SUMMARY

This analysis supposes that the Persian Gold Diplomacy was a sequence of the Achaemenid gift-given tradition. It did not reflect some peculiarities of the Persian relations with the Greek world. The Persian King when sending gold to the Greeks rewarded them for loyalty and services and did not attempt to conduct the politics of balance among the Greeks, how some scholars stress.

5. CONCLUSION

The Gold Diplomacy simply was a mean of extending the King's power beyond the limits of the Achaemenid Empire as far as possible. It was a non-military way of subjugation of the people to the Persian monarchs, especially when earth and water demand was not successful. In fact, coercive Earth-and-Water Diplomacy and Gold Diplomacy were the implementation of a carrot and stick approach by the Achaemenids in their relations with the foreign countries and rulers.

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