



The Sociopolitical Context of Central Fars during the Achaemenes Era and its Relation with the Economic System

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Abstract: Emphasis on the importance of social-political fabric and its effect on the urbanization and economic system that are aspects of urbanization life is one of the necessities during the Achaemenid Period. This study was conducted based on the deductive-inductive method. First, written sources (clay inscription of Persepolis and classic authors) have been used to achieve general information about the social-political fabric of Fars during Achaemenid Period then archeological evidence remained from the economic system of Achaemenid period in Central Fars was analyzed within this framework. No coin, including Shahi or so-called Satrapy, has been discovered from archaeological excavations in Iran. It seems that Achaemenid Empire had no plan for monetary economic development, and coin promotion and use in transactions despite its wide territory and regular discipline. On the contrary, it seems that Darius and his successors considered coin as a political instrument used to convey and show the message of the political and military power of the Achaemenid king at that ear not as a tool for the economic system. Therefore, studies focused on clay inscriptions of Persepolis and evaluated works of authors indicate that the sociopolitical fabric of Iranian society, especially Fars has been traditional and based on agriculture and husbandry during Achaemenid Era. As we know, the city was not shaped during the Achaemenid period despite the presence of urban structures, such as social sophistication, specialism, and the modern administrative system of the ear; therefore, coin use was not institutionalized in the economy of that era. The present study aims to discuss the Fars economy during the Achaemenid era regarding its sociopolitical context after the coin mintage Achaemenid Empire.

Keywords: *Economy, Sociopolitical Context, Achaemenid Empire, Central Fars, Coin.*

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Introduction

The city can be defined as a settlement, residents of which are not engaged in agriculture alone but a part of the population is employed in various service and industrial fields (Soltanzadeh, 1986: 39). Therefore, urbanization is a process shaped through enhanced business relationships and communication networks, as well as economic activity development and control over the political and administrative organization (Taleghani, 2011: 10).

Irrigation-based agriculture development in southern Mesopotamia led to the development of social and economic organizations by developing irrigation systems at least from the late fourth millennium (Adams, 1981: 243). Long distance business was developed after the accumulation of agricultural production surplus and subsequent wealth accumulation (Childe, 1978: 191-92). Therefore, the connection and communication between different population groups were started in Mesopotamia and other areas of the Near East directing them toward social growth and civility (Stone, 1995: 236).

Early cities indicated a modern social order, so became a place not only for residence but also for good exchange, product surplus storage, a gathering of expert craftsmen, and a location for the residence of gods and their forces (Seyyed Sajjadi, 2004: 65). In general, the factors and conditions influencing the formation of city and urbanization growth include population rise, specialization in techniques, skilled metal work, social sophistication, and formation of social classes (Childe, 1978: 193-94). The evolutions expressed in human communities created three underlying systems at a higher level, which are elements forming cities: economic system, political system, and ideologic system. The economic system appeared with the advent and expansion of land and water use techniques and remote distance business; the political system was developed after the formation of military power and empire governance, and the ideologic system was linked to the empire or kingdom system after the advent of clergymen, temples, and changed religious viewpoints (Jacobsen, 1976).

Sociopolitical Context and urbanism history before Achaemenid Era in Central Fars

It is necessary to study the archeology of Central Fars (Kor River Basin) before the Achaemenid Era to investigate and criticize the remained findings to know the formation process of the monetary economy and coin popularity in Central Fars, and subsequent urbanism phenomenon in this area. The only archaeological evidence from the time interval of 550-1000 in the Kor River basin includes different types of clays, and one Elamite rock relief in Naqsh-e Rostam, which is evidence indicating Elamites' presence in Fars during the first half of millennium one (Majidzadeh, 2007: 97).

We face a decrease in settlements in Kor River Basin in this time interval. The reason for the population declines in the period is not clear. The entrance of desert and nomadic tribes to this region may be a reason for such decline (Sumner, 1972: 265). Therefore, the newly-entered nomadic tribes settled in empty and unoccupied areas of the Kur River basin. Over time, wars and struggles between nomadic and settled tribes were reduced and communication was created between villages and nomadic tribes gradually. The success of nomadic leaders made them land owners who could politically control the area (Ibid: 266-67), which caused the retreat of Elamite tribes towards the northwest of the Kur River Basin (Boucharlat, 2013: 422). At that time, the effective dominance of Elamites was reduced, so they had to retreat and go back to the lowlands of Shush (Sumner, 2009: 168).

In the time interval from 1000 AD century to the beginning of the Achaemenid Empire in 550 AD century, four clay types of Elam, Mianeh, Ghaleh, Shagha, and Taimuran existed in Kor (or Kur)

River basin indicating the tribal and cultural diversity of this time in the opinion of Sumner. The previous cultural unity, which relied on the integration and uniformity of clays of the Kaftari Period (Old Elamite) is no longer seen in this period but the mentioned clays are seen instead of clays that remained from Kaftari Era. According to conducted assessments, the clay types of Ghaleh and Elamite of Mianeh were more popular in the northwest of the Kur River basin introducing Parsian Tribes that newly entered this region (Sumner, 2009: 156-162). Sumner believes that the culture of Shagha and Taimuran starts in the second half of the AD millennium in the Kur River basin, and is related to the early Persians. The Culture of Shagha and Taimuran is seen in the southeast of the valley, which is an area with few agricultural activities (Sumner, 1972: 266). The residents of this area can be considered nomads since the cemetery and some minor antecedents of small settlements are seen in this area used by the residents as a camp or cemetery (Hartnell, 2012: 84).

The frequency of Shagha and Taimuran elements in the center and northwest of the valley indicated the dominant nomadic population of Shagha and Taimuran compared to sedentism and people who settle in a place without leaving it. Some relics, such as remains of a pottery kiln in the Tapeh Gate with some signs on the Shagha dishes and sculptures made in the workroom can represent this point that people with sedentism culture made these products for nomadic consumers living in shelters. The frequency of Shagha dishes compared to the number of Taimuran dishes in villages indicate that Taimuran people were nomadic and chose sedentism late after other tribes (Sumner, 2009: 167). The abovementioned points help to understand the economy of the Shagha Taimuran period and their living style based on the nomadic life and tribal system (Hartnell, 2012: 106). Hence, we find no sign of permanent settlement and building construction in the Kur River basin during the 1000-550 AD century. The reason was no requirement for a systematic settlement due to the lifestyle and sociopolitical system of that era. In general, studies indicate that nomadic lifestyle and livelihood in this region in the first half of the AD century (Karter, 2009: 119-120). Herodotus also describes how Cyrus II the Great gathered the Persian tribes in 550 AD century to defeat Astyage in Persepolis naming Parsi tribes who lived as nomads and their job was animal husbandry (Hdt. I. 125).

It seems that Persian people were nomads and herders regarding the political and cultural situation of Anshan City in ancient Elamite and Mianeh civilization (that appears as a real city), settlement and population decline from the late second millennium of AD century to the beginning of Achaemenid Era, some signs of dominant nomadic life in Fars, and finally the formation of Achaemenid Empire. Therefore, the Persian people created no permanent settlement in Marvdasht before the formal government. They seemingly continued their nomadic life during Achaemenid Era even after the empire formation (Sumner 1986).

Literature Review

E. Herzfeld was the first person who talked about the required attention that must be paid to the urbanization topic during Achaemenid Era in his field studies on Persepolis plain (Herzfeld, 2002). The next researcher was Tilia who conducted serious research in this region (Tilia, 1978) followed by Sumner (1986) who was the last person who conducted a study in this field. Particularly after the Revolution of 1976, field studies conducted by two joint boards of Iran-France and Iran-Italy under the supervision of R. Busharla, K. Mohammadkhani (2004-2008) and A. Askari Chaverdi (2008-2018) must be mentioned (Askari Chaverdi et al. 2013; Askari Chaverdi et al. 2014). Moreover, significant studies were conducted by T. Hartnell and his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Chicago's Center for Ancient Near Eastern Studies (Hartnell 2012).



Research Methodology

The present study was conducted using the deductive-inductive method. First, written sources (clay inscription of Persepolis and classic authors) have been used to propose general information about the social-political fabric of Fars during Achaemenid Period then archeological evidence remained from the economic system of Achaemenid period in Central Fars was analyzed within this framework.

Sociopolitical Context and economic system in Achaemenid Era

One should refer to written references (Persepolis clay inscriptions) and classic authors to understand the sociopolitical context, urbanization system, and type of livelihood during the Achaemenid Era. Clay inscriptions provide some information about the Achaemenid bureaucracy, which cannot be obtained from Greek sources (Briant, 2002: 13). The clay inscriptions help us to know the economic structure and historical geography of the Achaemenid Era. Unlike the royal inscriptions found in Persepolis, which were formal statements and speeches for the public (Locoq, 2003: 114), Baroo (fortification) and Khazaneh clay inscriptions did not have promotional nature but were domestic and accounting documents of Fars and Khuzestan. Baroo Clay inscriptions are administrative archives giving valuable information about the livelihood and lifestyle of people living in the Achaemenid Era. Contrary to works of Greek historians, clay inscriptions have citation values because these inscriptions are not written for the public, so their texts have not been distorted (Briant, 2002: 660-661).

The topic of clay inscriptions includes information about collecting taxes or income as some items, including wine, fruits, beer, cereals, and animals like cows, sheep, goats, horses, camels, and other commodities. This tax collection was conducted in a large area between Fars and Khuzestan (Hallock 1985: 595). In general, the texts written on the Baroo inscriptions found in Persepolis are about the production of crops and animal breeding, as well as the distribution of these products for various purposes and registering relevant affairs in an active economic and administrative network. In other words, this economic-administrative system is restored as follows: collecting crops through taxes, storing and redistributing them for religious uses, aristocratic class, governmental officials, workers, livestock, and passengers of royal roads (Henkelman, 2013: 115). Finally, clay inscriptions sealed by the payer and receiver were sent as an activity report to Persepolis (Lewis, 2009: 21). Hence, these inscriptions provide important information about labor and human force organization, workers' position, population rate in empire heart, royal roads, clergymen's position, tax policies, the relationship between public and private institutes, religious rituals, and management reports' documents (Henkelman, 2013: 116). These texts indicate that each person working in the public sector receives a fixed certain amount of wage. Salaries were paid in a highly organized system; for instance, travelers had some sealed documents issued by Satrapy officials or the King, and these papers indicate the food ration of each person (Lewis, 2009: 20-21).

The name of many crops written in the clay inscriptions, as well as a large number of cereals in transactions between various regions and individuals indicated the large area of properties and agricultural lands in the south and southwest of Iran. For instance, texts 700-702 from group J related to royal provisions point that 640 cargos, 12610 cargos, and 1783 flour cargos belong to the king. The mentioned amounts indicate the considerable agriculture potential in Central Fars Region since agriculture was the major production sector of that area (Dandamayev, 2018: 139). Great attention must be paid to the considerable number of payments and receipts of various items, including cereals, herds, and livestock mentioned in Baroo inscriptions found in Persepolis. In this case, the texts mentioning livestock and herds are highly important for the present study. Transcripts C4 that covers texts 267-273 include taxes imposed on small flocks. The text PF 267



notes that 476 domestic animals, including 28 rams, 392 ewes, 4 male lambs, 6 female lambs, and 46 female horses were given a one-year tax. The text PF 268 names 382 domestic animals, including 211 rams, 163 ewes, and 8 horses as tax. Text PF 269 mentions paying tax by giving 241 herds, including 10 male goats, 5 female goats, 159 rams, and 67 ewes.

Text PF 663 from group H includes what officials received, which was 174 sheep taken as the quota. Some clay inscriptions have mentioned a large number of cereals or livestock given for daily consumption. The text PF 696 from group J pointed out that 1124 sheep were consumed for one meal or one day on the 21st anniversary of Darius' reign. In this field, a historical report can be mentioned that is matched with texts written in Baroo clay inscription found in Persepolis. In his *Persica*, Ctesias states that Pars' Shah used to give food to 1500 people in his royal court, and Heraclides admits that Achaemenid King every day fed thousands of people living in the royal court, so thousands of herds of horses, deer, cows, and poultries were slaughtered and cooked in the royal kitchen (Jones, 2015: 328). According to the text PF 775 from the K2 category associated with the quota determined for special individuals, Shah ordered to give 100 sheep as a gift to one of his wives. Text PF 2007 is another prominent sample that mentions a list of the large number of 16843 sheep and goats (Lewis, 2009: 23). In sum, around ten thousand sheep have been listed in Baroo inscriptions indicating the high capacity of animal husbandry in Pars area and Elam. The majority of products named in the inscriptions included local byproducts and animal breeding, as well as documents of the folks given to the shepherds (Henkelman, 2013: 137). According to the mentioned points, it is concluded that most of the people living in the considered region have been ranchers. Among 2100 Baroo inscriptions of Persepolis, around 17376 individuals have been identified whose occupational and administrative background indicated that few of them were from aristocratic and high-rank classes, so the rest of them possibly were shepherds and workers (Lewis, 2009: 22).

On the other hand, Greek authors have described Pars tribes and people in a good way indicating the social context of this area during the Achaemenid era. According to Herodotus, Persian (Persian people) were divided into several tribes that Cyrus recalled to help him in the war with Medes and could achieve victory. These tribes were Pasargaday, Marafeiee, and Mapeseiee, the first one being the most important one the Achaemenid clan belonged to this tribe, and Pars Shahs were from this tribe. There were also other tribes, such as Pantialei, Doroosi, and Germanihaynd tribes that were farmers, while other clans, including Daee, Mard, Doroopiki, and Sagarti were nomads (Hdt. I. 125). Therefore, Herodotus believes that the Pars Society was nomadic (Ibid. VII. 85).

The high number of transactions, predetermined quotas, received taxes, and royal orders for delivery of a lot of flocks and cereals to different individuals mentioned in clay inscriptions confirm the high-level animal husbandry in this region. Therefore, one can assume that the local people living in this area mainly were herders. Since no specific technique or job has been mentioned in Baroo texts indicating no social complexities, we can introduce the social and economic fabric of Central Fars a herder population who met their needs by breeding animals and nomadic lifestyle. Moreover, Epigraphy found in the Susa Palace points to some industrialists and artists who have been taken there to design huge constructions of the Achaemenid Era.

According to the texts written by Greek historians, Achaemenid shahs moved from one place to another (Frye, 1965: 161). Unlike the Greek's opinion, researchers believe that frequent movements of Achaemenid shahs were not seasonal because they did not travel just for fun and use good weather but the political structure of the Achaemenid empire made shahs travel and move from one province to another to manage their territory better and strengthen their relationships with subordinate nations (Briant, 2002: 285-294). Achaemenid shahs traveled to megacities of the



empire periodically to have control over these cities. On these journeys, the royal glory entered cities showing the power and wealth of the Shah. For instance, in his book "Education of Cyrus," Xenophon talks about the glory of the royal procession of Cyrus as a new movement done by this king to respect the Achaemenid Shah and keep his power (Xenophon, 1971: 262). Such movements of the Achaemenid procession had a political aspect too. Shah used to visit tribes living in his territory during these journeys. Shah could show the power and wealth of his military forces and kingdom to those who lived at far distances. As described in classic sources, people gathered in the place where the royal procession was supposed to pass (Xenophon, 1971: 265).

In classic sources, a part of clay inscriptions called texts Q has been assigned to frequent travels and journeys of Achaemenid shahs that were done with numerous ceremonies and large crowds that accompanied the king and procession having all facilities of royal life, including royal tents. As mentioned before, these journeys of Achaemenid Shahs were not seasonal. These descriptions indicate the mobility of government and political structure of Achaemenids indicating us non-fixed concept of capital in that era. According to the classic sources mentioning the journeys of Achaemenid Shahs, Baroo clay inscriptions confirm this topic (Hallock, 1969). Since Achaemenid Shah traveled with the royal family and countries, many facilities were provided for the journey that has been mentioned in Baroo clay inscriptions. For instance, they took 1224 sheep and 12350 wine glasses (Henkelman 2010: 676) with themselves indicating that more than 15000 people accompanied Achaemenid Shah on these journeys (Briant, 2001: 287). Herodotus also pointed out that Cyrus provided food and livestock when wanted to go to war (Hdt. I. 188).

According to the points mentioned above about the continuous travels of the king with a large crowd (around 15000 people) (Briant, 2002: 287), a considerable case is the settlement of this crowd. Classic texts present a surprising and glorious description of tents and royal food tables provided by Achaemenid Shahs, as well as the luxurious character of Persians (Briant, 2002: 394-450). "Skilled workers prepared the land to set up the Shah's tent, which surprised the king when saw the fast process of their activities," Xenophon states. He explains that a royal tent was put up at the center, and loyal champions settled around the tent surrounded by cavalries and charioteers in a circular arrangement (Xenophon, 1971: 272-274). During the war between Xerxes Shah and the Greeks, the tent of the king was captured by the enemy. Greeks saw the glory of these tents that had all facilities of a palace, and described them as a monument that had rooms, a hall, a bath, a harem, and even a stable (Hdt. IX. 82). The description of these tents and their glory includes Persians' traditions and customs and precious equipment and appliances indicating the luxurious lifestyle of Persians. Royal tables and servants working as those who set up the food table poured wine glasses, and cleaned the table, as well as those servants who did the daily duties of the palace, including royal dressers, doormen, hairdressers, and bath attendants, were mentioned as a part of this royal lifestyle (Briant, 2002: 455-456). The mentioned descriptions imply that a large crowd accompanies Shah on his journeys. Another significant description of the royal tents of Achaemenids is mentioned in the case when Alexander entered Darius' tents after defeating Darius III in the Battle of Issus. Servants of Alexander prepared the tent for his entrance, so he entered the tent and got surprised when saw the glory of the tent and said, this is the kingdom! (Plutarch, 1960: 25).

The abovementioned descriptions of numerous rituals of royal palaces and tents, as well as the conditions in which the king listened to the demands of tribes living in different areas, indicated the political aspects of these journeys. It seems that the political structure of the Achaemenid Empire was based on frequent migration and movements. The reason was that royal power existed anywhere that Shah was present either in the tent or place, in Persepolis or Pardis, in Sard or Memphis. Setting up a royal tent for Shah and his companions means creating a movable capital in which Shah's tent is considered a mobile power center (Briant, 2002: 288). Therefore, it was nec-



essary to create an urban structure due to the movable territory of the Shah.

We can see the incomplete and scattered locations, which are ceremonial without aspects of daily life during the Achaemenid Empire. For instance, Persepolis and other memorial places of this era were not suitable for long-term settlement. Moreover, empty spaces are seen around the monuments that remained from the Achaemenid Empire. The relation between frequent journeys of Achaemenid Shahs and empty spaces around the capitals like Persepolis indicates that empty spaces were suitable for putting up tents. Classic authors have pointed to this case many times because memorial centers of the Achaemenid Era were not suitable for long-term settlement, and were just a replica of the power and ceremonies of an Achaemenid era that is just used for some ceremonies, not long-term settlement (Tajvidi, 1976: 54-55; Shapoor Shahbazi, 1996: 19; Bahadori, 2015: 55). A considerable point of this case is that no sign has been obtained from royal monuments or architecture for settlement of king despite frequent travels of Achaemenid Shahs to different places. The obtained signs, such as Borazjan palace indicate places suitable for temporary settlement, not long-term residence like other Achaemenid buildings (Bahadori & Valipour, 2019: 32). As mentioned before, these empty spaces are proper for setting up tents (Boucharlat, 2014: 97-8).

According to the points mentioned above, the sociopolitical context and livelihood in Achaemenid Empire were based on nomadic lifestyles, and most people were farmers and herders. Therefore, economic transactions of that era included barter exchange, so the coin exchange-based economy could not become popular in such a social context. Interestingly, a coin is used instead of a seal on one of Baroo's clay inscriptions (Root, 1988: 9). It may be asked why an official of the complicated administrative system of Persepolis used a coin instead of a seal to endorse clay inscriptions. It can be answered that although the complicated administrative system of Persepolis was a sign of modern life in Iran in the Achaemenid Era, the living context was such simple and traditional that even administrative officials could not detect the difference between seal and coin. However, this action may be done to promote coin not due to lack of knowledge.

The clay inscriptions held in the treasury also provide important information about the economic system of the Achaemenid Empire. The clay inscriptions were written in 458-492 AD century, from the 30th anniversary of Darius the Great kingdom to the 7th anniversary of Artaxerxes I (Arfaee, 2008: 33). The clay inscriptions kept in the treasury are about wages paid to industrialists and craftsmen who engaged in the construction of Persepolis monuments (Schmidt, 1963: 4). The famous Iran historian and expert in ancient languages of Iran, George Cameron read more than 100 clay inscriptions kept in treasury (Cameron, 1948).

Investigations on clay inscriptions kept in the treasury indicate a disturbance in the economic system of the Achaemenid Era. This disturbance and chaos occurred on the seventh anniversary of Xerxes in 479 AD century, so that the salary of craftsmen and industrialists of Persepolis was paid in non-cash form as commodities without providing a field for the monetary system, while a part of wages was paid in cash (shekel or karsha). Two-thirds of this payment included commodities, and the remaining part was paid in cash (each seep equaled three Shekels, and each wine jug equaled one Shekel), which continued until the 16th anniversary of Xerxes Shah's reign, while wages were paid half cash and half non-cash in this year. This process indicated a decline in non-cash payments but treasury bred showed the prevalent of non-cash payment in the next years of Xerxes Shah's reign, which was a traditional method rooted in the history of the Near East, so all wages were paid in the previous method non-cash payments (Ibid: 1-3). According to the process taken for payments in treasury bred, it is concluded that the economic system was not developed based on the coin in the land of Persians, and was not related to the livelihood and sociopolitical



content of that era. Another point is that a coin exchange-based economy does not suddenly appear, and requires a provided field. Regarding the mentioned points, the history of weighed metals used as money was a long history in Mesopotamia and adjacent areas. The Nushijan and its popular treasury containing silver pieces with fixed weight can be named in Iran, which was possibly used as a monetary tool for exchanges (Mullazadeh, 2014: 154-165).

According to the points mentioned above about the social texture of Iran during the Achaemenid period, it seems that no economic need could encourage Darius to mintage the coin, but he was interested in creating an innovation to send a powerful message to the entire land under the control of his reign. Like glorious monuments of this era like Persepolis, coin mintage had a symbolic aspect with a picture of the Achaemenid king with a bow in his hands. The bow is a symbol of power with an old tradition behind it that history goes back to Mesopotamia. Bow and arrow is a part of the order message indicating military power, and a metaphor for the king's presence symbolized with a Persian robe and royal crown anywhere in the empire. Audiences who received this message were people living in the western territory of the empire, either the Greek soldiers who received silver coins or non-Persian and Persian nobles who were given Darik Coin. Finally, these coins represented order and discipline in the empire system in terms of economic, social, military, and political reforms. Coin uses are not just limited to the economy but play a critical role in social and political fields. Logically, images and pictures of mintages on the coin were an important issue in the past, which was done symbolically. The memorial issues are also endorsed on the coins in the present era (Nimchuk, 2002: 57).

According to available sources, Hammurabi gave some gifts as silver and gold, which were not usable in business and transactions, to Zimri-Lim soldiers (Mari Empire) in the 18th AD century. Although Darik coins and Hammurabi silvers had a certain weight and were symbolized, they were not used in trade circulation but were applicable for political promotions. Darius's goal was to strengthen the empire's power by making relationships with Persian and non-Persian nobles, especially in Asia Minor. Moreover, Achaemenid Darius sends a message to the empire territory under his control with Bisotun Inscription, so the discovery of some parts of a smaller sample of Bisotun Inscription in Babel confirmed that Achaemenid Darius wanted to send his message to other parts of the empire (Ibid).

Conclusion

If it is supposed to accept this reality that the coin and monetary system that is based on it is one of the main aspects of urbanism and urbanization cultures, it should be noted that this underlying base does not exist in Achaemenid Iran. Regarding the sociopolitical context and livelihood derived from Baroo clay inscriptions and classic authors' sources, the dominant livelihood in the central Fars area was animal husbandry and agriculture. The coin exchange-based economic system could not become popular in that era due to the simple and traditional life that was based on the nomadic lifestyle. Moreover, the investigated treasury breed indicated that it attempted to pay Persepolis workers' wages in cash, but they returned to the old non-cash method after several years. It seems that the popularity of the coin exchange system was not accepted in the social context of that period, so they returned to the traditional method of wage payment over time. This case is confirmed since a considerable number of coins were not found in the Plateau of Iran.

On the other hand, the coins minted ordered by the Achaemenid Darius I were not used in the economic system but were applicable for propaganda and media to show his empire's power and send this powerful message to other lands. Achaemenid coins are considered a royal sign used to strengthen the empire's power regarding the political system of that era and frequent travels of Achaemenid shahs to their territories' lands giving these coins as gifts to non-Persian nobles.



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