

The Duties of the Immortals and the Name of *Anauša* or *Anušiya*

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Abstract—One of the reasons for the success of the Achaemenids was the innovation and precise organization used in the administrative and military fields. Of course, these organizations had their roots in the previous governments that had changed in these borrowings. The units of the Achaemenid army are also among the cases that have their origins in the ancient East. In this article, the attempt is to find the sources of the Immortal Army based on the writings of old and current authors and archaeological documents, and the name mentioned by Herodotus. Of course, linguistic sources have also been used for better conclusions than the indicated sources. This paper emphasizes linguistic data to lead to a better deduction. Thus, it was included that about ‘*anauša*’ is more probable than *anušiya*.

Keyword—Army, immortal, Achaemenid, *Anauša*, *Anušiya*

I. INTRODUCTION

ONE of the Shah's bodyguards was called the Immortal unit. This military unit was an important one and was a chosen category that fought with a short spear, bow, and shield wall from behind [1, p.9]. Herodotus indicates the Xerxes expedition (8.113.2): “when Xerxes parted from Mardinios in Thessaly in the fall of 480 B.C., Mardinios was allowed to pick the best of Xerxes force. In his enormous infantry, Mardinios included all of the Immortals and an infantry force of ten thousand” [2, p.168], [3, p.168]. It was a military unit in the pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties because of its background and importance. According to Procopius (I.xiv.30-6), the Sasanian elite units, also called the ‘Immortals’ like that of the Achaemenids consisted of ten thousand soldiers [4, p.123], [5, p.197]. The Seleucid army comprised 10,000 infantry as well [6]. There have even been the personal bodyguards of the king in the Ottoman Empire, known as janissaries, who were the selected infantry [7, p.9].

One of the principal problems in linguistics studies is the word etymology. This process can analyze and solve some historical traditions. One of these samples is the Herodotus' reports about the immortal unite and its name. Herodotus (7.1.83) reports that “this group was called the immortals because were not diminished their counts; if a man was killed or fell sick, the vacancy he left was at once filled so its power was never more nor less than ten thousand” [8, p.41], [9, p.22].

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The paper aims to determine the following questions: What was the purpose of forming this military unit? Did this military unit already exist in the ancient Near East? How did this military unit function? Which of the Old Persian words did Herodotus mean?

II. THE ARMY WORD AND TEN THOUSAND IN THE ANCIENT PERSIA

A. Army Word

There was no word equivalent to ‘Army, Heer’ in the ancient Iranian languages [10, p.579]; two words were used for military forces in the Old Iranian languages from the beginning of the foundation of the first Iranian state, i.e., Medes. In the sacred book of the Iranians, Avesta, we have *ahuric* and *daevic* words; hence, *haēnā* is used for the *daevic* army and *spāda* for that of *ahuric*.

Most scholars believe that *spāda* or *taxmaspāda* in Old Persian is a loanword from the Medes [11, p.33]. Burgan indicates, “*In Media, Cyaxares, the Third Median king, created a full-time army, called a spade*” [12, p.22]. He organized the units of the archer (*anuvaniya*) and spearmen (*ysika*) and established at least one battalion to break or circumvent city walls and other fortifications in siege warfare [11, p.33]. Herodotus reports that “Cyaxares was the first Median king to separate the army into the spearmen, archers, and cavalry. Before this, they were all mixed up” [13, p.46]. The *spāda* (PIE **kuēdh₁os*) has evolved into “*spāh*” in the middle Persian and “*sipāh*” in the new Persian [11, p.33].

In the Old Persian inscriptions, *kāra* (PIE **koro*) stands for people- army and nobles [14, p.275]. *Kāra* belongs to the *satəm* group of Indo-European languages, which is equivalent to the Lithuanian *karis* or *karias* (lit. war, army), and Germanic *harjis* (lit. army; modern High German Heer) [15, p.282]. Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, did not possess any actual army in the professional sense [11, p.31].

In the Bihstun inscription, Darius the Great points out a *Kāra* who were army-people and transformed into *Kārzār* in the new Persian [16, p.82]. *Kāra* originally means the doer of an action, applies to any executive body, and thus equally implies military forces and a nation or population [17, p.119]. It is a reasonable assumption that farmers acted as a warrior when the kingdom of Persia faced an attack [12, p.22]. Namely, they worked on their land and house before going to the field. They were soldiers who fought in exchange for military obligations. Darius I, in his inscription in Bistun rock, claims that the “usurper” Gaumata deprived these people of their land [18, p.119]; the Babylonian version of this

inscription applies the same word to the vassals held by military colonists in Babylon [19, p.12].

B. Ten Thousand

It is worth bearing in mind that numbers were sacred, just like the natural and celestial phenomena, agriculture, color, cross, snake, water, and zodiac. Schneider believes that the late Neolithic period makes a difference from that of the previous Neolithic; it has to do with the creative forces such as the fabulous animals, stars, the music tools, and numbers [20, p.677], [21, p.230]. Some 'ten thousand' number was sacred; for example, the units of the Xenophon army in return to Greece were the ten thousand soldiers. Feng Lin, a soldier-immortal in the battle of 10,000 spills, is defended by Li Nocha, who used his magic bracelet [22, p.145]. According to De Milloue, the cross sign in Japanese was the number 10,000, which was the ultimate symbol. The Chinese character Wan later stood for the number 10,000 [23, p.6], [24, p.43].

It is reasonable to assume that the Persian name of these larger groups lost that the Greeks called myriads [25, p.325]. We should, of course, take into account that the ten thousand word in Avesta is *baēvar*, which can be reconstructed **baivar* in the Old Persian language [26, p.913]. The most important of the myriads was a group as the king's guardian in the Persian army [25, p.325]. This number repeats in the Old Iranian texts: *baēvar*, *baēvan* = ten thousand; *baēvar-yav* = ten thousand times; *baēvar-γma* = ten thousand blows; *baēvarə. čašman* = ten thousand eyes; *baēvar. patay* or the master of the thousand..., these examples show its importance in ancient Persia [26, p.913].

III. THE NUMBER OF THE ACHAEMENID ARMY UNIT

Our information about the military organization of the Achaemenids depends on the artistic pictures such as the Persepolis images, the Susa iconographies, the stone sarcophagus of Alexander the great in Sidon, the Pompey descriptions of Darius III, who waged a campaign against Alexander the Great, and the other artistic works. The Greek and Roman authors like Herodotus, Xenophon, Quintus Curtius Rufus, and the later Greek-Roman authors can help us to reconstruct the Achaemenid army.

The Achaemenid Empire was the last great military system in the ancient Near East and was much the same as the Near Eastern civilizations [27, p.178]. The Achaemenids inherited the Assyrian legacy from the Medes as well. We can also draw an analogy between the Achaemenids and earlier Assyrian organizational systems [11, p.39]. Based on these similarities, it is logical to assume that the general organization of the Achaemenids army deeply developed from the military units of the ancient Near East [28, p.210].

The king was at the heart of the Achaemenid military organization. The Achaemenid kings could dominate their armies. Thus, we see Darius I, who personally guided his army towards the Scythians. Moreover, generals of the Achaemenids conducted their campaigns of the war. These generals were often members of the high Persian nobility. For example, we can refer to Mardinios, who commanded the

army to control Greece. The military units of the Achaemenids, just like the Assyrians divided into ten thousand (OP¹ = **baivara*, commander of ten thousand), thousands (Av² = *hazangra*, commander of a thousand men), a hundred, ten and five (**panča-dathapati*- in Elamite transcriptions) [29, pp.11, 12], [30, p.119], [31, p.54]. The Old Persian word for 1000 was *Hazarabaram*, which meant thousand persons, and Bam was a nominal suffix [32, p.14]. *Hazarpatish* means 'thousand leaders' in the Old Persian, known to Greeks as the *Chiliarch*, whose role is not clear. The *hazarpatish*, it seems, was a close man of the king, and he was generally in charge of the formal palace reception of the king's guests and supervising the royal treasury [11, p.39], [33, p.78]. Since *Chiliarch* or *Hazarpatish* was a close official to the king, he should be a trustworthy person [34, p.135], [35, p.17], [36, p.261]. Each Chiliarch or Hazarabam is subdivided into *sabata* or a hundred men, and each *satabam* into *dathaba* or ten men. When Darius the Great was a young officer, the ten thousand Immortals were under his command during the Egyptian campaign [37, p.142].

The ancient Greek writers such as Herodotus and Xenophon can describe some Achaemenid kings:

Cyrus: 4,000 lance-bearers (*doryphoroi*) that were before the chariot; 2,000 more on each side of the royal chariot; then (after the 200 royal horses), 10,000 cavalries (arranged 100 square), then two move groups of 10,000 cavalries; finally allied troops and chariots.

Xerxes: 1,000 Persian cavalries, 1,000 Persian pike-bearers, 10 *Nisaeen* horses before the chariots of the god and the king; and afterward, other Persian troops: 1,000 pike-bearers, 1,000 cavalries, 10,000 lancers (with gold and silver sashes) and 10,000 Persian cavalries.

Darius III: tire 10,000 Immortals and the *doryphoroi* precede the royal chariot; 10,000 lancers follow the royal chariot.

The Relatives (*cognati*) of Darius the Great walked before his chariot, and after them were the Immortals. The right and left of his chariot are placed the noblest of those close to him. Finally, each of the processions includes divine chariots [36, p.197]. Herodotus tells us the number of the army in Xerxes's time: And thus that whom Xerxes son of Darius led as far as the Sepiad headland and Thermopylae was five million two hundred and eighty-three thousand, two hundred and twenty (5283220). But none can say what the exact sum of cooking women, concubines, and eunuchs was; nor of the beast of draught and burden and the Indian dogs that were with the host could anyone tell the number, so many they were. It is also no marvel that some of the stream's water ran dry [8, p.187].

IV. THE IMMORTAL ARMY (BAĒVAR)

A. Duty

The Immortals were a military unit that seemed to regard as the royal guard and core of the Persian army in the

¹ . Old Persian

² . Avesta

Achaemenid period [38, p.108]. They were given the best equipment and were generally the best in the military troops [39, p.104]. They, it seems, entirely comprised the Persians, but Garthwaite describes this military unit was made up of the Persians and the Medes [40, p.62]. They were supposedly 10,000 in number, with golden spear butts, selected because of their rank from the ten thousand Persian called the immortals. These factors make us assume that the spear carriers were chosen from the Persian nobility, whereas the other regiments of immortals were not. Herakleides Kyme (Athen12.514b) tells us, "the Immortals included the Apple-bearers of spear carriers of the king who were all Persian by race" [32, p.6]. Herodotus (VIII. 113) gives an account of Mardonius about choosing two of the Royal Guard regiments and the 10,000 Immortals; all Medes, Sacae, Bactrians and Indians, cavalry and infantry alike; and only a few from the other nations [2, p.113], [40, p.534].

If there were not a campaign, these bodyguards would accompany the king or stay at the various royal capitals. There is a strong possibility that they were the only central standing troops maintained by the Achaemenids. As Darius the Great in Behistun inscription states that the Persian and Median army, which was with me, was small. He points out a small Persian army whose duty was to guard the royal palace [19, p.12]. Of course, this military unit was sometimes appointed to the other duties; for example, Herodotus (VII, 29-32) reports Xerxes during passing from Phrygia into Lydia, he comes to the place where the part of the road, the left-hand one bearing towards Caria and the right hand to Sardis. He had come across a plane tree of such surpassing loveliness that he had halted the entire march of his army in admiration. One of the Immortals had even been detached from the company and ordered to serve as its guard [13, p.239].

It is not clear the distribution of supplies to the soldiers of the Achaemenid military units, and we do not know whether they received rations free or not, but there have been the food supplies for the immortals and were brought rations for them on camels or mules [36, p.454]. They could enjoy special privileges, and when they marched into the battle, they could bring their concubine and servants [38, p.107].

B. Armor

The two famous French archaeologists, Jane and Marcel Dieulafoy managed to find some glazed tiles at Susa during excavations in 1884-1886. They give a general description of them the tablet shows the marching archers. These archers have the spear and their quiver and bows attached to the shoulder [41, p.36]. Farrokh describes that the first Iranians who migrated to Elam, mixed with the native population, just like the Immortals at Susa seems to have had an appearance with the dark skin and a Dravidian-Elamite mixture [11, p.21]. During excavations at Babylon, discovered the Achaemenid glazed tiles placed on the external walls of Darius I palace. Heat reports from Herodotus, "those who were in Persian dress carrying bows and quivers slung over their shoulders, and those who were in Median dress carrying large bow-cases slung on the left hip" while the other guards carry spears and

shields, and without bows [19, p.22]. They carried spears, which were shorter and lighter than two meters, and had a bow, which was put in a case along with their arrows on their back [42, p.45]. Herodotus (VII 40-42) continues, one thousand of these latter bore golden pomegranates on their spear-shafts in place of the spike, and surrounded the rest; the nine thousand were enclosed within, and carried silver pomegranates; they that held their spears reversed bore golden pomegranates also, and those who were nearest to Xerxes, apples of gold [8, p.357].

Cook notes that of the 10,000 soldiers, 1000 were appointed as the closest battalion to the king. They carried armors identified by the golden apples on their spear butts [43, p.101]. Maria Brosius reports Herodotus' report about the Immortals that a small unit of them served as the king's bodyguard. Their members were distinguished by carrying spears, which had apple-shaped ends of gold. The rest of the 9,000 immortals had silver pomegranates [44, pp.58-9], and Sekunda describes the chariot of the king protecting a single unit composed of a thousand "spear carriers" or *arštibara* in the Old Persian language. They had golden spear butts known as apple-bearers [32, p.6]. These fruitage shapes were stuck to the butt to its balance [12, p.42].

It is a reasonable assumption that the Immortals were all equipped with a short spear and a bow, but a few of them had spears [45, p.12]. The surviving figures of the Immortals (Fig. 1) show the guards with bows, quivers, and spears facing right [28, p.87]. Spear bearers marched in front of the army and a half behind the king's chariot, and this caused Herodotus to imagine two regiments of spear bearers. The spear-bearers seem to have borrowed from the previous dynasty, i.e., Medes [32, p.6].

C. Order and Clothes

Herodotus (Book VII 39-40) describes Xerxes' army as it strode towards Sardis to invade Greece. "The king marched in the middle of the army. Ahead of the king came a thousand horsemen, chosen from the Persians; next, a thousand spearmen, picked men like the others, carrying their spears reversed; after them, ten horses of the breed called Nesaeon, because there is in Media a vast plain of that name. Behind these ten horses was the place of the sacred chariot of Zeus, drawn by eight white horses. After these came Xerxes himself in a chariot drawn by Nesaeon horses. Behind him came of Persian, customarily carrying a thousand spearmen of the best and noblest blood their spear; after them, a thousand pike Persian equestrian, and after the horse, ten thousand that were footmen, chosen out of the rest of the Persians" [8, p. 355] (Fig. 1).

Curtius (3.3.9-21), too, tells us about the Immortals: in front, on silver alters, was carried the fire which the Persians called sacred and eternal. Next come the magi, singing the traditional hymn, and they are followed by 365 young men in scarlet cloaks, their members equaling the days of the year; then come the chariot consecrated to Jupiter, drawn by white horses, followed by a horse of magnificent size, which the Persian called the sun's horse. The driving horses were

equipped with golden whips and white robes. These were followed by the cavalry of 12 nations of different cultures. Next in line were the soldiers whom the Persians called the Immortals, 10,000 to number. After a short interval came to the 15,000 men known as "the king's kinsmen" ... the column next to these comprised the so-called Doryphoroe ..., and these preceded the royal chariot on which rode the king himself ... 10,000 spearmen carrying lances chased with silver and tipped with gold followed the king's chariot, and to the right and left he was attended by some 200 of his most noble relatives. At the end of the column came 30,000 foot-soldiers followed by 400 of the king's horses [46, p.135], [41, p.36].



Fig. 1 The figure of the Immortals on Susa's tiles

The clothes of the apple bearers (*melophoroi*) are adorned with cloaks of purple and quince yellow. Quintus Curtius talks about the Immortals: "no others were more adorned with the splendor of barbaric wealth; theirs were golden necklets, and garments decorated with cloth of gold and long-sleeved tunics adorned even with gems". He adds: They were accustomed to taking care of the royal robes. To report Hesychius's explanation among the Persians, they are entrusted with watching over and serving (therapeia) the king [46, p.132]. The form of their clothes was terrible same as their number. They were equipped with brilliant, gold-decked armor, had a single gold earring and many golden bracelets, and wore a long robe, which stretched to their wrists and ankles [38, p.107]. Herodotus (Book VII 61-62) tells of their equipment, "they wore on their heads loose caps called tiaras, and on their body's sleeved tunics of divers' colors, with scales of iron like the appearance to the scales of fish, and breeches on their legs; for shields, they had wicker bucklers, their quivers hanging beneath theses. They carried a short spear, longbows, and arrow of reed, and daggers that hang from girdle by right thigh" [8, p.377]. Jane and Marcel Dieulafoy give a general description of the excavations "Their clothes have been sewn up them with different colors. Their hands and ears have bracelets and earrings. The splendid and frill cloths are marvelous" [41, p.36].

There is an inscription from the tomb of Darius I showing the two figures standing behind the king that everyone can imagine as *arštibara*, the commander of the spear bearers, along with his *Vačcabara*. It used to be supposed to denote

bow-bearer or battle-ax, but it now seems probable that a word is a variant form of *vastrabara* or garment bearer, i.e., chamberlain [32, p.10] (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Artišbara or Vačcabara from the tomb of Darius I

V. THE IMMORTAL WORD

It was probably during Xerxes' time when a unit of the army was called the Immortals [47, p.17]. It seems that the Immortals do not mention after Xerxes' reign. Xenophon, the ancient Greek writer in *Kyropaidia*, claims that Cyrus the Great founded ten thousand spearmen as his guards, and this unit was in existence until his period. Their name again appears in Curtius's account of Darius III's order of marsh. These reports of Darius III's army can observe that some guard units had survived until this time [19, p.12].

Having searched for the ancient Greek writers such as Herodotus and Xenophon, we understand that the Greek writers have used *āthavátoi* for the Immortals. Herodotus (7.1.83) describes that "this group was called the immortals because did not diminish their counts. In the other word, it was invariably kept up to strength; if a man was killed or fell sick, the vacancy he left was at once filled, so that its strength was never more nor less than ten thousand" [8, p.22]. Furthermore, Plutarch uses *āthavátoi* for the Immortals [48, p.57], as Diodorus and Herodotus state, it uses for Gods [49, p.101]. In the Greek dictionary *āthavátoi, oi*, means the immortals, also of a body of troops that keep at a certain number: of things, everlasting [50, p.16]. *thavátoi* derives from the *dhwenhx in Indo-European, which means the cover and dark [15, p.147]. Pokorny regards its meaning as move, smoke, dark, and die, which derives from the root of "dheu" with the extension of "n" (*dhewn*) [51, p.841]. In the Greek language, "thanat" is a stem, which signifies "death [15.p.330], and with a negative, a prefix is translated into immortal [52, p.147].

There are two words for the Immortals in the Old Iranian languages; *amarta* (Av, *aməša*) and *anauša* (Av, *anaoša*):

A. *Amarta*

This word is composed of: the negative prefix (a=PIE *h₂*) + root *mar* (PIE *mer* 'die'), and *ta* as past participle suffix (PIE *te/o*). It transformed into *amahrka*, *aməša* in Avesta, i.e., cluster *rt* in the Old Persian is the Avestan equivalent of *š* and usually applies to God [26, p.147]. This word is not in the

Achaemenid inscriptions, but frequently used for gods and heavenly phenomena in Avesta, and aməša 'immortal' is seen in all parts of Avesta as an adjective [53, p.7]. It was used for aməša spənta 'holy immortals or life-living immortals' that were Ahura Mazda's assistants in the Zoroastrian theology. They originated from Ahura Mazda's first cosmic sacrifice, by which the world of the gods came into being [54, p.27]. We cannot exactly say whether the Immortal units were founded by analogy with them or taken from the Mesopotamian military forces because we did not find any word in Mesopotamian texts meaning immortal.

B. Anauša

This word has not been mentioned in the Old Persian language, but it can be reconstructed as **anauša*. In Avesta, *anaoša* is hinted only at *yasht* 10,125, which means imperishable. This word is composed of the -an- prefix, plus the 'aoš' root, which evolves into the new Persian as *Nošidan* = drink (immortal water) [26, p.114]. The other forms appear as *aošah*, *aošatara* or immortal [54, p.10].

C. Anušiya

Anauša has not been used in the Bihstun's inscription of Darius the Great, but there is an *anušiya*, which is similar to *anauša*. Some scholars hesitate to believe in Herodotus' sentence and describe that the Greeks did not know perfectly well about this word and applied *anauša* (= immortal) for *anušiyā* (followers). Of course, some scholars have criticized this viewpoint [5, p.29].

This word can be composed of 'anu' (sequence, follow) and 'šiyā' (go). Oppert and Johnson, of course, regard 'šiyā' as a suffix [55, p.183], [56, p.108], and Kent describes it is composed of 'anu' (along with) and the adjective suffix of 'tya' [57, p.168]. Skjaervo explains that it seems to mean a loyal follower [58, p.161], and Walter Hintz compares it with 'nwt' (support) in the Sogdian language [59, p.123]. It can also be inferred that *anuša* means the follower and close adherent.

Furthermore, we ought to concentrate on the Bistun's inscription from Darius the Great; it is significant to consider that *anušiya* in Old Persian inscriptions was used for both the king and the rebellious commander, and an army of the king (*kāra*) as *anušiya* [60, p.131]:

About the rebels (D.B³: 1. 58):

*adam avam Gaumātam tyam magum avājanam utā
tyašaiy fratamā martiyā anušiya āhatā*

I killed that Gaumāta and those who were the best of his followers [61, p.35].

About the king (D.B:4.84):

*Adakaiky imaiy martiyā hamataxšatā anušiya manā
At that time, these men cooperated as my followers* [57, p.130].

About the Army of king or kāra (D.B:2.95):

*pasāva vištaspā ašiyava hadā kāra hyašaiy anušiya
āha,*

Then, Vishtasp went with an army loyal to him [57, p.122].

³ . Darius' Bistun inscription

To sum up:

- 1- as the rebel forces (*fratamā martiyā anušiya āhatā*)
- 2- as the followers of the king (*anušiya manā*).
- 3- as an army which was loyal to the king (*kāra hyašaiy anušiya āha*)

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the oldest references concerning the Achaemenid inscriptions and the writings of the Greek historians, we came to know of the division and duties of the Immortals. We can say that the Immortals were made up of 10,000, who could recognize as their spears: those who bore silver and golden pomegranate spears and those who had apple spears. They were the special guards and fought next to the king along with some other military units. The Achaemenids probably adopted this unit from the ancient Near East military units. *Amarta/ameša* is usually a word used for a group of Ahura Mazda's assistants in Iranian sacred texts, and it is far more practical than *anauša*. If we agree with the Greek writers to use *āthavātoi* (*athanatoi*) for immortal comparatively, it will be possible for it to be *amarta/ameša* or *anauša*. About disappearing these words in Achaemenid inscriptions, it is necessary to note that Old Persian inscriptions reflect the kings' deeds rather than religious beliefs. Darius the great tells of a loyal group (*anušiyā*) toward their master, and it is less probable that it indicates a particular military unit. We cannot precisely say which one of the military units was the most loyal toward the king, and the "foremost followers" in the Bihstun's inscription cannot address only a particular part, such as the Immortals. This small group was loyal toward Darius, just as those who were the foremost followers toward their rebellious leaders. Therefore, we can accept Herodotus' statement about the Immortals as long as we do not find any reliable reference.

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