

CONCEPT OF "PERSIA" IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL TIMES **QƏDİM VƏ ORTA ƏSRLƏR DÖVRÜNDƏ "PƏRSİYA" KONSEPTİ**

Vahab Fətəliyev **Vahab Fətəliyev**

Fellow researcher of Department of "Natural and exact sciences" of Institute of history of science, ANAS

AMEA, Elm tarixi institutunun "Dəqiq və təbiət elmləri" şöbəsinin kiçik elmi işçisi

vahabfətəliyev@gmail.com vahabfətəliyev@gmail.com

After all this, we come to the conclusion that the name Persia was used in ancient sources during the reign of the Achaemenids and Sassanids. The reason was that these dynasties was from the province of Persia (Fars) in the present-day Republic of Iran. In this case, the expression "Persians" used in the sources did not have a purely Persian/farsi meaning. All the peoples of these two empires are named after their masters as subjects of the empire. Since the Sassanid period, we see that the name Persia has changed from a political to a geographical meaning, and in almost all medieval Western sources, most of the territories covered by the former Achaemenid and Sassanid empires were referred to by the term Persian geographically. The peoples of Persia were called Persians. However, we would like to note here that the Persian name used for the population in these sources does not have an ethnic meaning, the translation of the Persian word as farsi is incorrect. The Persian territory we encounter in European sources is a multi-ethnic area, and all of these nations are mentioned in these sources as Persian because they live in the same territory. We should not be surprised to see in these sources that the territories of Azerbaijan were given within Persia, and we should not think that Azerbaijan was under occupation at that time. We see that the Medes, the Achaemenids, the Parthians, the Sassanids, and the subsequent empires established in these territories covered approximately the same territories, and that the peoples of these empires had the same rights and created a common culture. In view of all this, we should not understand the Persian culture in Western historiography as farsi culture. This is a culture created by different peoples in a large geography, so we cannot say that any nation that existed in these empires is under the occupation and enslavement of another (except for certain short periods). Also, when we look at the sources, we see that Persia and Iran cover different geographical areas, and the concept of Iranian territory is smaller than that of Persia. Therefore, considering that it is not correct to translate Persia as Iran, we are in favor of keeping this name in our language as Persia. Finally, we would like to note that during the Sassanid period, Iran meant more territories inhabited by Aryans or Zoroastrians, but after the collapse of this empire, this essence disappeared, because many Arabs, Turks and others settled in these territories. Although Iran remained a geographical name, it was no longer inhabited by Aryans or Zoroastrians.

Key words: *Persia, Antique sources, Herodotus, Procopius, Pliny, Strabo*

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to explain the concept of Persia and partly Iran mentioned in ancient and medieval works. Thus, the mention of Persia in the sources of this and later periods, and especially the inclusion of Azerbaijan in this empire, along with a number of other countries

in ancient sources, gave some scholars the impression that Azerbaijan has been a part of Persia or a province of present-day Iran since ancient times. These authors associated it only with the persians/farsi people wherever they saw the word of Persia in the Middle Age sources and considered Persian culture to be a pure persian/farsi culture. Unfortunately, such a mentality is prevalent in our country too. In addition, the Persian expression written in European and Russian research works has been translated into our language as Iran. However, when we read the sources, we see that these two expressions are different from each other and even cover different geographical areas. From the Middle Ages, Europeans began to call the territories from Derbent to the Persian Gulf, from Eastern Anatolia to Khorasan-Central Asia as Persia, regardless of the origin of the states here. Ancient writers were more precise in this regard. They called the state that existed in those territories by the name of that people or dynasty that created the nation or dynasty. For example, we do not find in ancient sources that Media, the Seleucids, or Parthians were called Persians. In the antic sources, only the Achaemenid and Sassanid empires are called Persia, due to the fact that the founders of these empires came from the province of Persia (Persis-V.F), on the shores of the Persian Gulf. However, for some reason, some modern historians ignore this evidence and call them all Persians, regardless of all the states of the time. For example, a number of modern historians present the Romans' wars with Parthia under the title of Roman-Persian Wars, however, romans themselves called them Parthia. As will be shown in the following chapters, based on sources, the ancient authors were well aware of who built the empires in these areas and called these empires by the names of their founders. At the same time, the empires belonged not only to one nation (here Persians-VF), but to all the peoples that existed in the area. If we look at medieval sources, we can see that the name of Persia written in these works is a purely geographical name, and the word "persians" is the name of all the peoples living in Persia, not just persians/farsi people. A number of modern historians present the Achaemenid Empire as Iran and their wars with the greeks as Greco-Iranian wars. However, if we look at the sources, we see that there was no name of Iran at that time. The name of Iran is officially inscribed on Sassanid monuments and coins. In these monuments, the Sassanid kings called themselves the kings of Iran and non-Iran. One of the main goals of the article is to determine the territories of Iran and non-Iran mentioned in these sources.

How ancient and medieval sources called "Persia"?

If we look at ancient sources, we can see that the geography of Persia, which is present in Western historiography today, is not always called like this. To do this, we must first look at Greek sources. Ancient Greek writers named the empires in the east after the people who created them. For example, Herodotus, considered the "father of history," referred to the Medes' empire as Media, not Persia. Although the territories of the Median Empire were almost identical to those of the

Persian historians, Herodotus mentions Astyages as the king of Media, and at the same time mentions that a Scythian tribe separated and came to Media. (8,p89). He also mentions that the Lydian king Alyatt was at war with Kiaksar and the Medes (8, p19). "Now the Cappadocians are called Syrians by the Greeks, and these Syrians were the subjects of the Medes before the Persian rule, and then of Cyrus (Lydia's ruler Croesus is said to have ruled the area during Cyrus' conquest of Cappodocia - V.F.). Because the border of the empires of Media and Lydia was

the river Halis (8, p.87). It is clear from Herodotus' information he knew that the Persians and the Medes were separate peoples, and he called the states they created by different names. To further strengthen our thought, let us mention another quote from Herodotus. He writes that the king of Lydia, Croesus, appealed to the priests to agree to attack the Persians, and after thinking that he had received the answer he wanted, he entered the territory of Persia (8, p.93). This war between Lydia and Persia (Achaemenid-V.F.) resulted in the conquest of Lydia by the Persian ruler Cyrus II. For a better understanding of the matter, let us turn to the works of other ancient authors. Diodorus of Sicily, speaking of a revolt that would end with the destruction of the Assyrian empire, states that the Medes and Persians were united with the Babylonians and the Arabs (7, p. 431). The author also states that the leader of the rebellion went to the city of Ekbatan in Media (7,p.445). We see clearly that the author distinguishes the Medes and the Persians. Josephus, a Jewish historian, writes in the first volume of his work: "Later, the Medes and the Persians, especially the latter, came to the world with their conquests on other continents" (9, p. 189). Looking at these sources, the ancient writers called the Mada state as Media, which existed in the area before the establishment of the Achaemenid state. In 553 BC the ruler of Persia (Persis) Cyrus II, the grandson of the Median ruler Astyages, revolted against Astyages and winning in 550 BC, acquired the throne, thus replacing the Medes with the Persians in power, and ancient sources call the country Persia from this date until the end of the Achaemenid empire were destroyed by Alexander the Great. In Azerbaijani historiography, the Achaemenid state is

represented as Iran in a number of historical works. For example, in the first volume of the seven-volume history of Azerbaijan, despite the fact that the Achaemenid state is written in many places, the name Iran was also used (17, p.205). However, in ancient sources we do not see the Achaemenid state being called Iran. In Greek and Latin sources, this state is called Persia. In Achaemenid sources, the kings called themselves kings of Persia (Parsa) and other lands. Dara I, one of the greatest rulers of the Achaemenid state, calls himself in the Bisutin monuments: I, Darayavush, great king, king of kings, king of Parsa, king of countries, son of Vishtasp, grandson of Arsham, Achaemenid.... Darayavush speaks: by the wish of Ahuramazda the countries belong to me are: Parsa, Uvja (Elam), Babirush (Babylon), Asura, Arabaya (Arabia), Mudraya (Egypt), coastal countries, Sparda (Lydia), Yauna (Ionia), Mada (Media), Armina (Armenia), Katpatuka (Cappadocia), Parsava (Parthia), Zranka (Sistan), Haraiva (Herat), Huvarazmish (Kharazm), Bakhtrish (Bactria), Suqda (Sogdiana), Kandahar (Kandahar), Saka, Satagush, Harakhuvativish, Maka - 23 countries in total "(16, p.42). In other similar monuments of the period, the Achaemenid kings call themselves the kings of Parsa and other conquered countries, but for some reason some of our historians call this state Iran. In the first volume of the seven-volume history of Azerbaijan, the Achaemenid state is also called the persian/farsi state (17, p202). Although the ruling dynasty was persian, we cannot call this state was purely persian. The Achaemenid state was the successor of the Medes, and like the Persians, the Medes were represented in this state.

As mentioned above, the Greco-Roman writers called the Achaemenid state

Persia, but after the abolishing of this state by Alexander the Great in 330 BC, what did these sources call the states that existed there? As it is well known, after Alexander's death, his empire was divided among his commanders, and much territory of the former Achaemenid empire belonged to Seleucius. In historiography this state is called the Seleucid state or the Syrian kingdom, the same names were also mentioned in ancient sources. Appian, one of the ancient authors, writes about Antiochus III, the Seleuciade ruler: "Antiochus, the ruler of the Syrians, Babylonians and other nations ... conquered Media and Parthia and other countries that rebelled against his predecessors" (1, p.105). Elsewhere in his work, Appian writes that the Parthians rebelled against the Seleucids and conquered Mesopotamia "(1, p.197). At the same time, we see in this work that after the weakening of the Seleucid empire and the loss of its territories, the state created in its place was called Parthia (1, p. 443). This state was so named because it was created by the Parni tribes. Although Dio Cassius, one of the ancient authors, mentioning the battle of Fermopil noted that it took place between the greeks and the persians (2, p. 311), he calls these areas Parthia when talking about the Roman relations with the east. As an example, he mentions that Pompey sent an envoy to the Parthian ruler Arsaces while talking about his march to the east (3, p.5). He also refers to the country as Parthia when referring to Crassus's march (3,p.421). The author's next note shows how precisely he distinguished between the Persians and the Parthians: "This was the beginning of the war of the Romans against the Parthians. These people dwell beyond the Tigris, for the most part in forts and garrisons, but also in a few cities, among them Ctesiphon, in which they have a royal

residence. Their race was in existence among the ancient barbarians and they had this same name even under the Persian kingdom, but at that time they inhabited only a small portion of the country and had acquired no dominion beyond their own borders. But when the Persian rule had been overthrown and that of the Macedonians was at its height, and when the successors of Alexander had quarrelled with one another, cutting off separate portions for themselves and setting up individual monarchies, the Parthians then first attained prominence under a certain Arsaces, from whom their succeeding rulers received the title of Arsacidae (3,p.425). Apparently, the author calls the Achaemenid period the rule of the Persians, and states that the Parthians have existed since then, and the state they established is also called Parthia. In ancient sources, we see that along with Parthia, the name of Media (Atropatena-V.F) is also mentioned. This proves to those who insist on seeing southern Azerbaijan as part of Iran politically and geographically that Media-Atropatena, which mainly covered the southern lands of Azerbaijan, was a separate independent state. When Dio Cassius mentions Mark Antony's attack on Fraaspa, he calls it the city where the king resides, and writes that the Medes and Parthians fought together against the Romans (4, p. 393). He even mentions the Parthians and the Medes separately in 216 A.D when narrating the march of Emperor Antonin Caracalla (6, p. 343). It is known that the city where the Parthian rulers lived was Ctesiphon. It is clear from this that there was an independent king sitting in Fraspa, who was the ruler of Media-Atropatena. The Parthian state was one of the most powerful enemies of the Roman Empire. Even though the emperor Trajan organized a great campaign against Parthia (5, p. 393), he

was unable to overthrow the Parthian state. The fall of Parthia was because of internal struggles. The ruler of Persia, Artaxerxes (Ardashir), rebelled against the Parthian ruler Artabanus V, overthrowing him and ending the Parthian state. Dio Cassi writes about it: "But the situation in Mesopotamia became still more alarming and inspired a more genuine fear in all, not merely the people in Rome, but the rest of mankind as well. For Artaxerxes, a Persian, after conquering the Parthians in three battles killing their king, Artabanus, made a campaign against Hatra, in the endeavour to capture it as a base for attacking the Romans. He actually did make a breach in the wall, but when he lost a good many soldiers through an ambush, he moved against Media. He accordingly became a source of fear to us, for he was encamped with a large army so as to threaten not only Mesopotamia but also Syria, and he boasted that he would win back everything that the ancient Persians had once held, as far as the Grecian Sea, claiming that all this"(6,p.483). As it can be seen, Dio Cassius calls Artaxerxes (Ardeshir), who overthrew Parthia, a Persian and wrote that he wanted to restore ancient Persia (Achaemenid state). As we know, it was the Sassanid dynasty that overthrew Parthia. Since this dynasty is also from the Persian province, ancient sources usually call this state Persia and see it as the successor of the Achaemenids. Even when we look at Chinese sources, we see that they separated Parthia and Persia, although they both covered almost the same territory. When they spoke of Parthia, they called it An-hsi (An-xi = Aršak), and when they spoke of the Sassanids they called it Po-ssu (Bo-si) (18).The territories covered by the Parthian state are described in the report of Pliny the Elder like this: "The kingdoms of Parthia are

eighteen in all : such being the divisions of its provinces, which lie, as we have already stated, along the Red Sea to the south, and the Hyrcanian to the north. Of this number the eleven, called the Higher provinces, begin at the frontiers of Armenia and the shores of the Caspian, and extend to the Scythians, whose mode of life is similar in every respect. The other seven kingdoms of Parthia bear the name of the Lower provinces. As to the Parthi themselves, Parthia always lay at the foot of the mountains so often mentioned, which overhang all these nations. On the east it is bounded by the Arii, on the south by Carmania and the Ariani, on the west by the Pratitse, a people of the Medi, and on the north by the Hyrcani. "(10, p.68). This is how the author describes the province of Persia: "The Persae have always inhabited the shores of the Red Sea, for which reason it has received the name of the Persian Gulf" (10, p.69).

Pliny the Elder probably called the province Persis elsewhere in his work to distinguish it from the empire (11, p.117). One of the ancient authors, Strabo, in his book Geography, writes that Parthia paid tribute together with the Hyrcanians in the time of the Persians (Achaemenids), and in his time its borders reached the Caspian gates and Raga and Tapiri, which formerly belonged to the Medes (13, p. 273). He writes about Persis that this place is located between the tribes of Karmania (Kirman) and Media (14, p.155). Strabo also states that Persis was weakened not only by the Macedonians, but also by the Parthians, and although Persis was under the rule of a king, it depended on Parthia (14, p.159). As far as we can see from the mentioned ancient sources, the name of Persia was developed only in the Achaemenid and Sassanid periods. In addition, when both the Seleucids and the Parthians seized the lands of

the former Achaemenid Empire and established their states there, we see the names of the conquered countries listed one by one. It is not written in any source that the Seleucids (1, p.209) and the Parthians conquered Persia. This is clear evidence that, as some historians claim, these territories have not been called Persia or Iran since ancient times. Persia was simply a geographical province on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

We can cite Byzantine sources from the first early medieval European sources that provided information about the Sassanids. Among the Byzantine sources, Prokopi's History of Wars should be mentioned first. In this work, the author spoke about the numerous wars waged by the Byzantine Empire, including the wars with the Sassanids. Interestingly, when Procopius speaks of the Sassanid army, he calls them either Persians or Medes. For example, before the death of Emperor Arkady, he was concerned that his son was too young, and he thought that the Medes (Sassanids) could harm the Romans. Therefore, he wrote to the Persian ruler Izdegerd that he applied him to be his son's guardian (12, p.11). Elsewhere in the work, he writes: "Anatolius, General of the East, had, as it happened, been sent by the Emperor Theodosius as ambassador to the Persians, alone and unaccompanied, as he approached the Median army, solitary as he was, he leapt down from his horse, and advanced on foot toward Vararanes (12,p.13). In many parts of the work, the author calls the Sassanids both Medes and Persians and calls the Parthian ruler Pacorus the ruler of Persia (12, p. 35). Bununla Prokopi Sasani dövlətinin Parfiya dövlətinin varisi olduğunu göstərmişdir. Another Byzantine historian, Theophanes, referred to the Sassanid kings as

Persian rulers. For example, when he writes about the events of 603 A.D, he notes that the Persian ruler Khosrow gathered a large army and sent it to the Romans (15, p. 420). Elsewhere, he writes that the ruler of India sent a gift to Heraclius for his victory over Persia (15, p. 466). When we look at the works of Byzantine authors, we see that Persia is already being developed in a different sense than in the past. Earlier, Greek and Roman sources did not call the country Persia if the ruling dynasty was not from Persis. In early medieval Byzantine sources, we already see that the name gradually became a geographical name. We can say this based on this information in Theophanes' work. "In the same year Abimelech sent Ziadus, the brother of Mauias, to Persia against the impostor and usurper Mouchtar" (15, p.506). Məlumdur ki, Muxtarın başçılıq etdiyi üsyan İraq ərazisində baş vermişdir. However, because Iraq was once the center of the Sassanid Empire, this area is geographically called Persia by Theophanes. It is interesting to note that during this period, the Byzantine army captured Armenia, Iberia, Albania and Media (Adarbaygan) and imposed taxes on them, but did not refer to these territories as Persian territory, but mentioned them separately. "Justinian sent the strategos Leontios with a Roman army to Armenia. He slew the Saracens that were there and subjugated Armenia to the Romans; likewise Iberia, Albania, Boukania, and Media, and, after imposing taxes on those countries, sent a great sum of money to the emperor" (15, p.507). We can see from this information that the name Persia has already become a geographical name. "Inner Persia, which is called Chorasana, also submitted to them" (15, p.512). In Byzantine sources, especially after the Arab conquests, the name Persia, which

lost its political meaning and became a geographical one, was later passed on to European authors. Throughout the Middle Ages, travelers to these lands marked these lands as Persia, whether during the Elkhandid, Akkoyunlu or Safavid periods.

IRAN

In historiography, Iran is usually used as a translation of the Persian name which used in European sources. However, when we look at the sources, we see that these two names cover different geographical areas. We usually see the continuous usage of the name of Iran during the Sassanid period. The Sassanid kings called themselves the kings of Iran and non-Iran. In this part of the article, we have tried to show which territories are covered by both Iran and non-Iran. It is believed that the Iranian name is derived from the name Aryanam. We find the name of Aryan in the sources of the Achaemenid period in the writings of Darius I in the form of "Arya, of Arya origin" and Xerxes in the form of "a Persian, son of a Persian, Arya, of Arya origin" (19). The name of Iran / Eran is first found in the inscriptions of the Sassanid ruler Ardashir I in Naqshi-Rustam. Here he is called "Ardashir Shahanshah of Eran" in the Middle Persian part of the text, and "Shahanshah of Aryan" in the Parthian language (19). His son Shapur I calls himself "shahanshah eran ud aneran" (king of Iran and non-Iran) in the middle Persian part of the text, and "shahanshah aryan and anaryan" (king of aryaans and non-aryans) in the Parthian part of the text (19). What territories does Iran and non-Iran cover? As we have mentioned, the name Iran was used to denote the areas inhabited by aryaans. Aniran (non-Iran) was called the area inhabited by non-Aryans. However, when we look at the sources of the Sassanid period, we see that

Aniran is used not only in the non-Iranian (Aryan) sense, but also in the non-Zoroastrian sense. According to the inscriptions of the Sassanid ruler Shapur I on the Kaaba-Zoroaster, he included the Caucasus and Armenia, inhabited mainly by non-Aryans, as part of Iran too, and Aniran included the newly acquired territories from Rome - Syria, Cappadocia and Cilicia. The situation is different in another article written 30 years after Shapur I. This is the writing of the high priest Kirdar. Georgia, Albania, Armenia and Balasagan are included in Aniran (non-Iran) (20). Based on this information, we can say that in the writings of Shapur I, name of Iran is more political, and the territories that were part of Parthia, which existed before the Sassanid state, are called Iran. The territories newly captured from Rome are called non-Iranian. Kirdar's writing is more religious in content, and he attributes non-Zoroastrians to non-Iranians. Atropatena was Zoroastrian, and even the main temple of Zoroastrianism was located here, so Kirdar's inscription refers territory Atropatene to Iran. From these inscriptions we see that there is a difference in the Sassanid sources in the political and religious approach to the concepts of Iran and Aniran. After the fall of the Sassanids, we can see that the name Iran disappeared as a political term. Later, Firdovsi and a number of Islamic geographers and historians used the name Iran in a political sense when referring to the Sassanids (21, p. 46).

Eran was also generally understood geographically, it is shown by the formation of the adjective eranag "Iranian," which is first attested in the Bundahisn and contemporary works (19). "The total area was divided into four parts: Khorasan, Iran (Kavaran), Nimruz, and Baktar [not "Bactria"]. Whatever is located toward the

northern boundary is called Baktar, whatever is located toward the southern boundary is called Nimruz; and the area in between is divided into two: whatever lies toward the eastern boundary is called Korasan, while whatever lies to the west is called Iransahr" (19). Tarixi Sistanda verilən bu məlumatdan da İranın coğrafi bir ərazi olduğunu görürük. İranın ərazi olaraq sərhədlərini daha dəqiq fikrimizcə Safiyuddin

Əbdülmumin ibn Əbdülhaqq əl-Bağdadi vermişdir. He writes, "Abu ar-Rayhan says that here (Iranshahr) is the name of the region that unites Iraq, Persia (Fars), al-Jibal and Khorasan" (22, p.172). This information allows us to determine the exact borders of Iran.

REFERENCES

- Appian's Roman History* (1962). Vol. II. Translated By Horace White. London, Mcmillan
- Dio's Roman History* (1970). Vol. II. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Dio's Roman History* (1914). Vol. III. William Heinemann, London. Mcmillan
- Dio's Roman History* (1957). Vol. V. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Dio's Roman History* (1925). Vol. VIII. William Heinemann, London. G.P. Putnam's Sons
- Dio's Roman History* (1955). Vol. IX. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Diodorus Siculus* (1989). Vol. I. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Herodotus* (1975). *Histories*. Vol. I. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Josephus* (1961). *Jewish Antiquities*. Vol. IV. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Pliny the Elder* (1855). *The Natural History*. Vol. II. London. G.P. Putnam's Sons
- Pliny the Elder* (1855). *The Natural History*. Vol. III. London. G.P. Putnam's Sons
- Procopius* (1938). *History of the Wars*. Vol I. William Heinemann. London. G.P. Putnam's Sons
- Strabo* (1961). *The Geography*. Vol. V. Harvard, Harvard University Press
- Strabo* (1930). *The Geography*. Vol. VII. William Heinemann, London. G.P. Putnam's Sons
- Theophanous Confessor* (1997). *The Chronicle*. Oxford, Clarendon Press
- Меликов Р (2013). Древне Персидские Надписи. Баки, Qərb-Şərq,
- Azərbaycan tarixi* (2007). *Yeddi cildə. I cild (Ən qədimdən - b.e. III əsri)*. Bakı. "Elm"
- <https://www.Iranicaonline.Org/Articles/Chinese-Iranian-I> (2011)
- <https://Iranicaonline.Org/Articles/Arya-An-Ethnic-Epithet> (2011)
- <https://Iranicaonline.Org/Articles/Aneran> (2012)
- Teker T. *İran, Aniran Və İranşehr Kavramları Üzerine*” *İrtad Sayı: 5, Aralık / December 2020*, S. 37-55
- Sefiyyü'd-dîn Abdü'l-mü'min b. Abdü'l-hakk el-Bağdâdî (2014). *Merasidü'l-İttılâ' Alâ Esmâi'l-Emkine ve'l-Bikâ. Yâkût el-Hamavî'nin Mu'cemü'l-Büldân Adlı Eserinin Muhtasarı. Cilt 1. Terc. H. İbrahim Gökbörü. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınları,*