

Cultural Identity and the Peoples of the Mediterranean

Keeping up with the Persians: Between ‘Persianization’ and Cultural Identity Maria Brosius – Newcastle University, UK

– REVISED DRAFT –

1. Introduction

With the following remarks I wish to investigate the mechanisms of Persian cultural influence on other peoples, a process we may call 'Persianization'. The question I have been asking myself, and which I hope will be of interest to the participants of the present workshop, is, to what extent this process is initiated and endorsed from above, i.e., the Persian king and the ruling Persian elite, and to what extent it was an independent action, i.e., that it was a consequence grown naturally out of Persian presence in the satrapies, fostering the desire of the local elites to copy and emulate Persian life-style. A further issue is how this phenomenon was brought into accord with the peoples' expression of and striving for their own cultural identity, both within the Persian empire and outside it.

While the answer to the first part of the query might on the surface be assumed to be negative due to the Persian king's general policy of 'tolerance', the answer to the second part is less clear. Would the king and the Persian ruling class have shown themselves 'tolerant' to such a degree that they unconditionally allowed the adoption of Persian life-style and culture at local level without exercising any degree of control over which social groups affected a Persianizing life-style, as well as the latter's extent and quality, if 'Persianization' was merely due to independent cultural adoption and adaptation? There are three areas for which this question is particularly intriguing: Firstly, in the case of the former kingdoms which came under Persian control, including the Lydian empire, we find that these already had a long-established cultural tradition and their own cultural identity. To what extent did they 'Persianise'? Secondly, there are the local dynasts who established their power during the period of Achaemenid rule, and thirdly, those areas outside the Persian empire, where 'Persianization' occurred. In the case of the former, the question is to what extent did these rulers 'Persianise' as an expression of political dependency from the Achaemenid centre, or whether this was an independent expression of local power. In the case of the latter, Thrace constitutes a special situation where we find a kingdom independent of Persian rule after 479/8 BC, but which displays a high degree of 'Persianisation' with the establishment of the Odrysian kingship.

2. Discussion

It is widely recognised among scholars that the Persians pursued a policy in which they deliberately left the cultural identity of their subject peoples intact. Although no direct literary documents have come down to us which would outline such a policy, some written and archaeological evidence covering a reasonable range of political and cultural aspects of Persian policy has come down to us which allows us to conclude that the Persians did not impose their culture on others. Seemingly no active attempt was made to encourage the subject peoples 'to become Persian'. There was no policy of inclusion which awarded their subjects a status equivalent to 'Roman citizenship', while the characteristic feature of the Persian army was the ethnic difference expressed in dress and weaponry.

The Persians neither attempted to impose the Persian language and script as the dominating form of communication across the empire, nor did they impose their own gods and their own religion on non-Persians. In regard to the language, of course, it could be argued that the widespread application of Aramaic as the administrative script and its accepted status as 'Reicharamäisch' could be interpreted in that way. Persian language and script remained in the domain of the indigenous Persians, with writing skills probably limited to a few high-ranking Persian officials and trained scribes working within Achaemenid administration. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that Aramaic was anything other than a 'Kanzleisprache', a language and script used solely within the realm of Persian administration, rather than being the cultural language of the empire. The recognition and use of local languages and scripts in official inscriptions seems to confirm that the local linguistic tradition was maintained under the Persians. This attitude, of course, has to be understood in the context of the progression from cuneiform writing to alphabetic script, and the fact that the use of Aramaic in Mesopotamia had started long before the rise of the Persians. There is no suggestion that it was used outside the royal administration with subject peoples having to use it as a matter of imperial policy. Its reference as a 'Kanzleisprache', or even more precisely, 'Kanzleischrift', a chancellery script, therefore is apt.

Religion is a second major indicator of the Persians' seeming lack of interest in 'Persianizing' their subjects. The Achaemenid royal inscriptions, Egyptian, Greek, and Hebrew evidence attest to the fact that the Persian kings, from Cyrus II to - at least - Artaxerxes II, pursued a policy by which they, as the rulers, officially acknowledged other peoples' religion, were seen to actively support it, restoring temples (in Egypt, in Jerusalem), caring for their upkeep (Egypt, Babylon, Jerusalem), punished disrespect shown by their own officials (e.g. Magnesia), or curtailed the power of the priesthood (Demotic papyrus regarding Cambyses' reforms in Egypt), performed rituals for the different gods (e.g., in Babylon). In Persepolis itself foreign gods are mentioned in the administrative documents and a priesthood was in charge of performing rituals for their cults. In return, cults of Persian gods were exclusively celebrated by the Persians, the rituals being performed by Persian priests and possibly, on occasion, the Persian king. He professed his belief in 'Ahuramazda and the other gods who are' which included Iranian deities like Mithra, the god of treaties, and Anahita, the goddess of water and fertility. Our general understanding of the cult of Ahuramazda and other Persian gods is that non-Persians did not participate in the rituals. Rather, it was an exclusive event solely attended by the ruling Persian class. It is assumed that Persian cults were upheld and celebrated in the royal centres and the satrapal cities of the empire, in order to ensure a forum for the locally governing Persian elite to articulate their 'Persian identity' and to manifest their link to the Persian king in the shared worship of Ahuramazda and the other Persian gods.

Thus said, matters become somewhat blurred here, as later Greek evidence, especially that relating to Asia Minor, refer to non-Persian temple servants, and the display of divine statues in processions, a practice not known in Achaemenid Persia. The question whether these places were administrative centres at sub-satrapal level, and thus required the presence of Persian cults, or whether we witness in this case the emergence of locally adapted Persian cults which differed from royal religious cults in that they had become 'Hellenised' (though we ought to bear in mind that these might also have been local Greek cults which were influenced by Persian practices), awaits further investigation. At this point I only wish to draw attention to the problem

concerning the goddess referred to in Greek literary and epigraphical documents as Artemis Persike, the Persian Artemis, or as Artemis Anaitis, who is widely assumed to be the Hellenised Persian goddess Anahita, but which in my view could also be the 'Persianised' Artemis. Greek evidence is extremely difficult to disentangle on this subject, not helped by the evident lack of information we possess on Persian religion. What concerns me most about the idea is that only Anahita underwent such a rapid Hellenisation, while Ahuramazda and Mithra remained unaffected, not only during the Achaemenid period, but also during the Hellenistic, Parthian and Sasanian periods. The 'weak' Persian goddess, in contrast, has been assumed to have been created out of a range of foreign goddesses from the very beginning (seemingly taking on traits of the Mesopotamian goddess Inanna/ Ishtar). Yet if we consider the late Iranian evidence, Anahita was a purely Iranian goddess, and if any syncretism occurred at all, it was through her association with other Iranian deities such as Aši and Daena. Suffice to take note here that we may be dealing with the possible Persianisation of a Greek goddess in Asia Minor in the late Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that this would have been a deliberate policy from the centre.

Thus, rather than being able to identify a 'Persianization' of the subject peoples of the Persian empire enforced by the king, we recognise a 'dominant Persian ethno-class', a term coined by P. Briant, which seems to confirm that the Persian ruling class was keen to maintain their own identity distinct from that of their subjects. Their policy reveals that they encouraged and supported the maintenance of local culture and the ethnic identity of the peoples of the empire. This was the key to the Persians' overall highly successful ideology of the Pax Persica: By maintaining the ethnic identity of the subject peoples the Persian ruling class minimised resistance to their rule.

But let us now turn to the third issue, culture, on which I should like to focus particular attention for the purpose of our discussion. Again, the general assumption is that the Persians made no seeming attempt to impose Achaemenid culture on others. On the contrary, the ethnic identity of the subject peoples is proudly displayed on the reliefs at Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam as well as on the base of Darius' statue from Susa. The aspect of ethnic and cultural identity, too, was part of the ideology of Pax Persica. But before delving into the discussion, we ought to explain briefly what is meant by 'Achaemenid culture'. Certainly language and religion are cultural elements, but in addition 'culture' describes a certain way of life, a particular life-style, a mode of social behaviour which identifies a people. In regard to Persian culture, which was defined by the ruling elite, it is probably best epitomised in feasting and banqueting, hunting, and the life-style generally connected with the royal court. It will have extended to the adoption and adaptation of funerary practices for high-ranking nobles, as well as – it can be assumed – in the adaptation of other courtly celebrations, such as marriage alliances, official birthdays, the appointment of the dynastic heir. In the context of court life, these adaptations involve the manner of appearance (headdress, dress, type and style of textiles, their colouring, level of embroidery and use of appliqués, jewellery, weapons carried on the body), adherence to a court etiquette (approach to the king, observation of a hierarchical order, seating order at the King's Table, value of the dining set [gold, silver, earthenware]), and the pursuit of courtly forms of entertainment such as hunting and archery. In addition, court life included leisurely pursuits such as oral recitation, music and dance performances to cater for the court's entertainment. Their inclusion into local dynastic life could also signify the adaptation of Persian court culture at local level, but the source situation hardly will allow us to gain insight in such detail. Equally, the king's appearance as well as that

of his entourage, either in the context of the court moving between royal residences, or in the moving of the army train, were part of the expression of court culture, and their practice might have found entry into the way local rulers determined their public appearance. Beyond that, it was expressed in the characteristic style of architecture, from palatial buildings to the use of particular architectural features, as well as in art and artistic motifs, where the shapes and decoration of vessels, jugs, phialai, beakers and rytha, of jewellery and weapons etc. resembled Achaemenid court art. Persian court culture was present in the royal and satrapal centres throughout the realm. Satraps whose office as the king's representative in the satrapy and as members of the royal court replicated Persian court life, complete with royal parks for hunting, leisure gardens, and estates. Banqueting, and the paraphernalia that it requires, were well known to the Greek writers who seem to marvel at this phenomenon, while at the same time they remarked critically upon their opulence and luxuriousness.

It is especially within this realm that archaeological evidence, as well as some epigraphical documents, seem to indicate that there was an element of 'Persianization' fostered from above. Not only do the Persepolis reliefs imply that objects produced in the satrapies adhered to a standard of craftsmanship and quality of production recognised as Achaemenid court art, and that these objects were brought to the centre as gifts for the king, but 'Persianization' went well beyond that at local level. On the one hand we find the emulation of royal court life by the satraps, while on the other we observe the adoption of the Persian way of life by the local elite. How we are to understand the latter's form of 'Persianization'? As mentioned above, my key concern here is whether this was an independent development, or whether this was a subtle policy, which allowed the local elite to identify with the Persian ruling class, while at the same time being kept apart from it, never factually on par with them.

If we take the depiction of the gift-bearing delegations on the Apadana-reliefs as a reflection of historical reality, then the precious objects these delegations brought to the king were crafted in the Achaemenid court style, that is to say, the objects' form, style, shape and decoration, adhered to an artistic standard which was dictated from the centre (i.e., the royal court). If these gifts were brought to the king from the satrapies, this means that there must have been local manufactories which produced these objects crafted in the royal court style. Questions we may then ask but might be unable to answer is: Was the extent of their production limited to the manufacturing of royal gifts, or were they also made for the Persian officials residing in the satrapal centres? Did they, in addition, cater for the local elite itself in their production of 'royal goods'? Furthermore, where are we to place the locally produced objects which were crafted in an Achaemenising style, meaning that while they apparently copy the forms, styles, and artistic motifs of Achaemenid court art, their adaptation differs noticeably from it. In the past decades, as the prevention of archaeological excavations in Iran has focused excavations to Achaemenid sites in Central Asia, Georgia, and Turkey, archaeologists have recovered a considerable wealth of artefacts dated to the Achaemenid period, and crafted in the Achaemenid style. Yet remarkably, many of these artefacts were local productions, imitating Achaemenid court style, and thus belonging to the category of 'Achaemenising' art. The question is what the occurrence of this type of art in fact tells us about the need, or want, for 'Persianization'. To what extent was this actively encouraged by the Persian king and the Persian ruling elite as a subtle way to lessen the otherwise distinct separation between the latter and the local elite. In other words, while the policy of 'tolerance' and the ideology of Pax Persica might generally reflect a historical truth, closer inspection might show that it was not categorically adhered to. Furthermore, there is

the adaptation of Persian life-style and court culture in regions which were politically independent from Persia. This is particularly striking in the case of Thrace in the from the mid-fifth century BC, which, having been released from Persian control after 478 BC, went on to develop its own court and kingship, modelled, by all accounts, on that of the Persian king, without compromising their Thracian cultural identity.

Thus, principally, there are three questions: 1: Is the notion that the Persian king did not pursue a 'Persianization' correct, or can we identify subtle measures which permeated the local elite to the extent that a Persian life-style and Persian culture did occur, and thus constitute a Persianization from above? 2. To what extent was the adoption of Persian culture undertaken voluntarily at local level, i.e., to what extent did 'Persianization' occur because it was initiated by the local elite who saw it as a way to express their wish to be part of the contemporary power, and therefore copied the life-style of the dominating Persian class? 3. Are we to understand the adoption of aspects of Persian cultural life by those outside the Persian realm in the same vein, i.e., as the physical, visible expression of power orientated according to the dominating power of the day, or as an independent artistic development separated from the political powers from which it originally derived?

2.1. The question of royal court art and courtly pursuits

We have already remarked upon the process of gift-giving and gifts crafted in royal Achaemenid style. This court style was adhered to by all subjects, if we take our primary evidence, the reliefs from the Apadana in Persepolis, literally. Particular styles, forms, and shapes of vessels, the use of patterns and artistic motifs on royal tableware, jewellery, and weapons, were manufactured and brought to the centre from the imperial realm, adhering to the Achaemenid court style. As was noted above, how exactly the mechanism of gift-giving worked is, in my view, still not completely understood. Was there a separate, central royal workshop producing gifts for the king or did the king collect these objects made in the satrapies, and then re-distributed them as 'royal gifts'? Were these luxury items crafted in the royal court style accessible to a clientele outside the world of the extended royal court?

Taking archaeological evidence from the satrapies into account, we can clearly detect the emulation of Persian court life at local level. Here, three motifs stand out in particular, the scene of the funerary banquet, the hunting scene, and the audience scene. While we view these with a degree of familiarity, the question has rarely been asked whether there was no restriction regarding the use of these motifs once they were in the 'public domain', so to speak, or whether they required some kind of official approval. Could anybody who was able to afford it have these motifs displayed on a stele, in a tomb, on a precious object? If these motifs were used by Persian satraps, their use raises no questions. But when used outside this environment, by local dignitaries within the Persian domain, as well as outside it, their application becomes a more difficult issue which requires some explanation.

You will all be familiar with the banqueting scene on the funerary stele from Dascyleion, dated to the fifth/fourth century BC, or the painting in the tomb chamber of Karaburun, for the use of Achaemenid phialai perched on the three fingers of the figure *en couchant* and those of his servant. The motif of the (funerary) banquet as a depiction associated with Persian culture can also be seen on an ivory plaque from Demetrias and on the funerary relief from Saqqara, which shows a Persian seated at the funerary banquet. Even the scene on the short side of the Polyxena-Sarcophagus from Gümüşçay is still reminiscent of this motif. The Persian elements within this

motif suggest a direct Persian influence on the creation of these scenes, especially when coupled with a hunting scene. Hunting scenes are well known from Achaemenid seals, and comparable motifs, again with Persian aspects, are depicted on stelai and sarcophagi from the western part of the empire, suggesting that here, too, Achaemenid court art served as a model.

Perhaps most intriguing is the application of the famous scene associated with the Persian court, the audience scene, which shows the king enthroned, receiving a visitor who is standing before an incense burner in a gesture of respect. Like no other motif this captures the idea of kingship, expresses the power of the ruler, as well as the idea of peaceful rule. The audience scene not only has its immediate precedent in a seal impressed on some Persepolis Fortification Tablets and carved in Elamite style (PFS 77*), but is replicated in several other Achaemenid or Achaemenid-style seals. One example can be found in a Persepolis Fortification seal, showing a male audience scene (PFS 22). An Achaemenid seal from the De Clercq Collection, and now in the Louvre (AO 22359), shows a female audience scene, as does the scene on an as yet unpublished seal from the Metropolitan Museum, N.Y. The royal audience scene was repeated in almost exact detail on a seal from Dascyleion and, most intriguingly, on the inside of the shield of a Persian soldier depicted on the so-called Alexander-Sarcophagus. But there is more: beyond the realm of seals and seal impressions, the audience scene can also be found on funerary architecture. Thus we find it replicated on a relief from Xanthus and on the so-called Harpy Tomb, where the audience scene is shown in two different forms, once to depict a male figure (the local ruler? the deceased?), the other a group of females gathered to meet a woman seated on a throne. Again, a similar scene is found on a fragmented relief from the Anthemion stele (Bakir 2001: 174), as well as on a funerary stele from Dascyleion (yet unpublished). Clearly this motif was widespread, used on a variety of artistic media. Its aim was to convey power and status of the person depicted. There can be little doubt that the image immediately evoked an association with the Persian court and the image of the Persian king in audience. Whereas in the case of the royal gifts it could be argued that the links or overlaps with royal gifts was due to the compulsory practice of gift-giving, the application of royal motifs in the context of funerary art is different. This must have been a choice, not an obligation. Being depicted in 'official' poses which were primarily associated with the king and the royal court, possibly even seen wearing Persian dress, or being equipped with Persian banqueting décor or hunting equipment, goes well beyond that.

Now, if, as we asked above, 'Persianization' was not directed from the centre, was such an application of artistic royal court themes without royal permission at all possible? In my view, this cannot have been the case. Rather, I suspect, this kind of 'Persianization' was subtly fostered from the centre to reach the local, non-Persian elite. They undoubtedly belonged to the group of non-Persians who could be recipients of royal gifts, and thus gain status symbols similar to those given to Persians. The distinction between them, however, remained. The characteristic feature of the Persian court was the dominance of Persians holding key positions, as personal attendants, as high officials, as satraps, and as military leaders. There were exceptions, however. Egyptian and Greek physicians feature at the court as well as foreign translators, and even entertainers (e.g., Cretan dancers). Nehemiah even held the trusted position of the king's wine steward. These non-Persians were able to rise – at least to an extent – within the Persian court hierarchy, receiving royal gifts, being permitted to the King's Table, and being given land and estates. At that same level, even mixed marriages were possible, as can be deduced from examples from Egypt

(Artam/Tanofrether) and Macedon (Bubares/Gygea). In turn, this group of individuals connected to the court opened Persian culture to another, non-Persian group of people, and thus contributed to the dissemination of Persian culture. Perhaps one can even argue that this effect made the system of the Persian ethno-class permeable. But as the initiative came from the Persian king who awarded the royal gifts and privileges to non-Persians, their ability to assume a Persian life-style came from the top. The objective behind it was similar to the king's dealing with the members of his court: to bind them closer to him, and to achieve loyalty through obligation. While the king entrusted only Persians with the most important positions in regard to the running of the empire, it was also necessary to secure – at the top level – the co-operation of the local ruling class. They included city-kings and local dynasts as well as foreign high officials who acted on behalf of the king in local political, religious, and administrative matters. The appearance at court level of non-Persians may have been due to their reputation (e.g., the foreign physicians), but it is also highly likely that the world of the palace was to be a microcosm of the empire and that people from across the realm were brought there to fulfil a range of servile positions.

As local dynasts and local officials were integrated into the meritocratic system of the Persian king and his court, they were deliberately included into the world of court hierarchy in which they could – to an extent – jockey for positions. But even if they were only on the periphery of this system, they still participated in the public display of royal privileges given. Just as in the case of the Persian officials, in this way, the king ensured their loyalty, binding them to him through gifts and privilege. On their part, it will have meant that they willingly followed the Persian model and became 'Persianized'. Being part of the system meant that they, too, needed to display their status, the royal gifts, the dress, the tableware etc. This may never have been a prescribed order given by the king, but through the system of gift-giving, through the artistic standard set with it, as well as through their integration into the – extended – court system, these non-Persians became part of the king's intrinsic network. And they, being part of the system, had to play it out accordingly. From their social level this pattern of behaviour would have trickled down, not only to spread amongst their peers, but also to those in their service and in their dependency. Persianization from the top may not have been an explicit policy, but it was a conscientious series of actions put in place to ensure that non-Persians did.

The adoption of royal motifs like the court scenes referred to above, must be seen as an extension of this 'Persianization'. As the royal court was recognised as the model on which to base one's own power and status, a local dignitary wanted to be depicted within a catalogue of forms associated with the royal court. They may not have required official 'sanctioning' from the king, but we may assume that the king had a vested interest in the widespread dissemination of these images.

2.2 The question of political dependency

One of the key questions which have been addressed in scholarship is to what extent the expression of a 'Persianised' life-style by local dignitaries equals the acceptance of political dependence from the Persian centre. My inclination is to argue that one is not possible without the other, and that the adoption of Persian culture and mannerisms signify the local ruler's political link to the king. A case in point is made by our evidence from Lycia.

2.2.1 The case of Lycia

The Nereid Monument, ascribed to Kheriga of Xanthus, is an excellent example for the symbiosis of Greek and Persian elements. The themes of the reliefs are manifestly Persian, including the audience scene and the banquet scenes. As Briant put it; 'it was first and foremost the image of power that these kinglets could outwardly show by exhibiting a symbolism of power that was strongly inspired by the ideological and iconographic codes that regulated the court of the Great King' (Briant 2002: 672). The choice of these symbols of power are deliberate. The dynast of Xanthus, striving for superiority over other contenders (Pericles of Limyra) used those images which most strongly suggested royal power: the audience scene and court life, epitomised in the royal banquet. This evidently invites the question as to whether the use of these images equals political submission of the Xanthian dynasts to the Persian king. It certainly signals the recognition of the king, and with that his authority. Quite possibly Kheriga and his successor Arbinas must have maintained some diplomatic relationship with the satrap of Lydia at Sardis. With this connection, it was inevitable that they entered the world of the Persian court, and accordingly, their 'Persianisation' in regard to the expression of power came from the centre. The fact that the Xanthian dynasts looked to Persia to emulate royal power also seems to shine through the Greek inscription of Arbinas. I would like to draw you particular attention to the last section of the inscription, carved on a statue base from the sanctuary of Leto, but for the discussion I provide the text in full:

[Arbin]as. son of Gerg[is, dedicated me, having accomplished deeds worthy of the] valour [of his forefathers. Within the tomb chamber lies] (his) cor[pse]. But the stele [that one] s[ees] here commemorates how he e[stablished his rule over the Lycians] by his resourcefulness, his s[upreme] might and po[wer.] In his youth he conquered in one month three cities – Xanthus, Pinara, and Tel[messus] with its fine harbour – striking terror into many Lycians and becoming their mas[ter.] A monument to these (achievements) he set up on the advice of the god Apoll[o.] Having sought counsel at Pytho, he dedicated me to Leto – his own image whose outward appearance(?) expres[ses the prowess?] of his achievements. Having slain many people, having brought honour to his father G[ergis], having conquered many cities, Arbinas made his own and his forefathers' name renowned [through the whole] land of Asia. He was conspicuous amongst all in human wisdom, in bowmanship, in courage, in horsemanship. From beginning to end, Arbinas, [you have] acc[omplished] great deeds, [you have presented] pleasing gifts to the immortal gods. Symmachus son of Eumedes of Pellana, blameless prophet, composed this easily understood 'elegy' as a gift for Arbinas.'

The passage I found striking in this text is the reference to his skills as a bowman and horseman, which is strikingly reminiscent of Darius' inscription from Naqsh-e Rostam (DNb) in which he attests to his skills as a good soldier, a good horseman and a good bowman:

§7. 'Of such a kind is my understanding and my judgement: when you shall see or hear of what I have done in the palace and on the battle-field, this is the willpower which I possess over my mind and my understanding. §8. This is indeed my courage as far as my body possesses the strength; as a commander I am a good commander; (...) 9 I am trained in my hands and in my feet; as a horseman I am a good horseman; as a bowman, I am a god bowman; both on foot and on horseback; as a spearman, I am a good spearman, both on foot and on horseback.'

The values expressed in Arbinas' inscription seem to me strongly reminiscent of the values depicted in Darius' inscription. It may be a Greek text written by a Greek, but these sentiments seem to derive from Persian culture. A local dynast who not only emulates Persian life-style, but Persian values as well?

2.2.2 The case of Thrace

That said, we must mention the exception to the rule. Thrace provides a case where the idea of political dependency from Persia does not apply. It allows us an insight into the world outside the direct control of the Persian empire. Margaret Miller has demonstrated the 'Perserie' splendidly for Greece after the Persian Wars, but this happens for specific reasons and within a particular political context. Yet here we have the case of a region incorporated into an existing satrapy, or which was a satrapy in its own right, in c. 513 BC, but which regained its autonomous status following the Persian retreat after 479/8 BC. But, as their own kingdom emerges over the following decades, the kingship, and the way this kingship is expressed, is clearly orientated towards the Persian court. It is tantalizing to study the range of Achaemenising artefacts and to realize that the Thracian court modelled itself on the Achaemenid court. The same phialae, jugs and vessels, and even rhytha were used to play out court life. Yet the decorative style of these objects, and perhaps even the context of their use, are quite removed from Achaemenid court art. They were produced in local workshops, by Greek or local craftsmen. While copying Achaemenid forms and motifs, their application is distinctively different, and the range of motifs is obviously adapted to local ideas. Direct Persian influence in this case is less likely, but Persia clearly served as the model for kingship and court life, and this meant the adaptation of Achaemenid court art. As diplomatic links may well have continued after 479/8 BC Thracian association with the Achaemenid court will have been welcomed. At the same time, through the degree of adaptation of Achaemenid art, using different motifs and applying inscriptions written in Greek, the Thracian kings and nobility ensured that they expressed their own, non-Persian identity through it. The Odrysian kings took over the system of gift-giving and thus re-created mechanisms of the Persian court. Regrettably we do not possess comparable images of audience scenes or banquet scenes to take this adaptation of Persian court life any further. The kings were not dependent on Persian support for their survival. The choice to emulate Persian court etiquette as far as we can discover it, must have been a real one, but considering that Persia still was the world power with no competing power beside it, it provided the model.

3. Conclusion

The Persian king and his court served as the only model of the day representing royal power, kingship, and the court which other rulers could follow. They determined the way in which power was expressed. And it was the authoritative way in which a dynast or ruler could present his power to his own world. This happened within the Persian empire, but can also be observed outside its immediate zone of influence, as the Thracian example demonstrates. Within the Persian realm the king himself had an interest in fostering this 'Persianization', as it reflected his influence over the local elite. The, in my view, ingenious method, in which this was achieved, was, that this was not forcefully imposed from above, but by indirect means which allowed the individual members of the local elite to maintain the idea of their own cultural independence, while gradually being incorporated into the Persian system.