

In the Shadow of Bezalel.
Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient
Near Eastern Studies in Honor
of Bezalel Porten

Edited by
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ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNOR IN PERSIAN IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION*

Lisbeth S. Fried

*I dedicate this paper in love and appreciation to
Bezalel Porten for his guidance and support of me
and of my interest in the Achaemenid Empire.*

This paper investigates the role of the local governor in the Achaemenid Empire through examination of contemporary texts.

1. *Archive from Akhvamazda, Satrap of Bactria*

I begin with an archive of fourth century Aramaic letters from Bactria, present day Afghanistan. It's appropriate to begin here since it was Buzzy who first told me of these letters. The Aramaic of these documents as well as their epistolary style is identical to that utilized in the Aramaic documents from Egypt, even though these are from Bactria, at the extreme other end of the empire.¹ Although unprovenanced, Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked affirm their authenticity, dating the earliest to the reign of Artaxerxes III, and the latest to the reign of Alexander the Great, i.e., from 353 to 324 BCE.² Eight of the documents in the archive appear to be chancellery copies of official letters from one named Akhvamazda to Bagavant, his subordinate.

We know from the verso of one letter that this Bagavant was a governor, *pahta*, and that his seat of office was in a city called Khulmi,

* This is a revised version of a paper presented at the XVth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 2009. I have benefitted from the comments of Lawrence Schiffman on that paper.

¹ Saul Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane et Son Gouverneur: Documents Araméens Du IV^e s. Avant Notre Ère Provenant de Bactriane* (Paris: De Boccard, 2004), 27.

² Saul Shaked, "De Khulmi a Nikhšapaya: Les Données Des Nouveaux Documents Araméens de Bactres sur la Toponymie de la Région" (IV^e Siècle Av. N. .È)," *CRAIBL* (2003): 1517–35; Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*.

likely the modern city of Khulm, in Northern Afghanistan, not far from its border with Uzbekistan.

Verso of a letter found in Afghanistan dated to Oct./Nov. 351:

2. *To Vacat Bagawant the Governor (paḥtā) in Khulmi*
On 3 of Marcheshvan [year] 8 of Artaxerxes the king to....

From other letters in the collection we know that Bagavant had jurisdiction over Khulm and its surrounding areas.³ Although neither Akhvamazda's title nor his place of residence is given in these documents, we can assume from the orders he gives to Bagavant the governor that he must have been the Satrap of Bactria and Sogdiana with his seat in the capital city of Bactra (present day Balqḥ), about 80 km (50 mi) west of Khulm.⁴ These documents can therefore give us a peek into the relationship between a governor and his satrap, and into the role of the governor in the Persian empire.

Judging from the personal names revealed in the letters, Akhvamazda, the satrap, Bagavant, the governor, and the other high officials mentioned in the archive are ethnic Persians; whereas the scribes and "the ones who know the orders" bear Iranized versions of local names, that is, they have Persian names with Bactrian theophorics, and so are probably local Bactrians.⁵ In Egypt as well, the scribes and heralds bore Egyptian names, whereas the officials and judges were all either of Persian or of Babylonian ethnicity, that is, they were not Egyptian.⁶

The first text to be discussed is a letter sent from Akhvamazda, the satrap, to Bagavant, the governor. It is dated to 3 Sivan, the 11th year of Artaxerxes III, or June 21, 348 BCE. Although Bagavant's seat of office is at Khulmi, his area of jurisdiction includes Nikhšapāya, probably the present-day town of Qarshi, in Uzbekistan, about 300 km north of Khulmi, a distance that would have taken 5 or 6 days to cross.⁷

³ Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 13.

⁴ Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 14.

⁵ Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 23–4.

⁶ Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire*, BJSUCSD 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 49–107.

⁷ Shaked, personal communication.

Letter (A4) from Akhvamazda to Bagavant⁸

Obverse:

From Akhvamazda to Bagavant. And now concerning what you have sent to me, saying: “(A message) has been sent to me from you (instructing me) to give the order to build the wall and the ditch around the city of Nikhšapāya. Then I set a time and had the troops come over. However, Spaita, the judges, and others of the garrison of the place came to me saying:

“There are locusts in great number and dense, and the harvest is ripe for harvesting. If we build this wall, the scourge of the locusts which is in the city [will increase] and will inflict...in the land. But I have no authority to let them go.

And another [affair]. That which you say, that which concerns the thing that you communicated to me... And now, the troops that have been appointed for you to have at your disposal, let them go in order that they may [crush] the locusts and that they may gather the harvest. When the time comes, they will build the wall and the ditch.

Daizaka the scribe knows this order.

Reverse:

To Bagavant who is at Khulmi. The 3 Sivan, the 11th year of Artaxerxes. Carry this letter to Nikhšapāya.

In this letter, Akhvamazda responds affirmatively to a previous request by Bagavant to release the troops at his disposal from building the city wall of Nikhšapāya and to use them instead to gather in the harvest before the locusts consume it. It is obvious first of all, that the governor had troops at his disposal, and second, that he was using his troops to build a city wall and moat. Another letter is similar, referring to Bagavant’s task to build a wall around the city of Kiš, in Sogdiana.⁹ This activity is similar to Nehemiah’s task of building a wall around Jerusalem, and he too had soldiers at his disposal to help him carry it out.¹⁰

⁸ Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 28–29.

⁹ Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 31.

¹⁰ Whether there are remains of a Persian period city wall in Jerusalem is disputed (see Israel Finkelstein, “Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah,” *JSOT* 32 [2008]: 501–20; Finkelstein, “Persian Period Jerusalem and Yehud: A Rejoinder,” *JHS* 9 [2009]: Article 24; Eilat Mazar, “The Wall That Nehemiah Built,” *BAR* 35 [2009]: 24–33, 66; and Oded Lipschits, “Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem: Facts and Interpretations,” *JHS* 9 [2009]: Article 20). These documents from Bactria demonstrate at least that it was the responsibility of local governors to build city walls, and that one at least build them with the aid of the troops at his disposal. That the troops and cavalry (חֹל וּפָרָשִׁים) that the king sent with Nehemiah

Third, and most important, it is clear from this letter that the Persian governor had no autonomy whatsoever. The governor could not decide by himself to halt the wall-building efforts in order to collect the harvest before the locusts ate it. He had first to request permission from his satrap and then to await his satrap's response. Lack of local autonomy is repeatedly mentioned by the Greek authors as well. Diodorus states, for example (Diodorus XV 41:5), that the Persians took so long in preparing to put down the Egyptian revolt, that the Egyptians were ready for them when they came. The long delay in attacking Egypt was due to the fact that the Persian generals had to refer all questions to the king and then to await his reply before they could carry out any action at all.

A second document in the archive, another letter to Bagavant from his satrap, is in response to a complaint from one Vahya-athru, an overseer on several of the satrap's domains:

Letter (A6) from Akhvamazda to Bagavant:¹¹

From Akhvamazda to Bagavant. And now.

Vahya-āthru, the official located at Dastakani and at Vahumati, my servant, sent me (a message) saying thus:

There are two old buildings in Vahumati and Artuki which belong to my lord Akhvamazda. Regarding these, an order has been issued from my lord Akhvamazda to Bagavant, who is at Khulmi, to cover them with a roof, but up to now they have not been covered. The grain and the sesame, equally, in the form of seed, that Bagavant was supposed to have brought to the <storehouse> of my lord, he has not been brought, in violation of that which he is obligated (to do). It is in this regard that I inform my lord.

Now if this is the case, according to what the above Vahya-āthru has informed me, you have not acted well in doing contrary (things) and not acting in conformity with my law. Give an order so that the roof of the above mentioned buildings in Vahumati and in Artuki may be covered in the best and most suitable manner as has been ordered previously by me. Moreover, see that the grain and the sesame in the form of seed in its entirety is delivered, as you are obliged, to my storehouse, for you are under the obligation (to see to it). Let it be known by you, if you do not

(2:9) were not sent with him merely to accompany him on his journey but to man the garrison (הַבִּירָה) that he was erecting in Jerusalem (Neh 2:8) is argued at length in Lisbeth S. Fried, "The Political Struggle of Fifth Century Judah," *Transeuphratène* 24 (2002): 9–21; Fried, *The Priest and the Great King*, 193–201. It should be noted that Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, also had troops at his disposal, the army of Samaria (חֵייל שְׁמַרְיָן), Neh 3:34.

¹¹ Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 36–37.

give the order that the roof of the above mentioned buildings may be covered in the best and most suitable manner, as has been commanded by me, and if you do not see that the grain is delivered in the form of seed in its entirety, as it has been commanded to you, you will hardly be released and you will pay the entire sum from your own domains to my domains.

Nurafratara knows this order.

The official complains that Bagavant was letting conditions on the satraps' property deteriorate. The letter suggests many of the tasks that Bagavant was responsible for on orders of his satrap. In addition to his other tasks of constructing a wall and a moat around the cities of Nikhšapāya and Kiš, as discussed above, this letter notes that Bagavant had been commanded to order that the roofs of two buildings belonging to the satrap be repaired, and to see to it that grain and sesame seeds from the satrap's domains were delivered in a timely fashion to the satrapal storehouse. Apparently Vahya-āthru had complained to the satrap that these tasks had not been done. Notably, the overseer could not do any of these things himself, but had to await instructions from Bagavant. Nor could the satrap tell the overseer to carry out the tasks himself. Rather, he had to tell the governor to give the order. Apparently, everything went through its proper channels.

It is evident from this letter that the governor's duties involved the management of his entire province, whether this included repairing roofs of some buildings on the satrap's estates or building a wall around a city. The relationship between satrap, governor, and local official that is exhibited here is also revealed in one of the letters in the Arsames' archive:

Letter from Arsames, satrap of Egypt, to Armapiya (late 5th Century BCE; *TAD* A.6.8):

From Arsames to Armapiya. And now. Psamshek my official (*paqid*) sent to me: He says thus: "Armapiya with the troops which are at his command does not listen to me in the matter of my lord about which I am telling them."

Now, Arsames says thus: "In the matter of my estate of which Psamshek will tell you and the troops which are at your command—(regarding) that, listen to him and do it. Thus [let] it be known to you: If Psamshe[k] later sends me a complaint against you, you will be strictly called to account and a harsh word will be directed at you."

Bagasrava knows this order. Ahpepi is the scribe.

Verso:

From *vacat* [Ar]sames to Armapiya.

Concerning (that) Psamshe[k] said: "They do not listen to me."

Psamshek, an Egyptian official on one of Arsames' estates, had complained to Arsames, satrap of Egypt, that a certain Armapiya, an ethnic Persian, was not listening to him. Since Armapiya had troops at his disposal, he was likely a high-ranking official in Egypt, probably a governor like Bagavant. Like Vahya-āthru, Psamshek could not have commanded or even have made a request from Armapiya directly. The order to Armapiya had to come from the satrap himself.

Included among the copies of the letters sent from Akhvamazda to Bagavant is another long letter in which the satrap reiterates a complaint that he has received from a certain Vahu-vakhšu about Bagavant.¹² Unfortunately, the letter is not available to me, but according to Shaked's summary, Bagavant and the judges (*dayyānayyā*) with him had seized and imprisoned a group of animal-drivers who worked for this Vahu-vakhšu. Bagavant and the judges were demanding tribute or taxes from the drivers over and above what Vahu-vakhšu considered fair and the going-rate in other provinces. According to the letter, the satrap had previously ordered Bagavant to release the drivers and to return the excess taxes taken from them, but Bagavant had not complied. Vahu-vakhšu begs the satrap to right these wrongs done him. Accordingly, Akhvamazda demands again that Bagavant release the animal-drivers and return the surplus in taxes levied on them.

We see from this letter that in addition to the governor's other duties, he was responsible for collecting the taxes and tribute in his province. The soldiers at his disposal as well as the judges with him were the means by which he collected them. The complaint was not that Bagavant was collecting taxes, but rather that the amounts were in excess of those considered fair. The reference to the judges with Bagavant suggests that the animal-drivers were tried in a court of law and then imprisoned. Vahu-vakhšu appeals to the satrap on behalf of his drivers; Akhvamazda, the satrap, supports him, ordering the governor to release the drivers and to return the excess funds.¹³

¹² Shaked, *Le Satrape de Bactriane*, 32–33.

¹³ We see similar complaints from the Jews of Elephantine about arbitrary arrests and the putative bribing of judges, as well as a similar faith that the satrap would right any wrong. We read in one letter (*TAD A4.2*), for example, that some men of the Jewish garrison at Elephantine were arrested, but “had we revealed our presence to Arsames before, this wou[ld]not (have happened to us).” In other words, the Jews too believed that if only Arsames the satrap had known about the problem, justice would have prevailed.

These letters demonstrate that the Greek historian Xenophon (*Oecon.* 4:8–11) was wrong on several accounts:

To those governors who are able to show him (Cyrus) that their country is densely populated and that the land is in cultivation and well stocked..., he assigns more territory and gives presents, and rewards them with seats of honor. Those whose territory he finds uncultivated..., he punishes, and appoints others to take their office.

...

Moreover, each of these duties is entrusted to a separate class of officers; one class governs the residents and the laborers, and collects tribute from them, the other commands the men under arms and the garrisons.

... Wherever a satrap is appointed, he attends to both these matters.

According to Xenophon, those who managed the land and its cultivation, and who collected the tribute owed on it were separate officials from those who were members of the military and who manned the garrisons. To Xenophon, the purpose of the armed men in the garrisons was only to protect the populace. Soldiers were not involved in administering the districts or in collecting the tribute. As is evident from the Bactrian correspondence, however, this was not the case. Bagavant, the governor, had troops at his disposal and through them he collected taxes and tribute from those in his district. Bagavant also managed the satrap's agricultural property, and was obligated to make sure that seed from it was taken to the storehouse before it rotted. Xenophon admits that the satrap attended to both spheres of activity, land management and military defense; but the Bactrian correspondence shows that the local governor was responsible for both these spheres as well, since he implemented his satrap's orders. We may conclude that Nehemiah, the governor of the Persian province of Yehud, also collected taxes from the provincial populace, and used his soldiers to ensure their collection.

Xenophon was also wrong on another account. Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* VIII 6:1) maintained that the garrison commanders were responsible to no one but the king:

When he arrived in Babylon, he (Cyrus) decided to send out satraps to govern the nations he had subdued. But the commanders of the garrisons in the citadels and the colonels in command of the guards throughout the country he wished to be responsible to no one but himself.

This is consistent with his claim that the garrisons' only duty was to protect the populace. The Bactrian correspondence reveals, however, that civil and military authorities were one and the same. Bagavant,

the governor, had troops at his disposal, and most decidedly he took orders and was responsible to the satrap, not the king. Soldiers in the local garrisons throughout the empire were used by the governor and the satrap to protect the people, but also, and more importantly, to control and govern them, and to extract from them taxes and tribute.

We can see from the Aramaic papyri from Egypt, however, that not all governors were garrison commanders. In September of 420 BCE (*TAD* B2.9) Vidranga was the **רַב חֵילָא**, the garrison commander at Elephantine and Syene, Egypt, and one Ramnadaina, was the *fratraka*, or governor.¹⁴ Both were ethnic Persians. In a second letter from Elephantine, dated to November of 407, 13 years later (*TAD* A4.7,8), Vidranga had now become the **פַּרְתֶּרֶךְ**, and he was giving orders to his son Naphaina, who was now titled the **רַב חֵיל**, the garrison commander. The son had acceded to his father's position as garrison commander, and the father had risen in rank to the position of governor. As governor, his ability to give orders to the garrison commander effectively put the garrison's troops at his disposal.

The garrison commander at Elephantine had charge of several detachments (*degelīm*) in both Syene and Elephantine. Since each detachment (*degel*) was composed of centuries, *me'ot*, the garrison commander would have been equivalent to the Greek *chiliarch*, commander of around 10,000 men.¹⁵ Again, against Xenophon, there was no separation between the military and the civil authorities. If the garrison commander was not the governor himself, then he reported directly to him, the governor reporting to the satrap.

3. *The Wadi ed-Daliyeh Papyri*

Leaving the Bactrian correspondence, we move to a group of fragmentary texts, found in the Abu Shinjeh Cave in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh about 14 km north of Jericho.¹⁶ The majority of the documents are slave

¹⁴ The Persian term *fratarā* (or *frathara*) means "superior," and the *ka* suffix means "who," "the one who" Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953). So we have *fratharaka*, "the one who is superior," i.e., the governor.

¹⁵ Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine; the Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 29.

¹⁶ Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Discovery of the Samaria Papyri," *BA* 26 (1963): 110–21; Cross, "Papyri of the Fourth Century B.C. from Daliyeh," in *New Directions in*

sales but there was also a contract for the sale of a house and another for the sale or pledge of a vineyard. All were signed in Samaria from the period of the reign of Artaxerxes II to that of Darius III (about 375–335 BCE), thus over a 45-year period. Although these documents are fragmentary, because the language in them is fixed and formulaic, half of a line in one document could be matched with a second half in another to interpret the whole line. In this way, the documents could be reconstructed.¹⁷ All of the contracts end with a clause stating that the deal was concluded before So-and-so son of So-and-So, the governor of Samaria, and So-and-so son of So-and-So, the *sagan*.

קדם PN בר PN פחה שמרין. . . . PN בר PN סגגא

The contracts of Samaritan slave sales can be compared to contracts of slave sales from Achaemenid Babylonia.¹⁸ One sale (ROMCT 2 35), for example, which occurred in the tenth year of an Artaxerxes (probably the 2nd or 3rd king of that name) was conducted in the “royal tax house,” *ina bīt mīksu ša šarri*, in the presence of several judges, and before the *hammarakarra*. This last term is a Persian loan word, and is usually translated “tax-accountant,” but perhaps he was, as Stolper suggests, both tax accountant and registrar. Two other Babylonian slave sales were also registered in a royal tax house (BM 30126:14; BM 62588:13). In all three cases, the relevant clause is either final or penultimate in the text, as in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh papyri. All three texts are slightly damaged at the crucial line, but because of their similarities, the underlying statement can be recovered:

**ina bīt mīksu ša šarri* PN₁ *amēlūti šuati ušeteqma ana* PN₂ *inaddin*.

PN₁ has transferred /registered those slaves in the royal tax office and has given them to PN₂

The royal tax house and registrar’s office where the Babylonian slave sales occurred seems quite analogous to the governor’s office in Samaria

Biblical Archaeology, ed. David N. Friedman and Jonas C. Greenfield (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 45–69; Cross, “The Papyri and Their Historical Implications,” in *Discoveries in the Wādi Ed-Dāliyah*, *AASOR* 41, ed. Paul W. Lapp and Nancy L. Lapp (Cambridge, MA: American School of Oriental Research, 1974), 4–18; Douglas M. Gropp, “Wadi Daliyeh II: The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh” in *DJD* XXVIII, ed. Emanuel Tov (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), vii–xiii, 1–123.

¹⁷ Gropp, “The Samaria Papyri,” 4.

¹⁸ Matthew W. Stolper, “Registration and Taxation of Slave Sales in Achaemenid Babylonia,” *ZA* 79 (1989): 80–101.

where slave sales were signed. This suggests that the Persian governor's office also served as the registrar and tax office.

The Arsames' papyri (*TAD* A6.11) also reveal a registrar of deeds in Achaemenid Egypt.

Inside:

From Arsames to Nakhṭhor, Kenzasirma and his colleagues.

And now, a certain Peṭosiri, plenipotentiary (ורשבֿר), my servant, sent to me. He says thus: There is a certain Pamun, my father. When there was unrest in Egypt, that one perished. And his domain, of 30-a(rdab) seed capacity, which the one named Pamun, my father, had been holding as heir, that was therein abandoned since all our household personnel per[rished]. The domain of Pamun, my father, [was not given] to me. Let one take thought of me. Let them give (it) to me. Let me-hold-(it)-as-heir.

Now, Arsames says thus: If it is so according to these words which Peṭosiri sent [to me that] (one) named [Pamun], his father, when there was the unrest in Egypt, perished with [his household] personnel [and] the domain of that Pamun his father, of 30 a(rdabs) seed capacity—was abandoned and not made over [to my estate] and not given by me to another servant, then I do give the domain of that Pamun to Peṭosiri. You, notify him. Let him hold-it-as-heir and pay the land-tax to my estate just as formerly his father Pamun had been paying.

Artavahya knows this order. Rashta is scribe.

Outside:

From Arsames to Nakhṭhor the official, (and to) [Kenza]sirma and his colleagues the *hammarakarāya* (המרכריא), i.e., the tax-accountants/registrars who are in Egypt.

(*Demotic:*) About the fields of Pamun which I have given to Peṭosiri.

The letter records that Arsames has assigned an estate to the son of its previous owner. As the outside of the document notes, the letter is addressed to Arsames' representative in Egypt and to the *hammarakarāya*, the tax accountants and registrars. When ownership of either land or a slave changed hands, the change was evidently recorded in the tax office.¹⁹ We do not find the word *hammarakara* as yet in the

¹⁹ A text from the Murašu archive (CBS 12859; Matthew W. Stolper, "Three Iranian Loanwords in Late Babylonian Texts," in *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*, Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 7, ed. Louis D. Levine & T. Cuyler Young [Malibu: Undena Publications, 1977], 251–66.) states that a house of Murašu son of Ḥatan was "written down" in the royal *kalamari* (*ina kal-am-ma-ri ša LUGAL*), that is, in the royal registry. According to Stolper ("Three Iranian Loanwords," 260), *Kalam-mari* is cognate with an hypothesized Old Persian **kara-hammari*, supposing only an l/r interchange. This is indicated by the common

Samaritan papyri, but it may be that in the small province of Samaria, the governor filled the role, and no separate *hammarakara* was necessary. These documents suggest that the governor had to register every sale of land and slave; he may have had to approve of them as well.

4. Late 4th Century Inscription from Sardis

Further information on the role of the local governor may be derived from our final text, the Mnesimachos Inscription at Sardis (ca 306–301 BCE).²⁰

Col. I

(Some lines missing)... And afterwards Antigonos awarded the estate (οἶκος) to me. Now since the temple-wardens are demanding back from me the gold lent on deposit and belonging to Artemis, but I do not have anything with which to repay them; therefore these are the items which constitute the οἶκος: the villages named as follows: <descriptions follow>.... The tribute of these villages to the chiliarchy of Pytheos is 50 gold staters a year. There is also an allotment at <description follows>; its [tribute] is three gold staters per year. There is also another village <description follows>...; its tribute paid to the chiliarchy of...arios, is 57 gold staters a year. And there is another allotment <description follows>...; its tribute, paid to the chiliarchy of Sagarios [son of?] Koreis, is three gold staters and 4 gold obols a year. There is also another village <description follows>...; its tribute is 3 gold staters and three gold obols a year. Therefore [this tribute is] from all the villages and from all the allotments and the buildings on them and from the people with all their households and their belongings and from their jars of wine and the revenue in silver and in labor and all the produce from all the villages and in addition to these still more....

Babylonian *hammarakara* and the Aramaic *hmrkry* (*hamarkari*), which therefore would denote “registrar.”

²⁰ The inscription was discovered in 1910 engraved on a wall of the temple of Artemis in Sardis and was intended, as it seems, to publicly demonstrate the temple’s ownership of several estates in the area (William H. Buckler and David M. Robinson, “Greek Inscriptions from Sardes I,” *AJA* 16 (1912): 11–82; Kathleen T.M. Atkinson, “A Hellenistic Land-Conveyance: The Estate of Mnesimachus in the Plain of Sardis,” *Historia* 21 (1972): 45–74; Raymond Descat, “Mnésimachos, Hérodote et le Système Tributaire Achéménide,” *REA* 87 (1985): 97–112; Elspeth R. Dusinberre, *Aspects of Empire in Achaemenid Sardis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 123–25, 237–38.

Col II.

(Some lines missing)... [Let it not be permitted?] to me or [to my descendants?] or to anyone else at any time to dissolve (the contract), and... < omitting 12 lines of caveats and promises.>

If the king should take the villages or the allotments or anything else of this property which is subject to the contract from Artemis on account of (δῖα) Mnesimachos, then I, Mnesimachos and my descendants, will forthwith give back to Artemis the original value of the gold of the deposit, 1325 gold staters....

The document was written when Antigonos the One-Eyed was the self-proclaimed king of Asia Minor, that is, from 306–301 BCE, although it refers to an earlier contract enacted while Antigonos was satrap of Phrygia under Alexander the Great. In spite of the Hellenistic context, the system of land ownership, conveyance, and taxation illustrated in it have been shown to originate in the Achaemenid period.²¹ Further, all the toponyms in it are either Persian or Lydian, even though these had quickly become Greek after Alexander's conquest.

According to the inscription, Antigonos had assigned the estates designated in the document over to Mnesimachos. In spite of the wealth of the land he received, Mnesimachos needed money, which he borrowed from the temple of Artemis in Sardis. The temple wardens now wanted the money back, and since Mnesimachos did not have the funds, he had to transfer the property over to the temple. A caveat in the document records, however, that if the king reclaimed title to the land on account of Mnesimachos, then he or his heirs would return to the temple the entire amount that had been borrowed. Thus we see that the king could at any time reclaim title on the land. In this sense there was no private property or even temple property, since land was never free from royal confiscation.

The document also apprises the temple that it must pay the tribute (φόρος) due on the lands in the various chiliarchies. Chiliarchies are military districts, headed by a chiliarch, that is by a garrison commander in charge of about 10,000 troops. Like Bagavant in the Bactrian

²¹ Descat, "Le système tributaire achéménid"; Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 394, 401, 411, 417; Pierre DeBord, *Aspects Sociaux et Économiques de la Vie Religieuse dans L'Anatolie Gréco-Romaine*, Etudes Préliminaires Aux Religions Orientales dans L'Empire Romain 48, ed. Maarten J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 245–7; Émile Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1966), 67–71.

correspondence who used his soldiers to collect the taxes, we see the chiliarch collecting taxes here.

We do not know whose land it was before Antigonos assigned it to Mnesimachos, but it was likely the lands of the Persian nobility. We know from the Arsames' letters and from the letters of Bagavant discussed above, that both Persian satraps and governors had estates in their provinces and elsewhere which they viewed as their private domains. Not even nobles could count on what was theirs, however. Mnesimachos knew that at any time the king could take back the land from him and from anyone he had transferred it to.

The Arsames documents also reveal that king or satrap could claim any estate as his own private land, that inheritance was not automatic. The letter from Arsames concerning Peṭosiri's estate is typical. It demonstrates that upon the death of his father, the son had to request permission from the satrap to inherit his own land. Without this permission, his land was either joined to the estates of the satrap or gifted by the satrap to another. There was no private property, kings, satraps, and governors ruled the areas of their jurisdiction as their own private fiefs.

5. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the new documents from Bactria, together with the Arsames correspondence, the Wadi ed-Daliyeh papyri, and the Mnesimachos inscription reveal the role of local governors in the Achaemenid empire. We see primarily that the governor lacked all autonomy, serving only as the agent of his satrap. Secondly, we see that he had troops at his disposal, either because he served as garrison commander himself, or because he commanded the garrison commanders. The governor, aided by his troops, collected the taxes, put up city walls, made sure that grain was deposited in the storehouse before it rotted, and most of all insured the compliance of the local populace in their new role as serfs on their own land.