

by iconographic precedent than by the artist's wish to create doublets with Astyanax (tondo) and the statue of Athena (N) in the scenes above. Similarly, the rescues of Aithra and Antenor, not found in art before this cup,⁴⁸ may have been developed specifically to contrast with the fate of Priam.

In cases of compositional originality and grandeur in vase-paintings, it is sometimes doubted whether the credit for innovation belongs to the vase-painter. Onesimos, one might argue, did not author the design, but only followed a plan originally executed in a monumental medium, sculpture or wall-painting. Such scepticism is in this case, I believe, unwarranted. The circular geometry of the cup's interior, as I have argued, is highly suitable, indeed conducive to the observed interaction among the Ilioupersis scenes. While we might imagine that a similar depiction of the Ilioupersis existed on a monumental work—a wall painting with similarly circular geometry or a large, round shield—contemporary comparative evidence is lacking.⁴⁹ No doubt, there are many missing links in the history of Ilioupersis iconography, but in this instance I think it unfair to underestimate the contribution of the painter.⁵⁰ If my analysis of the combination of Ilioupersis scenes is valid, then we must credit Onesimos with a deep appreciation of the significance of the images represented and with a remarkable ability not only to transmit tradition, but to shape and even to supplement it according to his own designs.

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⁴⁸ Attempts have been made to identify Aithra's rescue in black-figure vase-paintings, but the identification is doubtful; see Kron (n. 36) nos 59-65. Apart from the Onesimos cup, the earliest certain representation of the scene appears on a red-figure calyx-krater by Myson, BM E458, ARV 239.16, *Para* 349, BA 201, Kron no. 66. The Krater is dated to between 500 and 490 BC and is therefore contemporary with the Onesimos cup.

⁴⁹ Compare the much earlier Kretan bronze shields and Phoenician bowls decorated with concentric bands of figures. The shield on Pheidias' Athena Parthenos seems not to have been decorated according to the geometric scheme employed by Onesimos.

⁵⁰ Onesimos' previous interest in the Ilioupersis theme is demonstrated by his earlier Ilioupersis cup (nn. 15 and 16). The Priam scene in the tondo of the earlier cup (very similar to that of the Getty cup—n. 16) and the exterior scenes of fighting and pursuit (comparable to the fight scenes on the Getty cup—n. 33) perhaps represent earlier stages in Onesimos' development of the iconography.

Ctesias, his royal patrons and Indian swords*

Like his predecessor Herodotus, Ctesias has a great deal to report of marvellous springs, lakes and other bodies of water.¹ Indeed, in one of the most noteworthy tales in his book on India, he describes a remarkable well which produces not water but gold. The story has never been discussed in full. A recent scholar, in fact, in one of the few allusions to it, reproduces the account, but only in part, namely the lines which concern the gold.² The original narrative, however, includes much more, for it deals, in addition, with the iron found at the bottom of the well and with its remarkable properties, as well as with the two swords of this metal which Ctesias allegedly received, one from the queen-mother, the other from the king.

The story deserves to be examined as a whole, for it raises a variety of interesting questions. We want to know such things as its source, whether Ctesias' own imagination has played a major role here, as has been believed,³ whether anything in the tale has a genuine connection with India. Other issues too are involved, namely those that have to do with Ctesias' stay at the Persian court.⁴ Is it at all likely that he was given a sword by the king, quite apart from the one supposedly given by the queen-mother? What was his relationship to his royal patrons? Does this part of his narrative shed any light on the role played by Greek doctors at the Achaemenid court?

Ctesias' tale is known only at second hand from Photius' summary of the *Indica*.⁵ In Jacoby's edition of the fragments of Ctesias it appears as follows (*FGrH* 688 F 45.9):

περὶ τῆς κρήνης τῆς πληρουμένης ἀν' ἔτος ὕγρου χρυσοῦ, ἐξ ἧς ἑκατὸν πρόχοι ὀστράκινοι ἀν' ἔτος ἀρύονται· ὀστρακίνοους δὲ δεῖ εἶναι, ἐπεὶ πῆγνυται ὁ χρυσοῦς ἀπαρυόμενος, καὶ ἀνάγκη τὸ ἀγγεῖον θλάειν καὶ οὕτως ἐξαγαγεῖν αὐτόν. ἡ δὲ κρήνη τετράγωνός ἐστιν, ἑκκαίδεκα μὲν πηχῶν ἢ περιμετρος, τὸ δὲ βάθος ὀργυῖα· ἐκάστη δὲ προχοῇ τάλαντον ἔλκει. καὶ περὶ τοῦ

* I am very grateful to two anonymous referees of the journal for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

¹ K. Karttunen, 'A miraculous fountain in India', *Arctos* xix (1985) 55-65, at 58, draws attention to this predilection of Ctesias. For bibliography on Ctesias' *Indica* see J.M. Bigwood, 'Ctesias' *Indica* and Photius', *Phoenix* xliii (1989) 302-16, at 302 and Bigwood, 'Ctesias' parrot', *CQ* xliii (1993) 321-7.

² P. Lindegger, *Griechische und römische Quellen zum Peripheren Tibet ii* (Zürich 1982) 104. The comments of Karttunen, *India in early Greek literature* (Helsinki 1989) 8-9 n. 18 are very brief.

³ E.g. by Lindegger (n. 2) 104, who also suggests influence by Herodotus. A recent article by J. Romm, 'Belief and other worlds: Ktesias and the founding of the "Indian wonders"' in *Mindscapes: the geographies of imagined worlds*, ed. G.E. Slusser and E.G. Rabkin (Carbondale IL 1989) 121-35, treats the work as in large measure a product of the author's fantasy.

⁴ The story is not mentioned by T.S. Brown, 'Suggestions for a vita of Ctesias of Cnidus', *Historia* xxvii (1978) 1-19, by B. Eck, 'Sur la vie de Ctésias', *REG* ciii (1990) 409-434, or by J. Aubergier, *Ctésias: Histoires de l'orient* (Paris 1991) 4-10, in her comments on Ctesias' life.

⁵ For Photius' emphasis on marvels and other aspects of his summary see Bigwood, 'Ctesias' *Indica*' (n. 1).

10 ἐν τῷ πυθμένι τῆς κρήνης σιδήρου, ἐξ οὗ καὶ
βασιλέως καὶ τὸ ἄλλο παρὰ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως
μητρὸς Παρυσάτιδος. φησὶ δὲ περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι
15 πηγνύμενος ἐν τῇ γῆ νέφους καὶ χαλάζης καὶ
ταῦτά φησι, βασιλέως δις ποιήσαντος.

2 πρόχοι A προχοαὶ M 5 ἐξάγειν ζ (M?) 6 τετρ-
άγωνος om. M 8 καὶ περὶ κτλ.: ἔστι δὲ ἐτέρα
κρήνη ἣτις ἐξάγει σίδηρον κτλ. Mon 11 τὸ ἄλλο A
ἐν M 14 ἀποτρόπαιος ζ (M?)⁶

The following pages examine the passage in detail, beginning with the particularly notable second half. The story is no doubt one which Ctesias claimed to have heard from knowledgeable sources. Elsewhere in his *Indica* (F 45.51), at any rate, he carefully informs the reader that much of what he says is what eye-witnesses report.⁷

I. THE TWO IRON SWORDS

India for Ctesias as for Herodotus is the source of wealth beyond all imagining (see below 139). In the first part of the tale (lines 1-8), we are given details about the vast quantities of gold supplied by the well and about the well itself. Then Photius, who has clearly been attracted by the story, meagre though his account of it is, turns to the iron which the well also produces (lines 8-15). He clearly refers here to the same well, although the unreliable *Monacensis* 287 talks of a second.⁸ Moreover, the iron in question is not something known to Ctesias merely from some informant's report. He had seen it for himself. Indeed, he possessed two swords made of it. In addition, he had also witnessed (ἰδεῖν) a demonstration of the metal's remarkable properties. These last details are clearly included to give credibility to the tale in its entirety. Like other early ethnographers, Ctesias obviously deems eye-witness evidence to have greater weight than hear-say testimony (cf. F 45b = Ael. *NA* xvii 29). Naturally too he is all eagerness to impress the reader with the closeness of his relationship to members of the royal family. Yet, despite this, there is no reason to reject his claims, or at least not all of them.

Ctesias had certainly seen, as he states he has done, items which were Indian. He had seen, for example,

⁶ T. Hägg's review of R. Henry, *Photius, Bibliothèque, GGA* ccxxviii (1976) 32-60, gives a fuller list (46 and 56) of the MSS variants in this passage, none of which affect my argument. He does not comment on the second τῆς in line 1, which also appears in R. Henry's, *Ctésias, La Perse, L'Inde: Les sommaires de Photius* (Bruxelles 1947), though not in his edition of the *Bibliotheca*.

⁷ Cf. throughout the fragments of this work expressions such as 'they say', or occasionally 'the Indians say'; and cf. 'the Bactrians say' in F 45h line 11 (Ael. *NA* iv 27).

⁸ On this manuscript see A. Diller, 'Some false fragments', *Classical studies presented to B.E. Perry* (Chicago 1969) 27-30. Philostratus *VA* iii 45 refers to the gold-producing well as a tall tale. However, his 'stone which behaves like a magnet' must be an allusion to Ctesias' *pantarbe* stone (described in iii 46; cf. 688 F 45.6), not to iron, as is supposed by C. Müller, 'Ctesiae Cnidii fragmenta' (appendix to Didot Herodotus, [Paris 1844]) 89 and by J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Ktesias the Knidian* (Calcutta 1882) 9.

Indian elephants (F 45b = Ael. *NA* xvii 29).⁹ That he should have set eyes on swords from India, or that items made of iron should have found their way from India to Persia at the end of the fifth century, is by no means unthinkable. Iron must certainly have been widely employed in north-west India in Ctesias' life-time.¹⁰ A series of classical authors, beginning with Herodotus (vii 65), refer to Indian use of the metal.¹¹ Indeed, at a comparatively early date, though long after Ctesias' sojourn at the Persian court, India became famous for its high quality steel. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (§6) alludes to the export of iron and steel from this country in the first century AD.¹²

We cannot of course tell from the summary the exact nature of the weapons referred to by Ctesias. The word *xiphos*, possibly the historian's own term, can mean 'sword' or 'dagger'¹³, and Photius supplies no further details. Moreover, we know little about types of sword in use in north-west India at this time, or indeed about the weaponry employed in general, which no doubt varied according to tribe. Indian evidence is meagre, as is that of the Iranian monuments.¹⁴ Reference in Greek

⁹ I discuss what he says about them in 'Aristotle and the elephant again', *AJP* cxiv (1993) 537-55. His description of the parrot (F 45.8) is surely also from personal observation; see Bigwood, 'Ctesias' parrot' (n. 1).

¹⁰ It becomes commonly used between 800 and 500 BC, according to B. and R. Allchin, *The rise of civilization in India and Pakistan* (Cambridge 1982) 345. (See 309 for the controversy about the date of its introduction.)

¹¹ E.g. Ctesias F 45.46 (cf. F 45=Ael. *NA* v 3) and F 45.49 (cf. F 45s=Antig. *Hist. Mir.* 150); Arrian *Ind.* 16.11 (=Nearchus 133 F 11); Diod. ii 36.2 (=Megasthenes 715 F 4; cf. Diod. ii 16.4). Cf. also in Curtius ix 8.1 the 100 talents of white iron (whatever is meant by this) brought, among other gifts, to Alexander by the Malli and Sudracae (Oxydracae) in the lower Punjab.

¹² Ed. L. Casson (Princeton 1989) 114. Indian iron is also listed as a dutiable import under M. Aurelius and Commodus (*Dig.* xxxix 4.16.7).

¹³ On how far Photius' vocabulary is that of the original see Bigwood, 'Ctesias' *Indica*' (n. 1) 306-8. In Herodotus, *xiphos* is applied to the Spartan short sword (vii 224.1), as well as to the *akinakes* or 'Median' dagger (vii 54.2; cf. iii 64.3 and iii 78.5). On the Greek sword in general see J.K. Anderson, *Military theory and practice in the age of Xenophon* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1970) 37-8; cf. Anderson, 'Hoplite weapons and offensive arms', in *Hoplites: the classical Greek battle experience*, ed. V.D. Hanson (London and New York 1991) 15-37 at 25. It is not of course certain that Ctesias talks of Indian swords, rather than swords made in Persia of Indian iron. For bulk metal as a gift see Curtius ix 8.1 (cf. n. 11).

¹⁴ For the Indian evidence see O. von Hinüber, *Arrian* ed. and tr. G. Wirth and O. von Hinüber (Zürich 1985) on Arr. *Ind.* 16.6, and G.N. Pant, *Indian arms and armour* ii (New Delhi 1980) 6 ff. For the identification of the Indian peoples on the Iranian monuments see M. Roaf, 'The subject peoples on the base of the statue of Darius', *CDAFI* iv (1974) 73-160, especially 144-7. Delegates in the processions of 'tribute-bearers' on the Persepolis reliefs are mostly unarmed and their gifts (which include weapons) are not necessarily representative of the area from which they come; see H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'Gifts in the Persian empire' in *Le tribut dans l'empire perse*, ed. P. Briant and C. Herrenschildt (Paris 1989) 129-46 at 136-7. (The weapons brought as gifts by the Indians and Gandarans do not in fact include swords.) The throne-bearers on the royal tombs (see E. Schmidt, *Persepolis* iii [Chicago 1970] 108 ff.) are with one exception armed, in most cases with a sword. It either

authors are few and inconsistent. In his account of Xerxes' army, Herodotus describes the Pactyans and Paricanians and other tribes in the area (vii 67-68) as being equipped with daggers (ἔγχειρτίδια), although he attributes neither sword nor dagger to the Indians and Gandarans (vii 65-66).¹⁵ According to Nearchus (133 F 11 = Arr. *Ind.* 16.9; cf. F 23 = Strabo xv 1.66), Indians generally carried a broad sword three cubits long, which Arrian and Strabo call a μάχατρα.

The evidence may be unsatisfactory. However, there is no doubt about the use of swords in India in early times, and they are certainly an appropriate gift for a Persian king.¹⁶ Weapons, including swords (daggers), are prominent among the 'gifts' of the 'tribute' delegations depicted on the reliefs of Xerxes' Apadana at Persepolis and on similar later reliefs.¹⁷ The Elamites include among their offerings two 'Elamo-Persian' daggers. Two other delegations, the Medes and Delegation 17 (the Sogdians?), each bring a Median dagger (the so-called *akinakes*).¹⁸ We may note, furthermore, that swords and other weapons feature among the gifts brought to King Yudhishthira in a famous episode of the *Mahābhārata* (2 [27] 47.14 ff.).¹⁹

II. THE SWORDS AS GIFTS OF ARTAXERXES II AND PARYSATIS

Gifts received by the Great King were often bestowed in turn on others deemed to be deserving. Ctesias' claim that he was given two swords by his royal patrons is on

hangs from a belt at the waist (or is tucked into the waist-band) or, as in the case of the delegates from the Indic provinces, is suspended from the shoulder. W.J. Vogelsang, *The rise and organisation of the Achaemenid empire* (Leiden 1992) 140 compares the long sword of Arr. *Ind.* 16.9. However, ten throne-bearers in all are given this type of sword and one suspects some stylisation (cf. Schmidt 116).

¹⁵ For the problems of Herodotus' army list see the useful comments of D.M. Lewis, 'Persians in Herodotus', in *The Greek historians: literature and history. Papers presented to A. E. Raubitschek* (Stanford 1985) 101-17. According to Ctesias, the dog-headed Indian tribe acquires *xiphe*, as well as other weapons, by barter and as gifts from the Indian king (F 45.41).

¹⁶ Four items are specifically mentioned in the fragments of Ctesias as gifts of the Indian to the Persian king. Two, i.e. animals (F 45dβ=Ael. *NA* iv 21) and woven materials (F 45pγ=Ael. *NA* iv 46) are among the more common kinds of gifts depicted on the Persepolis reliefs. For the third, a fragrant oil in an alabaster container (F 45.47), compare Cambyses' gift of an alabaster container of myrrh (Hdt. iii 20). For the fourth item, a drug or poison (F 45m=Ael. *NA* iv 41), cf. the *pharmaka* of Polycleitus 128 F 3a (Strabo xv 3.21), and also the aphrodisiac sent by the Indian king Sandrocottus to Seleucus (Phylarchus 81 F 35). H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (n. 14) 129-46 discusses the types of gifts brought by the peoples of the empire and also those bestowed by the king.

¹⁷ See the table in G. Walsler, *Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persepolis* (Berlin 1966) 103.

¹⁸ I follow here the identification of the various delegations given by Walsler (n. 17). On the differences between the two kinds of dagger see P. Calmeyer, 'Greek historiography and Achaemenid reliefs', *Ach. Hist.* ii ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (Leiden 1987) 11-26 at 13.

¹⁹ J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata* ii (Chicago 1975). The epic is believed to have been gradually shaped over the period c. 400 BC to c. 400 AD, its more or less final form being reached in the Gupta period (4th-6th centuries AD); see Karttunen (n. 2) 147.

first appearances a reasonable one, at least as far as Artaxerxes is concerned.²⁰ We do not of course have solid evidence about the exact role and status of Greek doctors at the Achaemenid court, or about the rewards which would be considered appropriate for them.²¹ Our sources do not extend beyond the more or less fanciful anecdotes with which Greek historians entertained their readers. In Herodotus' account of Democedes, for example, the two pairs of gold fetters received as a reward by the doctor, and the coins scooped from the chest full of gold (iii 130), are surely fictional, and a great deal of the rest of the story (iii 129-137).²²

Similarly, much is uncertain about Ctesias' role, for which our information comes almost entirely from Ctesias himself. Since he is not necessarily to be trusted even when it is a question of contemporary events,²³ his statements require a scrutiny which they rarely receive. However, that he was at least among those honoured by the king after the battle of Cunaxa, as he boasts in his history (F 26 = Plut. *Art.* 14.1), is not at all improbable. The ancient authorities disagree on many of the details of the battle, but there is no doubt that during it Ctesias was in attendance on the king and saw to the king's wound, although he may have exaggerated its seriousness and his own role, as he is wont to do.²⁴

We have every reason then to accept that Ctesias was rewarded by the king on this occasion, and doubtless on others as well. But is it likely that he received gifts from the queen-mother, Parysatis, and what would have been the circumstances? The Persian queens, on whom Greek historians lavish so much attention, are shadowy figures. What do we really know of Parysatis? We need to look at least briefly at some of the details of Ctesias' account, and again there is need for a critical approach.²⁵

²⁰ For the golden *akinakes* as a gift of honour from the king see Xen. *Anab.* i 2.27. On redistribution of gifts see Sancisi-Weerdenburg (n. 14) 137 ff.

²¹ H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'Decadence in the empire or decadence in the sources?' *Ach. Hist.* i ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Leiden 1987) 33-45 at 36, stresses our lack of knowledge

²² See A. Griffiths, 'Democedes of Croton: a Greek doctor at the court of Darius', *Ach. Hist.* ii ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (Leiden 1987) 37-51. Eck (n. 4) 413 accepts the large house and the honour of sharing the king's table (Hdt. iii 132).

²³ On the inaccuracies see Bigwood, 'The ancient accounts of the battle of Cunaxa', *AJP* civ (1983) 340-57 at 344-8.

²⁴ On the sources see also H.D. Westlake, 'Diodorus and the expedition of Cyrus', *Phoenix* xli (1987) 241-54. Xen. (*Anab.* i 8.24 ff.), who was not near the king and is not necessarily correct, gives Ctesias' version some support, but disagrees over the gravity of the wound. His Artaxerxes does not withdraw from the battle. On Deinon's account (690 F 17 = Plut. *Art.* 10.1-3), where Artaxerxes apparently does not receive a wound and which seems to reflect Artaxerxes' propaganda, see R.B. Stevenson, 'Lies and invention in Deinon's *Persica*', *Ach. Hist.* ii ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (Leiden 1987) 27-35 at 30-31. Diodorus' account of Artaxerxes' wound (xiv 23.6) is perhaps influenced by Ctesias.

²⁵ This is rightly emphasised in H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg's discussion of Parysatis (n. 21) especially 40-44, and also 'Exit Atossa: images of women in Greek historiography on Persia', in *Images of women in antiquity*², ed. A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (London 1993) 20-33 at 31-33, although she is perhaps too sceptical. On Parysatis see also D.M. Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden 1977) 21-22.

Although Ctesias devotes an enormous amount of space to a lurid recital of Parysatis' intrigues, we do not in fact know, it should first of all be emphasised, how much meaningful contact he had with her or with any of the royal women. He claims in one passage (F 15.51 - Phot.) to have received information from her in person (details about the number of her children and about the date of the birth of Cyrus). It is clear that he wishes to impress the reader with the authenticity of what he reports and with the fact that much of it derives from personal contact.

Yet, sensationalised as his account of her activities may be, not everything is fable. When, for example, he implies that she was a property-owner on a significant scale (F 16.65), he is certainly correct. His testimony, and also of course that of Xenophon (*Anab.* i 4.9; cf. ii 4.27), is corroborated by cuneiform evidence of her property in Babylonia.²⁶ Moreover, it is not unreasonable to believe that she exerted some influence on events behind the scenes. A further reference in Ctesias' history, the second of the two extant allusions to his dealings with her (direct or indirect), deserves to be noted—Ctesias' claim that it was at her instigation that he visited the captive Spartan mercenary Clearchus and attempted to remedy his plight (F 27.69-Phot.; F 28 = Plut. *Art.* 18.3).

The claim is surely plausible enough, for it cannot be supposed that Ctesias visited Clearchus without the influence of someone in high places.²⁷ At any rate, it must be true that Ctesias had contact with the incarcerated mercenary, as he states (F 27.69 - Phot.; F 28 = Plut. *Art.* 18.1-4). His description of Cyrus' rebellion, which glorifies Clearchus, certainly suggests that some of it was inspired by conversation with the man himself.²⁸ Besides, there are the convincing details—Clearchus' appropriately Spartan concern for his hair, for example, or the evidence of his ring. Clearchus gave the ring to Ctesias as a token of friendship, so that he could show it to Clearchus' friends and relatives in Sparta (F 28 = Plut. *Art.* 18.2). Ctesias describes it and its very Laconian device. The information supplied here (see below 139-40) cannot be fantasy.

Ctesias' services to Clearchus could well have earned him the favour of the queen-mother, and this was conceivably the occasion for a reward. However, there is still the question of the specific gift. A sword of Indian iron is scarcely the most obvious present for a Persian queen to give, or for that matter receive, although it should be noted that there is some evidence, tantalisingly meagre though it may be, for weapon-bearing women in India.²⁹ Besides, Parysatis is by no

means the only Iranian woman to be associated with things military. Herodotus' Artaynte after all is promised as a gift an army which she alone should command (ix 109).³⁰ In Ctesias (F 15.55), at the end of the fifth century, we have Teritouchmes' sister, 'skilled with the bow and javelin'. Indeed, a series of warrior women stalk the pages of Greek historians dealing with the East.³¹

III. THE IRON AND ITS MAGICAL PROPERTIES

Parysatis' gift to Ctesias, which seems too peculiar to have been imagined, should not then be dismissed as the historian's fantasy. Rather, it serves to remind us of how little we know of the women of the Achaemenid court. But we must turn now to the equally intriguing next part of the tale of the well (lines 12-15). The iron, which it produced, had, according to Ctesias, remarkable properties. Fixed in the ground, it could avert clouds, hail and whirlwinds.³² Ctesias himself was a witness to these things when the king performed them twice.

Commentators of last century saw here an allusion to iron's magnetic properties, not well understood at this date, or to the use of the metal as a lightning conductor.³³ However, the reference is surely to some ritual performed with the aim of controlling the forces of nature, and involving the magical powers of iron. Tales of attempts to manipulate the elements by appeals to some deity, or by some kind of 'magic', are after all related of many different peoples, including the Persians of the Achaemenid period or their kings.³⁴ Herodotus, for example, in a well-known passage (vii 191), reports efforts by the Magi to quell a storm at Cape Sepias by sacrifices to the wind (cf. i 131) and by incantations.³⁵

1963) women armed with bows guard the king's bed-chamber. (On the date of this work, some of the information in which may go back to c. 300 BC, see Karttunen [n. 2] 146-7.)

³⁰ Discussed by H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'A typically Persian gift (Hdt. ix 109)', *Historia* xxxvii (1988) 372-4.

³¹ E.g. Tomyris in Hdt. i 205-214, Atossa daughter of Ariaspes in Hellanicus 4 F 178a, Zarinæa and Sparethra in Ctesias (F 5 = Diod. ii 34.3-5, F 8a and F 8b, and F 9.3), to name a few. For archaeological evidence suggesting that some Scythian and Sauromatian women took part in military ventures, see A.I. Melyukova, *Cambridge history of early inner Asia*, ed. D. Sinor (Cambridge 1990) 106 and 111-12, and R. Rolle, *The world of the Scythians*, Eng. tr. (London 1989) 86-91.

³² Photius presumably means a sword of this iron is planted in the ground. $\pi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\eta\rho$ is translated by McCrindle (n. 8) 9 as 'thunderstorm', and by C. Lassen, *Indische Alterthumskunde* ii (Leipzig 1874) 564 as 'Blitzstrahl'; cf. LSJ s.v. $\pi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\eta\rho$ 'hurricane...attended by lightning'. Whatever its meaning here, at F 45.18 it clearly means 'tornado' or 'whirlwind'. C. Melville, 'Meteorological hazards and disasters in Iran: a preliminary survey to 1950', *Iran* xx (1984) 113-150 collects data from the seventh century AD onwards on the destructiveness of rain, hail, thunderstorms, dust-storms and the like in Iran.

³³ For the first view, see Baehr as reported by Müller (n. 8) 89; for the second, see Lassen (n. 32) 564.

³⁴ See Sir J.G. Frazer, *The golden bough*³ i (London 1911) 244-331.

³⁵ Herodotus adds that they also sacrificed to the Greek local deities, Thetis and the Nereids. Additional classical references to Magi as manipulators of the weather are given by W. Fiedler, *Antiker Wetterzauber* (Stuttgart 1931) 19-21. For similar attempts on the part of Indian brahmins see Fiedler 17 and 45.

²⁶ See M.W. Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and empire* (Istanbul 1985) 63-64, and for further discussion, P. Briant, 'Dons de terres et de villes: l'Asie mineure dans le contexte achéménide', *REA* lxxxvii (1985) 53-72 at 59-60, and G. Cardascia, 'La ceinture de Parysatis', *Marchands, diplomates et empereurs: Études . . . offertes à Paul Garelli*, ed. D. Charpin and F. Joannès (Paris 1991) 363-9.

²⁷ It is well-known that Ctesias acted as an intermediary for Artaxerxes in the last years of his stay in Persia (F 30 - Phot., and F 32 = Plut. *Art.* 21-4), though he no doubt greatly exaggerated his own importance.

²⁸ See Bigwood (n. 23) 345 and 356.

²⁹ Megasthenes (715 F 32 Strabo xv 1.55) describes the king hunting with an escort of armed women; in the *Arthashastra* attributed to Kautilya (i 21.1; tr. R.P. Kangle, Bombay

Earlier in his narrative (vii 113-114), he had alluded to their endeavours to placate the River Strymon by similar methods. Other tales concern the Persian king. Polyaeus (vii 12), for example, drawing on an unknown source, describes how Darius on one occasion, in desperate straits in the wastes of Scythia, planted his sceptre in the ground, putting round it his candys, tiara and diadem, and then prayed to Apollo to save his army by sending rain.³⁶

Ctesias' story is surely a variation on the same theme—an attempt to curb the destructiveness of nature in this case by means of iron, a metal widely believed to possess the power to repel evil spirits, disease and ill of all kinds, including harmful weather.³⁷ Such superstitions are alluded to by a number of classical authors and, it should be added, are sometimes given an oriental origin. Pliny (*HN* xxviii 47), for example, attributes a belief about the magical properties of iron to the Magi. The *Geoponica* (vii 11; cf. *Geop.* xiv 11.5) ascribe to Zoroaster statements about the protection which iron affords to wine against the evil effects of thunder and lightning.³⁸ In Herodotus, too, if we may return to much earlier times, the famous tales of Xerxes casting fetters into the Hellespont (vii 35), or a Persian *akinakes* (vii 54), which do not of course specifically mention iron and which Herodotus possibly did not understand, may in their original form have involved similar beliefs about this metal.

Ctesias' account of some activities in which the king participated and during which iron was planted in the ground may genuinely reflect oriental beliefs. Moreover, Ctesias may well be describing a scene which, as he says, he himself witnessed. Although we need not suppose that he necessarily understood what he saw, there is certainly no reason to disbelieve the claim. So far as we know, he did not assert that he actually saw the iron dispel the baneful weather. The apotropaic qualities of the iron could be something that he merely claimed to have been told.

³⁶ Discussed by P. Calmeyer, 'Der "Apollon" des Dareios', *AMI* xxii (1989) 125-30 and by W. Nagel and B. Jacobs, 'Königsgötter und Sonnengötter bei altiranischen Dynastien', *IA* xxiv (1989) 337-89.

³⁷ See Sir J.G. Frazer, *The golden bough*³ iii (London 1911) 232-6, citing Indian beliefs among others, and I. Mundle *RAC* vi (1964) s.v. 'Erz' 479-490. For the sword in magic see R. Mouterde, 'Le glaive de Dardanos: objets et inscriptions magiques de Syrie', *Mélanges de l'université Saint-Joseph* xv.3 (Beirut 1930) 61 n.2 and Mundle *op. cit.* 489. Cf. also the apotropaic seven swords of adamant which King Ganges fixes in the earth (Philostratus *VA* iii 21), although it is not certain that there is anything Indian or oriental about this story. According to G. Anderson, *Philostratus* (Beckenham, Kent 1986) 211 the context is Pythagorean. For the mixture of Indian and other ideas in this section of the work see Anderson 199-220.

³⁸ According to the *Denkard* vii 5.9 (Pahlavi Texts v p. 76, tr. W.E. West), a compilation of the 9th or 10th centuries AD, Zoroaster taught rites to dispel hail and similar evils. For the beliefs attributed to the Magi and to Zoroaster by the Graeco-Roman world see especially R. Beck, 'Thus spake not Zarathustra: Zoroastrian pseudograph of the Graeco-Roman world', in M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A history of Zoroastrianism* iii (Leiden 1991) 491-565. Earlier views are found in J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés*, 2 vols. (Paris 1938).

IV. THE WELL AND ITS GOLD

The part of Ctesias' story which we have so far discussed is wholly independent of anything in Herodotus. It is reasonable to believe that most, if not all, of it derives from what Ctesias heard or saw. However, there remain the first lines of the tale (1-8), the description of the well itself and the gold which it produces.³⁹ Can we plausibly argue that this too is something that the historian was told by his informants?⁴⁰

Characteristically, Ctesias' description of the well is very precise. It is square, 16 cubits in circumference (7-8 m.) and a fathom deep (1.8 m.).⁴¹ From it 100 earthenware vessels of liquid gold, each weighing a talent, are drawn off every year. However, the very exactness of the statistics perhaps gives rise to uneasiness about how authentic they are. Moreover, the resemblance of other details to Herodotus' account of how the Persian king deals with the silver and gold brought to him as tribute may engender further doubts. Ctesias writes of the need to collect the gold in earthenware vessels, so that when the gold solidifies, the container (*ἀργεῖον*) can be broken off. In Herodotus (iii 96), the metal is melted and poured into ceramic jars. Then the jar (*ἀργός*) is removed.

Herodotus' description has clearly some connection with techniques known to have been employed in the great financial centres of the ancient Near East, including those of the Achaemenid empire.⁴² Admittedly, Herodotus writes of a method of storing the tribute, but this must be a misunderstanding. The allusion must be to some process of refining silver and gold in clay receptacles to ensure uniform quality.⁴³ It may seem as if Ctesias for his part is merely indulging in a practice of which he has often been accused, namely that of borrowing details from Herodotus and inventing the rest.⁴⁴ However, the two narratives, we should note, are not identical. In Ctesias we are dealing with a method of drawing off liquid gold, not melting down precious

³⁹ For gold cf. also his tale of the griffins in F 45.26 (Phot.) and F 45h (Ael. *NA* iv 27). For gold production in general in ancient India see O. von Hinüber (n. 14) 1123-24 on Arr. *Ind.* 15.4. The gold of Dardistan in the north is discussed by P. Bernard, 'Les Indiens de la liste des tributs d'Hérodote', *Stud. Iran.* xvi (1987) 177-91, and somewhat differently by W. J. Vogelsang (n. 14) 204-6.

⁴⁰ Karttunen (n. 2) 8-9 n. 18, is tempted to connect it with Nuristani traditions about magic lakes containing precious items. For these see Schuyler Jones, 'Silver, gold and iron. Concerning Katara, urei, and the magic lakes of Nuristan', *KUML Årbog for Jysk arkeologisk selskab* 1973-74, 251-61 (English version) at 255-8 and G. Tucci, 'On Swāt. The Dards and connected problems', *East and West* xxvii (1977) 9-103 at 28-29. One tradition goes back to the sixth century AD at least.

⁴¹ Cf. the well in F 45.49 and also the Ethiopian pool (F1=Diod. ii 14.4). In both cases we have the label τετραγώνος, as well as measurements.

⁴² See A. L. Oppenheim, 'A fiscal practice of the ancient Near East', *JNES* vi (1947) 116-20, and D. Asheri, *Erodoto, le storie, libro* iii (Milan 1990) 322-23 on Hdt. iii 96.

⁴³ Cf. P. Bernard (n. 39) 180-81. For evidence of such practices from the Lydian period at Sardis see G.M.A. Hanfmann, *Sardis from prehistoric to Roman times* (Cambridge, MA 1983) 34-41.

⁴⁴ See especially F. Jacoby, *RE* xi (1922) s.v. 'Ktesias' 2059 and, for this story, Lindegger (n. 2) 104.

metals (silver as well as gold) for storage. His containers (πρόχοι ὀστράκινοι) hold one talent, when Herodotus' πῖθοι κερύμνοι are of unspecified capacity. Also the total weight is one hundred talents, not the three hundred and sixty of Herodotus (iii 94). In short, Ctesias' account, which reflects what must have been widespread practice,⁴⁵ need not depend on Herodotus at all. Ctesias could well be reproducing a tall tale which he has heard, one which he has perhaps augmented with some details of his own invention.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Ctesias no doubt impressed his contemporaries with his account of the marvels of the well and this would have been his aim. But his tale is no less interesting for the modern reader. On the one hand, it tells us something of Ctesias' relationship to his royal patrons, who surely held him in some esteem. There is after all no real reason to reject his claim that he was given a sword by the king. There is likewise no real reason to disbelieve in the gift of a second sword, this one from the queen-mother, whose importance he certainly exaggerates, although it is not to be doubted that she exerted some influence behind the scenes.

But we also learn from the tale of the well something of Ctesias' methods as an ethnographer, for analysis of the story as a whole reveals that it is by no means mere fantasy on the basis of a description in Herodotus. We have seen that a significant portion of what Ctesias relates here is very possibly something that he was told. This is not to suggest of course that he listened critically, or that he refrained from embroidering on what he heard. Nor should we assume that misunderstandings are absent. Indeed, these are only too likely, given the problems posed by language and the probability that Indian information was relayed to the historian by intermediaries, and intermediaries who were not necessarily well-informed. Other details in the story, as we noted, plausibly derive from what he saw, although again we need not believe that he observed carefully or understood everything that he observed. Furthermore, the iron swords, which could very well be Indian, are but one of a number of Indian items which Ctesias could have seen at the court and which he describes. There is little that is certainly fictional in this passage of his *Indica*.

APPENDIX: CLEARCHUS' RING

The description of Clearchus' ring (F 28 = Plut. *Art.* 18.2) is worth noting. Engraved on the seal, so Ctesias tells us, according to Plutarch's version of these events, were dancing Karyatides. Plutarch of course means, not the architectural support figures sometimes called Kary-

⁴⁵ Although it was not necessarily Indian practice. Ctesias' griffin story implies that some Indians knew how to refine gold; see F 45h lines 31-2 (Ael. *NA* iv 27). However, Strabo xv 1.30, perhaps following Onesicritus (134 F 21), and speaking of the territory of Sopeithes, comments on the primitive technology of the Indians (of the area?), while Megasthenes (715 F 23b=Strabo xv 1.44) says something similar of the Derdae (Dards). For the evidence relating to early gold-mining see especially F.R. Allchin, 'Upon the antiquity and methods of gold-mining in ancient India', *JESHO* v (1962) 195-211.

atides, but the Spartan girls who danced every year in honour of Artemis Karyatis at Karyae on the borders of Laconia and Arcadia, and who were famous throughout antiquity.⁴⁶ Pausanias alludes to them in a couple of passages (iii 10.7 and iv 16.9), making clear that they were Lacedaemonian. Their connection with Lacedaemon is also evident from references of Lucian (*Salt.* 10) and of Pollux (iv 104).⁴⁷

Some additional evidence needs to be considered here, for the girls were also, it is believed, frequently depicted in art. According to Pliny (*HN* xxxvi 23), a work of the fourth century sculptor Praxiteles, which could be seen at Rome, was entitled *Caryatides* and the context clearly shows that dancers are meant. Scholars have connected *Karyatides* too with the so-called *kalathiskos* dancing girls, the dancers wearing short tunics and basket-like head-dresses, not infrequently seen on reliefs, vases and other objects from about the middle of the fifth century onwards. In addition, a much discussed work of the sculptor Callimachus in the later years of the fifth century, the 'saltantes Lacaenae' (Pliny *HN* xxxiv 92), has been thought by many to represent them.⁴⁸

These identifications may oversimplify the evidence. However, girls dancing are certainly seen frequently on gems and rings. Dancing maenads are a particularly common motif, but other types of dancers also occur,⁴⁹ and more than one figure may be depicted. We may note the ring with girl dancing (a *kalathiskos* dancer?) from the Spartan colony of Tarentum and dating to the end of the fifth century, or the *kalathiskos* dancer on a gold earring of the end of the fourth century in Berlin, as well as the two dancers on one side of a ring of the classical period from South Russia.⁵⁰ Clearchus' ring, as described by Ctesias, certainly bears a plausible Laconian device and one which is very appropriate to its Spartan owner.

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⁴⁶ On the cult of Artemis Karyatis see S. Wide, *Lakonische Kulte* (Stuttgart 1893) 102-3 and 108 and C. Calame, *Les choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque* i (Rome 1977) especially 264-76. E. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Karyatide*, (Würzburg 1982) 14-32 reviews some of the literary evidence for the term 'Karyatides' and also comments on the problem of the relationship of the dancing girls to the architectural support figures.

⁴⁷ Statius *Theb.* iv 225 refers to their singing.

⁴⁸ On these identifications see W. Fuchs, *Die Vorbilder der neuattischen Reliefs*, *JDAI* Erg. H. 20 (1959) 91-92 and Schmidt (n. 46) 23. Fuchs gives some well-known examples of *kalathiskos* dancing girls and bibliographical information in n. 53 (pp. 91-92). Further examples and bibliography in A.B. Cook, *Zeus* iii.2 (Cambridge 1940) 990-1012.

⁴⁹ For maenads see J. Boardman, *Greek gems and finger rings* (London 1970) 216. Boardman no. 167 depicts a 'mantle-dancer'; no. 409 (Arcadian) depicts a dancer with tambourine. Dancers also appear in nos. 566 and 1029.

⁵⁰ See Boardman (n. 49) for the first (no. 718) and for the third (233, pl. 822). For the second (from S. Russia) see Cook (n. 48) 1009 and A. Greifenhagen, *Antike Kunstwerke* (Berlin 1960) 30, pl. 93.2. Cook (1011) also refers to similar figures on gems of Roman imperial date.