

The Winged Figure of Pasargadae

Courtesy of: **Simon Chew & Nick Sekunda**
The Persian Army



The winged figure has been interpreted as either a winged genii, or as some form of idealized portrait of Cyrus the Great, possibly representing the King's 'Fortune'. Some interpretation such as this seems inevitable, given that the figure wears a crown and Elamite royal robe. 'Resting on the long twisted horns of the Abyssinian ram (*Ovis longipes palaeo-egyptiacus*), between two opposed uraei of the headdress consists of three bunches of reeds, each surmounted by a solar disc and each set against a background of ostrich feathers. Three solar discs with concentric circles mark the bottom of the reed bundles.... The body of the figure is clad in a full-length, fringed robe that passes over the right arm. On both the vertical and horizontal hems the fringe is backed by a narrow border of rosettes, each rosette having eight petals and eight minute sepals' (David Stronach, *Pasargadae-1978* p.50). The crown, though ultimately of Egyptian origin, seems to have been borrowed from the repertoire of Syno-Phoenician art.

The Elamite royal robe continued to be used at least until the later stages of the reign of Cyrus. The so-called 'Nabonidus Chronicle', a cuneiform document dealing with the history of Babylonia during this period, records an incident which seems to have taken place during the coronation ceremony attended by Cambyses on the 15th March 538 BC, inaugurating the period of co-regency of Cyrus and Cambyses in Babylon (cf. Jerome Peat, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 41-1989 pp.199-216). The god Nabu was the vizier of the Babylonian divine pantheon, and it seems that the king of Babylon would be given the sceptre of Nabu as part of the coronation ceremony. The tablet is, unfortunately, damaged at this point, but according to an interpretation of A. L. Oppenheim (*The Cambridge History of Iran 2- 1985* p.554), Cambyses went to the temple of Nabu where the priest of Nabu refused to hand over the sceptre of the god to Cambyses on account of the Elamite dress he wore. The chronicle then makes mention of spears and quivers. The Elamites were hated at Babylon, where memories of their cruelty during an earlier period of occupation persisted.

At some point subsequent to this incident, indeed possibly as a result of it, the Elamite royal robe was abandoned and replaced by a new royal garment, the so called 'Achaemenid robe'. Arrian (*Anab.* 6.29.6) tells us that Cyrus' body lay in a golden sarcophagus. Placed on it were a kantung (Median Cloak), and besides tunics of Babylonian workmanship, Median anaxyrides (trousers) and 'hyacinth-dyed' garments (a shade of dark blue), some others of purple and of other colors, and neck-torques, akinaka (daggers), and earrings of gold set with jewels. It is possible that either the tunics of Babylonian workmanship, or the hyacinth-dyed garments, could be examples of the "Achaemenid robe" and could be taken to indicate that it was adopted as royal dress before the death of Cyrus the Great. The 'Achaemenid robe' was used by the king and his army alike, but its origin is unknown. Some regard it as of Elamite origin, while others think it was native Persian (Calmeyer AMI21(1988) pp. 27-51).

source:

http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/hakhamaneshian/Cyrus-the-great/winged_figure_of_pasargard.htm

Historical Site of Mirhadi Hoseini

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