

**Lightly edited Google translate of a Russian-language review of “Armed Force in the Teispid-Achaemenid Empire” in Memnon (St. Petersburg) 21 (2021) pp. 212-215 by A. Nefedkin**

Although the Achaemenid kingdom and its culture have been the subject of study by researchers of various specialties for more than one century, there has not yet been a scientific monograph that analyzed the military affairs of this world power of the 6th-4th centuries BCE. Only in 1992 were two popular science, richly illustrated books about the Achaemenid army written by specialist historians Duncan Head and Nicholas Sekunda<sup>[1]</sup> published at once. However, both because of the genre and because of the small volume (72 and 64 pages, respectively), these books are not strictly scientific.

Finally, in 2021, the book “Armed Forces in the Teispo-Achaemenid Empire: Past Approaches, Future Projects” was published. The author of the work is Canadian orientalist Sean Gavin William Menning, a graduate of the University of Victoria (2009) and Calgary (2013), who in 2018 defended the eponymous doctoral (PhD) dissertation at the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Innsbruck (Austria), written under the guidance of Professor Robert Rollinger<sup>1</sup>.

Compositionally, the book is divided into seven chapters: the first is historiographical, considering research from the works of Eduard Meier (1890s) to the present (p. 21-64), the second is about the army itself, its weapons (p. 65-114), the third is about the royal ideology of war (p. 115-154), the fourth is about the composition of the militia, according to cuneiform sources, which show that the mobilization took place according to local laws (p. 155-221), the fifth chapter is devoted to the description and classification of archaeological remains in various regions of the empire, and the level of technology, according to the author, in the East, was not inferior to the Western (p. 223-259), the sixth chapter examines tactics reconstructed according to the information of ancient authors (p. 261-347), the seventh chapter is the conclusion (p. 349-358). The book ends with an extensive bibliography (pp. 359-415) and indexes (pp. 418-437).

The main goal of his monograph is to show the Achaemenid army through the prism of Eastern, and not Greek (i.e. Western) sources, which are usually used by historians. The author analyzes four main types of sources: Persian inscriptions, cuneiform tablets, classical literature and archaeological artifacts. Only by confirming the descriptions of the Hellenic authors by Eastern documents, one can present an objective picture. Moreover, for lack of time, the author refused a detailed analysis of works of art and information about the fleet (p. 61-63).

The work is not a systematic description of the military institutions of the empire, but is modeled on the well-known book of the French historian Pierre Briand “History of the Persian Empire from Cyrus to Alexander”<sup>1</sup> according to

the problematic principle, considering the issues themselves, their historiography and interpretations. In general, the author identified five existing approaches to the study of the Achaemenid military system: classical synthetic and classical critical (depending on the attitude of the researcher to ancient sources), oriental (comparison with other eastern empires of antiquity and the Middle Ages), Iranian (consideration of Persian pre-Islamic culture as a whole), Assyriological (study of cuneiform documents) and proposed to create a fifth synthetic one, essentially consisting of a combination of all the existing ones (p. 350-358).

Sh. Manning, following the modern comparative approach to the analysis of ancient military affairs "Face of Battle", suggests using it (p. 264), widely using historical analogies in the book (p. 195, 206-209, 254-255, 276-277, 303, 315, 319-320, 323-331, 346). Naturally, the author, as a Sumerian and Akkadologist, is especially close to the Assyrian army, which he rightly regards as the predecessor of the Persian one (ch. 2). However, if comparisons with the Assyrian army are quite appropriate, then comparisons with the British army of the 19th century. (p. 206-207, 210) or with the battle of Prokhorovka in 1943 (p. 324) seem to be rather free. The author's doubts about the traditional comparison of Greek long and Persian short copies (Hdt., V,49; VII,61; 211) do not look convincing either, since, according to S. Manning, the Persians had different types of these weapons (p. 278-282). Indeed, the spears were different in length, but Herodotus speaks of the more commonly used weapon. Even less likely is the existence of scythed chariots in Mesopotamia by 480 BC. e. (p. 278) - they are not in the description of the army of Xerxes, where the inhabitants of Mesopotamia served (Hdt., VII, 63.1). The author clearly did not understand the typical Persian battle formation: his assumption that the usual Persian battle formation in battle had long intervals and was mobile seems unlikely (pp. 305-307). The formation of large wicker shields along the front from the "wall" and the archers following behind can hardly be considered a discharged formation. It is also not worth supporting the comparison of the armies of the Persians with the Assyrians, who had an army of 120,000 people (pp. 320-322, 329), the territory of the Persian Empire is much like an extension and there is little doubt that a specially assembled army should be larger. Also, the practical absence of illustrative material should be attributed to the comments - there are only five maps and images in the book of 437 pages (three maps and two drawings)!

However, these specific remarks do not in the least detract from the importance of the work under consideration for the study of the military institutions of the ancient East in general and the Persian Empire in particular. After all, I repeat, the book, in fact, became the first scientific monograph on the Achaemenid army, which deals with various aspects related to the latter. Moreover, unlike traditional studies, the author seeks to use all groups of sources, while relying on eastern, mainly Mesopotamian, material, which successfully complements and expands our knowledge of the Achaemenid state and its army.