

UDC 391:94(35)

## ACHAEMENID *AKINAKES*: ORIGINS AND TYPES

*M. Moshtagh Khorasani*

PhD (Linguistics)

Lecturer and Professor of Intercultural Management and Ethical Leadership  
Frankfurt School of Finance and Management

Adickesallee 32-34, 60322 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

International School of Management

Mörfelder Landstraße 55, 60598 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

[Manouchehr@moshtaghkhorasani.com](mailto:Manouchehr@moshtaghkhorasani.com)

ORCID: 0000-0002-7663-1963

The present paper deals with a description and classification of the Achaemenid short sword *akinakes*. The Achaemenid *akinakes* was most probably influenced by the Scythians or the Sakas. Hence, the paper provides a brief discussion on other types of *akinakes* as well. There were longer examples of *akinakes* used by the Scythians, but the archaeological examples of Achaemenid *akinakes* and also their depictions on Achaemenid stone reliefs tend to depict short swords. Stone reliefs in Persepolis, Apadana, and other Persian sites show two types of Achaemenid short swords. One type is hung via a cord attached to an ear-shaped suspension system of the scabbard mouth, resembling the same suspension system used by Scythians and other nations influenced by them. The other type is tucked in the sash or the belt. The present paper argues that although these swords depicted on Achaemenid reliefs use two different suspension systems, they should be both considered as *akinakes* in the Persian cultural context. The stone reliefs show different decorative elements for each type of *akinakes* as well. It is not clear why some of them were left undecorated on the reliefs. It could be an artistic convention or it could be that they were wiped off due to climate changes. On the other hand, others are elaborately decorated. The

© 2022 M. Moshtagh Khorasani; Published by the A. Yu. Krymskyi Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS of Ukraine on behalf of *The Oriental Studies*. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

paper also makes a comparative study between some Achaemenid swords kept in the National Museum of Iran and some western museums, and the *akinakai* depicted on Achaemenid stone reliefs. Hence, the present paper offers a new classification of Achaemenid *akinakai* represented on stone reliefs and compare them to some archaeological examples.

**Keywords:** *akinakes*, Achaemenid sword, Achaemenid Empire, Achaemenids, Scythians, Sakas

## 1. Introduction

The Achaemenids did not use long swords, but they used short swords called *akinakes*. They were no longer than 40 to 50 cm [Zoka 1971, 69]. We should note that this sword was not only used by Achaemenids but by Scythians and other nations as well. In the Scythian world, the *akinakes* was an object of worship representing the god of war. Due to the wide geographical stretch of its use linking the farthest grounds from the Danube to the Yellow River, different styles of *akinakai* existed that not only varied in ornamentation and shape but also length [Topal 2021a, 557]. Hence, the length of different *akinakai* can vary between 20 to 70 cm, and some of them are even longer<sup>1</sup>.

The name *akinakes* is of Greek origin and is written as ἀκινάκης that was used by the Greeks to refer to this type of Iranian sword [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. However, the ancient Iranian word for *akinakes* is unknown [Pur Davud 1969, 43]. The origins of this word can either be traced back to the Scythian language or the Old Persian. Lebedynsky believes that the term *akinakes* can also be found in the Sogdian language, which is another Iranian language from Central Asia, such as *kyn'k* [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. Most probably the term *akinakes* was used as a general term for “sword” back then, but in today’s specialist literature, it is used to describe this type of short sword<sup>2</sup>. Such an assumption might create confusion and misunderstanding as will be explained. The origins of this type of sword are not clear, but it appears that its original creation and appearance happened at the beginning of the Scythian period [Lebedynsky 2008, 39]. Although there are many publications on the Scythian *akinakes*<sup>3</sup>, the

<sup>1</sup> See: [Lebedynsky 2008, 38; Topal 2021a, 560].

<sup>2</sup> See: [Lebedynsky 2008, 38].

<sup>3</sup> See: [Erdan 2021; Gorelik 2003; Lebedynsky 2008; Topal 2021a; 2021b; 2019a; 2019b] for some references.

publications dedicated to a systematic study of Achaemenid *akinakes* are scant as they show Achaemenid *akinakes* as part of a larger collection of Achaemenid artifacts<sup>4</sup>. There are also some individual parts of Achaemenid *akinakai* in different museums, for example, see the pommel of an Achaemenid *akinakes* from the Musée du Louvre (AO 2757), a scabbard chape of an *akinakes* from the British Museum (132925), and a sword sheath from the British Museum (123923). There is also an excavated Achaemenid *akinakes* that is kept in the National Museum of Iran [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 395]. The same museum has also purchased Achaemenid *akinakes*, such as an example with the museum number 69324 [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, *Cat.* 50] and another ceremonial golden *akinakes* with the museum inventory number 1322 [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 392–393, *Cat.* 49]. The purpose of this research is to analyze different Achaemenid *akinakai* that are depicted on Achaemenid rock reliefs and compare them to a few pieces of Achaemenid *akinakes* that are kept in European, Iranian, and American museums to find similarities and differences. To my knowledge, no systematic study of Achaemenid *akinakai* depicted on Achaemenid rock reliefs has been conducted so far. Thus, the present paper tries to offer the first classification of these depictions. Generally, the classification of *akinakai* is based on the following characteristics: a) the shape of the hilt and pommel, b) blade shape and c) distinguishing “cultural types”<sup>5</sup>. I will analyze the Achaemenid *akinakai* based on these three features with the addition of the following characteristics: d) shape of the scabbard and e) suspension method of the *akinakes*.

## **2. The origins of the sword *akinakes***

It is often assumed that the Achaemenid *akinakes* should have been influenced by the Scythian *akinakes*. Based on the fact that Greeks believed that the *akinakes* was a traditional sword of Persians and Lydians, early research also suggested a Persian origin for the *akinakes* that was spread via the Caucasus to the northern territories. But chronological data negates such a hypothesis as the images of *akinakai* from Persepolis or even the scabbard of *akinakes* found in the Oxus treasure could not be attributed a date earlier than the

---

<sup>4</sup> See: [Curtis 2012; 2004; Moorey 1980].

<sup>5</sup> See: [Topal 2021a, 559].

6<sup>th</sup> century BC, whereas the early Scythian *akinakai* are older than these Persian prototypes<sup>6</sup>. The chronological scheme for Scythian *akinakai* is divided into the following major eras: a) Early Scythian period (7<sup>th</sup> – early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC), b) the Middle Scythian period (mid 6<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC), and the Classical period (5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century BC) [Topal 2019b, 143–144].

As with any other sword type, we should note that cultures influence each other and adopt a certain design. Later, they add their domestic cultural elements to it. There are different theories regarding the origins of *akinakes*. Even assuming the Scythian origin of the *akinakes* is challenging as the origins of the Scythian culture are unclear and have provided a source of academic debate since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century [Topal 2021a, 559]. Generally, according to Topal [2021a, 559–560], there are two major trends:

a) The Central Asian origin of the Scythian *akinakes* advocated by Terenozhkin, who claimed that the early forms of *akinakes* can be found among late Bronze Age – early Iron Age weapons of the Minusinsk Basin (Hollow). The hypothesis of Terenozhkin was based on the idea that Karasuk daggers, which were close to Cimmerian weapons, were the prototypes that could have influenced the creation of new weapon types in the North Caucasus [Topal 2021a, 559–560]. Although Murzin shared this view, he warned that the assumption of Karasuk origin of Scythian *akinakes* is based on assemblages that have no firm dating, and these hoards did not contain any long swords in the Near East or South Siberia. On the other hand, making long swords was well established in the Pontic Scythia. Additionally, Karasuk casters did not know the technology of making bi-metallic daggers and swords, and thus the makers who made daggers and swords using this technology could have not borrowed that technology from Karasuk makers [Topal 2015, 30].

b) The association of the Scythian *akinakes* with the evolution of North Caucasian daggers of the Kabardino-Pyatigorsk type whose origin was connected with the Karasuk traditions [Topal 2021a, 559–560]. Persian *akinakes* could be seen as one variant of these types [Topal 2015, 30]. However, even this theory can be challenged as the close resemblance between North Caucasian daggers and swords from Karasuk-Tagar and Scythian daggers and swords can be traced

<sup>6</sup> See: [Topal 2015, 30].

back to the very fact that first Karasuk-Cimmerian community used their weapons and then the Scythian-Siberian community entered the territory and used their own weapons [Topal 2015, 30]. In an earlier publication, Topal [2013, 7] gave credence more to this possibility although even back then he pointed at the role of Transcaucasia, where Scythian swords and daggers were imported or made based on samples from the North Caucasus.

Lebedynsky [2008, 38] also refers to these two major hypotheses regarding the origins of the sword *akinakes* and states that some researchers assume that *akinakes* originates from Caucasian daggers from the Bronze Age. Others assume they might come from Cimmerian daggers and others believe that they originated from Karasuk daggers. Gorelik [2003] believes that triangular blades are inspired by Caucasian examples and the *akinakes* swords with converging blades are influenced by Karasuk daggers<sup>7</sup>. The guard of *akinakes* vaguely resembles certain Caucasian or Cimmerian models, and one can find it on very ancient bronze prototypes in the Caucasus [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. On the other hand, certain bronze arms from the farther eastern regions of the steppe show a guard with two small downward quillons, and this feature might have influenced the guard of the *akinakes* later [Lebedynsky 2008, 39]. Lebedynsky [2008, 39] believes that the manner of carrying this short sword is the same method used by “the First Nomads” that used to hang them from their belt, but adding a hole in the scabbard ear of the *akinakes* seems to be an improved feature of the *akinakes*, and hence he believes that *akinakes* is an original creation of the beginning of the Scythian period. The determination of the geographical origin and the diffusion of this weapon seem to be problematic<sup>8</sup>. On the one hand, many Scythian cultural elements seem to come from the west due to the Scythian migration from Siberia to Central Asia. *Akinakes* spread faster in the west compared to the eastern regions [Lebedynsky 2008, 39]. Topal [2021a, 563] offers a detailed classification of Scythian *akinakai* as follows: a) Early Scythian forms and their reflection in the west of the Scythian world (bronze *akinakai* and early Scythian scabbards, Kerlermes type and its “western” variations), b) *akinakai* from the middle Scythian period, c) antennae of Scythian *akinakai*, d) classical Scythia

---

<sup>7</sup> See also: [Lebedynsky 2008, 38].

<sup>8</sup> See: [Lebedynsky 2008, 39].

and “golden fall” of the Scythian sword, and e) Danube region: Chronology of local groups<sup>9</sup>.

### 3. Characteristics of an *akinakes*

The general form of *akinakes* seems to resemble each other. But as far as the details of *akinakai* are concerned, we can distinguish between the following characteristics of this weapon:

a) There are different types of guards: i) a guard resembling a reversed stylized heart placed upside down, and ii) a guard resembling a double mustache. The point of contact between the guard and the blade looks like a triangular indentation [Lebedynsky 2008, 38, 42]. The heart-shaped hilt is also described as kidney-shaped referring to the Vetterfelde type of *akinakes*<sup>10</sup>. The term kidney-shaped hilt is also used to refer to the massive hilt of single-edged *akinakai* [Topal 2019a, 200].

b) The length of the *akinakes* varies from 20 cm to 60 cm. It means that even longer swords were made following the same pattern [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. Based on an analysis of a sample of 2100 *akinakai*, Topal [2021, 560] divides these swords into i) daggers with a blade length of up to 20 cm, ii) short swords with a length of 20–30 cm, c) average swords with a length of 30–40 cm, d) long swords with a length of 40–70 cm, and e) extra-long swords with a length of over 70 cm. Even among different types of *akinakai*, Topal [2013, 6] distinguishes between different lengths, such as Kelermes type *akinakai* that is divided into three major classes: less than 25 cm, 25–35 cm, and 35–55 cm.

c) There are two types of blades. One sword type has a blade with an elongated triangular shape and converging edges. The other type has parallel edges [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. Most examples have a converging blade resembling an elongated triangle. For an *akinakes* found in Moravia (the Czech Republic) with an elongated triangular blade, see Topal and Golec [2017, 8–9]. Those blades with parallel edges are less frequent and could be found in 6–5 centuries BC [Lebedynsky 2008, 41]. Topal [2019b, 148] explains that most Early Scythian *akinakai* have a parallel-edged blade and by the end of the same period the blade has a narrow elongated triangular shape. The

<sup>9</sup> See: [Topal 2021a], for more detailed information on subclassification of Scythian *akinakai*.

<sup>10</sup> See: [Topal, Golec 2017, 8].

existence of parallel edges and a median rib on a blade is a characteristic feature of the Kelermes type [Topal 2013, 8]. But there are also single-edged *akinakai* from Transylvania and the Great Hungarian Plain [Topal 2019a]. There are Hungarian complexes with single-edged swords of the Nògrád type. These include burials of Gyöngyös, Tarpa, and close to Bátmonosótor [Topal, Golec 2017, 14, 16].

d) The Scythian *akinakai* from Ukraine and those from Northern Caucasus are generally made of iron. There are also older examples made of bronze, and even there are bimetallic examples [Lebedynsky 2008, 41]. It means that the archaic Scythian blades were made of bronze often combined with iron [Ginters 1828, 23; Topal 2015, 30]. The production of Scythian bimetallic sword handles dates to Pre-Scythian technology of *Cimmerian scheme* that is a Pre-Scythian technology [Topal 2021a; Topal 2015, 30]. One of the reasons for combining bronze and iron could be that they were very familiar with bronze molding and not that familiar with sophisticated methods of iron forging, and hence combined these materials. Later, the bimetallic handles were replaced with iron *steppe akinakai* [Topal 2015, 30]. As examples of bimetallic *akinakai*, we can refer to Gudermes type *akinakai* (the prototype of this type of dagger was found near Stepnoy (Russian Federation) [Topal 2015, 31]. As another example, we can refer to an *akinakes* of the Gudermes type excavated in the central Caucasus in burial n. 85 from Tlia cemetery that was forged of high-carbon steel with a bronze handle molded in the shape of rollers [Topal 2013, 33]. There were also examples of *akinakai* that were completely or partially made of bronze in the Carpathian Basin, such as an *akinakes* of Posmus type that was entirely made of bronze, and another similar example that was made of iron with a bronze hilt [Topal 2015, 35].

e) The handle could have longitudinal grooves [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. Some have horizontal grooves similar to the Achaemenid *akinakes* kept in the National Museum of Iran [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, cat. 50]. Longitudinal grooves are a characteristic feature of the Posmus type of *akinakes* [Topal 2015, 38]. The existence of a bight or opening on the handle is typical of early Scythian swords and daggers. The reasons for having a bight on the handle of the early *akinakai* have not been clarified, although different ideas have been suggested, such as the bight was used to attach a type of sword-knot

to the wrist of the swordsman so that he would not lose it upon impact [Topal 2013, 5; Chernenko 1980, 13]. The very existence of a bight together with a bimetallic handle also indicates an early *akinakes* [Topal 2015, 43]. Certain features in the morphology of the handle of Scythian *akinakai* also serve for the determination of an approximate dating among researchers. For instance, researchers consider a round or oval cross-section of the handle as an early characteristic feature. On the other hand, they consider a flattened handle with ringed ornamentation typical of later weapons [Topal 2015, 31]. Another distinguishing feature is that the length of the handle decreases over time and the straight hilts tend to be more curved [Topal 2015, 31]. By the end of the Early Scythian period, the hilts of *akinakai* become more massive and rounded. On the other hand, the pommels become thin and elongated [Topal 2019b, 148].

f) The pommel mostly resembles a horizontal bar or a volute in the shape of stylized horns or zoomorphic motifs [Lebedynsky 2008, 38]. Topal and Golec [2017, 8] think that a narrow elongated pommel is an indication for an early type of *akinakes*. A volute head is also called an “antennae pommel” [Topal 2015, 29]. For an *akinakes* discovered in Moravia (the Czech Republic) with a pommel in the shape of volutes, see Golec [2017, 8–9]. The forms of pommels vary in style. The pommels can have the following shapes: i) examples of the pommel resembling a simple horizontal bar (6<sup>th</sup> century BC), ii) pommels resembling a volute (5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC), iii) examples that have an oval or a round pommel (4<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC) [Lebedynsky 2008, 42], iv) there are also examples of pommels of Achaemenid *akinakai* that resemble bull proteomes (see Musée du Louvre).

g) The scabbards were generally made of wood and covered with leather. The representations of *akinakes* on Greco-Scythian objects of art show different decorative elements on the scabbard [Topal 2015, 39].

h) The scabbard chapes have different shapes, and some show zoomorphic elements. A large number of bronze chapes of Caucasian *akinakai* are in the shape of a highly stylized bird’s head from the early Scythian period [Topal 2015, 39]. These are described as stylized as the bird’s beak and eyes display certain realistic features whereas the ending is shaped as a ringed ledge possibly indicating the archaistic feature of these items [Topal 2015, 41].



i) The scabbard mouth had an ear with a hole. It was used to pass a cord through it so that the sword could be suspended from the belt [Lebedynsky 2008, 42]. Based on Lebedynsky [2008, 42–43], three factors should be taken into consideration regarding this type of suspension system: i) This suspension system makes the scabbard (the sword) hang diagonally pointing the scabbard chape forward on the right side of the body. It has a similar suspension system as the traditional Caucasian dirks from the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In contrast to the Sakas, the Medes, and the Persians, the lower part of the scabbard was not attached with an additional cord to the thigh; ii) an *akinakes* from Kelermes (Russia) dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC has an accessory resembling a key without a key-bit that serves to stop the suspension cord. It is a rare feature among Scythian *akinakes* but can be seen among examples in Persia; and iii) There are also rare examples with two suspension systems, such as the sword of the *Solokha* kurgan and the statue of Mariupol. It is a prototype of the scabbard system that appeared on nomad sabers centuries later. Astonishingly, the sword of Solokha has only a hole in the upper suspension system. It could be that the lower suspension system was attached via a perishable material that has been lost today [Lebedynsky 2008, 43]. The so-called Gudermes dagger discovered near Stepnoy (the Gudermes district, Russia) also had remains of a wooden scabbard [Topal 2015, 31].

The Scythians portrayed on the stone relief of Persepolis are also equipped with an *akinakes* with a scabbard ear for suspending the scabbard from the belt (see: [Koch 1992, 107, 109]). Archaeological examples of *akinakes* were also found at Scythian burial sites<sup>11</sup>. Schiltz [1994, 90, 394–395] shows a Scythian *akinakes* with a chased, golden grip, golden-covered scabbard; and iron blade, which dates back to 700 BC. The length of the handle on this piece is 15.5 cm, and the length of the scabbard is 47 cm. The scabbard and the base of the handle are decorated with animals and mythological figures. Reeder [1999, 251–254] shows two Scythian *akinakai* with golden handles and gold-covered scabbards. The iron blades of these double-edged short swords remain only in fragments. Wamers and Stutzinger [2003, 83] show a further example of an *akinakes* with a golden handle and scabbard. The blade of this piece is rusted. This sword is

---

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed study of archaeological examples of Scythian *akinakai*, see: [Topal 2021a; 2021b; 2019a; 2019b].

58 cm long, and the maximum width of the blade is 6 cm. This sword was excavated from a Scythian burial mound, lying close to the left hand of the dead person.

#### 4. Achaemenid *akinakes*

In Asia, the Sakas of Central Asia, different populations of Siberia, Mongolia, Eastern Turkestan, and other nomads of other origins used *akinakes* [Lebedynsky 2008, 45]. In general, the *akinakai* used by these groups tend to be shorter and could be considered more as dirks and not as short swords. Generally, Asian *akinakai* used to be cast in bronze for a longer period compared to the examples made in Europe. Although iron as a material was already known in the region from earlier times (Arzhan-2, the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC), we should note that in general, the swordmakers of “Asian Scythia” did not widely use the bimetallic technology in making *akinakai* handles, but they made a large variety of solid bronze swords and daggers [Topal 2021a, 564]. The Achaemenid *akinakai* have even different scabbards compared to European models. Lebedynsky [2008, 45] states that the Sakas depicted on the Achaemenid reliefs from the 6<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC carry a type of *akinakes* resembling the suspension system of a Scythian *akinakes*, but it has an additional strap to attach the lower part of the scabbard close to the chape to the right thigh. Many sedentary cultures also started to use *akinakes* due to the efficiency of this type of weapon. It was the case with the Caucasian tribes who were conquered by Scythians and cultures that came into contact with Scythians, such as Central Russians, Persians, Thracians, and people from Northern China [Lebedynsky 2008, 46].

As mentioned before, the short sword of the Achaemenids can be seen on many reliefs in Persepolis<sup>12</sup>. Ancient narratives, such as *Republic* by Plato and *Anabasis* by Xenophon, stress that *akinakes* was not only regarded as a sword, but it served as a status symbol, a royal gift, and an artifact with religious meaning for the Persians<sup>13</sup>. Lebedynsky [2008, 46] believes that the earliest known representation of a Persian *akinakes* can be seen from the reign of Darius I (521–486 BC), and states that it is not clear whether the Persians adopted this type of weapon during the Scythian invasion of Asia around 680–580 BC or later periods from the Sakas of Central Asia. Looking at

<sup>12</sup> See: [Koch 2000, 257].

<sup>13</sup> See: [Erdan 2021, 21].

the *akinakes* depicted in Achaemenid stone reliefs, one can distinguish between two major types based on the method of suspension, the shape of the scabbard chape, and the scabbard mouth. Burton [1987, 211] already identified two forms of *akinakes*. These two ways of wearing an *akinakes* is also recognized by Curtis [2004].

Zoka [1971, 70, 211] calls the type slung via a cord on the right side, a Median *akinakes* and the type tucked in the sash as a Persian *akinakes*<sup>14</sup>. However, Lebedynsky [2008, 46–47] believes that such a distinction is solely based on the Median and Persian attires worn by the Achaemenids. He believes that it could be that the Persian attire was worn with the short sword tucked in the sash as an ensemble for court ceremonies, whereas the other type resembling the Scythian *akinakes* was used for combat. Hence, Lebedynsky believes that one should avoid using the term *akinakes* to refer to the type tucked in the sash and should reserve it only for the designation of the Scythian type that used the same suspension system in all cultures even if the term *akinakes* was a general term to denote “sword” in Persian and it could have been used in Achaemenid Persia to refer to both types of swords. He further states that the type of sword tucked in the sash could have been an indigenous creation. However, there are also other researchers who identify this type tucked into the sash in front of the body also as an *akinakes*. Erdan [2021, 20–22, fig. d] points to an Achaemenid ivory figurine from the Louvre Museum and identifies this type also as an *akinakes* that was directly carried on the belt, next to the other type that was suspended from the belt.

Given the similar sizes of both edged weapons, it is evident that the reliefs represent two types of similar short swords. The type that is suspended by a cord from the scabbard ear shows a type of *akinakes* that was most probably influenced by Scythian or Saka *akinakai*. But at the same time, we should not forget that both types have the same size and represent an almost similar short sword with two different suspension systems and also different handles. It is important not to forget that cultures adopt different features of weapons from other cultures, but the new weapon acquires new local features. In this context, I would like to provide another similar example of the usage of the term *shamshir* (*šamšir*) in western literature. This term is used to refer to a highly curved sword in the West, whereas it is a

---

<sup>14</sup> Also see: [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 72–75].

general term to refer to any type of sword in Persian<sup>15</sup>. This should have been the case with *akinakes* as well.

Now, I will describe these two types of Achaemenid *akinakai* (**Fig. 1**). Based on the Achaemenid rock reliefs, the first type of *akinakes* has the following characteristics:

- A protruded scabbard mouth or ear with a hole or a ring to pass a leather or fabric cord through it that was used to suspend the sword. The lower part of the scabbard mouth represents a reversed heart or a kidney.
- A bulging or widening scabbard chape mostly decorated with a zoological motif.
- A horizontal bar-shaped pommel on top of the handle.
- Additionally, a cord is passed over the scabbard chape to fasten the scabbard to the thigh and stop it from dangling.



**Fig. 1.** An *akinakes* from Hadish (The Palace of Xerxes) (photo by author)

<sup>15</sup> For this discussion, see: [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 130–145].

It means that this type of *akinakes* is a short sword with a scabbard, hung from the belt by a thong passing through its projecting “ear”. It is hung diagonally with the scabbard chape suspending forward on the right thigh. The scabbard was made of wood, covered with hide, and ornamented with a metal scabbard chape. The wooden scabbard of *akinakes* can be seen from an example excavated in Egypt. The blades were also made of iron as seen in the pieces found in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 72–75]. The sword was worn on the right side, and over the end of the scabbard and the chape, a belt was passed to keep the scabbard from dangling [Zoka 1971, 70]. They used to have an extra belt for hanging their *akinakai* in addition to their belts [Zoka 1971, 73–74]. As we have seen before, the Scythians also used the same system to suspend their *akinakai*. The only difference is that the Scythian *akinakes* was not fastened to the thigh with a belt over the chape<sup>16</sup>. A stone relief depicting a guard from Tripylon in Persepolis wears a similar *akinakes* [Koch 2000, 258]. This type of *akinakes* can also be seen on plates, such as a plate showing servants carrying wine, a goat, and bowls going up the stairs to Darius’ palace. The servant who is carrying the goat is wearing a similar *akinakes* [Koch 2000, 258].

Quoting Ammianus Marcellinus and other classical sources, Burton [1987, 211] claims that hanging a sword via a cord as shown in Achaemenid reliefs an “unswordmanlike peculiarity”, referring to the suspension system of this short sword. Burton considered this suspension system to be very impractical. But his statement shows a lack of understanding of the functions of this weapon. This type of sword suspension system was not just used in Achaemenid Iran. The practice of hanging the swords on the right side was also used by Scythians, who could unsheathe their *akinakai* slung on the right side, by pushing the handle of the sword down, allowing the sword to easily slide out of the scabbard. Later on, Roman legionaries also used this method. The ordinary Roman soldiers hung their short swords, such as the *gladius hispaniensis*, using a baldric on the right side. This method was used to prevent exposing themselves during the battle since the left hand was holding a shield or scutum [Cowan 2003, 28–30]. On

---

<sup>16</sup> See: [Chernenko 2001, 29–30; 34; plates A–H]; also see: [Lebedynsky 2008, 42–43].

the other hand, aquiliferi, centurions, and more senior officers wore it on the left as a mark of their rank. Further, Burton [1987, 212] quotes Quintus Curtius, who reported that the sword belt of Darius was of gold. The scabbard of this sword was made entirely of pearl. Burton further states that the Iranians inlaid blades and hilts, which could explain Herodotus' report that amongst the spoils taken at Platae by the Greeks "were *akinakai* with golden ornaments".

An example of this type of *akinakes* is kept in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran (Fig. 2). This piece has the museum inventory number 69324 and is 21 cm long. The blade and handle are made of iron, probably of one piece. The handle and the pommel are covered by a chased, gold sheet. The top of the pommel is not covered by a gold sheet and, hence, the tip of the tang there is visible. The scabbard is made of wood, which is now in fossilized condition. The lower part of the scabbard mouth does not have the reverse heart shape of a kidney. The scabbard chape is also made of beautiful, chased gold. It represents the head of a bull that has stylized lotus bloom instead of horns on one side. Koch [1992, 258] shows a very similar scabbard chape of an *akinakes*. The end of the upper-projecting ear of the scabbard is made of metal with a hole in it allowing a belt or cord to go through it to hold it in place. This is a typical feature of this type of *akinakes*. Part of the projecting ear on this piece is broken. Fortunately, the broken piece is extant and stored together with the blade. The iron blade is unfortunately broken. The remaining part of the broken blade is only 12 cm long; its base measures 4.7 cm wide and is corroded. This sword, without its scabbard, weighs 250 grams; however, one must recall that a large portion of the blade is broken and missing.



**Fig. 2.** An *akinakes* from the National Museum of Iran  
(after [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, cat. 50;  
Moshtagh Khorasani 2010, 61; Moshtagh Khorasani 2018, 52])

Sekunda [1992, 20] shows a wooden scabbard of a Median *akinakes*, two iron *akinakes* blades, and the scabbard chape. The shapes of the handles, scabbard chapes, projecting ears of the scabbards, and even the general shape of the scabbards are almost identical to this piece compared to the *akinakes* from Hadish (The Palace of Xerxes). The sketch of a magician on a golden plate (15 cm long) from the Oxus temple also shows a similar *akinakes* [Koch 2000, 281]. In the Median delegation, one of them is bringing this type of *akinakes* as a present to the king [Koch 2000, 100]. The *akinakes* of King Darius, which is being carried by his weapon bearer on the relief, is also of this type [Koch 2000, 99]. The swords depicted on the stone reliefs have a distinct ornamented chape, as can be seen on the reliefs of Persepolis. A number of these scabbard chapes have survived that were made either of metal or ivory<sup>17</sup>. An Achaemenid scabbard chape made of ivory is kept at National Museums Liverpool. It was purchased at Sotheby & Co Auction House and therefore, it is not an excavated item. It is attributed to Malek Tappeh. It depicts the head of a bull that has stylized lotus bloom instead of horns on one side. The measurements of the piece are given as 5.4 cm × 4.1 cm × 1.2 cm (see National Museums Liverpool). Another scabbard chape made of ivory is kept in the British Museum. It has the museum inventory number 132935. The scabbard chape is carved and has the dimensions of 4 cm × 6.6 cm × 1 cm. It weighs 27 grams<sup>18</sup>. The following picture shows the ornamented scabbard chapes of different *akinakai* (**Fig. 3**).



**Fig. 3.** Different forms of ornamented scabbard chapes (after [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, cat. 50] and author's photos)

The following picture (**Fig. 4**) shows the scabbard chape of the archaeological example of the *akinakes* kept in the National Museum of

<sup>17</sup> For example, see: [Koch 2000, 259].

<sup>18</sup> See: British Museum Chape [Simpson 1997; Barnett 1962].

Iran next to several stone reliefs shown in stone reliefs in Hadish (The Palace of Xerxes), Tachar (The Palace of Darius), and Talar Shora (The Assembly Hall, Apadana). As we can see, the scabbard chapes can be divided into two parts: a) those that are decorated with animal motifs, and b) those that are left undecorated.



**Fig. 4.** Different forms of scabbard chapes of *akinakes* with ornamentation and without ornamentation (after [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, cat. 50] and author's photos)



**Fig. 5.** The handle and pommel cap of an *akinakes* from the National Museum of Iran (on the left side) and the handle and pommel cap of an *akinakes* from the Assembly Hall (after [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, cat. 50; Moshtagh Khorasani 2010, 61] and author's photos)



The handles and pommels of *akinakes* depicted in the stone reliefs in Hadish (The Palace of Xerxes), Tachar (The Palace of Darius), and Talar Shora (The Assembly Hall, Apadana) are mostly undecorated and simple. Only the handle of an *akinakes* from the Assembly Hall is decorated with vertical grooves along with the handle. The gold-covered handle of the *akinakes* kept in the National Museum of Iran is ornamented with horizontal lines. Interestingly, the same horizontal lines can be seen on the handle of single-edged *akinakai* from Transylvania and the Great Hungarian Plain [Topal 2019a, 210]. The decoration on the pommel of both examples also looks almost identical. The difference is that the archaeological example of *akinakes* kept in the National Museum of Iran has an engraving resembling an ellipse, whereas the handle of the *akinakes* shown on the stone relief of the Assembly Hall has two smaller ellipses positioned in a bigger one (**Fig. 5**).

Koch [2000, 257] shows a royal sword of the king with similar features. This sword is portrayed on the northern stairs of the audience relief in Apadana and is being carried by a weapon bearer. The scabbard is decorated with several ibexes (wild goats). These are connected with their feet. Two griffins are placed on the scabbard mouth with their backs to each other but with their heads turned toward each other. The oval pommel of this sword is left undecorated. Similar scabbards and grips covered with fine sheets of gold were found in graves. The pommel of this type of sword is also sometimes decorated with typical Persian animal heads (**Fig. 6**). A sword found in Chertomlyk in Ukraine



**Fig. 6.** Different forms of scabbards and pommels of *akinakai* (the *akinakes* published in [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 394, cat. 50, Moshtagh Khorasani 2010, 61] and stone reliefs are published partially in [Moshtagh Khorasani 2018, 53]; author's photos)

shows this form of the pommel. In this piece, two calf heads look away from each other [Koch 2000, 256–257]. There are also rare types of Achaemenid pommel. One piece that is made of marble is kept in the Musée du Louvre (Paris). It represents double bull proteomes. Its dimensions are 2.7 cm × 6.5 cm × 2.5 cm. This chape is also a purchased item that was acquired in 1898 and not an excavated one (see Musée du Louvre).

Another Achaemenid *akinakes* with the museum inventory number 108723 is kept in the British Museum. It has a similar shape to the ones depicted in the picture above. It was excavated at Deve Hüyük, Syria. It has a forged iron blade with a shallow midrib tapering to a point. The hilt has an oval section terminating at a T-shaped pommel. The sword is 34 cm long and weighs 328 grams [Moorey 1980]. As far as Achaemenid scabbards of *akinakes* are concerned, one can refer to an embossed scabbard from the Oxus collection, portraying lion-hunting scenes. This golden scabbard is presumably attributed to Takht-I Kuwad. The scabbard is 27.60 cm long<sup>19</sup>. Regarding the origins of this scabbard, researchers have different opinions. Dalton [1964] and Barnett [1957] suggest a Median origin for the scabbard, whereas Moorey [1985] and Stronach [1998] believe it to be an Achaemenid scabbard. According to Stronach [1998], due to the form of the winged disc, this scabbard cannot be earlier than the reign of Darius. He even suggests a possible date to the reign of Artaxerxes II (404–359 BC)<sup>20</sup>. Regarding the Oxus Treasure in general and the *akinakes* scabbard of this hoard in particular, Topal [2021a, 562] warns that it is hard to determine the exact composition of the treasure consisting of more than 180 objects of gold and silver and over 1500 coins. He opines that although the scenes of royal hunting is a reference to Assyrian art from the period of Ashurbanipal, the scabbard was already made during the Achaemenid period, most probably during the reign of Artaxerxes II in 404–359 BC. This type of *akinakes* was also minted on Tisna coins [Erdan 2021, 20].

The second type of *akinakes* is carried by tucking the scabbard in the belt or the sash (**Fig. 7–8**). In contrast to the former type, this *akinakes* was placed under the belt in front of the belly. The second type of Achaemenid *akinakes* has the following characteristics:

<sup>19</sup> See British Museum and [Curtis 2004, 300; 2012].

<sup>20</sup> Also see British Museum, Sword-Sheath.

- A scabbard with two semi-circles on the lower part of the scabbard.
- A scabbard that tapers towards its tip.
- An I-shaped handle.
- There is no cord for fastening the scabbard as it is tucked in the belt. The belt shows a long knot on top of the scabbard.

An excellent example of this type of sword is excavated in Persepolis and is stored in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran [Moshagh Khorasani 2006, 395]. Unfortunately, no scabbard was found next to the sword. This was probably because the scabbard was made of wood, which decayed over time. This sword is larger and has a very solid blade. The total length of the blade is 65 cm (length of the handle 15.5 cm and length of the blade 49.5 cm). The blade is 6 cm wide at the base, tapering to 5 cm in the middle. The blade tapers toward a sharp point, but it keeps its parallel edges for the most part. This indicates an earlier type of *akinakes*, especially when compared to Scythian counterparts [Topal 2021a, 563]. The handle is hollowed out a bit on both sides to allow for grip scales, this being indicated by the presence of several different rivets on both sides. The handle and blade were probably cast/forged from two different pieces.



**Fig. 7.** The second type of *akinakes* (author's photo)



**Fig. 8.** The second type of *akinakes* (author's photos)

Similar to ceremonial Scythian *akinakai* that were decorated with precious metals mostly with gold [Topal 2021a, 561], there were also Achaemenid *akinakai* that were made of gold and served for ceremonial purposes. There are also several ceremonial golden *akinakai* kept in different museums. One is kept in the Metropolitan Museum of Art [Koch 2000, 257], and the other is kept in the National Museum of Iran [Moshtagh Khorasani, 2006, 392–393]. The magnificent, golden *akinakes* from the Achaemenid period that is kept in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran has the museum inventory number 1322 [Muzeye Meli Iran 2001, 109]. This lion-headed, golden *akinakes* was discovered in Hamadan (Ecbatana) and dates back to 500 BC [Huot 1965, 192, 223]. It resembles an example stored in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Similar to the piece in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, there are two lion heads on the pommel and two ibex heads close to the forte. However, the ibex heads on the piece from the National Museum of Iran are aesthetically much more delicate and refined. The handles of both look similar, showing three knobs on each side (this being an integral part of the handle). The blade shape of these two pieces appears similar; however, the number of fullers on the two specimens is different. The sword in New York has a deep, central fuller with two shallow fullers running on both sides of it. All the fullers begin almost immediately from the forte. On the other hand, the piece in Tehran does not have a central fuller and has four shallow fullers. These fullers do not start at the forte but close to the ibex heads on each side. In comparison to the sword in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the blade of the sword in Tehran tapers more rapidly toward the tip. The sword in the National Museum of Iran weighs 800 grams. The total length is 41 cm (the length of the handle, including the pommel, is 12 cm, and the length of the blade is 29 cm). The distance from one lion head to the other is 10 cm, and the distance from one ibex head to the other is 7 cm. The width of the blade at the forte is 3.9 cm, the middle is 3.2 cm, and close to the tip measures 2.9 cm from where it tapers to a sharp point (**Fig. 9**).



**Fig. 9.** A golden *akinakes* kept in the National Museum of Iran  
(after [Moshtagh Khorasani 2006, 392–393, *cat.* 49;  
Moshtagh Khorasani 2018, 55])

Sekunda [1992, 56] states that the piece in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is possibly a present received by a “friend from the king”. He adds that the “friends” may refer to peoples of Elamite origin as Assyrian texts report that the best Elamite soldiers were those “who wore golden daggers and heavy rings of shining gold on their wrists” [Sekunda 1992, 56]. In this respect, Burton [1987, 212] quotes Xenophon, who reported that the royal gift of Iran was a golden *akinakes*, a Nisaeon horse with a golden bridle, and other battle gear. Burton also mentions that Herodotus makes Xerxes present the Abderites with a golden sword and a tiara.

### **5. The use of *akinakes***

Given the elongated triangular shape of the blade of most *akinakai*, Lebedynsky [2008, 48–49] assumes that *akinakes* was primarily a thrusting weapon. But we need to take into account that the primary weapon of Achaemenids was a spear, and *akinakes* was used as a secondary weapon. As a melee weapon, a short sword is generally used for both thrusting and cutting. Additionally, we should not forget that earlier forms of *akinakai* had blades with parallel edges and even having an elongated triangular blade does not mean that the sword was not used for cutting as repeated cutting tests with blades of such shapes have shown that they could have been used to cut as well. But it seems that other researchers in this area believe that an elongated triangular blade was mainly used for thrusting, whereas single-edged *akinakai* was mainly used for chopping unlike most Scythian or Persian *akinakai*<sup>21</sup>. More experimental cutting tests with reproduction *akinakai* should be conducted to come to more conclusive results.

---

<sup>21</sup> See: [Topal 2019a, 200; Ginters 1928, 30].

Due to its short size, Lebedynsky [2008, 48–49] also believes that the *akinakes* was not used as a cavalry weapon. This is another assumption that needs to be tested.

## 6. The influence of *akinakes* on later swords

The more recent, double-edged Caucasian sword, a *kindjal*, and double-edged Persian *qame* resemble *akinakes* in appearance. As the origins of the *kindjal* are unclear, several curious legends came to light based on classical 19<sup>th</sup> century CE prejudices, trying to establish a relationship between a Caucasian *kindjal* and the early Roman Gladius Hispanienses. However, there is no evidence to support such a theory [Lebedynsky 1990, 69]. Many double-edged Bronze Age swords and daggers that demonstrate the same characteristics of later *kindjals* have been excavated in modern Caucasia. The same pattern can be seen in early Iranian bronze daggers and the later Persian *qame*. In Lebedynsky's opinion, the shape of the *kindjal* and its manner of suspension could also be influenced by the short, double-edged swords of the Scythians, the so-called *akinakes*. Lebedynsky [1990, 69] states that *akinakes* were very well known and used in ancient Caucasia, much as they were in Iran (Persia). In any case, the *kindjal* is autochthonous and indigenous to Caucasia. Considering the facts and the similarities between Persian and Scythian *akinakai* and the late Persian *qames* and Caucasian *kindjals*, one can apply the same theory to the development of this weapon in Iran as well.

## 7. Conclusion

The Achaemenids used a short sword that was called *akinakes* (ἀκινάκης) by the Greek. The ancient Iranian word for this sword is not known. The origin of this word can be traced back to the Scythian language or the Old Persian, and its variant spelling as *kyn'k* can also be found in the Sogdian language, which is another Iranian language from Central Asia. Achaemenid reliefs show two types of short swords with two different suspension systems. The first type with a scabbard ear for suspending the blade via a cord is most probably a Scythian influence or a Saka influence. Although the second type of sword that is tucked in the belt has a different suspension system, it should be also considered an *akinakes* in the Persian cultural sphere. The Achaemenid reliefs show different decorative elements in each style of *akinakes*. Future research should delve more into this topic by researching more excavated *akinakai* in Iran.

## REFERENCES

- Barnett R. D. (1962), “Median Art”, *Iranica Antiqua*, Vol. 2, pp. 77–95, pls. I–VI.
- Barnett R. D. (1957), “Persepolis”, *Iraq*, Vol. 19, pp. 55–77, pls. XV–XXIII.
- British Museum, London, Chape (5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> BC), Museum Inventory Number 132925, available at: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1961-0215-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1961-0215-1) (accessed 10 March 2022).
- British Museum, London, Sword-Sheath, Museum Inventory Number 123923, available at: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1897-1231-22](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1897-1231-22) (accessed 10 March 2022).
- Burton R. F. (1987), *The Book of the Sword*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York.
- Chernenko E. V. (2001), *The Scythians: 700–300 BC*, First published in 1983, Osprey Publishing Ltd, Oxford.
- Chernenko E. V. (1980), Drevneishie skifskie paradnye mechi (Mel’gunov i Kelermes), in A. I. Terenozhkin (ed.), *Skifiya i Kavkaz*, Naukova dumka, Kyiv, pp. 7–30. (In Russian).
- Cowan R. (2003), *Roman Legionary: 58 BC – AD 69*, Osprey Publishing Ltd., Oxford.
- Curtis J. (2012), *The Oxus Treasure (Objects in Focus)*, British Museum Press, London.
- Curtis J. (2004), “The Oxus Treasure in the British Museum”, *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia*, Vol. 10, pp. 293–338.
- Curtis J. E. and Tallis N. (2005), *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*, British Museum Press, London.
- Dalton O. M. (1964), *The Treasure of the Oxus with other Examples of Early Oriental Metalwork*, British Museum Press, London.
- Erdan E. (2021), “It’s a Sword, It’s a Scabbard, it’s Tisna Coins with Depiction of Persian Akinakes”, *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 19–25.
- Furtwaengler A. (1883), “Der Goldfund von Vetersfelde”, *Winckelmannsfeste der archäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, Program 43, pp. 3–52.
- Ginters W. (1928), *Das Schwert der Skythen und Sarmaten in Südrussland*, Verlag von Walter De Gruyter & Co, Berlin.
- Gorelik M. (2003), *Oruzhie drevnego Vostoka*, Atlant, Saint Petersburg. (In Russian).

Huot J.-L. (1965), *Iran I: des Origines aux Achéménides*, Les Éditions Nagel, Geneva.

Koch H. (2000), *Es kündigt Dareios der König: vom Leben im persischen Großreich*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Philip von Zabern, Mainz.

Lebedynsky I. (2008), *De L'Épée Scythe au Sabre Mongol: Les Armes Blanches des Nomades de la Steppe IX<sup>e</sup> Siècle av. J.-C. – XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle apr. J.-C.*, Éditions Errance, Paris.

Lebedynsky I. (1990), *Les Armes Cosaques et Caucasiennes et les Armes Traditionnelles d'Europe Orientale*, Editions du Portail, La Tour du Pin.

Moorey P. R. S. (1985), “The Iranian Contribution to Achaemenid Material Culture”, *Iran* (23), British Institute of Persian Studies, London, pp. 21–37.

Moorey P. R. S. (1980), Cemeteries of the First Millennium BC at Deve Hüyük, near Carchemish, Salvaged by T. E. Lawrence and C. L. Woolley in 1913, available at: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1913-1108-70](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1913-1108-70) (accessed 10 March 2022).

Moshtagh Khorasani M. (2006), *Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period*, Legat Verlag, Tübingen.

Moshtagh Khorasani M. (2010), *Lexicon of Arms and Armor from Iran: A Study of Symbols and Terminology*, Legat Verlag, Tübingen.

Moshtagh Khorasani M. (2018), “Les armes et armures achéménides”, *La Revue de Téhéran Mensuel Culturel Iranien en Langue Française*, No. 149, Avril 2018, 13<sup>e</sup> Année, pp. 52–61.

Musée du Louvre, Paris, Pommeau d'Épée Orné, Museum Inventory Number AO 2757, available at: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010151868> (accessed 11 March 2022).

Muzeye Meli Iran (2001), *Irāne Bāšān: Negahi be Ganjineye Muzeye Melli Irān [Ancient Iran: An Overview of the Treasure of the National Museum of Iran]*, Sāzmāne Mirāse Farhange Kešvar, Tehran. (In Persian).

National Museums Liverpool, Scabbard chape (5<sup>th</sup> Century BC Early), Museum Inventory Number 1966.349, available at: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/artifact/scabbard-chape> (accessed 09 March 2022).

Plato (1969), *Republic*, Translated by P. Shorey, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Pur Dāvud E. (1969), *Zin Abzār (Armament)*, Čāpxāne-ye Arteše Šāhanšāhi, Tehran. (In Persian).



Reeder E. D. (ed.) (1999), *Scythian Gold: Treasure from Ancient Ukraine*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York.

Schiltz V. (1994), *Die Skythen und Andere Steppenvölker*, Beck, München.

Sekunda N. (1992), *The Persian Army: 560–330 BC*, Osprey Publishing Ltd, Oxford.

Simpson St. J. (1997), “Bone, Ivory, and Shell: Artifacts of the Persian through Roman Periods”, in E. Meyers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 343–8.

Stronach D. (1998), “On the Date of the Oxus Gold Scabbard and Other Achaemenid Matters”, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, Vol. 12 (New Series), pp. 231–48.

Topal D. (2013), “Akinakai of Kelermes Type: New Discoveries in Central Bessarabia”, *Marisia*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 13–32.

Topal D. (2015), “The Use of Bronze in Making the Early Scythian Akinakai”, *Tyragetia*, Vol. IX (XXIV), No. 1, pp. 29–50.

Topal D. (2019a), “Single-edged Akinakai of Transylvania and Great Hungarian Plain. Reflection of a Balkan Tradition”, *Godišnjak/Jahrbuch 2019, Centar za Balkanološka Ispitivanja (Zentrum für Balkanforschungen)*, Kjiga / Band 48, pp. 199–218.

Topal D. (2019b), “Scythian Akinakai between Carpathians and Dniester. The Structure of a Storm”, in V. Diaconu and L. Pîrnău (eds), *Un Secol de Arheologie în Spațiul est-Carpatic: Concepte, Metode, Tendințe*, Bibliotheca Memoriae Antiquitatis, T. XLI, pp. 141–95.

Topal D. (2021a), “Akinak na zapade skifskoga mira”, in E. Sava and A. Zanoic (eds), *Biblioteca Tyragetia*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 557–77. (In Russian).

Topal D. (2021b), “Die Chronologie der Vorrömischen Eisen- und Frühen Kaiserzeit in Mittel- und Südosteuropa: Probleme und Perspektiven”, in E. Sava, V. Iarmulschi, A. Zanoci, M. Băt, and Munteanu O. (eds), *Tyragetia International III, Humboldt-Kolleg: Chronologie in den Archäologischen Forschungen Chișinău, 08–09. November 2018*, Bons Offices, Chișinău, pp. 47–61.

Topal D. and Golec M. (2017), “Vekerzug Culture and New Finds of Scythian Akinakes in Moravia”, *Tyragetia*, Vol. XI (XXVI), pp. 7–22.

Wamers, E. and D. Stutzinger (eds) (2003), *Steppengold: Grab-schätze der Skythen und Sarmaten am unteren Don*, Archeologisches Museum, Frankfurt.

Xenophon (1922), *Anabasis*, C. L. Brownson (ed.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Zoka Y. (1971/1350), *Arteše Šāhanšāhi Irān az Kurošā ta Pahlavi* [*The Royal Army of Iran from Kurosh to Phalavi*], Čārxāneye Ve-zārate Farhang Va Honar, Tehran. (In Persian).

*M. Moshtagh Khorasani*

### **АХЕМЕНІДСЬКІ АКІНАКИ: ПОХОДЖЕННЯ І ТИПИ**

У статті надано опис і класифікацію ахеменідських коротких *акінаків*. Ахеменідські *акінаки*, найімовірніше, розвивалися під впливом скіфів або саків. Відповідно, стаття містить коротке обговорення інших типів *акінаків*. Існували довгі типи *акінаків*, що використовувалися скіфами, але археологічні приклади ахеменідських *акінаків*, а також їхні зображення на кам'яних рельєфах Ахеменідів, як правило, зображують короткі мечі. Кам'яні рельєфи в Персеполі, Ападані та інших містах Перської держави показують два типи ахеменідських коротких мечів. Один тип підвішується на шнурі, прикріпленому до вухоподібної системи підвіски піхов, що нагадує систему підвіски, яку використовували скіфи та інші народи, що перебували під їхнім впливом. Інший тип заправляється в стулку або за пояс. У дослідженні стверджується, що хоча мечі, що зображені на ахеменідських рельєфах, використовують дві різні системи підвіски, їх слід розглядати як *акінаки* в контексті перської культури. Кам'яні рельєфи також показують різні декоративні елементи для кожного типу *акінаків*. Чому деякі з них залишилися без декору на рельєфах, незрозуміло. Це може бути мистецькою умовністю, а може бути результатом того, що вони були стерті через кліматичні зміни. З іншого боку, інші вишукано прикрашені. У статті також надане порівняльне дослідження деяких ахеменідських мечів, які зберігаються в Національному музеї Ірану та низці західних музеїв, і *акінаків*, зображених на кам'яних рельєфах Ахеменідів. Отже, у роботі пропонується нова класифікація ахеменідських *акінаків*, зображених на кам'яних рельєфах, і їхнє порівняння з деякими археологічними прикладами.

**Ключові слова:** *акінак*, мечі Ахеменідів, імперія Ахеменідів, Ахеменіди, скіфи, саки

*Стаття надійшла до редакції 19.02.2022*