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MAHMOOD SEYYED

Islamic Azad University, Iran (Islamic Republic of)

PROFESSIONS OF NON-COURTIER WOMEN IN THE ACHAEMENIAN AGE

Abstract:

In every society women as a half of the population can play an effective role in economy. Addressing different jobs is one of the ways indicating the women's economic activities in the age of the Achaemenid. With the use of clay tablets of Perspolis and also the seals from the age of the Achaemenian, helpful but incomplete information about the history of the women of the time was obtained. Women in this period performed a variety of professions and got paid in return for their work. The payment was often in the form of objects and materials. There was great variety in jobs including simple labor to the head of the workshop. Of course the women were involved in satisfying their spouses' affairs and raising children too and probably it could be said that these responsibilities were prioritized. This article makes attempt, as much as possible, to introduce these careers to the readers and pave the path for more profound researches.

Keywords:

jobs, women, Achaemenian, wages.

Introduction

The human's need to live and make a living can be the initial reasons for jobs to come into existence. Some parts of this burden in the history of women were on their shoulders and Achaemenian women were not excluded from this rule. Jobs can be divided into courtier and non-courtier ones that this article deals with the latter. In the tablets of fortifications and the treasury of Persepolis, it's not only the names and history of courtier women mentioned but in considerable number of the tablets we come across with the countless women making a large population who were in charge of various jobs. Most work concerning these women was accomplished by Bersius in the book of Achaemenian women and some other scattered information was driven from other sources. But the important part of this article relates to the extraction of data about jobs and wage rates of women using the tables created from the tablets of Persepolis Barrow, the tablets of Persepolis treasury and the impressions of Achaemenian seals by the researcher. By non-courtier women we mean, on one hand, the women who don't belong to the Shah's nobles and relatives but serve at the government agencies under the supervision of court officials and receive the ration of court. On the other hand they belong to a huge crowds as normal classes of the society about which much information is not available and we have to search through different materials in various books and find some information based on the personal reasoning and analysis.

Non-courtier women at a glance

Rajabi writes quoted from Plotark: "Iranians are very jealous of their wives. Iranian men not only are so watchful not let any men keep their eyes on their wives but also they are very strict about their slaves and purchased ones to keep protected. Women have to live at home locked and while on a trip they are bounded in the tent limit of carts." Rajabi in this regard analyzes amazingly. He believes that reports by Plotark can only refer to the affluent classes. He is positive that women in rural areas, farmers and workers can't be said to be in accordance with the reports. As in and out of the house they work hard and have never owned any luxurious houses and chariots as well (Rajabi, 2004: 22 and 321). Studies on wage conditions reflect that men and women labored together. They received equal salaries and sometimes women undertook even more difficult tasks. For example we can observe majority of ladies as farmers. Stone polishers mostly include female workers. However we aren't still able to say what they exactly did. They probably gave the ultimate polishing after the stone images had got ready. The occupations of most women in the Persepolis tablets were sewing and stitching. A diverse job including sewing simple clothing items or luxurious clothes which after sewing they were artistically needle worked. Of course it must be mentioned that women in addition to work outside, were responsible for arranging daily affairs of the family too. Meanwhile it is observed in the clay tablets that ladies could reach higher positions. For example the shah

workshops were constantly supervised and managed by women. In sewing workplaces mainly occupied by women, men worked under women supervision and female supervisors got paid more than men. Even in the wine ration there was no difference between. Sometimes this question arises how strong was a woman to cope with 1 liter of Shiraz red wine. Also in the tablets we see professions in which women haven't been applied. In managing tasks related to the court or calculations and audit, there's no trace of women. It seems that in every job when there was an obligation to leave the place and travel to different regions in order to control various administrative sections, they preferred not to use women. Women were employed in the fixed jobs which was the indicative of the necessity for the women presence in the family. The women's duties in the family were paid special attention to by the administrative management. (Koukh: 71-269) it is obvious that when the job is more precise and finer, for example sewing simple, delicate or very delicate clothes or having enough skills or being a beginner and concerning ladies, part-time or full-time jobs would have an effect on the wage rate. Male servants had no contact and communication with the Queen and the court ladies and according to the tablets we recognize that even the trainers of queen's horses have also been female. (Semit, 2010: 226) apparently, female simple workers were sometimes given meat too. In the beginning of the month of April or March, year 503 B.C the secretary of court ordered the rancher of the court to distribute the meat diet among 544 female dressmakers working in the Verentush workshop for 3 months. Of course the amount of meat so little: a sheep for 30 people every month. (Rajabi, 2004: 324)

Jobs of ordinary women

Searching in the resources and with the assistance of the charts that the researcher has provided through the translation of some tablets, we could classify the women's job titles and the rate of wages and the method by which they got paid. Of course information on these issues is not much. Based on the translated tablets, of the women serving in the monarchy, 40 to 60 percent were workers and along with the girls they totally made 60 to 70 percent. The figures lead us to find out that in terms of working opportunities, women with no discrimination enjoyed equal rights. It appears that most of the men served in the army and a tremendous part of the industrial works and public constructions of the government, has been in the hands of the female members of the society. (Mountain, 2007: 137)

Labor

The large number of female employees was placed in this category. Their jobs aren't characterized and they have simply been introduced under the general title of workers in various areas. The group could include farmers, construction workers, the queen's attendants, weavers and tailors, cooks and babysitters and many other occupations.

Data related to these workers driven from all the tablets shows that the total number of them reached to 1030 and they distinguished from each other in such a way that some would receive wages of 3 loads of grain to 1 load of grain and 3 Merish (a unit of liquids) of wine to 3 Merish of wine. These differences reflexes the difference in the kind of services they offered.

the treasury clerk

The second rank with respect to the number of employees is assigned to the treasury clerks . These employees in the workshops of the treasury were in charge of various activities which were mostly considered as artistic ones . Some of these women have even been the heads of these workshops, as it concluded from their salaries . 632 people have been working in these treasury offices. Many of them have obtained wages above 6 forms; but in the same field that they were getting this sum ,there were some men receiving more than 7 forms. However this doesn't mean the men's higher salary , because the type of their jobs is not clear. Only in one of the tablets ,2 female employees are named who in the same field have received higher wages than those of men. These two tablets show the influence of the expertise rate on receiving wages and gender has had no effect on the rate of wages.

Crafts-women

Regarding the number of employees this job is located in the third place. In two tablets 278 women have been mentioned as crafts-women and in both tablets they paid to all of them equally which was 1 and 9/1 forms. These two tablets imply a fascinating idea, that is ,in different parts of the country there was an identical tariff to pay wages .Berian has the faith that the Elamite term 'Marrip ' meaning a crafts-person is more likely the same as the Persian term "Karnuvaka " which means a skillful craft Is- person or a worker who is skillful in all professions. (Berian, 2000: 895) This report by Berian refers to the reason why the number of crafts-people was high .

Workers IRDABAMA¹

In one of the Tablets it has been told about 206 female labors of the lady irdabama . This group with respect to the number of employees is in the fourth place. These workers have certainly been working in the workshops of the mentioned court lady but the kind of their jobs is unknown and their wage sizes are recognized as 3 loads of grain and 2 loads of grain.

¹Irdabama

The Shepherd

Shepherd is also among the jobs in which women have had an enormous participation. In the two tablets, the total number of 126 Shepherdess is mentioned. In both cases the women have received 2/5 forms of silver monthly which has been a relatively good wage. High amount of livestock in the Achaemenian era due to the material taxes and the payment of wages in the form of materials which livestock constitutes a part of these two cases is a sign that specifies the need for a great number of shepherds. So they introduce these people as the shah shepherds (baterasunikra) .(Berian 2000: 971) Of course all of these shepherds worked for the shah's flocks.

Wine Maker

According to the translated tablets in the workshops of the Achaemenid wineries 56 women worked . They received 2 loads of grain and 1 form of silver a month. This job has surely been common throughout the period of Achaemenid .

Brewer

In one of the tablets ,9 female brewers has been named .They received approximately 2 and 4/3 forms of silver per month .That fewer workers worked in breweries than wineries was probably because of less consumption of beer than wine .

Minstrel

Probably one of the jobs that women have been into and was sort of peculiar to them , is called minstrel which caused the king to be entertained . Bersius declares that even at the time of hunting the woman minstrels accompanied courtiers for entertainment . (Bersius, 2011: 65).Greek historians have written that when Iranian kings have a meal ,a group of minstrels were busy entertaining ,singing ,dancing . Musicians and minstrels of countries ,Egypt , Babylonia and India have been in the court. As it is written, in war Aysus, after the defeat of Darius the third by Alexander, three hundred and twenty female musicians were among the captives captured by Parmenion ,the general of Alexander . (Semit, 2010: 205)

Cupbearers

In various texts,it has been said that the cupbearers had a special skill of pouring wine. Royal cupbearers performed their duties elegantly and poured the wine into the cups without letting a drop of wine leak out of the cup . (Sympson20133: 222)

Filter holders

Sympson believes that maids have been responsible for putting the filter over the wine cups and refers to their presence in the court of Achaemenid Darius the third. He also believes that cupbearers put some wine on their hands and drank to examine its health. (Sympson, 2013: 222 and 223) Vishofer also mentions 70 wine filter holders who have served Darius. (Vishofer, 2011: 62). However people's gender has not been cited, due to the existing images we can find out that there have been some women among them.

Food providers

In one of the tablets has pointed to 17 women in charge of providing food but it's not clear if they are cooks or responsible for the provision of the royal table or both of them. This work force has been in Shiraz and because Hints has cited 11 cooks they maybe were mostly involved in preparing the royal table. In this tablet they inform us about the monthly ration of 1 Merish wine for them. Of course with a look at the writings of Sympson about the Achaemenid royal table, we can find the significance of the food providers such as bakers, cooks, dishwashers, table setters and (Sympson, 2013: 232)

cooking

In some parts they served the workers with lunch. For example in treasuries, woman chefs made public foods for the workers' lunch. Hints talks about 11 cooks in the court treasury. These cooks were considered as the employees of the treasury.

Gozal providers

Probably, Gozal has been a kind of grain and in one of the tablets has talked about 21 women whose jobs were to provide Gozal. In the researchers' perspective, they were women who worked on the farms with the product Gozal. They received 1 load of grain per month.

Diligent women

In two tablets, has been pointed to some unknown women under the title of diligent women that it's not obvious what activities they were exactly engaged in and 30 Merish beer was determined as their wages. As we don't know the accurate number, the precise rate of the wage remains unknown.

Women responsible for the horses

It seems that the people responsible for the horses of female courtiers that is, the trainers of their horses were the women. Men didn't have the right to do the jobs in which they needed to have direct communication with the courtier ladies. In one of the tablets, some women have been mentioned who were in charge of horses of the lady Abakish (based on the studies done by the researcher, according to Bersius it's the same as Irdabama, a member of the royal family. and according to Hints, Darius the first wife). However the one responsible for the horses was called Epiciatish which probably is a masculine name. A huge rate of wage has been assigned which was 165 Karsha of silver. But it is not clear who this rate belonged to. But in the author's opinion it was a ration belonging to lady Abakish herself from the court's treasury. According to the text of this tablet in the year 30 of Darius empire it has been divided among 1 manager and 1 person responsible for the female trainers' affairs and an unknown number of other women. Of course another reason the author mentions is that the king Darius himself has ordered to bestow that amount.

Finance provider for the workers

In one of the tablets it has been referred to a lady called Mandana who provided finance for 7 crafts-persons and sent them to Parse. She might be a courtier's wife or a wife of a court official who possessed workforce and definitely was a landowner.

Tax officer

A woman employee in the tax department has been mentioned as a tax officer. She received 2/5 forms of silver monthly. She has probably been supposed to deal with the tax records in "Herkdushi²". In fact she had an office job, since as it is mentioned before women weren't hired in jobs that needed travelling and being away.

Goldsmith

In one of the tablets it refers to 27 women goldsmith with 1/5 forms of silver every month. This is a job in which women may play important roles by designing and creating new things. Because it has been considered as a delicate job and also a considerable portion of ornaments have belonged to the women. Women worked in goldsmith workshops to create different ornaments. The bracelet have been one of the most difficult things to make. John Curtis believes that the bracelet is the reflection of the technical knowledge and top art initiative of the Achaemenian artists. (Curtis, 2013: 294)

² Refers to a place in which 2 men and 1 women perform tax administration (mostafavi, 83.2004)

The Coppersmith

11 woman coppersmiths have been involved in a workshop and received about 2 and 1/3 forms of silver monthly.

Armor Maker

That they employed women for armor producing workshops was amazing .Because this job always appears to be a manly profession but maybe these women whose total number in a tablet was cited to be 14 worked in the armor decoration part of the workshops . These armor making women received 2/5 forms of silver per month.

Sewing

The women working in the king's sewing workshops and in the treasury received their wages based on the clothes they made ,simple dresses , elegant dresses and very elegant dresses .Among the individuals who got the highest salaries ,we come across the names of some male tailors .The number of men is much lower than that of women .Apparently the job of this group was to make the king's clothes and the ones he would bestow. Their wage rate was the same size as the wages of the women who created artistic objects: monthly 40 liters of beer and ten liters of wine. This rate is twice as much as the least ration of the women, meanwhile their wine ration was regularly paid . (Kough: 244)

Tailors who worked in the tailor's places were called" Masishtka"or senior woman. Such a senior person got up to 50 liters of beer every month 'that is 'two and a half times more than the least ration .These qualified workers got salaries just the same size as the men' s. This equality of wages between man and woman is one of the strengths of the Achaemenid. They also received 3 pots of wine per month and above all ,they received meat ration ,that is , a sheep every 3 months, while their fellow workers never got meat rations at all. (Hints, 2013: 354)

Textiles

Kenneth Kourth in the second volume of ancient Iran refers to Iranian fabrics woven by the Iranian women . Herodotus also write; Emistres, Xerxus' wife herself has woven the precious fabric for the king's clothing, and in this respect has cited a story .There has been this probability that in the Achaemenid workshops silk would have been created and by expensive cloth he possibly means silk fabrics with gold warps. Anyway, some samples of fabrics woven in that period were discovered in Susa and Perspolis , some of which look like silk cloth and suggests that the skeins of silk have more likely been

imported from China and in the Iranian factories (Hamedan, Susa, etc.) turned into cloth. Among these silk clothing in various prints, some were made from gold and silver, so they have been unique. However most of the fabric were made of cotton and wool with the colors like purple, orange and brown and with the designs of flowers like Lotus...etc which mostly were symbolic. The royal color of the silk fabrics in the Achaemanid period was purple and the king's guard soldiers and some other people wore clothes in cyan, orange, brown and blue with symbolic designs. Therefore we can conclude that in that period the textile industry was in its boom times.. (Qeiby, 2006: 143). Iranian textile industry in the Achaemenian time was famous especially for weaving soft, fine wool and silk cloth. According to some reports the Iranians in that period of time well knew how to make fabrics and in cold seasons they made use of the fur and skin of animals for sewing the edges of clothes and their lining. Gold embroidery has reached to perfection and weavers applied costly materials such as silk, silver and gold to make fabrics. (Fyuzat, 1985: 4)

midwifery

Due to the attention the Achaemenians paid to the pregnant women, those giving birth to a child, their leave from work and giving them gifts and extra rations, midwifery was one of the most impressive jobs which was just for women and many of them were involved in. In many parts of clay tablets they speak about midwives caring for pregnant workers. While delivering, these midwives have even given the pregnant some wine to relieve their pain. (Rajabi, 2004: 323)

Layout supervisor

Although the researcher have never seen such a title before, he based on the descriptions about the lay-out of palaces and color harmony presented in different books which caused the Greeks surprise and admiration, comes to the conclusion that there must exist some people working on decorations who had special talents. We can guess that since the sewing workshops and fine works were monitored and done under the supervision of women, this job has been a feminine job of that period.

tax

The remarkable point is that all working individuals had to pay tax and the ordinary people's tax was paid in the form of material. Ali Semit refers to a tax document in the treasury of the Perspolis which relates to a lady named Induka who appears to be Tutu's mother, the merchants' boss. The document shows the remaining payment of tax by the lady. Her tax is as following.

14 enamel and 5/6 enamel white silver which was calculated to equal 14 enamels and 18 forms.

9 enamels and 53 forms of second degree silver.

5 enamels and 3 forms of third degree silver. (Semit, 2010: 73)

The researcher thinks this lady was one of the rich ladies and a division of her tax was this amount which has been paid in cash .

Services for workers

In the Achaemanid age, working women enjoyed special services .These services certainly led to their output increase .Because the women in addition to outside working, accomplished the duties of housekeeping and child caring .These service got the women not to concern about their home and children .The services can be classified as below.

Maternity leave

With giving birth to a child . the women were exempt from work outside for a period of time .The maternity leave has seemingly been 5 months. After this period they were allowed to shorten the time of daily work to be able to meet household duties .Of course ,the part time job was paid less salary .”Dried fruit was applied for something that was technically called the pleasant food ,that is ,an award and encouragement to rise the regular rations. Women with a new child or children had the right to receive that “. (Hints 2013: 297)

Taking care of children

In the tablets and the texts ,they have pointed to some places in which the female workers' children were kept .Infants ,during the work hours were watched out by the babysitters . In the treasury of Shiraz ,two nurses were responsible for taking care of the children . (Hints, 2013: 289) . It seems that these services caused more efficiency of female workforce.

Making use of diners

Women working in the treasury could have the meals in the treasury's diner ,as it is mentioned in the story of Baghpata ³.This facility is one of the services which end in better performances of women .Because the woman doesn't worry about cooking food

³ For more information see: a day in the treasury work's life(koukh,263-267)

any more .Of course this facility was provided for those who all the family members worked at the same place. The researcher imagines that in the workshops of the court women also this service was available for women workers .

Receiving gifts

According to the tablets , a specific ration has been considered for delivered women.The amount of this ration for the women giving birth to a girl has been half of the ration for the women giving birth to a boy .As far as it's investigated by the researcher, , this gift has been wine ,for male infant 1 Merish and for female infant $\frac{1}{2}$ of Merish .This is of a few cases in which there is difference between boys and girls .In the researcher's opinion , the reason for it could be the boys' recruitment in military posts , every boy has been considered as a soldier of the king .Berian believes that this extra ration given to the women helped them leave the bed sooner and in an appropriate condition breastfeed their children . He with an interesting analysis points out that in the ancient Iran they have got aware of the role of beer in increasing the mothers' milk. (Berian2000: 1502) in one of the tablets, it refers to the auxiliary ration as the ration peculiar to the mothers which has been 5 loads of flour and a man called Puktuk has got for his workers .The number of these workers and type of their job are not clear though. We can't even find out the reason why that particular ration was given to them . What we are certain about is ,since it has been titled as the ration of mothers ,so it must be given to the married women with children .Bersius believes that the special ration (Kamakash) wasn't considered as an advantage for a certain profession . (Bersius, 2010: 219) The researcher thinks that it can be considered as a kind of the offspring's right .Berian also says that the reason why the excellent ration (kamakash) was given to some women is not known and talks about 15 liters wine at a time . (Berian, 2000: 907) in the researcher's point of view this ration of wine could belong to the midwives to use it as a pain reliever ,as discussed earlier .

Conclusion

In this period individuals were ranked according to their expertise and the rate of work they did and as far as it was studied the race, gender and the age haven't had any effect on the payment for a similar job. However to get a job opportunity the individuals' race and their social class were significant .Most of the jobs were appointed to only the Persians and then to the Medes and other people weren't allowed to. In obtaining the job chances ,there were some distinctions between men and women. However these difference are indicative of equality .Women couldn't enter the jobs in which travel was a necessity .In judicial and military jobs , no trace of women was observed . But in ammunition manufacturing like making armors we come across numerous women .

It can be said that they cared about the family roles of women more than their economic roles . Maternity leave ,giving additional rations to the mothers and lower work hours for the women and children comparing with the men proves this claim .In return for giving birth to a baby ,the women received an award that exceptionally in this case there was obvious difference between the male and female child .It means that the gift belonging to the son delivering mother has been twice as much as that of the daughter delivering mother . The reason can be stated in two cases. first ,Iran was a land with mostly cultural livelihood and the boys were counted as workforce and the land remediation ,on the other hand as it was mentioned the women played no role in military posts, so each boy was the same as a soldier for the king.

The job diversity and the order in the wage payment in this period reflexes a regular economic system along with the powerful management of the king in which some certain organizations administrated the job affairs.

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