The Achaemenids and the Imperial Signature:
Persepolis – Arachosia – Bactria

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The Achaemenid Empire (c. 550–330 BCE) defined itself through a set of ideological values that were reflected in royal inscriptions, court stories, and practices that were probably observed by the Persian nobility. The image that arises from this type of material is coherent enough as it stands, but may be further complemented if the perspective from economic and administrative sources is included. Although these documents have been partially known for decades, they have recently acquired greater meaning, through combination with other sources centered on the Persepolis Fortification Archive, to form a more comprehensive semantic mosaic. Put into the larger Achaemenid context, texts from Arachosia, for example, gain significance as traces of an “imperial signature,” a recognizable Achaemenid way of organising the lands the Persians had conquered, based on standard structures and protocols, emerge. In fact, this approach, best witnessed in the eastern and northeastern satrapies, turns out to be quite systematic in nature. It lends support to the notion of an imperial paradigm, the idea that administrative networks could be copied and applied as useful tools. Persian imperial self-awareness perhaps was not only limited to universal order and the pax achaemenica, but may well have included ideas about efficient organisation, communication, and accountability.

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*Light refreshments will be served*
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