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- 1 This substantial contribution from Marek Olbrycht gives a panoramic overview of the links between the Parthians and the nomads of Central Asia, in the early Arsacid period, a crucial phase in the formation of the Arsacid state. The Parthian dynasty was created after the takeover of the Parni/Aparni in the satrapy of Parthia. The Parni were in fact a tribe of the Dahae confederation, which had strong connection with the sedentary societies since long time. The Arsacid dynasty adopted immediately some peculiar features of sedentary ruling classes, like the habit of founding new cities, but it never ceased to entertain strong relations with and exert a strong influence over the nomadic world. In the middle of the 2nd century BC the migrations which took place in Central Asia constituted a threat for the quickly expanding Parthian empire. The Arsacids were forced to face several nomadic invasions and after some initial setbacks were able to extend with Mithridates I their area of control as far as the river Amu Darya. After this period, a completely new group of nomadic confederations had arrived and settled just beyond the Arsacid borders. Scattered finding from few settlements in the Oxus area like the so-called Oxus temple or the Orlat burial ground provide some visual depiction of the new-comers. Other archaeological discoveries like the statues from Khachayan attest to relevant contacts between members of the Parthian clans, often depicted in their traditional garments and local Bactrian and

Chorasmian nomadic leading classes. On the other side, the Dahae within the empire borders and the nomads of the Uzboi basin entered the cultural influence of the powerful Arsacid kingdom they were part of. In the final sections Olbrycht takes into account the origins of Parthian cataphract warfare and war weapons, like ring pommel daggers and the typical scabbards with four side projections, often depicted in Parthian and not-Parthian art (like the famous Shami prince or the Commagenian kings) to retrace their origin to the Central Asian cultural environment. This would support Ghirshman's idea of an "Oriental Koiné" which included a series of common cultural elements and which extended itself from Syria to Central Asia. This cultural network existed and continued to flourish also after the 1st century AD, when due to the Roman attacks and the appearance of consolidated and structured states in Central Asia, the political relationship and the exchanges between Parthia and Central Asia declined.

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