Religion in the Achaemenid Persian Empire

Emerging Judaisms and Trends

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Part II: Other Religious Trends in the Persian Empire

Abbreviations

AP	COWLEY, Arthur Ernest. *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford: Clarendon 1923
BK	BRESCIANI, Edda, and KAMIL, Murad. "Le Lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli." *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.* Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche. Memorie. Ser. VIII 12 (1966): 357–428
BM	British Museum
BMC	Greek Coins in the British Museum
CIG	*Corpus inscriptionum graecarum*
CIS	*Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*
DB	Behistun Inscription of Darius I
DPe	Inscription of Darius at Persepolis
FGrH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker,* ed. Felix Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964
KAI	DONNER, Herbert, and RÖLLIG, Wolfgang. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften.* 5th ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002
OGIS	*Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae*
PAT	HILLERS, Delbert R., and CUSSINI, Eleonora. *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996
PF	Persepolis Fortification Tablet
RTP	INGHOLT, Harald, SEYRIG, Henri, and STARCKY, Jean. *Recueil des tessères de Palmyre.* Paris: Geuthner, 1955
TAD	PORTEN, Bezalel, and YARDENI, Ada. *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt.* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999
Urk.	*Urkunde I: Old Kingdom Texts.* In SETHE, Kurt. *Ägyptische Lesestücke: Texte des Mittleren Reiches. Zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht.* 2nd ed. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1928 (repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983)

Achaemenid Persian Patronage of Egyptian Cults and Religious Institutions in the 27th Dynasty: A Study of Political Acumen in the Ancient World

Jared Krebsbach

The Achaemenid Persian Empire was vast in its geographical range and in the number of different subject peoples who were under its rule. From Egypt to Bactria, dozens[1] of different peoples and a plethora of gods and goddesses those peoples followed comprised the subjects of the Empire. One of the hallmarks of the Achaemenid Empire was the Persian practice of leaving their subject peoples free to practice their native religions unhindered (BRIANT 2002: 388–422). This practice or "doctrine," to use a modern geo-political term, often appears to modern readers as an example of the Persians' progressive and enlightened attitude toward other peoples, and although that may be true to a certain extent, an examination reveals that they probably adopted this doctrine for pragmatic political purposes. The Persian occupation of Egypt presents modern scholarship with an interesting case study of this doctrine as that land represented, along with Babylonia/Mesopotamia, one of the oldest and most sophisticated cultures under Achaemenid rule. Most Egyptian religious cults and institutions were already hundreds or even thousands of years old by the time the Persians conquered Egypt in 526 BCE,[2] and with their age came an entrenched system that demanded the Egyptian king take part in their maintenance in order to ensure the proper world order or Maat:

> The king lives under the obligation to maintain *maat,* which is usually translated "truth," but which really means the "right order" – the inherent structure of creation, of which justice is an integral part. Thus the king, in the solitariness of his divinity, shoulders an immense responsibility. (FRANKFORT 1948: 51)

The following study of Achaemenid patronage of Egyptian cults and religious institutions reveals that the Persian rulers not only followed a doctrine of non-interference toward Egyptian religion but that they also fulfilled the proper pharaonic role, at least outwardly, as defenders and purveyors of the proper world order. Of importance here

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[1] The exact number fluctuated, but most satrapal lists from throughout the Empire list somewhere between twenty and thirty different subject peoples. For the original publication of the reliefs, see SCHMIDT 1953. For a study of the historical origins of the Achaemenid tribute/subject peoples relief scenes, see WALSER 1966.

[2] On the complexities of Egyptian religion, see ASSMANN 2001; HORNUNG 1982; MORENZ 1960. On 526 BCE as the year of the Persian conquest of Egypt, see QUACK 2011b.

is what aspects of Egyptian religion the Persians accepted and why. The why relates not so much to the obvious reason of grafting the Egyptians into their Empire, but more so why certain theological and therefore ideological aspects were accepted while others were discarded. Equally important may be why the Persians decided not to patronize other cults and one religious institution in particular – the God's Wife of Amun. In the end, it will be demonstrated that the Persian rulers of Egypt consciously followed a specific program that was designed to legitimize their rule in the eyes of the Egyptians and which was, for the most part, more pragmatic and political than it was theological or religious in nature. It will also be demonstrated that, in at least one case, Egyptian scribes knowledgeable of their culture's deep literary and religious heritage aided Persian rulers, who helped better portray their new lords as legitimate Egyptian kings.

The Precedent of Patronage in Babylon

In 539 BCE, before Cambyses conquered Egypt (526 BCE), his predecessor conquered the equally ancient and sophisticated Neo-Babylonian/Chaldean Empire and with it Mesopotamia (BRIANT 2002: 40–51). The situation that the Persians faced in Babylonia concerning their desire to be accepted as legitimate rulers was similar to what they would face only a few years later in Egypt. Both were ancient cultures that had passed through the "imperial" phases of their pasts. The height of Egypt's New Kingdom was hundreds of years gone by the time of the Persian conquest. Beyond the ephemeral Neo-Babylonian Empire, the days of great empires in Mesopotamia were also long past. Nevertheless, both were thriving cultures, especially in the realm of religion.

After conquering Babylon, Cyrus legitimized his rule over Mesopotamia with the restoration of the Marduk cult, which the last Chaldean king, Nabonidas, had neglected. At least that is what Cyrus wanted others to believe. The restoration is commemorated on the famous Cyrus Cylinder, a foundation deposit under the city wall of Babylon not meant for public viewing but, possibly, for the gaze and approval of Marduk himself, or of future kings who would restore the city wall. The inscription notes that an earlier foundation deposit had been uncovered, so this foundation cylinder was likely an imitation of the earlier one:

> The worship of Marduk, the king of the gods, he (Nabonidus) changed into abomination, daily he used to do evil against his city ... When I entered Babylon as a friend and when I established the seat of the government in the palace of the ruler under jubilation and rejoicing, Marduk, the great lord, induced the magnanimous inhabitants of Babylon to love me, and I was daily endeavouring to worship him. (OPPENHEIM 1969: 315–16)

Of course, everything written in ancient texts is not factual, but by viewing the Cyrus Cylinder as "a source of the knowledge on the author of the document" (LIVERANI 1973: 179), one can deduce that Cyrus believed that it was important that the Babylonian people perceived him as the restorer of the Marduk cult.

Cyrus' patronage of the Marduk cult depicted on the Cylinder is corroborated by the so-called *Verse Account of Nabonidus* which depicts the last Chaldean king as a man

unfit to rule, while Cyrus is shown as the restorer of order (SCHAUDIG 2001: 563–78). It is impossible to determine how much of the text is hyperbole, but it is important to remember that the reality of the situation is less important than how Cyrus wished to be portrayed. Both texts fit the motif or topos of Cyrus as a legitimate king who restored order in Babylonia. Finally, brick inscriptions from Uruk dated to the fourth year of Cyrus mention attempts to reorganize cults in Eshnunna and Akkad, while a document from the Eanna temple in Uruk from year three of Cambyses refers to the restoration of royal stelae at that king's behest (JURSA 2007: 77–78). The activities mentioned by the Achaemenids in Babylonia may have provided them with a template that they used in Egypt, although their activities in the Nile Valley were much more nuanced and developed, as will be shown.[3]

Achaemenid Royal Patronage of the Neith Cult

The Persian patronage of the Neith cult involved not only the physical act of restoring that goddess' primary temple in Sais but also the placement of the Achaemenid king in an Egyptian text as the patron and restorer of the cult as well as the savior of the entire land.

The earliest iconographic representation of the goddess Neith can be traced back to the 2nd Dynasty (EL-SAYED 1982: 3), while in the Pyramid Texts written in the 5th and 6th Dynasties, she is associated with funerary cult (EL-SAYED 1982: 81–84). Much later, the Greeks associated Neith with Athena – possibly because of the arrows in her hieroglyphic sign that they may have viewed as signalling a martial aspect (SCHLICHTING 1975: 392–93). Besides Herodotus's *Histories* 2.169–170, the naophorous statue of Henat now in the Museum of Florence (EL-SAYED 1975: 131) is the main source about the Neith temple in Sais, since the location of the building is unknown.

It was in the 26th Dynasty (ca. 664–525 BCE) that Neith rose to prominence in the Egyptian pantheon (SCHLICHTING 1975: 392–94; EL-SAYED 1982: 31–33). During the 26th Dynasty, Neith enjoyed an exalted status as the patron deity of Sais and the ruling Saite dynasty. She also became a national deity similar to Amun during the New Kingdom.[4] As such, Neith's importance in Egyptian society, especially in the Delta, did not evaporate with the Persian conquest. Neith is invoked by Darius I on a stele commemorating the completion of a canal that linked the Red Sea to the Nile River (POSENER 1936: 48–87; REDMOUNT 1995).

One of the most interesting Egyptian texts for the current study, and for the 27th Dynasty in general, is the naophorous statue of the Egyptian doctor, admiral, and high-priest of Neith, Udjahorresnet (LICHTHEIM 1980: 36–44). Divided into two distinct formats or genres, the statue reflects the complexities of Udjahorresnet's collaboration

[3] For another discussion of Persian religious policy in Babylon, which emphasizes its historical contingency, see A. FITZPATRICK-MCKINLEY, "Continuity between Assyrian and Persian Policies toward the Cults of Their Subjects," pp. 137–171 in this volume.

[4] Neith was at her low point of importance during the New Kingdom, which was coincidentally when Amun was foremost in the Egyptian pantheon (SCHLICHTING 1975: 392).

with the Persians and "the intellectual constructs which determined the psychological processing" (LLOYD 1982: 167). The first layer of the text to consider, what actually happened, concerns the tactical aspects of the war and its aftermath. According to the text, Udjahorresnet served in the Egyptian military before and during the Persian invasion as commander of the navy under Amasis, commander of the navy under Psamtek III (CRUZ-URIBE 2003: 13). The text describes how, after the Persian conquest, Udjahorresnet was made Cambyses' chief doctor and advisor:

> After they (the Persians) occupied the country he was made the great ruler of Egypt and great chief of the world. His majesty made me the chief doctor. He made me live at his side as companion and administrator of the palace. I made the titulary into his name of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesutira, (I) caused his majesty to know the greatness of Sais. (POSENER 1936: 6, lines 12–13)[5]

The final details of the text that concern 'what actually happened' deal with the destruction wrought on Egypt in general and Sais in particular as a result of the Persian invasion. Although these details cover the layer of actuality, they begin to bleed into the second genre that Lloyd has described as "intellectual constructs," which is where modern scholars can learn more about the motives of the Persians for patronizing the Neith cult.

There are several lines on the statue that describe the destruction that accompanied the Persian invasion. Udjahorresnet describes the events and his role in the post-invasion order:

> The honored one who is near the gods of the Saite nome, the chief doctor, Udjahorresnet, he said: "I established the divine offering of the great Neith, divine mother by his majesty's command to the extent of eternity. I made a monument for Neith, the mistress of Sais, with every good thing like a servant who made excellence for his lord. I am a good man from his town because I saved her people from a very great unrest when it happened (took place) to all of Egypt. Nothing like it had ever happened in this land. I defended the weak against the strong and I saved the fearful when this happened. I made all excellent things for them. I did these things for them at this time." (POSENER 1936: 18–19, lines 31–36)

The unrest described by Udjahorresnet may well have been as extensive as he describes, but closer examination reveals these lines also to be formulaic, employing an Egyptian literary topos (OTTO 1954: 90–91).[6] Line 35, where Udjahorresnet describes what he did for the land – defending the weak from the strong and the fearful from mis-

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[5] The translations of the Udjahorresnet texts are mine. I thank Dr. Mariam Ayad for the grammatical expertise she provided for the translation. For a looser translation, see LICHTHEIM 1980: 37–40. The precise order in which the texts are supposed to be read is open to conjecture. The line numbering follows POSENER (1936: 7), but BAINES (1996: 92) argues that Udjahorresnet's dedications to the goddess Neith should be read first: "Despite the large amount of historical information in the texts, the statue should be read first as a dedicatory piece in the temple of Neith in Sais, which is the major single subject of the narratives, and only thereafter in more general historical terms."

[6] More recently, JANSEN-WINKELN 2002: 313 has argued that any claims that Cambyses respected Egyptian religion cannot be made based on this source. He states that the inscription tells of nothing positive Cambyses did for another Egyptian temple and that the entire story may have been invented by Udjahorresnet. The purpose of the current study is not to rehabilitate Cambyses' image but to examine what efforts he and the other Achaemenid kings made in Egypt to legitimize their rule. The actions of Cambyses and Darius concerning the temple of Neith are only one piece of this puzzle.

fortune – echoes the much earlier Middle Kingdom literary work, *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*. In *The Admonitions,* Egypt has suffered a calamity where everything is upside down and backward; the "timid is not distinguished from the violent" (LICHTHEIM 1973: 159) and "men stir up strife unopposed" (LICHTHEIM 1973: 156). Generally, Egypt suffers from a loss of order or Maat in this story. E. OTTO (1954) saw similarities between Udjahorresnet's inscriptions and the Middle Kingdom *Story of Sinuhe,* in particular the idea of the banished/exiled protagonist returning to his beloved Egypt. Lines 43 and 44 on the back of the Udjahorresnet statue describe how he was ordered to return to Egypt from Elam by Darius I – he was apparently in the Great King's travelling retinue – in order to establish the House of Life in Sais. The inscription reads:

> The majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Darius, who lives forever, ordered me to return to Egypt, while his majesty was in Elam as he is the great prince of all foreign lands, the great ruler of Egypt, in order to establish the office of the House of Life (of Sais) after it had become ruinous. The foreigners from foreign lands took me to the land, delivering me to Egypt as the lord of the Two Lands commanded. I did as his majesty commanded to me. I organized them in their personnel from sons of men, no low class sons were there. I placed them in charge of all knowledge. (POSENER 1936: 21, lines 43–44)

OTTO (1954: 91) pointed out that both men returned to Egypt, but the situations that led them to leave Egypt also share similarities. Sinuhe left Egypt because he was implicated in the regicide of king Amenemhat I. Udjahorresnet was ordered away from Egypt by a foreign king whose people wrought destruction on Egypt. Both situations involve a calamity in Egypt and the loss of order or Maat.[7]

The foreign invasion is another topos in the Udjahorresnet inscriptions, a common topos in Egyptian literature in later periods. Although most of the literary examples were written later than the Udjahorresnet inscriptions, the theme probably originated in the New Kingdom in the wake of the Hyksos invasion and was an "extension of New Kingdom ideology" that demonized foreigners (GOZZOLI 2006: 303). In the 1st millennium BCE, Egyptians combined the disorder topos with the foreign invasion topos (GOZZOLI 2006: 303). So it is likely that a combination of these topoi was already part of the Egyptian scribal tradition that became common in texts of the 1st millennium BCE when Egypt was often deprived of its political independence. This includes the end of the 25th Dynasty, when Egypt was briefly under Neo-Assyrian rule, the 27th or Persian Dynasty, and the Ptolemaic and Roman periods of rule. The prevalence in later literature is a logical consequence of Egypt's status as a province.

In *The Potter's Oracle,* a Greek text known from three papyri from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, Egypt is conquered by a people identified as "Typhonians," after which the temples fall into ruin and proper funerary traditions are no longer kept (KOENEN 2002: 139–87; KERKESLAGER 1998: 72–73).[8]

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[7] On the purpose of Egyptian historical texts and their melding with what is commonly considered "literature" in the modern sense, see EYRE 1996.

[8] KOENEN 2002: 173–78 offers a detailed and articulate analysis of this story. He argues that the story of *The Potter's Oracle* follows a genre that originated during the Middle Kingdom with the

Fragment 42 of MANETHO's *Aegyptiaca* (2004: 86–87), written at Heliopolis in the 3rd century BCE under the Ptolemies, relates a similarly worded story concerning the Hyksos invasion and occupation of Egypt.

Finally, *The Demotic Chronicle,* another Ptolemaic-era text of the early 2nd century BCE, provides another example of the invasion. In columns IV–V of the *Chronicle,* the Achaemenids, referred to as "Medes," bring disaster to Egypt (FELBER 2002: 84).[9] This disaster, like the ones in *The Potter's Oracle* and Manetho's *Aegyptiaca,* shall be reversed by the coming of a redeeming pharaoh. The redeeming pharaoh who restores order or Maat to a maligned Egypt is a topos apparent in many Egyptian texts, including the Udjahorresnet inscriptions. *The Potter's Oracle* describes a pharaoh who will return Egypt to its greatness after the disaster of foreign occupation:

> And then Egypt will grow, when the kindly one who originates from Helios has arrived to be king for fifty-five years, a giver of good things, who is appointed by the greatest goddess Isis. (KERKESLAGER 1998: 77)

The return of Egypt to native rule after the Ptolemaic dynasty is also a central theme in *The Demotic Chronicle* (FELBER 2002: 78–79) and in Fragment 42 of MANETHO's *Aegyptiaca* (2004: 86–87) that mentions a pharaoh named Misphragmuthôsis, who defeated the Hyksos and returned order to Egypt. Another example is the edict of the 18th Dynasty king Horemheb, who restored Egypt to orthodoxy after the Amarna Period. Although the text is presented as historical, much of it appears to fit the topos of the redeeming pharaoh (KRUCHTEN 1981).

In a similar fashion, the Udjahorresnet texts tie Cambyses' role as restorer of order to his rebuilding the Temple of Neith in Sais, which had apparently become the home of squatters and had fallen into misuse after the Persian conquest:

> I petitioned to the majesty of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, concerning all the foreigners who were seated in the Temple of Neith to banish them from it, making the Neith Temple in all its splendor like it was before. His majesty ordered the expulsion of all foreigners who were seated in the Temple of Neith, demolishing their houses and all their obstructions that were in this temple. They carried [all of their things] themselves to the outside of the wall of this temple. His majesty ordered the purification of the Temple of Neith, giving all of her people to it (and allowing the devotees back) ... to make all their feasts and all their appearances like what was done before. His majesty did this because I cause His majesty to recognize the greatness of Sais. It is the city of all the gods who are firm on their throne forever. (POSENER 1936: 14–15, lines 17–23)

These lines of the Udjahorresnet inscription contain both the invasion/disaster topos and the topos of the pharaoh who restores order, although it is the same person who brought destruction and restoration. Again, it should be pointed out, as LLOYD (1982: 55) has written, that the Udjahorresnet texts were multi-layered thematically and that within those layers was the reality that Cambyses restored the Temple of Neith in Sais. The Udjahorresnet text may not fit the precise structure of some of the other texts that were written before and after it, and it is not to be interpreted purely as topos, but it

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"Prophecy of Neferti". For other recent commentaries on this text, see GOZZOLI 2006: 297–301; QUACK 2011a.

[9] For a more recent commentary on this text, see QUACK 2009b.

fits an Egyptian literary tradition. On a purely factual level, the Udjahorresnet texts demonstrate that the Persians found it important to maintain the Neith cult in Sais, while on a literay level, the texts show that the Persians knew the importance of image, both in the present and for posterity.

The Udjahorresnet statue reveals the Persians' efforts in Egypt during the 27th Dynasty. The significance of these texts is not so much as sources on the invasion itself – or if Cambyses and Darius I took part in cultic functions – but in how they portray the Persian kings as legitimate Egyptian kings rather than foreign usurpers. The inscriptions employ some typical Egyptian literary topoi, which could reflect a deliberate desire by Udjahorresnet to conform the Persian kings to Egyptian cultural traditions. Alternatively, it could reflect the need of the Persian kings to conform to Egyptian culture or possibly be a combination of both.[10]

The Udjahorresnet inscriptions share with the Cyrus Cylinder the topos of the king who restores disrupted order. It is tempting to see a direct dependence of the Udjahorresnet inscription on a template developed after the Persian conquest of Babylon. Both traditions view the king as the link between heaven and earth and as responsible for maintaining the divinely established order. After any disruptions caused by a foreign invasion, it was the responsibility of a native king to expel the invaders and regain the throne to restore order. Thus, it is likely that the Achaemenid administration drew on local traditions and enlisted the aid of native scribes. The inscriptions on the statue of Udjahorresnet suggest either an astute Egyptian civil servant who took the initiative to depict his Achaemenid overlords and political sponsors in familiar categories previously used of the native pharaohs. Or, the Achaemenid court ordered local scribes to portray their overlords as native rulers. The latter would be a clear example of Achaemenid political acumen, in which the Persian kings used their subjects' religion and literary traditions to their advantage. The former cannot be ruled out, however, since Udjahorresnet survived and prospered during Achaemenid rule, and his knowledge may have served both his foreign overlords and his own personal interests. As it stands, it appears very likely that a directive was first given by the Achaemenid court, which Udjahorresnet carried out by depicting the Persian kings using Egyptian literary topoi.

[10] Diana Edelman pointed out to me that, considering the extant primary sources, it is impossible to rule out the text being the initiative of either Udjahorresnet or the Persian kings. For other discussions in this volume of the inscriptions on this statue and what they reflect about Persian royal ideology in subject regions of their Empire, see A. FITZPATRICK-MCKINLEY, "Continuity between Assyrian and Persian Policies toward the Cults of Their Subjects," pp. 137–171 and D. AGUT-LABORDÈRE, "Beyond the Persian Tolerance Policy: Great Kings and Egyptian Gods during the Achaemenid Period," pp. 319–328.

The Persians and the Apis Cult

Perhaps the most important religious institution in Egypt in the 1st millennium BCE was the cult of the sacred Apis bull. Inscriptions from the Memphite Serapeum,[11] which was where the dead Apis bulls were interred, demonstrates the Persian patronage of this important Egyptian religious institution. In the theology of the Apis cult, there was only one living bull, which was viewed as the living embodiment of Osiris. Strabo (17.1.31) noted that Apis is the same as Osiris.

The connection between the chthonic deity Osiris and a male bovine may have to do with the bull's potency and strength, which were also attributes of Osiris (OTTO 1964: 57).[12]

The cult developed during the New Kingdom. The Serapeum was first built during the reign of Amenhotep III in the 18th Dynasty. Despite the continued presence of the Apis cult throughout the earlier periods of pharaonic history, it was in the 1st millennium BCE that the cult truly came to prominence. In the 26th Dynasty, Psamtek I, the first Saite king to rule over a unified Egypt, expanded the burial chambers of the Serapeum (GOMAÀ 1973: 39). Textual and archeological evidence from the Memphite Serapeum indicate that Cambyses and Darius I continued where their Saite predecessors left off by taking an active interest in patronizing the Apis cult.

Epitaph stelae from the Serapeum indicate that two bulls were ceremoniously buried during the reigns of Cambyses and Darius I (POSENER 1936: 30–41). The epitaphs demonstrate that the Persians saw the importance of the Serapeum and took an

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[11] STRABO (2001: 17.1) visited Egypt in 25/24 BCE and noticed a half-buried sphinx outside the Serapeum. The ruins of the Serapeum were rediscovered by A. Mariette (MARIETTE/MASPERO 1882) and excavated by PETRIE 1909 and recently by JONES/JONES 1982; 1983; 1985; 1987; 1988. For the partial publication of the thousand votive stelae in the Serapeum, see MALININE 1953; MALININE/POSENER/VERCOUTTER 1968; 1983.

[12] There was only one Apis bull alive at a time and he had to possess special markings on his coat that indicated his divinity. Herodotus 2.29 observed that each bull was black, with a white diamond shaped mark on its forehead, a white eagle shaped marking on its back, and a mark in the shape of a scarab on its tongue. These marks were considered so important that they were even left exposed after the dead bull was mummified (OTTO 1964: 11). When an Apis bull died, the priests of Ptah, who were responsible for the care of the bull, would search Egypt for a replacement that bore the specific markings and take him back to Memphis. The bull was then housed above the Serapeum in the section of the Temple of Ptah known as the *Pr-wsir-Hp,* 'house of Osiris-Apis' (Diodorus Siculus 1.85). When the reigning bull died he was mummified in a 70-day process similar to that of human corpses and then placed on a wheeled cart and paraded in splendor to its final resting place in the subterranean chambers (DIMICK 1958). Fragments of a manual for embalming the Apis bull have been published in VOS 1993; QUACK 1995; 1997–1998; MEYRAT 2014. The exact chronological origin of the Apis cult is unclear, but Manetho's *Aegyptiaca,* Fragment 9 claims that the Apis cult was functioning already by at least the 2nd Dynasty (ca. 2700 BCE). A black and white diorite bowl with the *serek* of king Aha places the origin of the Apis cult back earlier in the 1st Dynasty (SIMPSON 1957: 141). The annalistic Palermo Stone also mentions an occurrence of the running of the Apis in the 1st Dynasty, and although the king's name is illegible, it very well could have been Aha (BREASTED 1906: 60).

active role in the maintenance of the cult.[13] The 27th Dynasty Serapeum texts would appear to contrast with Herodotus's account (3.29) that Cambyses killed the sacred bull in a blind rage.[14] The evidence clearly shows that the first two kings of the 27th Dynasty took an active role in patronizing the Serapeum and Apis cult. The pattern of legitimization established by the kings of the 27th Dynasty demonstrates that any abuse of the sacred Apis bull would have been anathema to any propaganda program of the Persians and does not fit the pattern of the doctrine of non-interference in their subjects' religious activities.[15]

One of the most interesting aspects of the Achaemenid Persian patronage of the Apis cult in Egypt is the specific deities they invoked in the Serapeum inscriptions. As noted above, the Apis bull was associated with Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, and so the most common god invoked in Serapeum inscriptions was the syncretic Apis-Osiris. The epitaph stelae discussed above are exceptions, since they invoke Apis-Atum as he "who grants all life" (POSENER 1936: 31–37). Although an Osiris-Apis-Atum-Horus is known from a 19th Dynasty Serapeum inscription (BRUGSCH 1878: 38; OTTO 1964: 19), these two mentions of Apis-Atum by the Persians are the best known from any dynasty. The evidence from the Memphite Serapeum proves that the Achaemenid Persians took a role in the maintenance of the Apis cult and by so doing legitimized their rule over the Nile Valley.

The Persians and Atum Worship in Egypt

The Persian patronage of the Neith and Apis cults made a link with the previous Saite dynasty and established a sense of political continuity. The Achaemenids also extended their patronage to the solar and creator god, Atum,[16] whom they had a number of reasons to view as an attractive Egyptian deity. Besides the inscriptions from the Memphite Serapeum discussed above, where the syncretic Apis-Atum replaced the

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[13] It is unknown if either Persian king actually took a physically active role in the cult rituals, but by placing their names on the monuments they were at least metaphysically participating.

[14] DEPUYDT 1995 has argued that Herodotus' account should not be discarded. He points out that there is an implied gap of about one and a half years between the death and burial of Apis XLII and that "perhaps the irregularity is somehow related to the incident of the Apis murder" (1995: 125). JANSEN-WINKELN 2002 concurs that there is no problem with the chronology and that Cambyses could have murdered the bull sometime after the burial of Apis XLII in November, 524 BCE. In the latter's view, the reason the incident is not mentioned in any Egyptian text is: "Denn Vorfälle wie dieser, die nicht ins ägyptische Weltbild passen – ein Pharao tötet einen Apis – hätte man gewiss nach Möglichkeit vertuscht" (2002: 315). No doubt this would have been covered up if true, but as noted by DEPUYDT 1995: 125, the jury is still out. Even if true, this still does not negate the evidence that the Persian kings took an active role in the Serapeum and Apis cult by burying two bulls.

[15] For another discussion of this evidence in this volume, see the article by D. AGUT-LABORDÈRE, "Beyond the Persian Tolerance Policy: Great Kings and Egyptian Gods during the Achaemenid Period," pp. 319–328.

[16] KÁKOSY 1975: 550–51. In the Heliopolitan creation myth, Atum created the first divine pair, Shu and Tefnut, through masturbation.

more common Osiris, Atum is invoked by the Persian rulers in a number of other Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions from the 27th Dynasty, in particular the colossal statue of Darius I from Susa.[17]

The multi-lingual inscriptions on the Darius Statue consist of cuneiform inscriptions in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian, each in a single vertical line on the right side of the statue's robe, which is similar in design to inscriptions from sites in Persia such as Persepolis, Susa, and Behistun (KENT 1953: 116–17). There are standard Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions on the statue's belt: on the right side, "The good god, lord of the Two Lands, Darius, who lives forever!" and on the left side, "The Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt, who makes rituals, Darius, who lives forever!" (YOYOTTE 1972: 254).

A longer vertical inscription on the right side of the robe opposite the cuneiform inscriptions invokes the god Atum. Darius I is described as the "son of Re born of Atum,"[18] while Atum is referred to as the "lord of Heliopolis". Atum is also invoked on the front of the base of the statue.[19] As the Darius Statue is the only known example of colossal royal statuary from the Achaemenid period (LUSCHEY 1983: 193; MUSCARELLA 1992: 219), the placement of Atum as the foremost of the Egyptian gods in this piece is important.

Ultimately, it may be that the Persians saw theological similarities between Atum and their own god, Ahuramazda. In early religious texts, Atum was often depicted as a solar god who created the universe (MYŚLIWIEC 1979: 175–81). As a solar god, he was sometimes paired with Re.[20] He stood alone as the sun, as the creator of the world, and as protector of the dead, he enclosed the sovereign in his arms (FAULKNER 1969: 43–50, Utterances 216–222). Also, Atum was often referenced in Egyptian texts by such epithets as "Lord of All," "Lord of Eternity," and "Lord of Life" (MYŚLIWIEC 1979: 181–88), which suggests further this possibility.

Ahuramazda was also associated with the creation of the world and the protection of the earthly Achaemenid king. The five Old Persian columns at Behistun invoke Ahuramazda seventy times, mostly for the protection of Darius as the king of the

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[17] The statue was discovered in Susa in 1972, but due to its Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions mentioning Heliopolis, that city was probably its original provenance. For the original publication of the hieroglyphic inscriptions in French, see YOYOTTE 1972. For the original publication of the cuneiform inscriptions in French, see VALLAT 1972; 1974. On the statue, see STRONACH 1972: 240–46; BOARDMAN 2000: 115–16; CALMEYER 1991: 285–92; MUSCARELLA 1992: 219–21. For more recent examinations of the inscriptions, see BRIANT 2000; YOYOTTE 2010.

[18] YOYOTTE 1972: 254–55 restored "Re" to this section so that it reads, *sA [ra] ms itm.*

[19] YOYOTTE 1972: 255–57. Here Atum is referred to as *itm nb tAwy iwnw,* 'Atum, lord of the Two Lands, and Heliopolis'. The mention of Heliopolis may point to the statue's original provenance being that Egyptian city. The city of Heliopolis, since it was the centre of the Heliopolitan creation myth, served as that deity's cult centre and housed a temple dedicated to that god and Re-Horakhty. The city first rose to prominence during the Old Kingdom but continued to be important through pharaonic history (J. P. ALLEN 2001).

[20] FAULKNER 1969: 44–45. FRANKFORT 1948: 379, n. 1 believed that Ra and Atum were different aspects of the same god and that the earliest texts do not allow any distinction. On the other hand, KÁKOSY 1975: 551 wrote that the Atum cult in Heliopolis did not completely merge with Ra.

Achaemenid Empire (KENT 1953: 116–34). Numerous other inscriptions from the royal palace at Persepolis, the royal tombs at Naqsh-i-Rustam, and the Darius Statue from Susa/Heliopolis also describe Ahuramazda's role as creator of the universe. At Persepolis, Ahuramazda is credited as the one who "created Darius the king, he bestowed on him the kingdom" (KENT 1953: 136, DPd lines 1–5), while at his tomb the god is described as the one "who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man" (KENT 1953: 138, DNa lines 1–8).

For the present discussion, the cuneiform inscriptions on the robes of Darius I on his colossal statue are the most important sources that invoked Ahuramazda and his attributes as the god "who created the sky and the below, who created man, who created happiness for man" (VALLAT 1974: 162, 163). The fact that Ahuramazda is invoked on the same statue as Atum and that this is the only known such occurrence (KREBSBACH 2011: 101) indicates that the Persians were aware of the similarities between the two gods.[21]

Ultimately, the Persians' patronage of the Neith, Apis, and Atum cults provided them with a sense of political legitimacy that they sought in Egypt. How much they believed in or even took part in the actual rituals of these cults is irrelevant; what is important is the image they advertized as rightful Egyptian kings who patronized the gods and goddesses and upheld Maat. Taking an active interest in these important Egyptian religious institutions, the Achaemenids used royal ideologies developed in Babylonia.[22] While the Achaemenid kings took an active role in Egyptian cults in order to further their political program, they avoided one important Egyptian religious institution.

The Achaemenid Persians and the God's Wife of Amun

The God's Wife of Amun (GWA) was as important, if not more so, than any of the Egyptian religious cults discussed above, but the Achaemenids conspicuously ignored this religious institution. The God's Wife in the 1st millennium BCE was the temporal

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[21] Egyptian and Persian religions share some similarities in their cosmogonies. The Egyptian ideas of *Maat,* or order, versus *Isfet,* or chaos, which together make up the universe, correspond to the Persian concepts of *Asha,* or truth, versus *Drugh,* or lie. "*Asha* is the opposite of *drug,* for *asha* is the personification, in Zoroastrian terms, of truth, and, being truth, it is the ideal form of the universal Ahuric law by which it is intended the cosmos is to be regulated" (CLARK 1998: 31). As the Persian kings gave homage to the Egyptian god to appease their subjects, they simply added the typical hyperbolic language of a Persian inscription that invokes Ahuramazda. Since royal Egyptian statues housed in temples held magical properties, they were probably aware of what they were doing.

[22] Cyrus' depiction as YHWH'S chosen and anointed one in the book of Isaiah represents another possible example of the same trend from Yehud, a more backwater part of the Empire, though it is associated with Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire, as is the Cyrus Cylinder, and not with Darius I. The date of composition of Isaiah (Isaiah 40–55) is unclear, as are potential additions to the text from even later editorial hands. There is not space to debate if the scribes in Yehud and elsewhere were sent an imperial directive from Cyrus' court to depict Cyrus favorably in terms of native royal ideology or if this was a local initiative by a pro-Persian scribe. I thank D. Edelman for bringing this to my attention.

consort, *douwat netjer,* often translated 'Divine Adorer', of the god Amun, whose cult center was in the city of Thebes (AYAD 2009: 3). The God's wife was expected to carry out a number of rituals intended to satisfy Amun, which included: playing music, making offerings, and erecting shrines (AYAD 2009: 34–115). The earliest known use of the title God's Wife of Amun occurred at the beginning of the New Kingdom (AYAD 2009: 4). Throughout the New Kingdom, the title GWA continued to be used, but its importance in the general political and religious landscape of Egypt ebbed and flowed and, for the most part, was nominal (AYAD 2009: 6–10).

After the New Kingdom, when centralized rule in Egypt gave way to a patchwork of semi-autonomous chieftains of Libyan descent, the office of the GWA assumed a much more powerful role in the Egyptian landscape. The penultimate king of the Libyan 23rd Dynasty, Osorkon III (777–749 BCE), installed his daughter, Shepenwepet I, as the GWA, which marked the ascendancy of the office (KITCHEN 1973: 176). In the New Kingdom, the GWA was first politicized, but it was during Shepenwepet I's tenure as God's Wife that "the full political potential of the office was realized" (AYAD 2009: 15). The political power of the GWA would be recognized and utilized by succeeding dynasties after the 23rd Dynasty.[23]

The Nubians, led by Piankhy, who conquered Egypt in 728 BCE, were quick to realize the importance of patronizing the GWA.[24] The Nubians saw the office as such an important part of their own political program in Egypt that even before they established their own dynasty, the 25th, Piankhy probably appointed Amenirdis to the powerful position.[25] When Ashurbanipal vanquished the Nubians, Psamtek I, the son of Nekau I, the Assyrian-appointed prince of the Delta city of Sais, filled the political vacuum and became the king of a unified Egypt in 664 BCE (KUHRT 1995: 637–38). Psamtek I displayed his political and military authority when, in year nine of his rule (656 BCE), he had his daughter Nitoqris installed as the GWA, commemorating the event on a stela that was discovered in the forecourt of the temple of Amun at the Karnak Temple in Thebes.[26] Despite the conflict between the Saites and Nubians that led to the assassination of two Saite kings/princes, Bakenranef and Nekau I, by Nubian kings,[27] the Saite kings saw the importance of patronizing the GWA in order to control the resources of the Amun temple. Hence, "it was the Saites, not the Libyans nor the Nubians, who monumentalized the official decrees installing their royal princesses as

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[23] For an earlier survey of the history of the office of the God's Wife of Amun, see GRAEFE 1981. For a study of the God's Wife of Amun in the 18th Dynasty, see GITTON 1984. The God's Wife of Amun in the late New Kingdom is covered in GOSSELIN 2007.

[24] The campaign was commemorated on in Egyptian hieroglyphs on a stela that currently is housed in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo #JE 48862. For a complete, line-by-line transcription of the hieroglyphic text divided by clauses and accompanied with a French translation and commentary, see GRIMAL 1981.

[25] AYAD 2009: 16. LOHWASSER 2001: 69 also thinks that Amenirdis was installed before Piankhy's invasion but believes it was her father, Kashta, not her brother, Piankhy, who had her installed.

[26] Hieroglyphic transcription with English translation in CAMINOS 1964 and DER MANUELIAN 1994: 297–321. On Nitoqris' genealogy and familial connections to the earliest Saite rulers, see CHRISTOPHE 1951.

[27] KITCHEN 1973: 138–47, 369–77, 399–408; KUHRT 1995: 628–38.

God's Wives of Amun" (AYAD 2009: 120). Later Saite kings continued to view the GWA as an important institution. A second God's Wife, Ankhnesneferibre, was installed after the death of Nitoqris during the reign of Apries in 596 BCE.[28] Ankhnesneferibre was to be the last woman to hold the important title of God's Wife of Amun since the Achaemenid Persians discontinued the institution.

If the Achaemenid kings patronized Neith, Atum, and Apis, why did they not follow suit with the equally important institution of the GWA? The Persian attitude toward the office of the GWA seems to run counter to the Achaemenid doctrine of allowing their subject peoples to practice their religious traditions unhindered. One would think that patronizing the GWA, as did the Nubians and Saites, would have served the legitimation of the Persian rule in Egypt. Yet, gender dynamics and the manner of disseminating power played a key role in the Persian avoidance of the GWA. The powerful position held by the women of the GWA was alien to the Persians, whose "royal daughters were not trained nor were they expected to hold such powerful positions" (AYAD 2001: 7).

There is no evidence that any God's Wife of Amun bore children,[29] with the line of succession of each GWA coming through adoption. Nevertheless, if the God's Wife of Amun usually was an unmarried woman and power was transferred through adoption, not marriage, this would explain why the Persians would not send an unmarried Achaemenid royal princess as a GWA to Thebes. The marriage of princesses was a key element in Persian diplomacy (AYAD 2001: 7).

Although Greek historians viewed Persian women as powerful in their own right, their early influence in the Achaemenid power structure came from "politically motivated marriages with daughters of Persian nobles and also with daughters of non-Persian royalty" (BROSIUS 1996: 47). This policy was followed when Cambyses conquered Egypt and was only slightly modified during the reign of his successor, Darius I, who made marriage alliances to "exclude other contestants to the Persian throne" (BROSIUS 1996: 81). No Persian woman enjoyed the independence and power that the GWA afforded to Egyptian royal women.[30] The Persians were willing to adapt Egyptian culture to a certain extent in order to legitimize their rule, but their treatment of the institution of the God's Wife of Amun demonstrates that they had their limits. The God's Wife of Amun was a powerful institution in Egypt at the time of the first Persian conquest but one that the Persians were unwilling to co-opt, due to their cultural and political power structure that was established long before they came to Egypt.

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[28] On Ankhnesneferibre's adoption as God's Wife, see LEAHY 1996: 157.

[29] GRAEFE 1998 raises the possibility that at least one GWA may have been married, but he maintains that the office was filled through adoption.

[30] If the Egyptian kings were not averse to marrying foreign women, they never sent their own princesses to marry foreign rulers (ROBINS 1993: 30–36).

Conclusion

An examination of Egyptian hieroglyphic sources from the 27th Dynasty reveals that the Persians not only followed a doctrine of non-interference in native cults but took an active role in their maintenance when it benefitted their hold over Egypt. The evidence indicates that the Achaemenid rulers sought to legitimize their rule in Egypt by appearing, at least outwardly in the texts, as rightful Egyptian kings. This political program probably originated in Babylonia with Cyrus' patronage of the Marduk cult, but in Egypt it became more sophisticated and nuanced.

The Achaemenid kings focused on the Neith, Atum, and Apis cults. Closer study of the texts reveals that Persian patronage of each of these offered specific benefits. Neith was an important deity to the Saites, whom the Persians usurped, and represented a type of "national" deity during Egypt's 26th Dynasty. By continuing the patronage of her cult, the Persians took part in the cultural continuity of Egypt by depicting themselves as the restorer of her temple and upholder of Maat, literary topoi that were clearly Egyptian in character.

As the most important religious institution in Egypt during the 1st millennium BCE, the cult of the Apis bull was patronized by the Libyans, Nubians, and Saites. Cambyses and Darius I followed suit. Atum was another important Egyptian deity of the 1st millennium BCE whose cult the Persians supported. The similarities of Atum with their own god led the Achaemenids to prefer Atum to Osiris, who may have been too foreign or distasteful for the Persians to patronize.

The Achaemenid refusal to patronize the institution of the God's Wife of Amun can be explained by the amount of power it granted women and possibly by the limited number of royal daughters available for diplomatic marriages. Ultimately, the Persians' patronage of some Egyptian cults and their termination of others such as the GWA during the 27th Dynasty had less to do with religion and more with politics. The Achaemenid rulers of Egypt used a template from their rule in Babylonia to patronize certain cults that would help them keep power while denying others that may have been a threat to them. This demonstrates the political sophistication of the Achaemenid Persian rulers and their advisers, who knew the benefits of inserting themselves into their subjects' religions without appearing to be foreign interlopers. Achaemenid Persian power in Egypt was not the result of law codes or military garrisons but came from their patronage of important religious cults and institutions.

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